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Anarchism and Syndicalism in South Africa, 1904-1921: Rethinking the history of labour and the left

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Promoter: Professor Jonathan Hyslop

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Johannesburg, 2007

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

Lucien JW van der Walt

15 day of July 2007

To Nestor Makhno

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Abstract

This is a study of the influence of anarchism and syndicalism (a variant of anarchism) on the left and labour movements in South Africa between the 1890s and the 1920s, but with a focus on the first two decades of the twentieth century. Internationally, this was a period of widespread working class unrest and radicalism, and the apogee, the "glorious period", of anarchist and syndicalist influence from the 1890s to the 1920s. The rising influence of anarchism and syndicalism was reflected in South Africa, where it widely influenced the left, as well as significant sections of the local labour movement, as well as layers of the nationalist movements. This influence also spilled into neighbouring countries, fostering a movement that was multi-racial in composition, as well as internationalist and interracial in outlook. These developments are today almost entirely forgotten, and have been largely excised from the literature: this thesis is, above all, a work of recovering the history of a significant tradition, a history that has significant implications for understanding the history of left and labour movements in South Africa and southern Africa.

Preface and acknowledgements

In recovering this history, I have been inspired and aided by many people, and it is to all of them that I wish to express my appreciation. First of all, most importantly of all, I would like to thank my wife, Nicole Ulrich, for her unstinting support, stimulating discussions, and keen insights. Any thesis of this scale is inevitably a journey of discovery, and, with discovery, change. Throughout this odyssey, a journey that began in earnest in 1997 – but whose genesis dates back to 1993 – you have been my partner. Simply put, I could not have done it without you: "Let come what may/ Thy doom is mine".

To my mother, Margaret, I extend my deepest love and respect. Your brilliance, wit and support have made it possible for me to do this work in the first place. Your kindness, honour and ethics have always been my model. My late father taught me many things, and this thesis reflects some of them. I would also like to thank my companions for their support and vigour, and for many years of camaraderie and solidarity. One cannot easily identify all those who helped, but I would like to single out Michael Schmidt, Shane Leach, Mandy Moussouris, Jon Payn, and James Pendlebury for special appreciation. We have been through interesting times: I am not sure whether that is a curse or a blessing.

No research of this type is possible without the collective labour and accumulated knowledge of the research community. I wish to express my thanks to the late Baruch Hirson, my respect for his pioneering work on the history of the left in South Africa, and my appreciation of our all-too-brief correspondence. I would like to thank other people who helped me in various ways and at various stages, and in no particular order: Phil Bonner, Elaine Katz, Evangelos Mantzaris, Francois Coquet, Sal Salerno, Alex Mouton, Peter Rachleff, Rick Halpern, Mia Roth, Reiner Torsdoff, Hartmut Rubner, Peter Alexander, Allison Drew, Piet Hoekman, Jannes Houkes, Kees Rodenburg, Bert Altena, Mark Shipway, Jeremy Grest, Jean Marie Penvenne, Adolfo Zunguza, David Short, Martin Howard, Jon Bekken, Fred Chase, "Morgan", Andrew Sessions, Iain McKay, Alan MacSimoin, Pamela Barnes, Shaheen Buckus, and Peter Limb. I must also pay tribute here to the late Harald Beyer-Arnesen for his stimulating analyses. Aspects of the arguments presented here have already been published: I would specifically like to thank the editors of the journals *Archiv für die Geschichte des Widerstandes und der Arbeit, Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, *De AS*, *Politikon* and *Refractions* for the opportunity to present some of my findings.

My deepest appreciation also goes out to the staff at the International Institute for Social History in Amsterdam, the National Archives in Pretoria, the South African Reference Library in Cape Town, the Pretoria State Library, the Mayibuye Centre at the University of the Western Cape, the historical papers collections at the University of Cape Town and the University of the Witwatersrand, as well as the Africana section of the Johannesburg Public Library. Their help was unstinting and invaluable. My gratitude also goes out to William LeFevre at the Archives of Labour and Urban Affairs at Wayne State University in Detroit, Alison Bullen of the Trade Union Library and Education Centre in Cape Town, Kieran Casey of Sweden's Central Workers' Organisation (SAC) for access to the organisation's extensive library collection, Barry Pateman at the Kate Sharpley Library, Marrianne Enckell of the Centre for International Research on Anarchism in Geneva, Switzerland, and the staff of *La Publico* in Paris, and *La Plume Noire* in Lyon.

Finally, I would like to thank my work colleagues, my supervisor, and my funders for their support. The University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, provided a good deal of the funding, not to mention the space, which made this work possible. The National Research Foundation, Pretoria, and the Institute for Anarchist Studies, New York, provided additional aid, helping make this work what it is today. My colleagues at the University of the Witwatersrand have always provided encouragement and support – I appreciate it deeply. The erudition and insight of my supervisor, Jonathan Hyslop, were of inestimable advantage. I am, of course, solely responsible for the arguments and conclusions presented here.

Is this list too long? If anything, it is too short.

Racial terminology

No study of South Africa seems complete without a discussion of the racial terminology to be used by the author. This is not because there is any doubt that South Africa is a highly racialised society, or the result of substantive disagreement about the main racial categories that apply. What is at stake is how best to refer to what is, for many, a most uncomfortable and charged reality. In this thesis I will refer to people of European descent in South Africa as White, as is the common usage in South Africa; I refer to the other racial groups in South Africa by the traditional categories of African, Coloured, and Indian. I do not use the term "black" to collectively refer to Africans, Coloureds, and Indians in Africa, as this usage obscures different experiences and the complexity of the racial order, and racial identities, in southern Africa; besides, for most South Africans, the terms "black" and "African" are interchangeable, a usage I will follow. Of course, when quoting materials from the period under examination, archaisms like "Native" etc. will obviously be used.

I have chosen to avoid the practice of referring to race, races, and particular racial groups in inverted commas or with the prefix "so-called" (as in "so-called Coloureds"). This practice is obviously designed to stress the socially constructed nature of race. But even if race is a social construct, it is no less real for all that, and no more socially constructed than categories like class or gender, with no more reason to be receive qualifying punctuation marks or prefixes than these cleavages. Racial identities are remarkably consistent and stable, and, in a society such as that of South Africa, more real to most people than God. They are simply too real to avoid through literary artifice. Race is deeply intertwined with culture, in family, in identity and in language, all of which are, in turn, directly tied to appearance and descent. No one is race-free, and race is no more noxious (nor more malleable) than any other identity.

Finally, it should be noted that I will not be using the term "racism" in this work: it is simply too broad and vague a label, and subject to far too many conflicting interpretations. I will speak, instead, of "racial prejudice", by which I mean attitudes of hostility towards other races, that is, of bias and hatred, and of "racial discrimination", by which I mean actual attempts to impose discriminatory measures on a racial basis, such as, for example, job colour bars and segregationist laws.

Glossary

ANC: African National Congress, South Africa
CGT (French CGT): General Confederation of Labour, France
CNETU: Council of Non-European Trade Unions
CNT: National Confederation of Labour, Spain
COB/ FORB: Confederation of Brazilian Workers/ Regional Workers' Federation of Brazil
COM: House of the Workers of the World, Mexico
Comintern: Communist International
COSATU: Congress of South African Trade Unions
CPGB: Communist Party of Great Britain
CPSA: Communist Party of South Africa
CPUSA: Communist Party of the United States of America
CTC: Cuban Workers' Confederation
FAUD: Free Workers' Union of Germany
FOSATU: Federation of South African Trade Unions
FNETU: Federation of Non-European Trade Unions, South Africa
FORA: Regional Workers' Federation of Argentina
FORA V: Regional Workers' Federation of Argentina of the 5th congress
FORA IX: Regional Workers' Federation of Argentina of the 9th congress
FORE: Regional Workers' Federation of Spain
FORP (Paraguay): Regional Workers' Federation of Paraguay
FORP (Peru): Regional Workers' Federation of Peru
FORU: Regional Workers' Federation of Uruguay
ICU: Industrial and Commercial Workers Union
ISL: International Socialist League, South Africa
IWA: Industrial Workers of Africa, South Africa
IWW: Industrial Workers of the World, the "Wobblies"
NAS: National Labour Secretariat, the Netherlands
NURHAS: National Union of Railway and Harbour Servants, South Africa
Profintern: Red International of Labour Unions, linked to Comintern
SAC: Swedish Central Workers' Organisation
SACP: South African Communist Party
SA Labour Party: South African Labour Party
SATLC: South African Trades and Labour Council
SATUC: South African Trade Union Congress
SDF: Social Democratic Federation, South Africa
SDP (Germany): Social Democratic Party
UON: National Labour Union, Portugal
USI: Italian Syndicalist Union

Chapter 1

Introduction: Anarchism, syndicalism and the southern African working class in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,

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On 19 June 1918, a large crowd gathered at the Market Square in Johannesburg, South Africa. Johannesburg, shadowed by mine dumps, deeply divided by class and race, and the biggest industrial city in the country – indeed, in the continent – had been the scene of months of ongoing protests and strikes. The rally was organised by a joint committee of the Industrial Workers of Africa, an African trade union, the International Socialist League, a revolutionary group, and the Transvaal Native Congress, a section of the African nationalist group, the South African Native National Congress (later the African National Congress, or ANC). There were perhaps two thousand people, mostly Africans but also a smattering of Whites, present. Despite the opposition of the conservatives in the Transvaal Native Congress, the joint committee recommended a struggle to win a wage increase of one shilling a day for African workers – a demand to be backed up with a general strike across the Witwatersrand industrial complex, of which Johannesburg was the very heart, in ten days time.

The crowd received this suggestion with great enthusiasm, indeed, with roars of approval, and the strike was set for July 1st. At the strike call, the State mobilised troops from the new Union Defence Force, marching them through Johannesburg in a show of strength, while government officials and newspaper editors spread the news of the impending "native rising". The strike was, however, called off at the very last moment. Several thousand African mineworkers did not hear about this, and came out nonetheless. They clashed with armed police at two of the mineworkers' hostels, or "compounds", leaving many workers injured, but, fortunately, resulting in no fatalities.

Soon afterwards, however, the authorities arrested and charged five Africans and three Whites for "incitement to public violence" for their role in the abortive strike movement: J.D. Ngojo, Reuben (Alfred) Cetiwe, and Hamilton Kraai of the Industrial Workers of Africa (and Transvaal Native Congress), Sidney "S.P." Bunting, H.C. Hanscombe and T.P. Tinker of the International Socialist League, and Thomas Levi Mvabaza and Daniel Simon Letanka, managers of the multi-lingual Congress paper, *AbantuBatho* ("The People"). This paper had been established in 1912, and was circulated across South Africa, the neighbouring

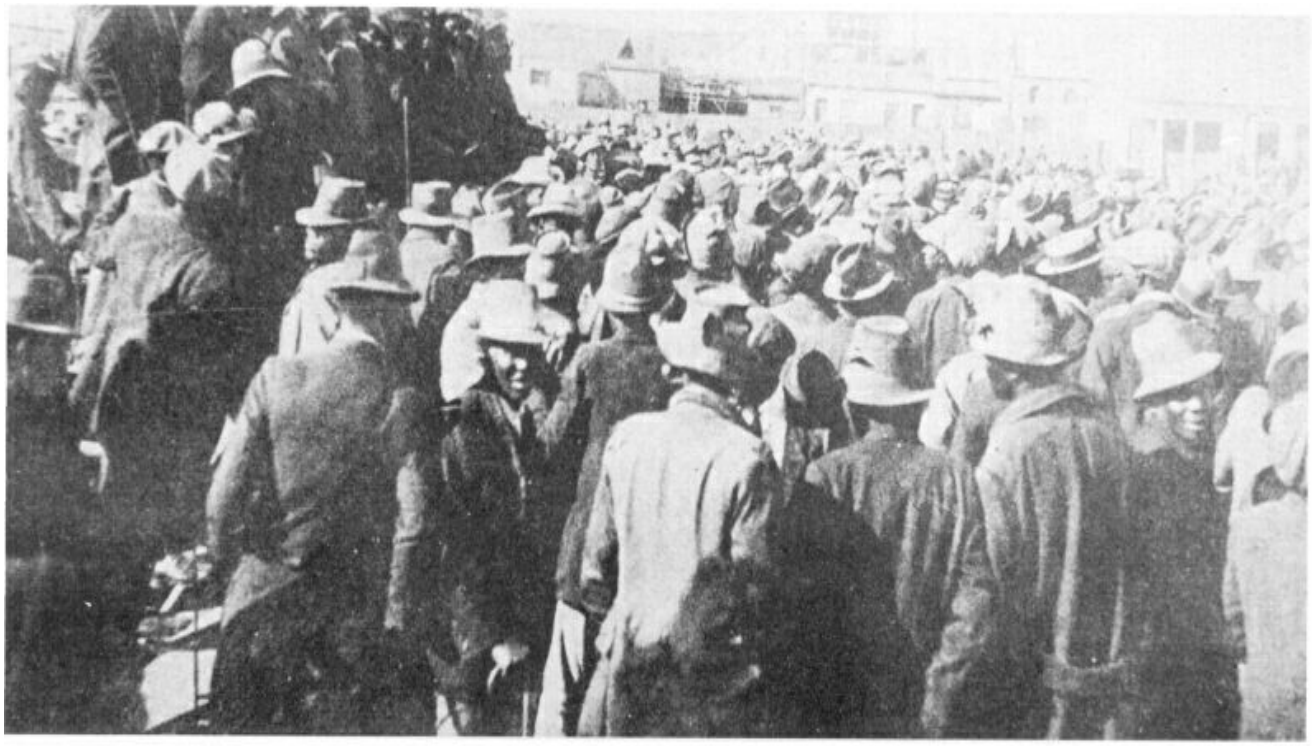

Figure one: A mass rally in Johannesburg in June 1918, addressed by speakers from the Industrial Workers of Africa, the International Socialist League and the Transvaal Native Congress.

Source: Peter Kallaway and Patrick Pearson, 1986, *Johannesburg: images and continuities: a history of working class life through pictures, 1885-1935*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, p. 97

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colonies and central Africa, also reaching Britain and the United States.[1] As T.D. Mweli Skota noted of the trial that followed, in the first edition of *the African Yearly Register*:[2]

> A matter of exceptional interest in this case is the fact that for the first time in South Africa, members of the European and Native races, in common cause united, were arrested and charged together for their political activities.

The prosecution's case fell apart, but not before it became clear that both the Industrial Workers of Africa and the International Socialist League, which were closely linked organisations, advocated a radical and libertarian socialism in which multi-racial trade unions, rather than a revolutionary State, would seize, and place under popular control, the means of production. Capitalism and the State would be destroyed in the process. The Industrial Workers of Africa, the first trade union for Africans in South Africa (and probably

[1] T.D. Mweli Skota, editor and compiler, [? 1930] n.d., *The African Yearly Register: being an illustrated biographical dictionary (who's who) of black folks in Africa*, R.l. Esson, Johannesburg, p. 443

[2] Skota, editor and compiler, [? 1930] n.d., *op cit*., p. 171. Skota was himself associated with the *Abantu-Batho* and an early member of the South African Native National Congress leadership.

the whole of Britain's African empire), and the International Socialist League, the most important political group on the left in South Africa in the 1910s, were, in other words, syndicalists.

1.1. Aims

The primary aim of this study is to examine the influence of two important socialist currents, anarchism and syndicalism, on labour and left in South Africa from the 1890s to the 1920s, with particular attention to the first two decades of the twentieth century. The research also touches on the impact of anarchism and syndicalism in several neighbouring countries; South Africa, however, remains the primary focus. The thesis is, then, primarily a political and social history of the role of anarchism and its progeny, syndicalism, in the larger labour and left movements in South Africa between the 1890s and the 1920s. This necessarily entails an examination of that role in relation to African, Coloured and Indian nationalism. I am interested, above all, in the manner in which a sector of the working class, drawn from all races, approached life in capitalist South Africa, articulated a radical critique of that society and a revolutionary strategy to change it, and the manner in which their ideas affected a broader layer of people both within, and outside, the country.

The thesis concentrates its attention on developments in southern Africa within the context of a period of global working class unrest, radicalism and insurgency; this period was also the apogee, the "glorious period", of anarchism and syndicalism as a mass movement.[3] This global upsurge of anarchism and syndicalism, was, I argue, reflected in South Africa (and in several neighbouring countries), yet the influence of anarchism and syndicalism has been almost entirely excised from the literature on southern Africa, and is today almost entirely unknown. In short, I am not just making a case for rethinking the record of left and labour radicalism in South Africa and its neighbours: I am also arguing that it is important to understand that record as part of a transnational labour history.

1.2. Before Communism: rethinking the world of labour and the left before Lenin

My interest in the topic of anarchism and syndicalism in South Africa was shaped by three broad concerns: an awareness of the diversity of socialist ideas in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, an interest in the ideological influences on the working class that emerged in southern Africa following the discovery of diamonds and gold in South Africa in the late nineteenth century, and a dissatisfaction with the existing literature. In each case, there was a clear rationale for the research I undertook. My findings, in turn, suggested the need for a radical rethinking of the history of labour and the left in South Africa – and, indeed, other countries in southern Africa – in the early twentieth century.

My first broad concern was with the diversity of socialist ideas in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I was strongly influenced by a growing literature that demonstrated that it was in this period – a period of worldwide working class unrest – that anarchist and syndicalist ideas exercised perhaps their greatest influence internationally. The 1890s saw the start of what Harald Beyer-Arnesen referred to as

[3] A phrase introduced in Harald Beyer-Arnesen, winter 1997-1998, "Anarcho-syndicalism: a historical closed door … or not?", *Libertarian Labour Review*, no. 22, p. 20

the "glorious period" of anarchism and syndicalism, lasting into the 1920s.[4] This was a period in which anarchists and syndicalists played a central part in the revolutionary left worldwide, and influenced unions in countries ranging from Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, France, Germany, Guatemala, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Mozambique, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, the United States, to Uruguay and Venezuela.[5] This influence, long forgotten, has been increasingly recognised in recent years by a wide range of studies.

Anarchism and syndicalism were (and are) radical forms of socialism. The core idea of syndicalism was that trade unions, not political parties, should make a social revolution by seizing the means of production in a revolutionary general strike. The syndicalists placed their stress on direct action and militant struggle, instead of elections, conspiracies, or coup d'etats; they favoured self-management of the means of production, rather than nationalisation under State control; they favoured the abolition of the State, as well as capitalism, not the capture of State power. Syndicalism was, in turn, a variant of anarchism, a doctrine and a movement that first emerged in the 1860s and 1870s in the International Workingmen's Association. This body, the "First International" (1864 to 1877), brought together a range of working class movements, shaping a generation of activists. Anarchism was committed to individual freedom, and believed that genuine freedom was only possible in an egalitarian social context, based on cooperation and voluntary association. As such, it opposed all forms of social and economic inequality, and, traditionally, argued that the class system centred on capitalism, landlordism and the State, was the main barrier to its vision of freedom through community. Consequently, anarchism advocated an internationalist, revolutionary, class struggle, based upon libertarian and self-organised forms of struggle, outside and against the State, to create a self-managed, and Stateless, socialist society.[6] Syndicalism was the most important expression of this outlook, and quickly emerged as the main form of anarchism.

The First International split in 1872 as a result of a titanic clash between the emerging anarchist current, centred on Mikhail Bakunin (1814-1876), and the older political tradition represented by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, classical Marxism. This split represented a more basic division between two fundamentally approaches, *political* socialism and *libertarian* socialism. Political socialism aims at "a political battle against capitalism waged through … centrally organized workers' parties aimed at seizing and utilising

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[4] Harald Beyer-Arnesen, winter 1997-1998, *op cit.* p. 20

[5] For partial overviews of the history of anarchism and syndicalism, see Wayne Thorpe, 1989, *'The Workers Themselves': revolutionary syndicalism and international labour 1913-23*, Kulwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht, Boston, London, and the International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, p. 3; Marcel van der Linden and Wayne Thorpe, 1990, "The Rise and Fall of Revolutionary Syndicalism", in Marcel van der Linden and Wayne Thorpe, editors, *Revolutionary Syndicalism: an international perspective*, Scolar Press, Otterup, Gower Publishing Company Limited, Aldershot: this article is hereafter referred to as van der Linden and Thorpe 1990a, and the collection as van der Linden and Thorpe 1990b, editors, *op cit*.; Peter Marshall, 1994, *Demanding the Impossible: a history of anarchism*, Fontana Press, London; Max Nettlau, [1934] 1996, *A Short History of Anarchism*, Freedom Press, London; Rudolph Rocker, [1938] 1989, *Anarcho-syndicalism*, Pluto Press, London; and George Woodcock, 1975, *Anarchism: a history of libertarian ideas and movements*, Penguin, new edition with postscript. Also see James Joll, 1964, *The Anarchists*, Methuen and Co., London

[6] See next chapter for elaboration.

State power to usher in socialism".[7] Anarchism and syndicalism are forms of *libertarian* socialism, centred on the idea that fundamental changes cannot come about through the State, or any other hierarchical body, but only through direct and self-managed action, outside of the formal political channels, and aimed at the creation, from below, of a democratic, self-managed and stateless order.

Anarchism and syndicalism are arguably the most important libertarian socialist currents, but there are other forms, like the Utopian socialism of Charles Fourier, the ideas of William Morris in England, and Guild Socialism. Some variants of Marxism, although not classical Marxism, also fall into the libertarian socialist camp. The most notable is "Council Communism", an openly anti-Bolshevik form of Marxism that emerged by the early 1920s and opposed Statism, political parties and trade unionism in favour of a federation of self-managed workers' councils.[8] Contemporary "autonomism" provides another example, underlining the point that while the mainstream Marxist tradition, that is, classical Marxism, is political socialism, Marxism, as such, is not necessarily synonymous with political socialism.

In a great many studies, the history of socialism has been reduced to the history of political socialism, with anarchism and syndicalism dismissed as matters of little consequence. [9] The only exception widely admitted was Spain, for views on anarchist and syndicalist history abound with the notion of Spanish exceptionalism, *viz.*,that anarchism "became a mass movement in Spain to an extent that it never did elsewhere".[10] However, while it is often assumed that the history of socialism since the nineteenth century is the history of the inevitable triumph of Marxism, a growing body of literature demonstrates that mass anarchist and syndicalist mass movements in many places, rivalling (often also overwhelming) the Marxists of the time.

Since the 1970s, a growing body of literature has challenged the dismissal of anarchism and syndicalism as a major historical force, quietly overthrowing Spanish exceptionalism. The notion of Spanish

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[7] Wayne Thorpe, 1989, *op cit.* p. 3

[8] By the 1930s, the Council Communist Otto Rühle was describing Lenin as the pioneer of fascist ideology, stating bluntly that "Fascism is merely a copy of bolshevism": see Otto Rühle, [1939] 1981, *The Struggle against Fascism begins with the Struggle against Bolshevism*, Elephant Editions, London, pp. 10-11, 13, 20. The Council Communist current, exemplified by Rühle, Hermann Gorter, and Anton Pannekoek, emerged out of the "ultra-left" Marxist currents of the late 1910s and early 1920s, opposed by Lenin: see V.I. Lenin, [1920] 1975c, "'Left-wing Communism': an infantile disorder", in V.I. Lenin, 1975c, *Selected Works in Three Volumes*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, revised edition, vol.3 For an overview of Council Communist ideas, and the history of this tendency, see John Gerber, 1989, *Anton Pannekoek and the Socialism of Workers' Self-Emancipation 1873-1960*, Kluwer Academic Publishers, the Netherlands, especially chapters 9 and 10; Richard Gombin, 1978, *The Radical Tradition: a study in modern revolutionary thought*, Methuen and Co., London, Mark Shipway, 1987, "Council Communism", in Maxmillien Rubel and John Crump, editors, 1987, *Non-Market Socialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, London, and Shipway, 1988, *op cit*. A useful compilation of Pannekoek's writings, including those of his pre-Council Communist period, is provided by Serge Bricianer, 1978, *Pannekoek and the Workers' Councils*, Telos Press, St. Louis. Also of interest is the collection edited and introduced by D.A Smart: D.A. Smart, editor, 1978, *Pannekoek and Gorter's Marxism*, Pluto Press, London. I would like to thank Mark Shipway for his correspondence and for sending me a copy of his book.

[9] There are far too many examples to list here: for two, consider Norman Mackenzie, 1966, *Socialism: a short history*, Hutchinson University Library, London, second edition., which does not include anarchism or syndicalism in its subject matter, and Chris Harman, 1999, *A People's History of the World*, Bookmarks. London, Chicago and Sydney, which does not mention anarchism at all, refers to anarcho-syndicalism five times, almost all in reference to Spain, and cites revolutionary syndicalism but once, in a 729 page world history of class struggles.

[10] Joll, 1964, *op cit.*, p. 224; also cf. Maria M. Breitbart, 1979, "Spanish Anarchism: an introductory essay", *Antipode: a radical journal of geography*, double issue vol.10, no. 3 and vol.11, no. 1, p. 1; Marshall, 1994, *op cit*., p. 453

exceptionalism always coexisted uneasily with literature recognising the impact of anarchism and syndicalism in Italy, France and the United States: in the latter case, the syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World (the IWW, or Wobblies) has always attracted a good deal of attention.[11] Now, a rapidly growing literature shows that the anarchists overwhelmingly won the battle in the First International against Marx, [12] quickly spreading across Europe, the Americas, and parts of the Caribbean and North Africa, by the late nineteenth century, moving into East Asia in the early twentieth century.

The new scholarship shows the enormous impact of anarchism and syndicalism in countries as diverse as Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Britain, Chile, China, Cuba, Egypt, Germany, Ireland, Korea, Japan, Mexico, Mozambique, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Peru, Portugal and Sweden.[13] While syndicalism was sidelined in the larger anarchist movement in the 1880s, with a shift towards insurrectionist anarchism exemplified by an international wave of terrorism, a second wave of syndicalism started in the 1890s. It started in France, where "the Anarchists, beginning with their famous 'raid' on the unions in the nineties had defeated the reformist Socialists and captured almost the entire French trade union movement",[14]

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[11] There is an extensive and growing literature on the IWW in the United States and in Canada. Key texts include and Philip S. Foner, 1965, *The Industrial Workers of the World, 1905-17*, International Publishers, New York; Sal Salerno, 1989, *Red November, Black November: culture and community in the Industrial Workers of the World*, State University of New York Press; Fred W. Thompson and Patrick Murfin, 1976, *The IWW: its first 70 years*, IWW, Chicago. An uneven survey of the IWW's international spread may be found in Patrick Renshaw, 1967, *The Wobblies: the story of syndicalism in the United States*, Eyre and Spottiswoode, London, pp. 275-293

[12]This was recognised decades ago, but remains widely unknown: see, for example, G.M Stekloff, 1928 *History of the First International*, Martin Lawrence Limited, London. This work, by a Bolshevik historian, first appeared in Russian 1918; the 1928 English edition was based on the third and fourth editions.

[13] The literature is simply too vast to list here, but important examples include Kieran Allen, 1987, *The Politics of James Connoll*y, Pluto Press, London; J. Michael Allen, 1999, "History, Nation, People: past and present in the writing of Sin Ch'aeho", PhD thesis, University of Washington; Charles L. Bertrand, 1990, "Revolutionary Syndicalism in Italy", in van der Linden and Thorpe, 1990b, editors, *op cit*.; Verity Burgmann, 1995, *Revolutionary Industrial Unionism: the IWW in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, New York, Melbourne; Joan Casanovas, 1994, "Labour and Colonialism in Cuba in the Second Half of the Nineteenth-Century", PhD thesis, Stony Brook, State University of New York; Norman Caulfield, 1995, "Wobblies and Mexican Workers in Petroleum, 1905-1924", *International Review of Social History*, no. 40; Peter DeShazo and Robert J. Halstead, October 1974, *Los Wobblies Del Sur: the Industrial Workers of the World in Chile and Mexico*, University of Wisconsin-Madison, unpublished mimeo; Arif Dirlik, 1991, *Anarchism in the Chinese Revolution*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London; John W. F. Dulles, 1973, *Anarchists and Communists in Brazil, 1900–1935*, University of Texas Press, Austin; Owen Dudley Edwards and Bernard Ransome, editors, 1973, *James Connolly: selected political writings*, Jonathan Cape, London; Eric A. Gordon, 1978, "Anarchism in Brazil: theory and practice, 1890–1920", PhD thesis, Tulane University; John Hart, 1978, *Anarchism and the Mexican Working Class, 1860–1931*, Texas University Press, Austin; Steven Jay Hirsch, 1997, "The Anarcho-Syndicalist Roots of a Multi-Class Alliance: organised labour and the Peruvian *Aprista* Party, 1900-1933", PhD thesis, George Washington University; Robert J. Holton, 1976, *British Syndicalism: myths and realities*, Pluto Press, London; Louis Levine, 1914, *Syndicalism in France*, second revised edition of *The Labour Movement in France*, Columbia University Press, New York, being vol.XLVI, no. 3 of the *Studies in History, Economics and Public Law* series; Carl Levy, 1989, "Italian Anarchism, 1870-1926", in David Goodway, editor, 1989, *For Anarchism: history, theory and practice*, Routledge, London and New York; Emmet O'Connor, 1988, *Syndicalism in Ireland, 1917-23*, Cork University Press, Ireland; Erik Olsen, 1988, *The Red Feds: revolutionary industrial unionism and the New Zealand Federation of Labour 1908-14*, Oxford University Press, Auckland; David Poole, editor, 1977, *Land and Liberty: anarchist influences in the Mexican Revolution: Ricardo Flores Magón*, Black Rose, Montréal; Kirwin R. Shaffer, 1998, "Purifying the Environment for the Coming New Dawn: anarchism and counter-cultural politics in Cuba, 1898-1925", PhD thesis, University of Kansas; Richard A. Yoast, 1975, "The Development of Argentine Anarchism: a socio-ideological analysis", PhD thesis, University of Wisconsin, Madison

[14] William Z. Foster, 1936, *From Bryan to Stalin*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, p. 49

winning over the labour chambers and the General Confederation of Labour, the French CGT, before exploding across the world in the "glorious period".

Classical Marxism, exemplified by Marx, Engels, Karl Kautsky, V.I. Lenin, Leon Trotsky, Joseph Stalin and Mao Zedong, is the prime example of a revolutionary type of political socialism, aiming at the "organisation of the proletarians into a class, consequently into a political party" and "open revolution … where the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie lays the foundation for the sway of the proletariat" through the Party and the State.[15] The Party ("always and everywhere" representing "the interests of the movement as a whole" – would conquer State power, and establish the "dictatorship of the proletariat", which would "centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the State" and manage the transition from capitalism.[16]

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the stronghold of classical Marxism was the Labour and Socialist International: formed in 1889, it was sometimes (problematically) called the "Second International".[17] Anarchists initially participated (they were expelled in the 1890s), and a syndicalist current also surfaced in the next decade, but the dominant influence was the Social Democratic Party (SDP) of Germany. This was headed by Kautsky, the "Pope of socialism",[18] who did "more to popularise Marxism in western Europe than any other intellectual" besides Engels:[19] arguing that popular interests were coincident with Party interests,[20] Kautsky advised the proletariat to "make the government subservient to its own interests" through the Party taking State power.[21]

Among the parties modelled on the SDP was the Russian Social-Democratic Workers' Party, which split into "Menshevik" and "Bolshevik" wings in 1903. Lenin, head of the latter, advocated Kautsky's views on the revolutionary Party as a proletarian "vanguard" in the strongest terms: the Party must be led "professional revolutionaries", centralised through a "stable organisation of leaders", reject any "primitive" conceptions of participatory democracy, and regard all rival views as *ipso facto* counter-revolutionary.[22] The vanguard Party, alone, was entitled to head the "dictatorship of the proletariat", described as a "centralised

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[15] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, [1848] 1954, *The Communist Manifesto*, Chicago, Henry Regnery Company, pp. 32, 36-37

[16] Marx and Engels, [1848] 1954, *op cit.,* pp. 39-54

[17] Neither the "First International" nor the "Second International" were, of course, the "first" or "second" leftwing international organisations. Such labelling is usually extended to the Communist International, or Comintern (the "Third International"), and sometimes to the dissident network established by Trotsky in the 1930s (the "Fourth International"). However, the effect is to date socialist internationalism by its place in a Marxist historical arc, and to altogether ignore other left formations, such as the anarchists' "Black International", in the 1880s, the syndicalist international formed in 1922, the social democratic international formed by the majority of the old Labour and Socialist International after that body collapsed in 1914, and the Council Communists' own "Fourth International". This work will use the term "First International", but not the terms "Second", "Third" and "Fourth" Internationals.

[18] James Joll, 1966, *The Second International, 1889-1914*, Harper Colophon Books, New York, p. 91

[19] Gary P. Steenson, 1991, *Karl Kautsky, 1854-1938: Marxism in the classical years*, University of Pittsburgh Press, second edition, p. 3

[20] Steenson, 1991, *op cit.*, p. 79

[21] Karl Kautsky, [1892] 1900, *The Class Struggle*, New York Labour News Company, translated by Daniel De Leon, pp. 12, 14

[22] V.I. Lenin, [1902] 1975a, "What is to be Done? burning questions of our movement", in V.I. Lenin, 1975, *Selected Works in Three Volumes*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, revised edition, vol.1, pp. 121-2, 151-2, 178, 182, 187-9,197-202, 207. This volume is referred to as Lenin, 1975a, *op cit*., to distinguish it from the other volumes in the series.

organisation of force, of violence" and "undivided power", designed to crush the capitalist class and "lead" the working class and non-proletarian elements to the "socialist economy".[23]

The Labour and Socialist International collapsed in 1914, when the overwhelming majority of member parties, including the German SDP, sided with "their" governments in the First World War. The Bolsheviks opposed the war, and replaced the SDP as the key interpreters of classical Marxism after playing a central role in the 1917 Russian Revolution. They formed and controlled the "Union of Soviet Socialist Republics", or Soviet Union, an authoritarian one-party State, and Lenin replaced Kautsky as the "Pope" of Marxism. The Communist International, or Comintern, was formed in March 1919 to establish Bolshevik-style Parties worldwide, and replace the International that failed. The Comintern had a trade union wing known as the Red International of Labour Unions, or "Profintern", initially designed to draw in the syndicalists, who were at first strong supporters of a Russian Revolution that seemed bear out their deepest hopes. Lenin's heirs split after his death: the great majority, the official Communist movement of the Comintern, the Soviet Union and Stalin, has often been called "Stalinist" and "Maoist"; the minority, which followed Trotsky into the political wilderness, was called "Trotskyist", but generally accepted the "Stalinist" regimes as post-capitalist or socialist. Meanwhile, the anarchists and syndicalists had broken with the Bolsheviks, forming a new syndicalist international in 1922, the International Workers' Association.

Political socialism also included a moderate tradition, parliamentary socialism or social democracy, which aimed at gradual reforms of the existing State through elections and legislation. At its most ambitious, parliamentary socialism aimed to "de-commodify" labour power using the State.[24] This tradition was well established by the late nineteenth century. It existed in the German SDP, where Eduard Bernstein headed a "revisionist" wing that disputed Marxism,[25] and favoured a "piecemeal settlement by means of organisation and legislation" rather than "universal, instantaneous and violent expropriation". [26] Formally condemned by the SDP, "revisionism" conquered the party in the 1910s, if not before.[27]

In the Anglo-Saxon world, classical Marxism never seriously challenged the hold of reformist Labour Parties. The British Labour Party, heavily sponsored by moderate trade unions, emerged in 1906 from the Labour Representation Committee, founded in 1900: it won 30 seats in Parliament that year.[28] A federal structure allowed socialist groups to affiliate,[29] one of which was the Independent Labour Party, formed by

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[23] V.I. Lenin, [1917b] 1975b, "The State and Revolution: the Marxist theory of the State and the tasks of the proletariat in the revolution, in Lenin, 1975b, *op cit.*, p. 255, emphasis in original

[24] The phrase "de-commodify" is used by Gosta Esping-Andersen in his 1990 study, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, published by Princeton University Press

[25] Eduard Bernstein, [1898] 1993, "Letter to the Stuttgart congress of the Social Democratic Party", in Eduard Bernstein, [1899] 1993, *The Preconditions for Socialism*, Cambridge University Press, edited and translated by Henry Tudor, pp.1-7; Bernstein, [1899] 1993, *op cit*., pp. 47-97, 98-109. A useful discussion of Bernstein may also be found in Peter Gay, [1952] 1962, *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism: Eduard Bernstein's challenge to Marx*, Collier Books, New York, Collier-Macmillan, London,

[26] Bernstein, [1899] 1993, *op cit*., p. 158

[27] "They always behaved like reformists though they sometimes thought it their duty to remind other people that their party believed in revolution": John Plamenatz, 1954, *German Marxism and Russian Communism*, Longmans Green and Co., London, p. 176

[28] Mark Shipway, 1988, *Anti-Parliamentary Communism: the movement for workers' councils in Britain*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, London, p. 57

[29] Ian Angus Duncan, June 1978, "Communists and the British Labour Party", *International Socialist Review*

the Scottish miner, James Kier Hardie, in 1893.[30] The Social Democratic Federation, led by H.M. Hyndman, which stayed outside the Labour Party, represented classical Marxism in Britain. Renamed the Social Democratic Party in 1908 (and merged with other groups to form the British Socialist Party in 1911), it tried unsuccessfully to prevent the Labour Party from joining the Labour and Socialist International.[31] The most influential tendency in the British Labour Party was the Fabian Society, [32] which favoured "practical views" on "immediate and pressing social problems".[33] The party's 1908 commitment to "socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange, to be controlled by a democratic State in the interests of the entire community",[34] reflected a moderate, rather than radical, approach.

The Labour Parties of Australia and New Zealand were equally mild. In New Zealand, the party entered a coalition with Liberals by the end of the nineteenth century, and focused on social change through legislation.[35] The Australian Labour Party combined parliamentary socialism[36] with a firm commitment to White supremacy. Forming the world's first Labour government in 1904, creating a "workingman's paradise",[37] it also defended a White Australia Policy designed to maintain the "thinly peopled continent as an everlasting home for an untainted European, and dominantly English community".[38] This "White Labourism" had parallels with the overt nationalism of many parliamentary socialists – and not a few Marxists, including Hyndman – elsewhere: the Independent Labour Party's open criticisms of colonialism were notable, but unusual, in the political socialism of the time, for it was really the Bolsheviks and the Comintern who first made imperialism a major item on the political socialist agenda.

The "capture" of the French CGT opened, as noted, the second wave of syndicalism, and the "glorious period" of anarchism and syndicalism.[39] It was, above all, through the trades unions that anarchism advanced, above all, through syndicalism that anarchism was reborn as a mass movement. Further, as Eric Hobsbawm, certainly no admirer of anarchism and syndicalism, noted: [40]

> … in 1905-1914, the marxist left had in most countries been on the fringe of the revolutionary movement, the main body of marxists had been identified with a *de facto* non-revolutionary social democracy, while the bulk of the revolutionary left was anarcho-syndicalist, or at least much closer to the ideas and the mood of anarcho-syndicalism than to that of classical marxism …

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[30] See Mackenzie, 1966, *op cit.,* pp. 87-90
[31] Joll, 1966, *op cit.*, pp. 121-2
[32] Mackenzie, 1966, *op cit.*, p. 89
[33] M. Beer, 1920, *A History of British Socialism*, vol.2, G. Bell and Sons Ltd., London, pp. 276-7
[34] Beer, 1920, *op cit*., pp. 333- 334
[35] Mackenzie, 1966, *op cit.*, p. 132
[36] Mackenzie, 1966, *op cit.*, p. 132
[37] Mackenzie, 1966, *op cit*., p. 132
[38] Brian Kennedy, 1984*, A Tale of Two Mining Cities: Johannesburg and Broken Hill*, *1885-1925*, A.D. Donker, Johannesburg, pp. 3-4
[39] Harald Beyer-Arnesen, winter 1997-1998, *op cit.*, p. 20
[40] Eric Hobsbawm, 1993, "Bolshevism and the Anarchists", in his *Revolutionaries,* Abacus, London, pp. 72-3. The odd spelling of "marxism" appears in Hobsbawm's text.

While the Labour and Socialist International collapsed, opposition to the First World War was largely confined to the anarchists and syndicalists (with the exception of the French CGT); the notion that the Bolsheviks alone stood against the tide, or that the crisis of Marxism represented the capitulation of socialism in general to patriotism, is incorrect. Moreover, the strength of the anarchists and syndicalists reached its peak after 1917, as the movement attracted millions more to its banners in the international climate of unrest and radicalism and revolutionary hope.

In the years that followed, however, anarchism and syndicalism haemorrhaged to the new Communist Parties: in Brazil, Britain, China, France, Mexico, Spain and elsewhere, former anarchists and syndicalists constituted the main component of the new Parties. Combined with the rise of dictatorships in many of its strongholds (and a challenge from moderate socialists and nationalists as well as capitalism boomed after 1945), the rise of Bolshevism led to a serious decline in anarchism and syndicalism. The growing identification of Marxism with "actively revolutionary movements" increasingly tied the fate of socialism to Marxist governments,[41] and reduced socialism to a grim trinity of Party, State, and central planning.[42] Thus ended the "glorious period", although there were still some powerful movements left in the 1940s and 1950s. For many years, debates on socialism narrowed down to endless discussions of the relative merits of States and markets in economic co-ordination;[43] the libertarian vision of self-management and common property all but disappeared until the 1960s.

In historical scholarship, too, anarchism and syndicalism faded away: one need not accept James Joll's scepticism about anarchism to join him in deploring "a whole way of looking at history", that holds that "it is the causes which triumph that alone should interest the historian",[44] or to agree that anarchism "has not been well served by the academy".[45] Syndicalism, a "significant radical movement", was "buried under subsequent defeats and political orthodoxies", and ignored by scholars for many years.[46]

The new scholarship of anarchism and syndicalism – coupled with the striking revival of these currents in the 1990s – has begun to change the situation, opening up new vistas on the history of labour and the left. In China, for example, where the history of socialism has long been reduced to the "progressive evolution of a correct socialism under the guidance of Mao Zedong or the Communist Party", the central role

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[41] Hobsbawm, 1993, *op cit.,* pp. 72-3. Typical of analysts after the fall of the Soviet Union was Krishan Kumar. Identifying socialism solely with the regimes of the old East Bloc, and with social democracy in Western Europe, he suggested that socialism was a historical failure: Krishan Kumar, 1992, "The Revolutions of 1989: socialism, capitalism and democracy", *Theory and Society*, vol.21, no. 3

[42] For example, Ben Turok's anthology of *Revolutionary Thought in the Twentieth Century* reduced "revolutionary thought" to twentieth century Marxism, and defined revolution as "the transfer of state power", where "revolutionary governments … concentrate power and take hold of the economy": see Ben Turok, 1990, "Introduction", to Ben Turok, editor, *Revolutionary Thought in the Twentieth Century*, Institute for African Alternatives, Braamfontein, pp. 3, 20. The introduction is hereafter referred to as Turok, 1990a, *op cit*., and the anthology as Turok, 1990b, editor, *op cit*.

[43] Consider the work of Alec Nove, advocate of "market socialism": proceeding from the premise that there only two possible forms of economic coordination in a modern economy – centralised State planning and market-based allocation – and eager to find a future for socialism, he simply advocated a synthesis of the two principles: Alec Nove, 1990, *Studies in Economics and Russia*, St. Martins Press, New York, particularly the introduction.

[44] James Joll. 1964, *The Anarchists*, Methuen and Co., London, pp. 11-12

[45] Robert Graham, 1985, "Review essay: three books on anarchism: Alan Ritter, *Anarchism: a theoretical analysis*/ Michael Taylor, *Community, Anarchy, and Liberty*/ David Miller, *Anarchism*", *Telos* no. 60, p. 197

[46] David Howell, 2000, "Taking Syndicalism Seriously", *Socialist History*, no. 16, p. 30

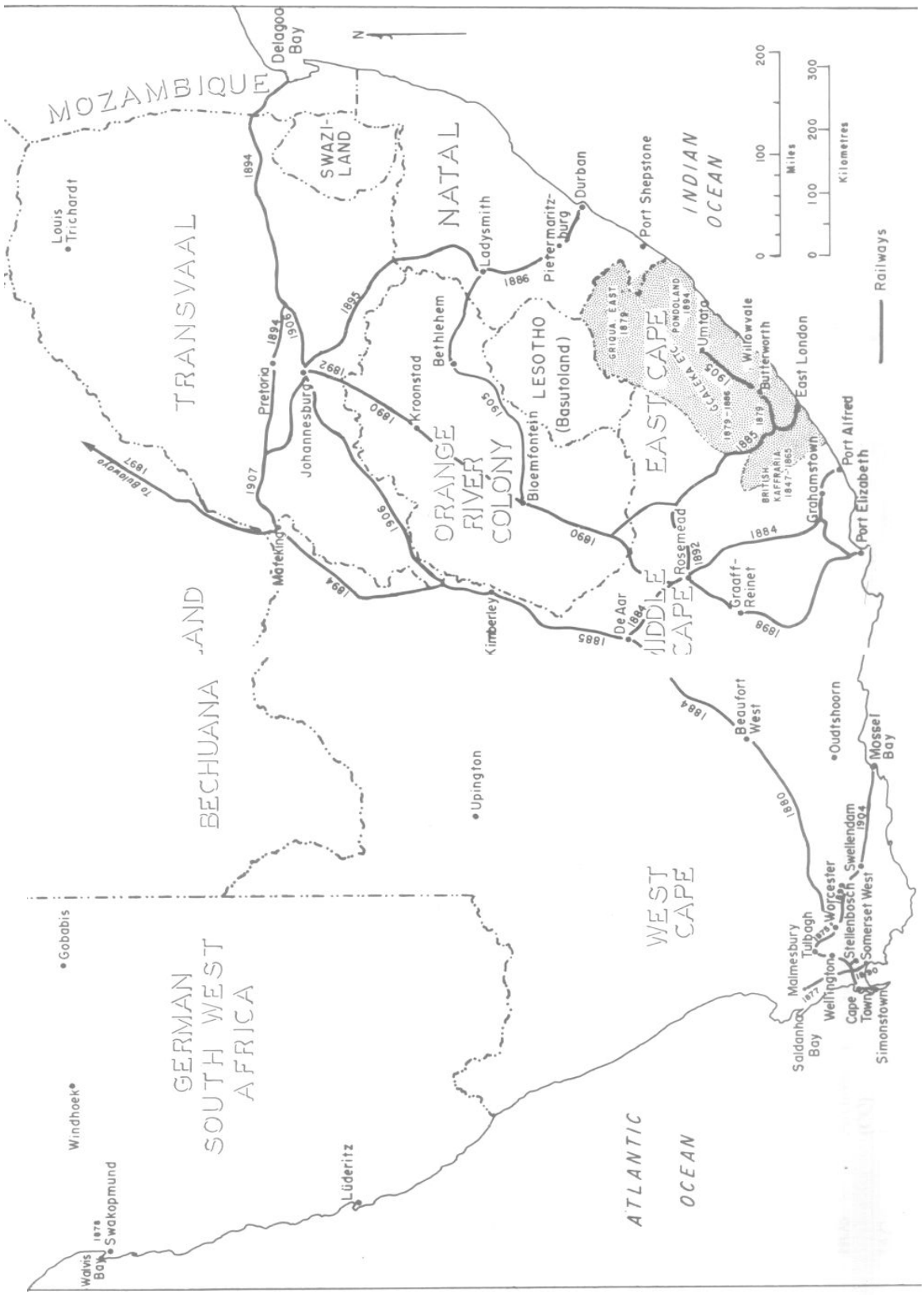

Figure two: Southern Africa ca. 1909

Source: Vivian Bickford-Smith, 1995, *Ethnic Pride and Racial Prejudice in Victorian Cape Town*, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, figure 1

of anarchism in the first four decades of the twentieth century has been rediscovered.[47] In Cuba, where anarchism has "largely been ignored or misrepresented", with an "almost complete lack of historiography", its central role in "in the political and economic development of the country" has been increasingly recognised.[48] Likewise in Korea, the "historical amnesia" "regarding the appeal of anarchism to Koreans" has been shaken.[49] As David Schechter notes, the "frequent assumption that revolutionary Socialism is by and large covered by the term 'Marxism-Leninism'" has been increasingly rejected as people search for alternative socialist traditions in the wake of the crisis of social democracy and the East bloc.[50]

1.3. Ideology in a transnational working class: the case of southern Africa

The second broad concern that shaped my research was an interest in the ideological influences on the working class that emerged in following the discovery of diamonds and gold in South Africa in the late nineteenth century, events that helped launch an industrial revolution that reshaped all of southern Africa. Increasingly familiar with the growing literature on anarchism and syndicalism – and genuinely surprised by the breadth and depth of anarchist and syndicalist influence uncovered – I was interested in examining whether anarchism and syndicalism had played a role in South Africa(ern) in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Adopting a transnational perspective on labour history, I noted the deep global interconnections that characterised the period, including mass migration, it seemed unlikely that the "glorious period" could have left southern Africa untouched. The 1870s to the 1930s was characterised by high levels of international trade and investment, a fairly open international economy, the emergence of the first multi-country manufacturing firms, high levels of international labour migration, and a rapid improvement in communication and transportation systems. The period saw international trade, foreign direct investment and global flows of labour occur on a scale larger than is generally the case today. Volumes of trade between major powers and less developed countries rose around six-fold from the 1840s to the 1870s – an unprecedented leap – while advances in geography, telecommunications and transportation helped create, for the first time, a genuinely global economic system, a development signified by the international slump of 1873.[51] From 1870 to 1914 world trade and output grew steadily at 3.5 percent and 3.45 percent respectively, with major powers developing trade to gross domestic product ratios exceeding 35 percent – around 44 percent in the case of Britain – with the ratios of 1913 only rarely reached by 1993. In this period, capital exports (both direct investments in production, and portfolio investment) took place on a scale that had not been matched by the end of the 1990s.[52]

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[47] Dirlik, 1991, *op cit.,* pp. 15, 27, 170; for another important study, see Peter Zarrow, 1990, *Anarchism and Chinese Political Culture*, Columbia University Press, New York
[48] Shaffer, 1998, *op cit*., pp. vii, 2; also see Casanovas, 1994, *op cit.*
[49] Allen, 1999, *op cit*., pp. 4, 263-4
[50] Darrow Schechter, 1994, *Radical Theories: paths beyond Marxism and social democracy,* Manchester University Press, pp. 1-2
[51] Eric Hobsbawm, 1977, *The Age of Capital, 1848-1875*, Abacus, London, p. 66 *et seq.*
[52] See Paul Hirst, 1997, "The Global Economy: myths and realities", *International Affairs*, vol.73, no. 3, p. 411

It was a world that was not as different from that of the present as might be supposed. In this world, nation-states were, however, the exception rather than the rule. Supra-national entities, such as the empires of Eastern and Western Europe, and East Asia, were a far more common political form. Pre-eminent was the British Empire, "the largest territorial empire in history".[53] In this period, transnational connections played a central role in labour and socialist movements, with migration and the radical press providing connections between activists in the popular classes, with "business, labour, administration, culture and politics … organised to a great extent through imperial networks".[54] Perhaps forty million people left Europe from 1814 to 1914 for Africa, Americas and Australasia – and there were also smaller migrations from South and East Asia[55] – and migration was often not a simple process of moving from one country to another, but involved continual movement between different parts of the world, something that helped create a global public sphere.[56] It was a period that may be regarded as a precursor of contemporary globalisation, a "first globalisation" that would come to a close with the rise of nation-States and closed economies from the 1920s onwards.

This was the world in which the area that would become South Africa industrialised. Following the discovery of diamonds at Kimberley in 1867, in what became the northern Cape, and then vast underground gold deposits in the Witwatersrand region, the previous marginal territory became one of the "focal points of capitalistic activity in the world economy".[57] Huge global flows of capital transformed southern Africa, as .investment from Britain and other European countries helped started an industrial revolution, beginning with mining. The role of the imperial State system was also crucial, as the late nineteenth century "Scramble for Africa" saw the British Empire wage a series of wars in the region. Under British auspices a Union of South Africa was formed in 1910 as a White dominion, with a degree of autonomy within the imperial framework; meanwhile, neighbouring territories were largely ruled as British colonies or protectorates.

The new working class that emerged in South Africa during this period cannot easily – indeed, should not – be described as a distinctly "South African" working class; it was, rather, a working class in South Africa. It was a multi-national and multi-racial mass connected, through the vast human rivers of mass migration of the time, drawing in labour from across the British Empire, including huge movements within southern Africa. Skilled workers were Whites, mainly from Britain (but with a significant admixture from Australia and New Zealand, continental Europe and the United States). By 1905, perhaps 85 percent of the White underground miners on the gold mines were British-born (often arriving via other mining regions in the Americas and Australia),[58] and a similar pattern prevailed on the collieries.[59] In 1921, 59,8 percent of

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[53] Jon Hyslop, 2004, *The Notorious Syndicalist: J.T. Bain: a Scottish Rebel in colonial South Africa*, Jacana Media, Johannesburg, p. 6
[54] Hyslop, 2004, *op cit*., p. 7
[55] By the Chinese Restriction Act of 1882, the Chinese population of California had surged from 76 in 1849 to 111,000 (25 percent of the non-Californian-born population of the State): Hobsbawm, 1977, *op cit*., pp. 80-81.
[56] Hyslop, 2004, *op cit*., pp. 7-8
[57] Bransky, 1974, *op cit*., p. 1
[58] Elaine Katz, 1994, *The White Death: silicosis on the Witwatersrand gold mines, 1886-1910*, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, p. 65; Wessel P. Visser, 2001a, "Die Geskiedenis en Rol van Persorgane in the Politieke en Ekonomiese Mobilisasie van die Georganiseerde Arbeiderbeweging in Suid-Afrika, 1908-1924", PhD

all typesetters, 55, 8 percent of all fitters, 52, 1 percent of barbers, 48,3 percent of carpenters, and 40 percent of electricians were foreign born.[60]

It was then inevitable, as Jon Hyslop has noted, that international influences would leave a powerful imprint upon the politics of White workers in what became South Africa.[61] The borders of South Africa did not neatly bound the experiences and lives of White workers, who were linked into international labour markets, population flows, and political cultures, via cheap steamship travel and the ever-growing railways networks.[62] There is, then, no reason to assume that anarchism and syndicalism would not impact upon at least some White workers,[63] given the larger context of the "glorious period", which also played out in countries like Australia, Britain and the United States.

Unskilled workers were mainly male African migrant workers, who worked on the mines while returning periodically to the rural African homesteads and villages where their families resided. These migrants were drawn from the African territories ruled by Britain and Portugal, and human rivers flowed between and within Basutoland (now Lesotho), Bechuanaland (now Botswana), Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia), Nyasaland (now Malawi), Mozambique (sometimes called Portuguese East Africa), South West Africa (now Namibia), Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), Swaziland, and South Africa.

South Africa was by far the most important employer, followed by Southern Rhodesia, and the African workers on the mines of the Witwatersrand were drawn from across the whole region. In 1920, for instance, only 51 percent of African mine labour in South Africa was drawn from within the country, mainly from the Eastern Cape African reserves, with 36 percent from Mozambique, and 13 percent from the three High Commission territories (Basutoland, Bechuanaland, and Swaziland).[64] In later years, a growing proportion would be drawn from the "tropical territories" (situated north of 22 degrees southern latitude, and including Northern Rhodesia), reaching 10 percent in 1945, as well as a small number from South West Africa.

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thesis, University of Stellenbosch, p.2; David Ticktin, 1973, "The Origins of the South African Labour Party, 1888-1910", PhD thesis, University of Cape Town pp. 3, 259-260

[59] Alexander, 2004, "Race, Class Loyalty and the Structure of Capitalism: coal miners in Alabama and the Transvaal, 1918-1922", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol.30, no. 1, pp. 188-119, also p. 119 note 20

[60] Freund, 1989, *op cit*., p. 83

[61] Jon Hyslop, 2002a, "Global Imaginations before 'Globalisation': the worlds of international labour activists on the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914", 2002, unpublished mimeo, Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg; Jon Hyslop, 2004, "The Imperial Working Class makes itself 'White': White Labourism in Britain, Australia and South Africa", *Journal of Historical Sociology*, vol.12, no. 4, p. 6-9

[62] See, in particular, Hyslop, 1999, *op cit.* and Hyslop, 2002a, *op cit.*

[63] *Contra*. Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 5-11, who focuses only on the impact of political socialist traditions, both radical and reformist, on local labour and the left.

[64] David Yudelman and Alan Jeeves, 1986, "New Labour Frontiers for Old: black migrants to the South African gold mines, 1920-85", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol.13, no. 1, pp. 123-4. Paul Maylam gives slightly different figures: "at least" 40 percent from Mozambique between 1904 and 1929, 10 percent from the High Commission territories from 1904-1930, and at "least" 25 percent from the Cape after 1915: see Paul Maylam, 1986, *A History of the African People of South Africa: from the Early Iron Age to the 1970s*, Croom Helm, London, David Philips, Cape Town, Johannesburg, p. 145. The proportion of Mozambican Africans was particularly high at the collieries, comprising over 82 percent for most of the 1920s: see Alexander, 2001, "Oscillating Migrants, 'Detribalised Families,' and Militancy: Mozambicans on Witbank collieries, 1918-1921", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol.27, no. 3, p. 508; Alexander, 2004, *op cit*., p. 119

In the period of the "first globalisation"- and the "glorious period"- the "South African" working class was not, in short, all that distinctly "South African", nor could its history be properly understood within a narrowly "South African" framework, or from the perspective a methodological nationalism, given its permeable and transnational character. This suggested, on the one hand, that isolation from international developments such as the "glorious period" was highly unlikely. It also suggested, on the other hand, that if anarchist and syndicalist influences existed in South Africa, they might be expected to have an impact on the neighbouring countries that fed into South African labour markets. It could be supposed, then, that White migration into South Africa would provide a conduit for the inflow of anarchism and syndicalism into South Africa, while African migration would provide a conduit for the spread of these influences northwards into the larger southern Africa.

Further, it also seemed particularly likely that the IWW would have had an influence: within the English-speaking countries of the Anglo-Saxon orbit, like Australia, Britain, Canada, New Zealand and the United States, the IWW was the key expression of syndicalism, and an important model for a wide range of radicals. IWW groups also emerged in Latin America, notably in Chile, Ecuador, and Mexico, while in Ireland the IWW played an important role as a model for syndicalists like James Connolly. In the United States, Britain, Canada, Chile, Ecuador and Mexico, the IWW existed primarily as an independent minority union movement; in Australia and New Zealand, the IWW existed primarily as a current *within* the existing labour movement. While a good many in the IWW doubtless saw themselves as Marxists, and while the IWW used the term "revolutionary industrial unionism" rather than syndicalism, IWW ideas and strategy were basically Bakuninist and syndicalist, and had little in common with classical Marxism.

Originally formed in the United States in 1905, with the intention of forming a union that transcended barriers of nationality, race and skill, and organised internationally, the IWW aimed at "One Big Union" that could make a revolutionary "One Big Strike". According to the 1908 *Preamble* to the IWW Constitution:[65]

> The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of the working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life.
>
> Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organise as a class, take possession of the earth and the machinery of production and abolish the wage system… Instead of the conservative motto, 'A fair day's wage for a fair day's work', we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, 'Abolition of the wage system'.
>
> It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organised, not only for every-day struggle with capitalists, but also to

[65] This appears as appendix 3 of Melvyn Dubofsky, 1987, *"Big Bill" Haywood*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, pp. 160-161. It is also included in the appendices of this thesis.

> carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organising industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.

The IWW – it is important to note – suffered an internal schism that year, breaking into a "Chicago" IWW (which repudiated all connections with socialist parties and elections), and a "Detroit" IWW (later renamed the "Workers' International Industrial Union"). The latter was aligned to the Socialist Labour Party, centred in the United States but with branches elsewhere, headed by Daniel De Leon, whose idiosyncratic brand of syndicalism stressed that elections could play an important role in forming the One Big Union. The split, starting in the United States, would be replicated in Australia, Britain and elsewhere. The question inevitably arose: what was the impact of the IWW tradition – including its rival factions – in South Africa and the neighbouring territories?

1.4. The Communist school and its impact on the historiography of South Africa

The third broad concern that shaped my research was a growing awareness that the existing literature on the history of the left in South Africa was of very limited value in examining these issues. That literature remained demonstrably structured by the arguments developed by writers linked to the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA), and its successor, the South African Communist Party (SACP). These writers, which I have dubbed the "Communist school", were mainly interested in examining the history of the Party, its failures and successes, and, in almost all cases, in buttressing its claims to represent a genuine working class "vanguard". The Communist school included official Party biographies of Party leaders[66] (as well as studies of leaders who fell from grace),[67] popular Party materials,[68] more scholarly monographs by Party leaders,[69] the official history of the Party,[70] and a range of other materials by, and about, the Party.[71] The writers I have in mind include Brian Bunting, R.K. Cope, Jeremy Cronin, Yusuf

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[66] Brian Bunting, 1975, *Moses Kotane: South African revolutionary*, Inkululeko, London; Cope, [? 1943] n.d., *Comrade Bill: the life and times of W.H. Andrews, workers' leader*, Stewart Printing, Cape Town

[67] Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *S.P. Bunting: a political biography*, Mayibuye Books, University of the Western Cape, Bellville. These arguments were reproduced in Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *Time Longer than Rope: a history of the black man's struggle for freedom in South Africa*, second edition, Wisconsin University Press, Madison, pp. 101-2.

[68] For example, Lionel Forman, [1959] 1992, "Chapters in the History of the March for Freedom", in Sadie Forman and Andre Odendaal, editors, 1992, *Lionel Forman: a trumpet from the rooftops*, Zed Books, London, David Philips, Cape Town, Johannesburg, Ohio University Press, Athens, Ohio. The editors' introduction to this work – Sadie Forman and Andre Odendaal, 1992, "Introduction", to Sadie Forman and Andre Odendaal, editors, 1992, *Lionel Forman: a trumpet from the rooftops*, Zed Books, London, David Philips, Cape Town, Johannesburg, Ohio University Press, Athens, Ohio – is hereafter referred to as Forman and Odendaal, 1992a, *op cit*., and the collection as a whole is Forman and Odendaal, 1992b, editors, *op cit.* Also see South African Communist Party [Jeremy Cronin, [? 1991] n.d., *The Red Flag in South Africa: a popular history of the Communist Party*, Jet Printers, Johannesburg, hereafter Cronin, [? 1991] n.d., *op cit*.

[69] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *Class and Colour in South Africa, 1850-1950*, International Defence and Aid Fund, London

[70] Michael Harmel ["A. Lerumo"], 1987 [1971], *Fifty Fighting Years: the Communist Party of South Africa 1921–71*, Inkululeko, London, third imprint, p. 40. This book will be referred as Harmel, 1971, *op cit.*, rather than as Lerumo, 1971, *op cit*.

[71] Notably, Ray (Simons) Alexander, 1991, "Review: Johnny Gomas as I knew him", *South African Labour Bulletin*, vol.15, no. 5; Brian Bunting, editor, 1981, *South African Communists Speak: documents from the history of the South African Communist Party, 1915-1980*, Inkululeko, London; Brian Bunting, editor, 1996, *Letters to Rebecca: South*

Dadoo, Michael Harmel (who also used the pseudonym "Lerumo"), Lionel Forman, Eddie Roux, and Jack and Ray Simons.

There was nothing conspiratorial about this development of a Party historiography: like any other political groups, the CPSA and SACP had an interest in their past. What *is* striking, however, is that the Communist school was so very influential in the shaping perceptions of the history of the left in South Africa, particularly its early years. These accounts –all commissioned by the Party or written by Party ideologues, and admittedly partisan – nonetheless left a very deep imprint on scholarly accounts of the left that emerged in subsequent years. The claims made by the Communist school regarding the early history of the South African left – specifically, the history of the left before the CPSA, as well as the early history of the CPSA - have long been repeated almost verbatim in scholarly materials to deal with this period, and this remains the case today, where the Communist school is invoked, and typically as the authoritative source on this period. I demonstrate this claim at some length in Chapter 3, but the key point to note is that the Party historiography is still the decisive influence in studies of the early left in South Africa at this time.[72] In other words, the official Party view is, in this area, has been adopted, generally uncritically, by the scholars.

How, then, is the history of the early left presented in the works of the Communist school (and, thus, as I suggest, in the scholarly literature)? First, it is structured by a larger narrative in which socialist history in South Africa is dated by the rise and development of the Party, its actions and decisions. The pre-Party left is presented as a prelude to the real story, the great drama of the CPSA and SACP.

In that prelude, the key figures, men like W.H. "Bill" Andrews, S.P. Bunting and David Ivon Jones, are invariably presented as good Marxists, a "Communist nucleus" of "true socialists",[73] who represent the Party-in-embryo, militants who were inevitably moving towards correct Leninist positions and who found the CPSA in 1921 as good Bolsheviks. They are the International Socialist League leaders with views that "closely approaching the stand of Lenin",[74] a view of the Russian Revolution essentially identical to that of the Bolsheviks,[75] and an ideology that "kept pace with the revolutionary fountainheads in Europe".[76] Anarchists and syndicalists were generally absent in this narrative, except to make brief cameos as examples of sectarianism, incompetence, and, sometimes, racial chauvinism.

African communist leader S.P. Bunting to his wife 1917-1934, Mayibuye Books, University of the Western Cape, Bellville, subsequently Brian Bunting, editor, 1996a, *op cit.*; Jeremy Cronin, 1990, "Rediscovering our Socialist History", *South African Labour Bulletin*, vol.15, no. 3; Jeremy Cronin, 1991, "Origins and 'Native Republic,'" in Colin Bundy, editor, 1991, *The History of the South African Communist Party*, University of Cape Town, Department of Adult Education and Extra-Mural Studies: this edited collection is henceforth referred to as Bundy, 1991b, *op cit*., in order to distinguish between it and Colin Bundy, 1991, ""Left, Right, Left, Right: the CPSA in the 1930s and 1930s", which appears in the same collection, that is, in Bundy, 1991b, *op cit.*; Govan Mbeki, 1992, *The Struggle For Liberation in South Africa: a short history*, David Philips, Cape Town, Mayibuye Books, University of the Western Cape, Bellville

[72] For now, an illustrative example: cf. Mason, 1971, *op cit.*, pp. 8-18 with Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, pp. 191-212, or cf. Legassick, 1973, *op cit.*, p. 3, p. 3 note 1 with Simons, *op cit.*, p. 290

[73] Yusuf Dadoo, 1981, "Introduction by Dr Yusuf Dadoo, National Chairman of the South African Communist Party", in Brian Bunting, editor, 1981, *op cit.*, p. xv

[74] Cope, [? 1943] n.d., *Comrade Bill: the life and times of W.H. Andrews, workers' leader*, Stewart Printing, Cape Town

[75] Brian Bunting, 1981, editor, *op cit.*, p. 48; Harmel, 1971, *op cit.*, pp. 33-7

[76] Brian Bunting, 1975, *op cit.*, p. 20

Second, the key index of the evolution of the Party – an evolution always presented in rather triumphalist and teleological terms – in this narrative is its position on the issue of race in South Africa. For the Communist school, the left before the CPSA simply had no proper approach to the race question. Some of its best elements, representing the best of the "Communist nucleus", grappled seriously with South Africa's pressing racial problems from an egalitarian perspective To be more specific, the story continues, only S.P. Bunting and Ivon Jones consistently took racial issues seriously - claim that I will refer to as the "S.P. Bunting/ Ivon Jones thesis". The great majority on the left either ignored these issues, or pandered to White racial prejudices. Andrew Dunbar, a leading figure in the early left who was marginalised in the CPSA, is, for example, presented as a "pseudo-radical" opposed to engaging with the "native problem".[77] But even S.P. Bunting/ Ivon Jones had, apparently, no real strategy on the racial question.

These arguments are, unsurprisingly, coupled to a tendency to present the pre-Party left as an almost entirely White movement: besides T. William "T.W." Thibedi, an outright socialist revolutionary, people of colour are almost entirely absent from the left in this narrative. There is, of course, little doubt that the early *CPSA* was overwhelmingly White in its early years. But for the Communist school, this is projected back into the period *before* the founding of the Party as an example of *continuity* with the past, and the *consequence* of the supposed long-standing refusal to look at the "native problem".

It was only from 1924, the narrative continued, that the CPSA broke with tradition and began to take an interest in workers of colour. Predictably, given the S.P. Bunting/ Ivon Jones thesis, S.P. Bunting, presented as something of a lone crusader on this issue (Ivon Jones having passed away), is given almost all the credit for this supposed shift, which led to an influx of African, Coloured and Indian members. And, then, the narrative continues, it was only in 1928 that a proper socialist strategy for the racial problems is adopted when the CPSA, at the urging of the Comintern, adopted a two-stage strategy for change. This stressed that the immediate task was the creation of a deracialised capitalist system, a "Native Republic": socialism was not on the agenda. The "Native Republic" would create a non-racial capitalism, but would not institute socialism.[78] It would lay the basis for socialism by abolishing "imperialist" and "feudal" elements,

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[77] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., 193

[78] The *Road to South African Freedom* argued that the "Party will strive continuously for the building and strengthening of a united front of national liberation, the unity of Communists and non-Communists, the unity of freedom-loving people of all nationalities and all anti-colonialist classes in the national democratic revolution". The aim, "National Democracy", was not a "programme for socialism", but the reform of capitalism: its "main content" was "national liberation", defined as an end of racial discrimination, a unitary nation-State based on universal franchise, fair labour laws, land reform, the break-up of "White monopoly capital", partial nationalisation, State support for local industry and private capitalists, and an independent foreign policy. See South African Communist Party, [1962] 1981, "The Road to South African Freedom, programme of the South African Communist Party adopted at the fifth national conference of the Party held inside the country in 1962", in Brian Bunting, editor, 1981, *op cit*., pp. 311, 313-20. For Jack Simons, a leading Party intellectual, the South African struggle was part of that wave of "National democratic revolutions" that took place in post-1945 Africa and Asia: "political revolutions" that "took control of the State machinery", instituted various national and democratic reforms, "did away with … race discrimination, expanded … education, gave votes… appointed their own nationals" to government office, increased State control of the economy, and boosted the "national" bourgeoisie. See Jack Simons, [1977-1979] 2001, "Lectures on Marxism-Leninism, Novo Catengue 1977-1979", in Marion Sparg, Jenny Schreiner and Gwen Ansell, editors, 2001, *Comrade Jack: the political lectures and diary of Jack Simons*, Novo Catengue, STE publishers, New Doornfontein, African National Congress, Johannesburg, p. 163. For senior Party leaders, it would help remove the types of restrictions and barriers that "curb the free development of capitalism in the colonial countries": see Robert Vincent Lambert, 1988, "Political Unionism in

meaning that the road to socialism passed through majority rule and an independent capitalist State. The thesis was revised in the 1950s around the catchphrases "Colonialism of a Special Type" and "National Democracy". This strategy led, the Communist school's narrative continued, to socialists taking the racial oppression of people of colour seriously for the first time (it was a long road from the sins of the pre-CPSA left), leading to a stress on African membership, and, ultimately, an alliance with the ANC and the subordination of the CPSA and SACP into African nationalism.

The more I explored the records of the early socialist movement in South Africa, however, the more unsatisfied I became with these sorts of claims. The *Voice of Labour*, a radical weekly published in Johannesburg from 1908, included a large amount of anarchist and syndicalist materials. The Johannesburg-based *International*, published by the International Socialist League, and often edited by S.P. Bunting and Ivon Jones, was full of anarchist and syndicalist material, and while Marx made regular appearances, he was not the Marx of Kautsky, nor of Lenin, but an apparently syndicalist Marx who was invoked in support of the IWW outlook that was consistently and loudly championed by the paper. The *Bolshevik*, printed in Cape Town by the Industrial Socialist League, was, despite its title, even more wedded to IWW views. In none of these papers was classical Marxism, in its Kaustkyite or Leninist versions, exactly common fare before the founding of the CPSA (and often even after 1921).

The image of antipathy towards people of colour, let alone White chauvinism, also seemed seriously flawed: the general image approach seemed to be that of a principled opposition to segregation and discrimination, and a commitment to interracial labour organising, a commitment that took flesh in a number of initiatives to organise workers of colour. Racial oppression was lambasted as an evil, and as a threat to the working class; the One Big Union was repeatedly invoked as the weapon to fight against *both* capitalism and racially discriminatory laws. Contrary to the notion that it was only in the 1920s, following the supposed 1924 turn, that the CPSA developed a critique of the White "labour aristocracy",[79] such critiques were standard fare, quite mainstream, and by no means confined to S. P. Bunting or Ivon Jones. By the late 1910s, the local left, originally White, was focussing many of its energies on African, Coloured, and Indian workers, and scores of people of colour were joining the main left organisations, and the syndicalist unions they sponsored. Certainly, there were signs of an anti-racist and interracial movement here, a movement caricatured by the Communist school.

The claims of the Communist school about the early left seemed somewhat unconvincing, and a subsequent re-reading of its key texts revealed serious contradictions at the heart of its narrative. The same texts admitted, perhaps with some discomfort, that the International Socialist League called for "one big

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South Africa: the South African Congress of Trade Unions, 1955-1965", PhD thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, p. 65. In the 1970s, SACP leader Joe Slovo explicitly downplayed a strict two-stages approach, yet argued that the "post-revolutionary phase can surely become the first stage *in a continuous process* along the road to socialism", for a "number of phases are envisaged" in the "South African Revolution": Joe Slovo, 1976, "South Africa: no middle road", in Basil Davidson, Joe Slovo and Anthony R. Wilkinson, editors, 1976, *Southern Africa: the new politics of revolution*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, New York, Victoria, Ontario, Auckland, pp. p. 145, 146, 148, emphasis in the original

[79] Edward Johanningsmeier, 2004, "Communists and Black Freedom Movements in South Africa and the US: 1919-1950", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol.30, no. 1, p. 161, in an piece that relies heavily on Eddie Roux and Jack and Ray Simons for its discussion of the early left in South Africa: see, for example, pp. 157-159, 162, notes 8, 9. 10, 11, 13, 24

union of all workers, irrespective of race" that would "ultimately take over the control of industry",[80] and promoted the "distorted … Marxism" of De Leon, with its on the "formation of 'one big Industrial Union' and the … general strike" for the "overthrow of capitalism".[81] This was, indeed, far more consistent with what a preliminary review of the primary material suggested than the official narrative of the Communist school, and questions emerged about just what else had been obscured by that narrative. If such tensions were ignored by the secondary literature, this was probably because the authority of the Communist school remained unchanged; also, anarchism and syndicalism were not really taken seriously.

Elements of the Communist school's general narrative of left history began to be questioned in the 1980s, as studies by the late Baruch Hirson[82] and others[83] rediscovered a local Trotskyist tradition written out of history by the Communist school. The narrative of socialist history developed by the Communist school was clearly too teleological, triumphalist and totalising. The history of the CPSA and SACP themselves, however, "remained, until recently, largely untouched".[84] This also started to change as studies of the Party's ideological development showed a more complicated picture than the official version of events.[85] The rise of social history in South Africa also shed new light on the history of the CPSA and SACP,[86]

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[80] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, pp. 196-7, 210

[81] Harmel, 1971, *op cit.*, pp. 37, 39, 43-4

[82] No account of the recovery of South African Trotskyist history would be complete without due recognition of the central role of the late Baruch Hirson. See, *inter alia*, Baruch Hirson, 1988b, "Death of a Revolutionary: Frank Glass/Li Fu-Jen/John Liang, 1901-1988", *Searchlight South Africa*, vol.1, no. 1; Baruch Hirson, 1989a, "Spark and the Red Nun", *Searchlight South Africa*, vol.1, no. 2; Baruch Hirson, 1989b, "A Question of Class: the writings of Kenneth A. Jordaan", *Searchlight South Africa*, vol.1, no. 2; Baruch Hirson, 1990b, *Yours for the Union: class and community struggles in South Africa, 1930-1947*, Wits University Press, Johannesburg; the key articles from *Searchlight South Africa*, which ran for 12 issues, are Baruch Hirson, 1990a, "The Black Republic Slogan – part II- the response of the Trotskyists", *Searchlight South Africa*, vol.1, no. 4; Baruch Hirson, 1991, "Obituary: the dualism of I.B. Tabata", *Searchlight South Africa*, vol.2, no. 2; Baruch Hirson, 1993b, *op cit*., Baruch Hirson, 1993c",The Trotskyists and the Trade Unions", and Hirson, 1993d, *op cit*., *Searchlight South Africa*, vol.3, no. 2; Baruch Hirson, 1995b, "A Short History of the Non-European Unity Movement: an insider's view", *Searchlight South Africa*, vol.3, no. 4; the aforementioned supplement was also reprinted as a special issue of the journal *Revolutionary History*, with an additional article by Ian Hunter and several original documents, and the two main articles also appeared in condensed form in a 1994 collection of papers on the history of opposition movements in South Africa: see Revolutionary History, 1993, "'Colour and Class': the origins of South African Trotskyism", vol.4, no. 4 and Ian Liebenberg, Fiona Lortan, Bobby Nel and Gert van der Westhuizen, editors, 1994, *The Long March: the story of the struggle for liberation in South Africa*, HAUM, Pretoria, pp. 52-71.

[83] Other important studies include Colin Bundy, 1987, "Land and Liberation: popular rural protest and the national liberation movement in South Africa, 1920-1960", in Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido, editors, 1987, *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa*, Longman, London; Robert Fine, with Dennis Davis, 1990, *Beyond Apartheid: labour and liberation in South Africa*, Pluto, London; Bill Nasson, 1990, "The Unity Movement: its legacy in popular consciousness", *Radical History Review* no. 46/7; Mark Stein, 1978, "Max Gordon and African Trade Unionism on the Witwatersrand, 1935-1940", in Eddie Webster, editor, 1978, *Essays in Southern African Labour History*, Ravan Press, Braamfontein

[84] Allison Drew, editor, 1997, *South Africa's Radical Tradition: a documentary history*, vol.two 1943-1964, UCT Press, University of Cape Town, Buchu Books, Cape Town, Mayibuye Books, University of the Western Cape 997, *op cit.*, p. 107. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Allison Drew for her advice, comments, help and encouragement.

[85] See, for instance, David Everett, 1991, "Alliance Politics of a Special Type: the roots of the ANC/SACP alliance, 1950-54", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol.18, no. 1; Peter Hudson, 1987, "The Freedom Charter and the Theory of the National Democratic Revolution", *Transformation*, no. 1; Derek Mosenthal, 1988, "The Flight from Class and Principle: an examination of Alliance Politics and the role of intellectuals in struggle, towards a discussion of the relation between theoretical conceptualisation of struggle and academic Marxist processes of thought", BA Honours dissertation, Industrial Sociology, University of the Witwatersrand; Lungilise Ntsebeza, 1988, "Divisions and Unity in Struggle: the African National Congress, International Socialist League and CP, 1910-28", B.A. Honours dissertation in

as did comparisons with other Communist Parties.[87] A growing review ad revision of the history of the left followed,[88] which presented the history of the Party and the Trotskyist tradition as part of a single socialist milieu,[89] and began, consequently, to unravel the Communist school's narrative.

However, the early history of the left in South Africa – and, specifically, the history of socialism in South Africa in the "glorious period" of anarchism and syndicalism – has remained unexplored by these works, leaving the claims of the Communist school in this regard largely unchallenged. Thus, for example, the tendency to date left history by reference to dates in CPSA/ SACP history continues, the pre-CPSA period remains largely unexplored, and the key claims of the Communist school remain generally in place. As recently as 2004, a study of the CPSA claimed (largely on the basis of citations from Eddie Roux and the Simons), that the International Socialist League ignored workers of colour, or viewed them in an "openly paternalist racist" manner (with the "exception" of S.P. Bunting and Jones, "considered cranks by many").[90] Other major works still use the S.P. Bunting/ Ivon Jones thesis, the related notion that 1924 was a break in the history of the left, and suggest that[91]

> … the Native Republic represented a significant advance in South African *socialist* thinking. *For the first time* socialists put South Africa's pressing social problems, the national, democratic and land questions, at the top of their political programme….

Economic History, University of Cape Town; Jonny Steinberg, 1995, "Adventures of a Still-Born Proletariat: the national democratic revolution and the new South African order", MA thesis, University of the Witwatersrand

[86] See Luli Callinicos, 1990, "The Communist Party during the War Years: the beginnings of grass-roots politics", *South African Labour Bulletin*, vol.15, no. 3; Peter Delius, 1993, "Migrant Organisation, the Communist Party, the ANC and the Sekhukhuneland Revolt, 1940-58", in Philip Bonner, Peter Delius and Deborah Posel, editors, 1993, *Apartheid's Genesis 1935-62*, Ravan Press, Braamfontein, Wits University Press, Johannesburg; Tom Lodge, 1985, "Class Conflict, Communal Struggle and Patriotic Unity: the CPSA during the Second World War", paper presented at the African Studies Seminar, University of the Witwatersrand, 7 October 1985. Another important work was Lambert, 1988, *op cit.* Also of interest was Taffy Adler, 1979, "Lithuania's Diaspora: the Johannesburg Jewish Workers' Club, 1928-1948", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol.6, no. 1

[87] Notably Johanningsmeier, 2004, *op cit.*

[88] Allison Drew, 2002, *Discordant Comrades: identities and loyalties on the South African left*, University of South Africa Press, Pretoria

[89] See Allison Drew, 1991a, "Social Mobilisation and Racial Capitalism in South Africa, 1928-1960", University of California, Los Angeles, PhD thesis; Allison Drew, 1991b, "Events were Breaking above their Heads: socialism in South Africa, 1921-1950", *Social Dynamics*, vol.17, no. 1; Allison Drew, editor, 1996a, *South Africa's Radical Tradition: a documentary history,* vol.one 1907-1950, University of Cape Town Press, Cape Town, Buchu Books, Cape Town, Mayibuye Books, University of the Western Cape; Allison Drew, 1996b, "The Theory and Practice of the Agrarian Question in South African Socialism", *Journal of Peasant Studies*, vol.23, no. 2/3; Drew, editor, 1997, *op cit.*

[90] Johanningsmeier, 2004*, op cit*., p. 158, mainly citing Eddie Roux and Jack and Ray Simons: see pp. 157-8, notes 8, 9, 10, and 11; the other main source is Drew, whose own claims were deeply shaped by these three writers.

[91] Drew, editor, 1996a, *op cit*, editorial comment, p. 22, my emphasis, also see p. 16. Cf. Drew, 1991a, *op cit.*, p. 165, my emphasis: "… the Native Republic thesis was, historically, a significant advance in South African Communist thinking. *For the first time* Communists put South Africa's great social problems, the national and democratic questions, at the top of their political programme …"

To the extent that syndicalist influences have been noted recently,[92] there has been no real examination of the impact of anarchism or syndicalism there remains little awareness of the broader global context of the "glorious period". This reflects, in part, an ongoing failure to understand syndicalism as a distinct radical tradition, and the broader local ignorance of terms "anarchism" (widely understood to mean chaos and terrorism), and "syndicalism" (routinely and incorrectly used to refer to a non-political and economistic style of trade unionism).[93] Hirson indicated that syndicalism played a role in the pre-Party left,[94] but did not develop this point; he continued to view, like the Communist school, S.P. Bunting and Ivon Jones as good Bolsheviks. Allison Drew's initial work largely ignored the pre-CPSA left: Drew's early work paid very little attention to the pre-Party left: six documents out of nearly 300 documents in a two-volume reader on the left from 1907 to 1950 were from before 1921.[95] Her recent work has paid more attention to the left before the CPSA, suggesting that anarchism was known locally, and syndicalism was "also an important current".[96]

Even so, Drew insisted that the pre-Party period was characterised by "organisational and ideological eclecticism",[97] and denied the significance if the distinction between libertarian and political socialism. [98] This is not a line of argument with which I concur. Debates over the relative merits of State power and nationalisation, on the one hand, and self-management and direct action, on the other, were defining features of the left during the "glorious period". Moreover, the rise of syndicalism from the 1890s onwards was *directly* related to a growing disillusionment with electoral action and the socialist parties of the Labour and Socialist International.[99] If radical elements in the Labour and Socialist International, the British Socialist Party or the Socialist Party of America, which was led by Eugene V. Debs, were drawn towards

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[92] Among the most important examples were Frederick A. Johnstone, 1979, "The IWA on the Rand: socialist organising amongst black workers on the Rand 1917-8", in Belinda Bozzoli editor, 1979, *Labour, Townships and Protest*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg and Evangelos A. Mantzaris, 1983, "The Indian Tobacco Workers Strike of 1920: a socio-historical investigation", *Journal of Natal and Zulu,* no. 6, p. 117-118. The Mantzaris paper has been reprinted in Evangelos A. Mantzaris, 1995, *Labour Struggles in South Africa: the forgotten pages, 1903-1921*, Collective Resources Publications, Namibia. All references to the latter paper in this thesis are to the original version: Mantzaris, 1983, *op cit.* I would like to thank Evangelos Mantzaris for sending me a copy of his book. I will be referring to all chapters of Mantzaris' fascinating collection of essays as Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit.*, although a number have appeared as articles and papers on previous occasions.

[93] For example, Anonymous [? Jeremy Cronin], 1986, "Errors of Workerism", *Isizwe: the nation: journal of the United Democratic Front*, vol.1, no. 3; Jeremy Baskin, 1991, *Striking Back: a history of COSATU*, Ravan Press, Braamfontein, pp. 94-5; Alex Callinicos, 1988, *South Africa: between reform and revolution*, p. 191; Robin Cohen and William Cobbett, 1988a, "Popular Struggles or One Struggle: dilemmas of liberation", in Robin Cohen and William Cobbett, editors, 1988b, *Popular Struggles in South Africa*, Regency House, Sheffield, James Currey, London, Africa World Press, New Jersey, p. 15; Duncan Innes, 1987, "Worker Politics and the Popular Movement", *Work in Progress*, no. 50; Mosenthal, 1988, *op cit.*, p. 47; Karl von Holdt, 1987, "The Political Significance of COSATU: a Response to Plaut", *Transformation*, no. 5, p. 96; Karl von Holdt, n.d. [? 1988], *Trade Unions, Community Organisations and Politics: a local case study on the East Rand*, Labour Studies Research Report, Sociology of Work Programme, University of the Witwatersrand, pp. 96 note 8, 97 note 10, 98-100

[94] Most obviously in Baruch Hirson, 12 November 1993e, "Syndicalists in South Africa, 1908-1917", *p*aper for discussion at postgraduate seminar, on "Comparative Labour and Working class History", University of London. I would like to thank Peter Alexander for sending me a copy of this paper.

[95] See Drew, editor, 1996a, *op cit*., and Drew, editor, 1997, *op cit*.

[96] Drew, 2002, *op cit*., p. 22

[97] Drew, 2002, *op cit*., p. 22

[98] Allison Drew, personal communication to author, 27 October 1998

[99] Peterson, 1982, *op cit*., pp. 51-68; van der Linden and Thorpe, 1990a, *op cit*., pp. 12-17

syndicalism, this was in large part due to the view that syndicalism offered something *different* to the old parties. This is not to say that libertarian and political socialism could not coexist in one organisation, which is obviously untrue, but rather that the anarchist and syndicalist tradition was a distinct current, and an *alternative* to classical Marxism and parliamentary socialism, and, further, that the development of socialism in the "glorious period" cannot be adequately understood unless such differences are taken seriously.

Indeed, precisely because anarchism "has not been well served by the academy"[100] and precisely because syndicalism was "buried under subsequent defeats and political orthodoxies",[101] it is important to *highlight* these two currents as part of a broader movement to recognise an important historical role, "which Leninist Marxism suppressed".[102] The danger of a stress on eclecticism lies in its potential for dissolving important differences into an amorphous socialist milieu; it is necessary at present to emphasise differences and the role of anarchism and syndicalism as a corrective to decades of scholarly neglect of both.

Finally, once it is recognised that any local manifestations of anarchism and syndicalism were part of broader and international trends, they assume a new significance and interest, as part of the broader global history of anarchism and syndicalism. The history of socialism in South Africa cannot, in short, be understood as purely a South African phenomenon; equally, it should not be centred on the history of Communism.

1.5. Regional context: the southern African political economy

The South African left emerged out of the capitalist transformation of southern Africa. In the late nineteenth century, the region was a patchwork of agrarian economies and polities, barely integrated into one another, and only tenuously linked into the world market. The first major change came in 1867, when diamonds were discovered at Kimberley, which was quickly annexed by Britain, being appended to the Cape Colony in 1880. Kimberley soon became the largest diamond producer in the world, and more importantly, set the "pattern … followed by other South African industries".[103]

In the first place, a pattern of domination by large monopolies was established. Diamond holdings were quickly centralised: by 1879, there were 300 claimholders, but 20 owning half the claims;[104] by 1890, one company, the De Beers Mining Corporation (controlled by Alfred Beit and Cecil John Rhodes) assumed almost total control of the diamond fields, and could set world diamond prices.[105] Secondly, the pattern of a working class deeply divided by race, with the African workers, mainly male migrants, subject to coercive

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[100] Graham, 1985, *op cit.,* p. 197
[101] David Howell, 2000, "Taking Syndicalism Seriously", *Socialist History*, no. 16, p. 30
[102] Dirlik, 1991, *op cit*., pp. 3-4, also see pp. 7-8
[103] Brian Roberts, 1976, *Kimberley: turbulent city*, David Philips, Cape Town, Johannesburg. 143. There are several excellent studies of the Kimberley and its mining industry; in addition to Roberts, 1976, *op cit*., see R.V. Turrell, 1987, *Capital and Labour on the Kimberley Diamond Fields, 1871-1890*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, London, New York, New Rochelle, Melbourne, Sydney, pp. 60-1 *op cit*., and William H. Worger, 1987,*South Africa's City of Diamonds: mine workers and monopoly capitalism in Kimberley, 1867-1895*, Yale University Press, New Haven, London
[104] Alan Mabin, 1989, "Waiting for Something to Turn Up? The Cape Colony in the eighteen eighties", in Alan Mabin, editor, 1989, *Organisation and Economic Change*, Southern African Studies series, vol.5, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, p. 21. This article is subsequently referred to as Mabin, 1989a, *op cit*., and the collection as Mabin, 1989b, editor, *op cit.*
[105] Roberts, 1976, *op cit*., pp. 249-263; Turrell, 1987, *op cit*., pp. 206-227; Worger, 1987, *op cit*., pp. 44-63, 191-296

labour controls and racial discrimination, was established. By 1872 there were 10,000 hired African labourers on the claims,[106] and in 1876 Africans were barred from holding claims. Hired under contracts that criminalised "desertion" and work stoppages, and regulated by pass laws, they were unfree and indentured workers.[107] From the mid-1880s, the African migrants began to be housed in closed compounds, surrounded by high walls and locked at night: designed to control diamond theft and allow ongoing searches, they also controlled the African labour force. This was a decisive moment in the consolidation of a system of unfree African migrant labour, a model that would be applied throughout the southern African region by mines, municipalities, railways, and heavy industries for many years to come.

The White workers on the diamond mines, by contrast, were relatively well paid, concentrated in the skilled occupations and in supervision, and a job colour bar was in place. The growing number of skilled and semi-skilled White workers, a "measure of the development" at Kimberley,[108] led to the emergence of unions from 1882, typically on a craft basis, and generally supportive of job colour bars. The bars were demanded by White workers terrified of replacement by cheap and unfree African labour: in 1886 wages for Whites at the main Kimberley mine ranged from £5.8 to £6.25 per week, while the average wage for other races was £1 and 5 shillings (a figure that excluded accommodation and food provided by the capitalists).[109]

In 1886, vast deep-level gold deposits were detected in the Witwatersrand in the southern Transvaal. This had far more dramatic consequences than the diamonds, leading directly to a sweeping industrial revolution that affected the entire southern African region. By 1898, the Witwatersrand produced 27 percent of the world's gold output, and this rose to 40 percent by 1913.[110] As was the case in Kimberley, ownership and control of the gold mines was rapidly centralised under with giant mining houses, initially financed by European shares, and linked through a Chamber of Mines, founded in 1887. The mining industry also expanded to include the Witbank coal district to the east, and the smaller coalfields in Natal. The collieries were represented in the Chamber of Mines through a Collieries' Committee, and also organised a separate cartel, the Transvaal Coal Owners' Association, in 1907.[111] Witwatersrand mining was a vast, capital-intensive and dangerous industry controlled by huge corporations, characterised by the systematic application of science to production, and worked by a vast and highly-regimented workforce at an intensive pace, a sort of "mass-production mining" without parallel.[112]

The vast labour demands of the gold mines led to the emergence of a large urban complex on the Witwatersrand, centred on Johannesburg, and with it, a vast, but deeply divided, working, class: Kimberley on a gigantic scale. In 1886, Johannesburg had 3,000 prospectors; ten years later, it was a city of 100,000, and by 1913, 250,000.[113] In 1913, there were 195,000 Africans on the mines of the Witwatersrand, recruited

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[106] Turrell, 1987, *op cit*., p. 18
[107] See, especially, Turrell, 1987, *op cit*., pp. 25-29, 89-99, 146-173; Worger, 1987, *op cit*., chapter 3
[108] Turrell, 1987, *op cit*., p. 122; also Worger, 1987, *op cit*., pp. 147-162
[109] Turrell, 1987, *op cit*., p. 228, table 1
[110] Riva Krut, 1988, "The Making of a South African Jewish Community", in Belinda Bozzoli, editor, 1988, *Class, Community and Conflict*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, pp. 135-6
[111] See Alexander, 2001 *op cit.,* pp. 116-7, 126
[112] Krikler, 2005, *op cit*., pp. 21-26
[113] Krut, 1988, *op cit.*, pp. 135-6

from across southern Africa, including a minority of "police-boys" and clerks; a further 37,000 were in domestic service, with 6,000 in factories, workshops and warehouses,[114] and, presumably, railways. Tens of thousands of skilled White workers were drawn into South Africa from across the world, and supplemented by increasing numbers of proletarianised Afrikaners, mainly unskilled and semi-skilled workers. There were 38,500 White workers, of whom 22,000 worked on the mines, a further 4,500 on the railways, and the remainder employed in building, tramways, printing, electricity and other industries.[115] Even so, South Africa was still a largely rural country at this time: in 1921, the total urban population was 1,733,000, out of 6,928,000, comprising 845,000 Whites, and 888,000 people from the other races.[116] Whites tended to be concentrated in the cities: in Kimberley, the ratio of Whites to other races was around 1:2 in 1911; in Johannesburg, it was closer to 1:1, Johannesburg itself had over 82,000 White inhabitants out of a population of 155,462 spread over 82 miles in 1904.[117] Meanwhile, vast areas of the countryside became commercialised to feed the new cities.

As in Kimberley, Africans were housed in closed compounds, or multi-racial slums alongside poor Coloureds, Indians and Whites, or stayed in segregated townships, or "locations". Pass laws, dating back to the nineteenth century, were systematically reintroduced in the Transvaal from 1907. An estimated 40,000 Africans lived outside the compounds in the Johannesburg area by 1909.[118] Most (but not all) African mineworkers lived on mine properties in compounds, and were unable to leave during the week except with special permission. By 1916, sixty mine compounds on the Witwatersrand housed, on average, four thousand men each,[119] with only 1,474 educated Africans lived on the mines in married quarters by 1930 out of a labour force of 200,000.[120] The collieries, unable to compete with the high wages of the gold mines, were more flexible, attracted experienced African mineworkers by allowing a substantial number to settle with their families around the mines from around 1907 into the 1930s.[121] In Natal, Indians also formed a substantial proportion of coal miners, and around 60 percent of mine labourers settled at the collieries by the late 1930s.[122]

Again, skilled White workers organised craft unions from the 1880s, many of which soon demanded job colour bars, for much the same reasons as in Kimberley. The first statutory colour bar was introduced in the Transvaal in 1893. The 1911 Mines and Works Act enabled further job colour bars in the Transvaal and Orange Free State, supplemented by customary restrictions. By 1914, perhaps three dozen occupations on

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[114] D. Hobart Houghton, 1964, *The South African Economy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, p. 141; Hirson, 1995, *op cit.,* pp. 106, 116
[115] Hobart Houghton, 1964, *op cit*., pp. 106, 116
[116] Kotzé, D.J., 1987, "Die Kommunistiese Beweging in Suid-Afrika tot die Stigting van die Kommunistiese Party van Suid-Afrika in 1921", research report, Institute for the Study of Marxism, University of Stellenbosch, pp. 73-4
[117] Lis Lange, 2003, *White, Poor and Angry: white working class families in Johannesburg*, Ashgate, Aldershot, Hampshire and Burlington, VT, pp. 12, 39, 84
[118] Harries, 1994, *op cit*., p. 199
[119] Harries, 1994, *Work, Culture and Identity: migrant labourers in Mozambique and South Africa c. 1860-1910*, Witwatersrand pp. 195-196
[120] E.L. Berger, 1974, *Labour, Race and Colonial Rule: the Copperbelt from 1924 to independence*, Clarendon Press, Oxford p. 31
[121] Alexander, 2001, *op cit*., pp. 510-515
[122] Alexander, 2001, *op cit*., p. 507

the gold mines were reserved for Whites.[123] The African mineworkers, meanwhile, like most other African workers on the Witwatersrand, were regulated by controls amounting to indenture. Perhaps the single most important legal control was the Native Labour Regulation Act of 1911: while establishing standards of accommodation, food and services on mines and elsewhere, it also made breaches of labour contracts in large parts of the economy a criminal offence. A range of other Masters and Servants Acts, going back to the nineteenth century, applied elsewhere in the country.[124]

The controls over African labour must be understood against the backdrop of colonial conquest and racial domination: in South Africa, "capitalist relations of exploitation were constructed upon colonial relations of domination".[125] The larger context was the Scramble for Africa, of which the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) was but one episode in a process going back to the 1870s that saw most of southern Africa come under British control. In some cases, this was by conquest (the Pedi kingdom, Zululand), in some cases by peaceful incorporation (Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland became High Commission territories), and, in come cases, companies took a hand: the British territories of Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia, and Nyasaland were established by the British South African Company, set up by the magnate Cecil John Rhodes.

In the course of these events the port city of Cape Town, the capital of the Cape Colony, and hitherto the premier city in southern Africa, was supplanted first by Kimberley and then Johannesburg as the most important centre. Nonetheless, it survived and thrived due to its excellent harbour facilities and its success in establishing the fastest railway route to Kimberley by 1885.[126] By 1892, it also had a railway to Johannesburg.[127] Port Elizabeth in the eastern Cape, at one time Cape Town's main rival, was marginalised by the rise of the mining economy, and never regained its former influence.[128] In turn, Cape Town faced a new rival in Durban, Natal, with its excellent enclosed harbour, and from 1905, its direct (and shorter) railway to the Witwatersrand. Durban became the principal port in the country, and, critically, the main port serving the mines.[129]

If the mines helped spur the industrial revolution that welded southern Africa into a regional political economy, the railway grid provided the infratsruicture for that system. By the turn of the twentieth century, railways linked Cape Town, Durban, Kimberley, and the Witwatersrand, as well as Lourenço Marques in Delagoa Bay, Mozambique. The gold mines and railways provided the impetus for the expansion of the collieries, with rapidly rising demand from locomotives and power stations.[130] In the meantime, both Cape

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[123] Peter van Duin, 1990, "South Africa", in Marcel van der Linden and Jürgen Rojahn, editors, 1990 *The Formation of Labour Movements, 1870-1914*, E.J. Brill, Leiden, New York, Kobenhavn, Koln, p. 645
[124] Peter L. Wickens, 1973, "The Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of Africa", PhD thesis, University of Cape Town, pp. 38-40, 41-3
[125] Bundy, 1991a, *op cit*., p. 32
[126] Mabin, 1986*, op cit*., pp. 288-289, 295-8; also see Bickford-Smith, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 11-13, 16-17, 43-6, 129-130
[127] Vivian Bickford-Smith, 1995, *Ethnic Pride and Racial Prejudice in Victorian Cape Town*, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, p. 129
[128] Alan Mabin, 1986*,* "The Rise and Decline of Port Elizabeth, 1850-1900", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol.19, no. 2, pp. 279-282
[129] Bill Freund, 1995, *Insiders and Outsiders: the Indian working class of Durban, 1910-1990*, Heinemann, Portsmouth, University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, James Currey, London, p. 29
[130] Alexander, 2001 *op cit*., pp. 116-7

Town and Durban developed significant local manufacturing and service sectors, partly based on access to cheap imported ingredients for products like paint and soap.[131] Both cities also grew rapidly, and experienced substantial White immigration. By 1904, Cape Town had 170,000 inhabitants, compared to Port Elizabeth's 33,000,[132] boosted by 70,000 immigrants, with 34,000 from Europe (mainly Britain), but also including 9,000 Jews, 2,000 Afrikaners, 9,000 Africans, 2,000 Indians and 21,000 Coloureds.[133] By 1910, Durban had a population of 65,000, of which slightly less than half was White.[134]

In 1910 Britain created the Union of South Africa, amalgamating the Cape Colony and Natal, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State as provinces, with the Pedi, Xhosa, Zulu and other African groups incorporated as subordinate "reserves", later "homelands". Cape Town became the seat of parliament, and Cape provincial capital; the Transvaal capital, Pretoria, became the administrative centre, and provincial capital; Bloemfontein in the Orange Free State was seat of the Supreme Court, and was provincial capital; Pietermaritzburg was the provincial capital of Natal. Kimberley was then in decline, and played no serious role in the new State. Facing competition from new diamond fields in South West Africa and elsewhere, and politically marginal, it was undergoing a long-term decline.[135] In 1911, its population stood at 20,953 Whites, and 43,401 people of other races, mainly Coloureds: 70 percent lived in segregated townships, like the Malay Camp, which also included Africans and some poor Whites. By 1914, these figures had fallen to 14,888 and 25,755 respectively,[136] and by the 1930s it had the air of a ghost town.[137] By the first quarter of the twentieth century, South Africa was decisively centred on three main urban complexes: the Witwatersrand and its surrounds, including Pretoria, greater Cape Town, and greater Durban.[138]

The new South African State was a White dominion like Australia and Canada, although the enfranchised Whites were a clear minority. The total population in 1911 was estimated at just short of six million, including 4,000,000 Africans (around 67 percent of the total), 1,276,000 Whites (around 21 percent), 525,000 Coloureds (around 9 percent), and 150,000 Indians (around 2,5 percent).[139] In the Orange Free State and Transvaal the franchise was restricted to qualified White men, while Natal, with an ostensibly non-racial franchise, managed to exclude almost all people of colour from voting. The old Cape Colony had a class-based franchise from 1853: around 85 percent of the voters were White men, although a third of the adult White men did not have the vote,[140] and African and Coloured voters were a significant political factor in several districts.

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[131] Bickford-Smith, 1995, *op cit*., p. 130; Freund, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 29-31; also see Martin Nicol, 1984, "A History of Garment and Tailoring Workers in Cape Town, 1900-1939", PhD thesis, University of Cape Town, pp. 70-71
[132] Bickford-Smith, 1995, *op cit*., p. 11, table 1
[133] Bickford-Smith, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 130-131
[134] John Lambert and Robert Morrell, 1996, "Domination and Subordination in Natal, 1890-1920", in Robert Morrell, editor, 1996, *Political Economy and Identities in KwaZulu-Natal: historical and social perspectives*, University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, Indicator Press, Johannesburg, p. 66
[135] Roberts, 1976, *op cit*., pp. 344-350, 356-361, 369-76
[136] Doreen Musson, 1989, *Johnny Gomas: voice of the working-class: a political biography,* Buchu Books, Cape Town, pp.19
[137] Roberts, 1976, *op cit*., p. 375
[138] Freund, 1995, *op cit*., p. 29
[139] Van Duin, 1990, *op cit*., p. 640 note 38
[140] Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., p. 42. This qualification was removed for Whites in the 1930s

After amalgamation in 1910, this arrangement was continued on the understanding that it would not be extended to other provinces, and that no person of colour could take a seat in the national parliament. Africans and Coloureds could, however, sit in the Cape Provincial Council. The conquered African "reserves", on the other hand, were governed through traditional authorities, the chiefs and kings reduced to tax collectors and labour recruiters; Africans, in general, could not carry weapons, except "police boys" who were given *assegais* (spears), not guns; Africans were, for many years, even forbidden to drink "White liquor", and were sold traditional beer at profitable beer-halls run by mining houses and municipalities.

The Whites were not, of course, a monolithic group. There were national divisions between the "English" Whites[141] and the Afrikaners. For the Afrikaner poor, the "trek to the cities was a journey to the mines, railways, and factories, where they saw themselves working at unfamiliar jobs, taking orders like black people, living in squalid conditions adjacent to black shanty towns, and having to speak a foreign language – English – like a conquered race",[142] which was exactly the case after the Anglo-Boer War and the official and unofficial discrimination that followed.,[143] By 1911, perhaps 24 percent of Afrikaners lived in urban areas,[144] reaching 41 percent by 1926 and 50 percent by 1936.[145] Lacking industrial trades, and unattractive to employers precisely because of their free status, recently proletarianised Afrikaners lost jobs to Africans and formed the core of the underemployed poor White population. The proportion of poor Whites reached between 10 and 15 percent of that population in the early 1920s;[146] the majority of the 300,000 poor Whites in 1931 were Afrikaners.[147] Underground mining, increasingly mechanised, unskilled and supervisory in character, was one of the few escapes: if Afrikaners were a small part of the White underground workforce in1900,[148] they made up three-quarters in the late 1910s,[149] and perhaps ninety percent of White underground miners by the 1940s.[150]

These conditions provided some of the grounds for the rise of Afrikaner nationalism, despite the distrust of the Afrikaner poor for the Afrikaner elite. From 1910 to 1924, the South African Party dominated the government, led by General Louis Botha (1910-1919), followed by General Jan Smuts (1919-1924). Founded in 1910 by a number of parties, including *Het Volk* – an early Afrikaner nationalist group – and led by two revered Anglo-Boer generals, it proved too conciliatory for many Afrikaner nationalists. A National

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[141] I say "English" in inverted commas, because this category in fact included all English-*speaking* Whites, not just those of English or Anglo-Saxon descent: it is traditionally understood to exclude other White ethnic groups, like Jews and Portuguese, but can include people of Afrikaans descent, Germans, etc.
[142] Sandra Swart, 2000, "'Desperate Men': the 1914 Rebellion and the politics of poverty", *South African Historical Journal*, no. 42, p. 172
[143] Visser, 2003, *op cit*., pp. 3, 15-19; also see Lange, 2003, *op cit*., pp. 113, 167; on British chauvinism in the early White labour movement, see, in particular, van Duin, 1990, *op cit*., pp. 631-635
[144] Swart, 2000, *op cit*., p. 172
[145] Visser, 2003, *op cit*., p. 3
[146] Kotzé, 1987, *op cit*., p. 77; also see Johnstone, 1976, *op cit*., pp. 61-2
[147] Visser, 2003, *op cit*., p. 4
[148] Visser, 2001, *op cit*., pp. 4-5
[149] Tommy Boydell, n.d., *"My Luck was In": with spotlights on General Smuts*, Stewart Printing, Cape Town, p. 191; Wessel P. Visser, 2003, *op cit*., pp. 7
[150] William H. Andrews, 1941, *Class Struggles in South Africa*: two lectures given on South African trade unionism by W.H. Andrews before the People's College, Cape Town, on October 7th and 14th, 1940, with foreword by E.S. Sachs, General Secretary, Garment Workers Union, Stewart Printing, Cape Town, p. 20

Party broke away in 1914: led by another general, J.B.M. Hertzog, it would capture a substantial portion of the support of Afrikaners of all classes for many years. Its basic character was an authoritarian, conservative and populist party, opposed to British imperialism, big business and African advancement in equal measure.

The other important White ethnic division was around the Jews, as large-scale Jewish immigration took place from the 1880s: from 1881 to 1910, some 40,000 Jews emigrated from east and central Europe, mainly from the "Jewish Pale of Settlement" in Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine and Russia, to South Africa.[151] Approximately half made their way to the Witwatersrand: in Johannesburg, the Jewish immigrants formed roughly ten percent of the population in 1913,[152] where many lived in the multi-racial slums, especially in a three-mile radius comprising Market Square, Ferreirastown and Commissioner Street in Johannesburg;[153] in Cape Town many were to be found in District Six.[154] The immigrant Jews were a mixed group: some worked as waged artisans, particularly in trades such as tailoring; others were poor but petty bourgeois, working as self-employed artisans, salesmen and shopkeepers, sometimes running the canteens on the mines that the Africans called "Jew stores".[155] Many were radicalised by conditions in the Russian empire, and would play a major, a disporrtionate role in the far left for many years; often speaking Yiddish, they were distinct from an earlier, wealthier, layer of Anglo-German Jews. The latter group included prominent mining capitalists like Lionel Philips and Otto Beit, who headed Wernher-Beit and Eckstein, and Sammy Marks and Barney Barnato of Kimberley (Marks moved to Johannesburg in the 1890s).[156] The new immigrants (pejoratively dubbed "Peruvians") were targeted in sections of the press as alien criminals and subversives, and there were sporadic moves to restrict Jewish immigration.[157]

The Rhodesias were ruled by the British South Africa Company, which had offices in South Africa, until 1924, when Northern Rhodesia came under the control of the British Colonial Office and Southern Rhodesia – with its far larger White population – was granted Responsible Government. A strong local capitalist class had already begun to emerge in Southern Rhodesia, hostile to South African predominance, and started erecting trade barriers and promoting local industrialisation. Northern Rhodesia was initially more marginal, with an economy centred on struggling White-owned farms and massive exports of African migrant labour. Matters changed from 1926 as the potential of the Central African Copperbelt (shared with the Belgian Congo) was realised.[158]

There were two exceptions to British hegemony on South Africa's borders. South West Africa was one of three German colonies in Africa. The oldest town, and the country's only harbour port for many years, was Lüderitz. In 1915, South Africa invaded the country as part of the British campaign in the First

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[151] Marcia Leveson, 1996, *People of the Book: images of the Jew in South African English fiction, 1880-1992*, Witwatersrand University Press, Braamfontein. p. 15; Krut 1987, *op cit*., pp. 135, 138

[152] Krut 1987, *op cit*., pp. 135-6

[153] Evangelos A. Mantzaris, 1988, "Radical Community: the Yiddish-speaking branch of the International Socialist League, 1918-20", in Bozzoli, 1988, editor, *op cit.*; Leveson, 1996, *op cit.*, p 16.

[154] Milton Shain, 1994, *The Roots of Anti-Semitism in South Africa*, Wits University Press, Johannesburg, pp. 51-2

[155] Krut, 1987, *op cit*., pp. 136, 138; Mantzaris, 1988, *op cit*., p. 163

[156] Krut, 1987, *op cit*., p. 136

[157] Bickford-Smith, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 148-9; Shain, 1994, *op cit.*, pp. 26-34

[158] For the history of the Copperbelt mines, see Elena L. Berger, 1974 *op cit.,* and Charles Perrings, 1979, *Black Mineworkers in Central Africa: industrial strategies and the evolution of an African proletariat in the Copperbelt, 1911-1941*, Heinemann, London, and Vellut, 1983, *op cit*.

World War (1914-1918), and the territory was mandated to South African control by the League of Nations in 1920. It developed a social order similar to South Africa, with commercial farming, diamond fields from 1908, copper mines, offshore fishing and some manufacturing, all resting on cheap African migrant labour. From 1924 naturalised Whites were given voting rights in South African elections; South African laws and policies were applied to the territory. Linkages were reinforced by the growing recruitment of migrant labour for South Africa, and the penetration of the economy by South African-based capital.[159]

To the east was Portugal's colony, Mozambique. Migrant labour to South Africa provided Mozambique with revenue, and the incentive and the means to extend control over the African hinterland, while Lourenço Marques benefited from increased trade with the Transvaal, and Portugal's free trade policy. Mozambique's foreign trade rose 300 percent between 1877 and 1892,[160] with more merchandise passed through that port in the first six months of 1893 than in the previous five years.[161] A railway linked Delagoa Bay to the Witwatersrand from 1895, and the harbour complex at Lourenço Marques was rapidly developed from 1900.[162] In 1862 there were only 15 Europeans in Lourenço Marques, in addition to a military garrison of 61; by 1900, the White population of Mozambique had risen to 6,356 people, rising to perhaps 15,000 by the 1920s.[163] The urban African population was estimated to be as large as 10,000 in 1916,[164] and, as in South Africa, Africans, generally migrants, were subject to a set of coercive labour regulations, the *indigenato* (with the exception of wealthy or educated *assimilado/as*).[165] Large-scale South African investments in real estate and construction were important in this process, although the subject of some resentment. South African interests controlled the key economic sectors in Lourenço Marques, including utilities, shipping and handling, insurance and banking by 1910,[166] but were displaced from 1910 onwards.[167]

The great question for all employers in southern Africa was the supply of cheap African labour, and competition continually took place throughout the region. [168] Dominated by American and South African

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[159] See Reginald H. Green and Kimmo Kiljunen, 1981, "The Colonial Economy: structures of growth and exploitation", in Reginald H. Green, Kimmo Kiljunen and Marj-Liisa Kiljunen, 1981, editors, *Namibia: the last colony*, Longman, Harlow; Duncan Innes, 1981, "South African Capital and Namibia", in Green, Kiljunen and Kiljunen, 1981, editors, *op cit*.; Pekka Peltola, 1995, *The Lost May Day: Namibian workers struggle for independence*, Finnish Anthropological Society in Association with the Nordic Africa Institute, Helsinki, pp. 62-97

[160] Jean Marie Penvenne, 1995, *African Workers and Colonial Racism: Mozambican strategies and struggles in Lourenço-Marques, 1877-1962*, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, Heinemann, Portsmouth NH, James Currey, London, 1995, *op cit*., p. 17

[161] Harries, 1994, *op cit.*, p. 141

[162] Penvenne, 1995, *op cit*., p. 35

[163] Figures from José Capela, 1981, *O Movimento Operário em Lourenço Marques, 1898-1927*, Edic es Afrontamento, Porto, p. 11, and Allen Isaacman and Barbara Isaacman, 1983, *Mozambique: from colonialism to revolution*, Zimbabwe Publishing House, Harare, p.29. I am grateful to Jeremy Grest for directing my attention to Capela, 1981, *op cit*., for providing a précis, and for translating key passages. I would also like to thank Adolfo Zunguza for his translation.

[164] Penvenne, 1995, *op cit*., p. 71

[165] Penvenne, 1995, *op cit*., p. 1

[166] Penvenne, 1995, *op cit*., p. 17

[167] Penvenne, 1995, *op cit*., p. 17;also Jean Marie Penvenne, 1984, "Labour Struggles at the Port of Lourenço Marques, 1900-1933", *Review: journal of the Fernand Braudel Centre for the Study of Economies, Historical Systems and Civilizations*, vol.8, no. 2, pp. 249-253, 255-257, 260-264

[168] Such competition was a central theme in the history of mining and commercial farming in central Africa: see, *inter alia*, William Beinart, 1987, "'Jamani': Cape workers in German South West Africa, 1904-1912", in William Beinart and Colin Bundy, editors, 1987, *Hidden Struggles in Rural South Africa: politics and movements in the Transkei and Eastern Cape 1890-1930*, James Currey, London; Berger, 1974, *op cit*., especially chapter 2; Henry S. Meebelo, 1986,

companies, the Northern Rhodesian mines expanded rapidly, but soon competed with the Belgian Congo and the south; Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland competed for migrant labour with South Africa and Southern Rhodesia; Southern Rhodesia fought an ongoing struggle for labour supplies with South Africa, which in turn lost workers to South West Africa in the early twentieth century. Within the borders of different States, similar patterns of competition existed: in South Africa, mines competed with farms, and gold mines with collieries.[169] Such was the labour shortage problem that the Witwatersrand mines even recruited 63,000 indentured Chinese workers in 1904 on three-year contracts, in a short-lived and highly controversial move.

A more lasting solution was found in the growing State interventions on Africans to enter wage labour, and the creation of systems of monopsonic labour recruiting which channelled African labour, and reduced choices and movements. The Chamber of Mines set up the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WNLA) in 1901 to organise recruitment in the Transvaal, Bechuanaland, Mozambique, Namibia, Northern Rhodesia, and Nyasaland, while the Native Recruiting Corporation, established in 1912, focused on Natal, the Cape, Basutoland and Swaziland.[170] Another initiative was the creation of the "maximum average system", an agreement amongst local mining houses to enforce maximum wages. This effectively prevented mines bidding against one another, and kept labour costs down. The consolidation of control over African labour may have driven wages down by nearly twenty percent in the early twentieth century.[171]

Migrant labour was regarded as cheap, on the grounds that workers' families subsisted independently through farming,[172] while coercive labour laws, like the Native Labour Regulation Act of 1911, modelled on the old Masters and Servants Act, criminalised desertion and strikes. Combined with the monopsonic labour recruitment system and the maximum average system, plus the control made possible by closed compounds, such measures helped make the Witwatersrand mines profitable. There were only two successful unionisation drives amongst African mineworkers in South Africa in over a century: the short-lived African Mineworkers Union was formed in the 1940s, and the more durable National Union of Mineworkers in the 1980s. Given a low grade of ore, and inelastic international gold prices, it is probable that the system of cheap and unfree African migrant labour made a major contribution to South Africa's industrialisation. The price paid was, however, a terrible one, in the form of coercion and discrimination, families divided, and low

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African Proletarians and Colonial Capitalism: the origins, growth and struggles of the Zambian labour movement to 1964, Kenneth Kaunda Foundation, Lusaka, especially chapter 1; R.J.B. Moorson, 1978, "Migrant Labourers and formation of SWANLA, 1900-1926", *South African Labour Bulletin*, vol.4, no. 1/ 2, double issue; Ian Phimister, 1988, *An Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe, 1890-1948: capital accumulation and class struggle*, Longman, London, New York; Charles van Onselen, 1976, *Chibaro: African mine labour in Southern Rhodesia*, Ravan Press, Braamfontein; Jean-Luc Vellut, 1983, "Mining in the Belgian Congo", in David Birmingham and Phyllis M. Martin, editors, 1983, *History of Central Africa*, Longman, London, New York, vol.two

[169] Besides the references cited above, also see Allan D. Cooper, 1999, "The Institutionalisation of Contract Labour in Namibia", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol.25, no. 1, on the issue of internal competition within South West Africa.

[170] On these developments, see Simon E. Katzenellenbogen, 1982, *South Africa and Southern Mozambique: labour, railways and trade in the making of a relationship*, Manchester, Manchester University Press; Alan Jeeves, 1985, *Migrant Labour in South Africa's Mining Economy: the struggle for the gold mines' labour supply, 1890-1920*, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg

[171] Harries, 1994, *op cit.,* pp. 129-140

[172] There was an initial interest by the mine-owners in housing more skilled African workers in cottages and locations on the mines, on a permanent basis, but by the twentieth-century, the hostel predominated: in 1914, there were roughly 4, 740 African men, plus 7,1078 women and children, housed in this manner. Harries, 1994, *op cit*., pp. 198-199

wages earned amid terrible conditions and high rates of mortality. Was it worth it? The confident assertion of classical Marxism that capitalism and imperialism was a "necessary evil"[173] rings somewhat hollow.

Transnational connections in this period, alluded to above, were evident in two ways. "In the eighties and nineties", on the one hand, "a number of British unions opened branches in Durban, Kimberley … Johannesburg … [and] … Cape Town", including the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners in Cape Town in 1881, the Amalgamated Society of Engineers in 1894, which organised skilled metalworkers such as blacksmiths and fitters and turners, and a South African Typographical Union for skilled printers in Durban and Pietermaritzburg in Natal.[174] On the other hand, demands for the job colour bar soon evolved into a local tradition of White Labourism: this drew directly on the policies of the Australian Labour Party,[175] as well as the existing colour bar traditions of the local trade unions. A South African Labour Party (hereafter the SA Labour Party) was established in October 1909 and launched in January 1910 after two years of unity talks, and with the backing of most of the Natal and Witwatersrand unions, and large bloc in the Cape. It favoured residential segregation, the repatriation of the Indians, and job reservation alongside welfare and municipal reforms, and a vaguely socialist aim modelled on that of British Labour.[176] Its ultimate aim was an exclusively White South Africa.

1.6. Labour in White skin, and black

What was the character of the working class that the left in South Africa sought to mobilise? Besides being structurally divided by the unfree/ free and African / White distinctions, it was also culturally diverse. The hostels were, for all their coercive aspects, also a zone of fairly autonomous cultural and social life, which was often structured around ethnic groups and places of origin. It would be mistaken to assume that the "African migrants share[d] the values and beliefs of workers in Europe or the United States",[177] but they were also not monolithic, drawing on a range of pre-capitalist rural cultural repertoires, and often organising through quasi-traditional and patriarchal structures. At the head were the "elders" who provided advice and discipline, organised remittances to families, and raised grievances with a management whose power was

[173] For example, Bill Warren, 1980, *Imperialism: pioneer of capitalism*, Verso, London, p. 136: "Imperialism was the means through which the techniques, culture, and institutions that had evolved in Western Europe over several centuries … sowed their revolutionary seeds in the rest of the world".
[174] W.H. Andrews, 1941, *Class Struggles in South Africa*, Stewart Printing, Cape Town, pp. 12-13
[175] This influence is stressed by Hyslop, 1999, *op cit.* and Katz, 1976, *op cit.*
[176] South African Labour Party, [1910] 1960, "Programme of Principles", in D.W. Krűger, 1960, editor, *South African Parties and Policies, 1910-1960: a select source book*, Human and Rousseau, Cape Town, p. 73. The 1909 constitution and platform, the 1910 general election manifesto and several other policy documents may be found in Ticktin, 1973, *op cit.*, pp. 487-495, 526-533. The amended 1912-1913 constitution and platform may be found in F.J. Grobler, 1968, "Die Invloed van Geskoolde Blanke Arbeid op die Suid-Afrikaanse Politiek van 1886 to 1924", PhD thesis, University of Potchefstroom, appendix one, pp. 498-519; Also see D.G. Thomas, 1963, "A History of the Labour Party in South Africa up to 1924", Honours dissertation, Department of Political Studies, University of the Witwatersrand, pp. 26-7, and van Duin, 1990, *op cit*., pp. 650-651. The impact of the Australian Labour Party on South Africa is stressed in Kennedy, 1984*, op cit.,* pp. 3-4, and Hyslop examines how the White Labourite approach, combined hostility to labour exploitation with a project of racial domination and segregation: Hyslop, 1999, *op cit.*, p. 418
[177] Harries, 1994, *op cit.*, pp. xiii-xix

partly based on the ability to provide the favours that eased hostel life.[178] These quasi-traditional organisations sometimes provided a means to organise more overt protests – including boycotts, demonstrations and even strikes – while reinforcing ethnic divisions.

The mining compounds were typically divided by ethnicity or nationality, an official policy on most mines that resonated with popular identities, and a complex hierarchy of occupations and wages emerged amongst the Africans. This was structured by experience and skills, as well as background. Zulus typically dominated the job of African "police boy"; Basuto carved out a niche as shaft sinkers; men from Pondoland in the eastern Cape carved out a niche as machine-drillers; and the "Shangaans" from Mozambique, the largest component of the workforce, were concentrated in the roughest tasks as "hammer boys" using hand drills and "lashers" loading broken rock onto the underground *cocopans* (trolleys).[179] The darker side of the ethnic situation were murderous armed clashes, or "faction fights", amongst African mineworkers, starting in Kimberley;[180] such clashes also took place outside the mines on occasion.[181]

The working class was also fractured in terms of space and place. Many Africans lived in the hostels, and worked the mines, but tens of thousands did not; some of the latter lived in families in town, unlike the single migrants, some in the dreary slums of downtown Johannesburg, some on freehold urban lands bought between 1908 and 1923, such as Sophiatown near Fordsburg, and Alexandra, north of Bezuidenhout Valley; others were housed on their employers' properties; and others lived in segregated townships set aside by municipal governments (like Pimville, nucleus of Soweto), and even in various Indian and Coloured locations.

There was an east-west axis of racially mixed, rough, working class districts in downtown Johannesburg, starting from Ferreriastown, Fordsburg and Vrededorp in the west, moving through the Newtown and Commissioner street areas, which included the Market Square, onto Turffontein and Bezuidenhout Valley, in the east. Several mines, such as Simmer and Jack, were immediately to the south. Newtown was the site of government railway yards, tram yards, and power stations, as well as municipal hostels for African sanitary workers. The townships were to the south, while the ruling class areas were to the north, in Parktown. The Witwatersrand townships were overcrowded, located in the least desirable areas, and hemmed in by a whole net of harsh rules. The Klipspruit location, for example, was built next to a sewerage works, and its administration levied a charge of 2 shillings and sixpence to ride a bicycle.[182] Elsewhere the same seems true: Ndabeni in Cape Town, for example, was built for 700 people, but home to 3,500 by 1918, and, as an observer noted, there were "no streets … no lights, and the huts were scorchingly hot in summer and too cold in winter".[183]

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[178] See, *inter alia*, Harries, 1994, *op cit.,* and T. Dunbar Moodie, 1986, "The Moral Economy of the Black Miners' Strike of 1946", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol.13, no. 1

[179] See, for example, Jeff Guy and Motlatsi Thabane, 1988, "Technology, Ethnicity and Ideology: Basotho miners and shaft-sinking on the South African gold mines", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol.14, no. 2; Moodie, 1986, *op cit*., pp. 13-14

[180] Harries, 1994, *op cit*., pp. 121-124

[181] Lambert and Morrell, 1996, *op cit*., p. 79

[182] Bonner, 1982, *op cit*; Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., p. 111

[183] Figures and quotation from Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 46-8

Nonetheless, there were some linkages between the Africans in the hostels and beyond. On the weekends, migrant workers engaged in a range of cultural and social activities at the mines, like church services, dancing, drinking and sports, or applied for passes to visit "town". On Saturday afternoons and on Sundays, they went to urban areas for entertainment and women, to meet friends from other mines – particularly men from their home districts, whom they might also visit at the hostels of other mines.[184] African mining clerks were also a connection between the mines and the towns, as many resided in the urban slums: for example, an "appreciable proportion" of the Africans living in Vrededorp worked on the mines.[185]

Even so, while the world of the migrants overlapped with the world of the "town" Africans, the world of the latter had many distinct features. It drew from a different labour pool, was often better educated, and it was far more "South African" than the mining workforce. In 1931, for instance, 47,4 percent of newly arrived African labour on the Witwatersrand *not* employed in the mines came from Natal, with a further 44,2 percent from the Transvaal: by contrast, only 3,6 percent and 10,6 percent of African mineworkers were from Natal and the Transvaal, respectively.[186] It also included a more educated "middle class" layer of artisans, clerks, journalists, teachers and merchants (as well as unemployed and *lumpen* groups). From the First World War onwards, there was a steady increase in the population of urban African women, and the African urban population outside of the mines became far more balanced, as African working class families set down roots.

Again, one can find a relationship between nationality, ethnicity and the division of labour. Not only were the urban Africans outside the compounds were far more "South African" than the African migrants, but they were also a major source of clerical labour; this was particular true of educated men from the Eastern Cape. At the same time the extensive network of mission schools in northern Nyasaland (combined with a lack of suitable employment in that largely agricultural country) meant that educated Nyasas were disproportionately represented amongst African mining clerks across southern Africa.[187]

Developments were not that different for much of the White working class in this respect. If the original White miners were often migrants living in bachelors' barracks and cheap hostels, who returned to homes abroad,[188] the White working class of the early twentieth century was increasingly settled. By 1904 (partly due to a growing confidence in the future of the mines and associated industries) 80,16 percent of Whites in Johannesburg lived in families, even if, eight years later, 49,31 percent of White miners were single.[189] Perhaps half of the latter miners were emigrant Cornishmen, separated from their families, who remitted incomes back "home".[190] Here, though, we need to distinguish between the urban life of the better paid skilled White workers (who, on the mines, could double, and sometimes up to five times, more than

[184] See Moodie, 1986, *op cit.*, pp. 7-12, 30
[185] Bonner, 1979, *op cit*., p. 282
[186] Freund, 1989, *op cit*., p. 83
[187] Van Onselen, 1976, *op cit*., pp. 118-121, 206-7
[188] On the Witwatersrand, see Hyslop, 2002, *op cit.*
[189] Lange, 2003, *op cit*., pp. 12, 79; also see Krikler, 2005, *op cit*., p. 30
[190] Jon Hyslop, 1999, *op cit.,* pp. 411

wages for comparable jobs abroad),[191] and the poor Whites. Again, it is worth noting the ethnic dimension to social stratification: as discussed earlier, poor Whites were typically unskilled Afrikaners.

While the legal and social status of the poor Whites was higher than that of most Africans, their material conditions were not that differnet to many of the town Africans, nor all that distcinct from those of the Coloured and Indian workers. The Coloureds ("brown" people) were a broad and sometimes loose category, generally of mixed race, and largely descended from the slaves and servants of the preindustrial Cape.[192] Yet culture could also define Coulored-ness: Africans assimilated into Afrikaner culture, sometimes known as *inboekselings* and *oorlams*, were often considered Coloured. Despite a wide divisions (for example, Muslim "Cape Malays" were often seen as a separate group), the Coloureds generally had a different legal and social status to Africans, and a distinct Coloured identity was evident by the late nineteenth century.[193] In the western and northern Cape, Coloureds were actually the majority, with African ppopulations overshadowed by the combined local Coloured and White population. In Cape Town, Coloureds were also a significant component of skilled workers.[194] The number of Coloured people in commercial and industrial occupations in the western Cape rose from 9 percent in 1891 to 20 percent in 1904, with the number of clerks, storekeepers and hawkers tripling, and the number of masons doubling, in this period.[195]

An important result was that the coercive labour controls applied to Africans only affected a minority of the workforce in Cape Town and Kimberley, as compared to the situation elsewhere, and the qualified franchise gave the local politics and society a distinctive cast. Moving east, the African population grew in significance: in 1921, Port Elizabeth had 11,472 Africans, compared to only 3,707 in Cape Town, as well as 13,203 Coloureds and Asians; East London had an African population of 11,601, and only 2,006 Coloureds and Asians.[196] While Coloureds were concentrated in the Cape, and in South Africa within southern Africa, Coloured communities also emerged in South West Africa, in Southern Rhodesia, in Mozambique, in Swaziland,[197] and elsewhere.

Natal was home to a large Indian population. The Indian population reached 20,000 by 1880, over 30,000 by 1885,[198] and by 1911, Natal was home to 98,114 Whites, 133,420 Indians, and 953,398 Africans.[199] The Indians were heavily drawn from a population of indentured plantation workers brought to Natal from the 1860s to 1911, mainly low-caste Hindus from the Madras Presidency. Until 1895, these workers had the option of transport back to India, or a plot of land locally, and the great majority had

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[191] Katz, 1994, *op cit*., pp. 67, 75-7
[192] Keegan, 1996, *op cit.*
[193] See, *inter alia*, Bickford-Smith, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 186-209; Ian Goldin, 1987, "The Reconstitution of Coloured Identity in the Western Cape", in Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido, editors, *op cit*., and James Muzondidya, 2002, "Towards a Historical Understanding of the Making of the Coloured Community in Zimbabwe, 1890-1920", *Identity, Culture and Politics*, vol.3, no. 2, pp. 77, 81-3
[194] Nicol, 1984, *op cit.*, pp. 19-21
[195] Goldin, 1987, *op cit*., p. 159
[196] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., p.p. 137-8
[197] Nonhlanhala Dlamini, 2004, "'No Desire To Be Regarded As Either Black or White': the colour of identity in Swaziland, 1913 – 1947", History Research Seminar Series, History Workshop/ Department of History, University of the Witwatersrand, 29 July 2004; Muzondidya, 2002, *op cit*.
[198] Swan, 1985, *op cit*., pp. 3-4
[199] Paul S. Thompson, 1990, *Natalians First: separatism in South Africa 1909-1961*, Southern, Johannesburg, p. 1; also see Lambert and Morrell, 1996, *op cit*., p. 68

elected to stay. They were supplemented by the arrival of "passenger Indians", independent immigrants including a large merchant component. The merchants were mainly drawn from Gujarat, and included many Muslims; a good number maintained transnational links to the Indian bourgeoisie. However, in the early twentieth century, most Natal Indians were workers, booth unskilled and unskilled; there was also a small elite of Western-educated clerks, doctors, interpreters, lawyers and teachers, and a significant number of small farmers and businessmen.[200] The Indian commercial elite was of growing concern to White capitalists, who agitated for various restrictions,[201] while skilled Indian workers faced opposition from White trade unionists; the educated elite was hampered by segregation and discrimination, particularly in the civil service.

Despite differences of caste, class and religion, a "growing Indian ethnicity" became clearly evident.[202] Communities of Indians also emerged in Kimberley, in Port Elizabeth, and on the Witwatersrand; an Indian minority also became a factor in Southern Rhodesia.[203] The qualified franchise in Natal had been whittled down by successive amendments, but while Africans became almost entirely excluded,[204] the (fairly limited) Indian vote remained important, despite an 1896 Franchise Amendment Act, particularly in several municipal wards in Durban. This gave Natal politics some unusual features, as did the fact that the White population of Natal was overwhelmingly English (elsewhere Afrikaners were the majority amongst Whites). At times, the character of Natal was expressed in British "jingoism".[205] In the Cape, the Indians had the same legal status as the Coloureds; they were barred from the Orange Free State and subject to legal discrimination in Natal and the Transvaal.

Coloured and Indian workers straddled the interstices between unskilled African and skilled White labour. They were free and settled labour, were very often urban, had legal union rights from 1924, and were generally better paid than Africans. At the same time, they, no less than White workers, were threatened by cheap, unfree African labour. There is little doubt that both Coloured and Indian workers were just as willing to pursue job colour bars. In 1906, for example, Coloured groups successfully lobbied the Cape Town municipality and harbours to employ Coloureds in preference to Africans.[206] Yet they were also subject to various legal disabilities on account of their race: besides the restrictive franchise, there were

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[200] In the Umlazi district of Durban at this time, for example, amongst Indian men there were 3,474 farm labourers, 127 labourers, 77 railway labourers, as well as 256 skilled manual workers, 107 waiters and 53 clerks, in addition to 1634 market gardeners, 176 storekeepers, 169 small cultivators, and 38 grocers: see Freund, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 44-45, table 3.5. I have derived the category of "skilled manual labour" by collapsing together the following categories used by Freund: bakers and confectioners, barbers and their assistants, basket makers, bricklayers, carpenters and their assistants, jewellers, painters, and printers.

[201] Lambert and Morrell, 1996, *op cit*., p. 66

[202] Lambert and Morrell, 1996, *op cit*., p. 84

[203] Surendra Bhana and Joy Brain, 1990, *Setting Down Roots: Indian migrants to South Africa, 1860-1911*, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, especially chapters 4 and 5; Muzondidya, 2002, *op cit.*

[204] In Natal, "Africans, by passing certain 'civilisation tests,' could become voters, but not more than two or three ever qualified, and for the last decade or more there been only one African voter": thus, Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit.,* pp. 101-2. Similarly, John Lambert and Robert Morrell note that the actual number of African voters was uncertain, but probably no more than six: Lambert and Morrell, 1996, *op cit*., p. 72. . Ticktin gives similar figures: there were perhaps 150 Indian voters, 50 Coloureds and six Africans: Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., p. 42

[205] Lambert and Morrell, 1996, *op cit*., p. 69

[206] Bickford-Smith, 1995, *op cit*., p. 214

attempts at residential segregation, and lower pay for the same jobs as Whites. If the racial division of labour in the Cape was not always as rigid as that in the mining towns, Whites nonetheless dominated management and supervisory positions, and the more secure and highly paid skilled jobs.[207] Even on the docks in the 1890s, White labourers worked in separate gangs, and received higher pay.

The deep divisions between the two major poles in the working class – unfree African migrant, skilled White worker - was exemplified in, and reinforced by, the fact that a great deal of communication between the two groups at the workplace took place through the medium of a crude pidgin called *fanakalo*, developed on the Natal sugar plantations, and then used on mines throughout southern Africa.[208] And it precisely the juxtaposition of a subject and unfree African workforce and a free White workforce that provided the continual incentive for employers to substitute Whites with Africans, particularly in economic downturns. Coupled to an official State ideology of White supremacy – an ideology that many White workers undoubtedly accepted – this situation militated against the development of an interracial labour movement.

A third important aspect of the character of the working class was this: some overlaps and connections *despite* the great divides. There were many overlaps between the worlds of the Coloured and Indian working classes, the poor Whites, and the urban Africans, and multi-racial slums were to be found in all the main centres. Besides the districts on the Witwatersrand already mentioned, there were places such as the Malay Camp in Kimberley, Districts One and Six, and Woodstock, in Cape Town, and Grey Street in Durban. In the Cape, poverty also pressed poor Whites into integrated mission schools. This is not to romanticise the situation, or to imagine wish into existence a pure and united working class, but to note that the there were many points at which the experience of the different layers of the working class intersected, and to suggest that if South Africa was racially divided, its proletariat was not always segregated.

If it is tempting to see the White workers as a cosseted labour aristocracy, the dangerous working conditions, grim urban life, and bitter class struggles of the period paint a rather different picture, and emphasise the need to recognise that their privileges were often relative and petty, and overshadowed by the cleavages of the larger class system. Before 1924, the White worker lacked legal trade union rights and access to official industrial relations machinery. It was only in 1915 that some limited union rights were conceded to White workers on the mines, soon followed by capitalist attempts to renege, and civil rights were regularly violated, with union leaders jailed without trial and bans on meetings of more than six people regularly enforced during strikes.

Coupled with employer hostility and contempt, and a violent State apparatus that intervened harshly in strikes, and the ongoing attempt to substitute White with African labour on the mines, this made for a series of violent industrial struggles by White workers in 1907, 1913, 1914 and 1922. High living costs (approximately three times those in obtaining in England),[209] overcrowding, the centralisation of residential land by the mining houses (which engaged in speculation and rack-renting), a lack of urban services, waves

[207] Bickford-Smith, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 127-128; van Duin, 1990, *op cit*., pp. 627-8
[208] On this point, see Alexander, 2004, *op cit*., p. 124. On *fanakalo*, see Harries, 1994, *op cit*., pp. 208-9. In Northern Rhodesia, a similar pidgin, *chikabanga*, was sometimes used: Meebelo, 1986, *op cit.,* p. 38
[209] D.G. Thomas, 1963, *op cit.,* pp. 7-8

of lay-offs due to the instability of the mining industry, formed an essential backdrop to these clashes.[210] In Cape Town, unemployment, overcrowding and poor urban conditions were all important issues.[211]

As was the case in Kimberley,[212] mining on the Witwatersrand was far more hazardous than mining in many other places. Besides accidents and inadequate safety measures – from June 1903 to June 1909, there were 4,874 recorded fatalities on the Transvaal mines, including 409 Whites[213] – there were the ravages of silicosis, in which the quartzite dust created by drilling destroyed the lungs of African and White alike on the Witwatersrand. In the first decade of the 1900s, the average working life of underground miners was twenty-eight years less than the average male population,[214] with up to 20 percent of the underground White miners affected by the condition at times.[215]

There was certainly enough contact to inspire official concern with enforcing segregation. In Cape Town (where integration between Coloureds and Whites was particularly noticeable), this helped prompt efforts were made to segregate public facilities and residential areas from the late nineteenth century onwards,[216] and similar campaigns were mounted in Johannesburg. At the same time, there were consistent efforts to separate Africans from the other races. In 1901, for instance, Africans were forcibly removed from District Six, and relocated to the new Ndabeni township, which was surrounded by a six-foot-high barbed wire fence, patrolled by guards, sited next to a sewerage dump.[217] Ndabeni was meant for married men: an equally grim Docks Location housed single African migrants. Yet large parts of central Cape Town remained racially mixed.[218]

In 1923, an Urban Areas Act was passed that tried to enforce residential segregation across the country, but the State's campaigns to uproot the multi-racial slums of the Witwatersrand would last well into the 1950s. Education was another site where these policies played out. There was increasing State expenditure on Coloured and Indian education in the twentieth century, yet this was coupled to the establishment of separate public schools, and attempts to segregate the mission schools,.[219] *Per capita* public expenditure on Coloured and Indian education was substantially lower than that for Whites,[220] yet was far better than that for Africans, for whom the State allocated funding mainly in the form of limited subsidies to mission schools.

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[210] Lange, 2003, *op cit*., pp. 50-58, 102-110, 165
[211] Bickford-Smith, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 105-112, 132-185
[212] In the early 1880s, mine workers at Kimberley "were twelve times as likely to die in the course of their work as their British peers": Worger, 187, *op cit*., p. 164
[213] Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., p. 35
[214] Katz, 1994, *op cit*., p. 4; also see Katz, 1976, *op cit.*
[215] Lange, 2003, *op cit*., pp. 50-58, 102-110, 165
[216] Bickford-Smith, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 91-125, 137-163, 210-217
[217] Maylam, 1986, *op cit*., p. 149
[218] Bickford-Smith, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 160-163, 212
[219] For example, Bickford-Smith, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 31
[220] Segregated public schools for Whites in Cape Town in the 1890s attracted twice the subsidy per pupil of mission schools, and Whites received five times more expenditure than the other races: Bickford-Smith, 1995, *op cit*., p. 142

1.7. Divided class, divided politics: White Labourism, African nationalism, and beyond

The creation of South Africa through capitalist industrialisation and British imperialism did not, then, involve the creation of a specifically "South African" working class. If ever a working class did neatly fit into the boundaries of a nation-state, it was the multi-racial and multi-national working class that emerged. Its transnational character did not, however, imply a neat process of proletarian unity, with the tendency of capitalism to homogenise the working class offset by the specific history and structure of what became South Africa.

African and White workers were employed in different occupations under distinctive conditions; they also lived in different areas, experienced a different interface with the State apparatus, with the African workers both members of a subject race and an unfree workforce, and were, furthermore, culturally and racially alien to one another. Arguments that draw an analogy between racial segregation in the United States and the South African situation are flawed precisely because they fail to recognise what was specific to South Africa: the deep "gulf … between free, white, labour and coerced, black labour" and the deep involvement of the State in the day-to-day operations of local capitalism.[221]

The lived experience of racial conflict and inequality had a profound imprint on consciousness in the region, providing fertile breeding grounds for all-sided chauvinism. The memoirs of Bernard Sachs (associated with the International Socialist League and then the CPSA) provide some insight into how this impacted upon socialist activity. Part of a CPSA team leafleting a dark and grim African squatter settlement near Johannesburg in 1927, he recalled:[222]

> … I handed a leaflet to an African woman standing in the doorway of a shack.
>
> 'I'm suffering from chest pains, master', she said with a note of sarcasm in her voice… 'You couldn't perhaps give me a blanket?'…
>
> 'Will you buy this paper *Freedom*? It'll give you light', I said to a passing African. "The cost is only one penny".
>
> 'For one penny I can buy a candle, master', he replied …
>
> An African came up the road, his face truculent with drink, and his tongue snarling curses that cut through the night'. There is nothing more terrible than to be an intellectual nigger', he declaimed at the top of his voice. 'I don't only suffer as a black man, I also suffer as a personality. Can you believe that a raw Boer policeman should ask me for a pass, when I've read Bernard Shaw's *Man and Superman*?'

[221] Alexander, 2004, *op cit*., p. 132
[222] Bernard Sachs, 1973, *Mist of Memory*, Valentine, Mitchell and Co., London, pp. 145-6

> A white policeman, an African 'police-boy' at his side, was busy thrusting the inquisitive, dancing light of his torch through the window of a shack … They were soon surrounded by a ring of black faces and white eyes and teeth behind which lurked derision.
>
> 'Get away, niggers', the policeman called out, his hand on the butt of his revolver.
>
> 'Niggers', they repeated, as they slouched away sulkily. 'Who is he calling niggers, the Boer bastard?' …
>
> We made our way home. Everywhere the dogs snarled at us, as if they had property to protect.
>
> 'I see you, white men', a voice barked at us from a shack …

Such divisions were reflected in the early labour movement in South Africa. From the 1870s to the late 1910s, the labour movement was predominantly a movement of English, White and skilled workers. In general, moreover, the movement was one that demanded job colour bars to exclude Africans (as well as Coloureds and Indians, where applicable) from "White" jobs. This was particularly evident in the mining industry, where unions tried to enforce a clear racial division of labour, but in other contexts – for example, Durban – job colour bars were an important part of union policies. The Cape was a partial exception. Coloureds were a well-established part of the skilled workforce in several trades, and there was something of a tradition of interracial organisation (between Coloureds and Whites, not Africans), including mixed unemployed demonstrations in 1884 and 1886 in Cape Town.[223] While several craft unions did accept Coloured members, a great many White trade unionists in the Cape favoured the job colour bar and restricting membership of craft unions to Whites; Coloureds were often marginalised even in the mixed unions.[224]

The founding of the SA Labour Party was part of an international trend towards the formation of working class political parties, but its mixture of social democratic demands and racial segregation was very much shaped by local trade union traditions. The SA Labour Party was always very much the a party of English labour, with a smattering of professionals and small businessmen, with its support concentrated in Cape Town, Durban, Pietermaritzburg, and the Witwatersrand. In the first general elections to the Union of South Africa parliament in 1910, the party won three seats, followed by a further four (three from by-elections; one by readmitting an expelled member). The party's fortunes continued to rise in the 1910s, with

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[223] For example, there were mixed demonstrations of the unemployed in 1884 and 1886, much to the alarm of the ruling class in Cape Town: see Bickford-Smith, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 108-111

[224] Bickford-Smith, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 164-185; Peter van Duin, 1989, "Artisans and Trade Unions in the Cape Town Building Industry", in Wilmot G. James and Mary Simons, 1989, editors, *The Angry Divide: social and economic history of the Western Cape*, David Philips, Cape Town, Johannesburg, in association with the Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town; van Duin, 1990, *op cit.*

seats on most municipalities on the Witwatersrand, as well as in other centres, and the capture in early 1914 of the Transvaal Provincial Council. It even applied to join the Labour and Socialist International in 1913, but the collapse of that body with the outbreak of the First World War meant the affiliation was never resolved.

It was only in the late 1910s that the social composition of the labour movement in South Africa began to change. The rising number of Afrikaner underground miners began to change the character of the Transvaal Miners' Association – formed in 1902 and only open to underground miners with a blasting certificate[225] – and its successor, the South African Mine Workers' Union of 1913. The union was the largest and most influential of the White unions on the Witwatersrand after 1907. However, there were ongoing complaints that the leadership of the union remained in English hands, and that union business was generally conducted in English. Likewise, the SA Labour Party attracted only limited support from Afrikaner workers, and it found in Afrikaner nationalism a powerful rival that also favoured colour bars and segregation. Afrikaner nationalists tried to capitalise on the situation by forming several (unsuccessful) separate unions by the 1920s. [226]

The other important development in the 1910s was the emergence of unions amongst workers of colour. The Industrial Workers of Africa, formed with the help of the International Socialist League in 1917, was the first union for Africans in South Africa (and, almost certainly, the first such union in Britain's African empire). Other unions also emerged amongst Coloureds and Indians. These unions were generally outside of the established unions, and, in fact, it was only in the late 1920s that the number of workers of colour in trade unions started to exceed the number of Whites. And, as the Afrikaners, nationalism was an important current amongst people of colour. From the late nineteenth century the small African, Coloured and Indian elites formed political groups. Small numbers of educated Africans and Coloureds had emerged in the Orange Free State and Transvaal, from amongst the *inboekselings* and *oorlams* and the more prosperous African tenant farmers on White-owned land.[227] In Kimberley, a layer of wealthy Africans and Coloureds emerged, despite growing restrictions, while in Cape Town, a distinctive Coloured elite, involved in commerce, the professions and industry, was well-established by the late nineteenth century.[228]

In the Cape and Natal, politicians, missionaries and Africans influenced by mid-Victorian notions of universal progress helped create a distinctive, educated, Anglicised, African elite. At the heart of this elite were the *kholwa* ("believers"), over a hundred thousand Africans living on, and around, the mission stations. The rise of prosperous African farmers in the eastern Cape gave the African elite hopes of ongoing

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[225] On the early union, see Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., pp. 40-41; Visser, 2001a, *op cit*., pp. 9-10; Ivan L. Walker and Ben Weinbren, 1961, *2,000 Casualties: a history of the trade unions and the labour movement in the history of South Africa*, South African Trade Union Council, Johannesburg, pp. 4-5, 22-3

[226] Notably the *Arbeid Aldelt*, the *Algemene Afrikaanse Werkersvereniging* (General Afrikaans Workers' Society) and the *Zuid-Afrikaanse Werkers' Bond* (South African Workers' League): see William H. Andrews, 28 December 1917, "The Working Class Problem in South Africa", *The Call*; Visser, 2003, *op cit*., pp. 7-8, 16

[227] See Peter Delius and Stanley Trapido, 1983, "Inboeksellings and Oorlams: the creation and transformation of a servile class", in Belinda Bozzoli, editor, 1983, *Town and Countryside in the Transvaal: capitalist penetration and popular response*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg; Tim Keegan, 1983, "The Sharecropping Economy, African Class Formation and the 1913 Natives Land Act in the Highveld Maize Belt", in Belinda Bozzoli, editor, 1983, *op cit*.; Nicole Ulrich, 1998, *Class, Race and Protest in Bloemfontein, 1919-1925*, paper presented at the Postgraduate Forum, University of the Witwatersrand

[228] Bickford-Smith, 1995, *op cit*., p. 86

progress,[229] as did the emergence of a similar grouping in the Orange Free State amongst tenant farmers.[230] It was amongst the Xhosa elite of that region that a modern African intelligentsia emerged to grapple with the question of African inclusion in an emerging capitalist South Africa.[231] In Natal meanwhile, the Indian commercial elite was a highly visible group by the end of the nineteenth century, and dominated Indian politics over the next two decades, although the locally born Indian educated elite also became increasingly important.[232]

These commercial and educated elites have often been described as a petty bourgeoisie or a "middle class", but such labels – rarely defined very clearly or consistently – do not capture the complexity and diversity of multiple strata ranging from members of the bourgeoisie to professionals to clerks to skilled workers. The elite was not, strictly speaking, a class: it included businessmen, prosperous farmers, and merchants, educated and professional men, such as clerks, doctors, lawyers, and teachers, as well as skilled workers such as compositors; it also overlapped with the chiefly and royal families of the traditional African ruling classes.

From the late nineteenth century these elites of colour had been placed under increased pressure by discriminatory laws and the labour hunger of the mines and farms, and the formation of the Union of South Africa dashed hopes that the limited rights enjoyed in the Cape would be extended to the other provinces. Subsequent State policies were devastating. The 1913 Land Act permanently restricted African land ownership to reserves making up around ten percent of the land area, where laws of communal property applied; all forms of African land tenure outside of these areas, besides labour tenancy, was banned. This crippled the wealthy African tenant farmers and landowners, now unable to take advantage of the growing urban markets by renting or purchasing land. The large layer of African sharecroppers was forced into labour tenancy or evicted,[233] a process that accelerated rapidly in the 1920s.[234] The Urban Areas Act segregated business districts to the disadvantage of African, Coloured and Indian traders, the civil service thwarted the careers of the educated, and a discriminatory welfare system (in place form the 1920s) discriminated on racial grounds. The limited Cape and Natal franchises were whittled away from the late 1920s,[235] while most voting qualifications for White men were abolished in 1931; White women were fully enfranchised in 1930 (they previously only had a municipal vote) to bolster the size of the White electorate.

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[229] The classic study of these developments remains Colin Bundy, 1972, "The Emergence and Decline of a South African Peasantry", *African Affairs*, no. 71, but see Jon Lewis, 1984, "The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry: a critique and reassessment", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol.11, no. 1, for an important re-evaluation.

[230] Keegan, 1983, *op cit.*; Marks, S. and R. Rathbone, R., editors, 1982, *Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa: African class formation, culture and consciousness, 1870-1930*, Harlow, Longman

[231] A fascinating study of the African intelligentsia is provided by Ntongela Masilela, 2003, "New Negro Modernity and New African Modernity", paper presented to The Black Atlantic: literatures, histories, cultures forum, Zurich

[232] Swan, 1985, *op cit*., pp. 39-78

[233] See Colin Bundy, 1972, *op cit.,* pp. 384-5

[234] Ulrich, 1998, *op cit.*

[235] Africans were removed from the common voters' roll in the Cape in 1936, and could henceforth vote for three White members of parliament and three in the Cape provincial Council; Africans countrywide could elect four White senators. A separate Natives' Representative Council was also established: elected through a complicated formula, it was purely advisory. Coloureds were removed from the common voting roll in the Cape in 1957, were separately represented in parliament by Whites until 1969, when a Coloured Persons' Representative Council was created. A nominated South African Indian Council was only formed in 1964.

The early African, Coloured, and Indian political groups were generally nationalist in outlook.[236] All nationalism centres on the project of mobilising a "nation" based on common ethnic, historical, linguistic or racial ties, to use the modern State to express the "national" will. Like Afrikaner nationalists, the nationalists of colour claimed to speak for their respective "nations", and regarded the unity of the classes as desirable and self-evident; all nationalist groups in South Africa shared a Statist orientation, and a drive to modify, rather than abolish, capitalism and the class system.

Nationalism can, however, take many forms, ranging from the millenarian to the conservative, and the African, Coloured and Indian nationalist groups in South Africa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were, above all, conservative and quiescent. They self-consciously promoted the demands of the elites for inclusion into the *status quo*, combining this with a paternalistic concern for the lower classes. The elites who dominated the nationalist groups "typically pleaded for acceptance as equals within the existing order, and never envisaged its destruction".[237]

All the nationalist movements in South Africa were, of course, exclusive movements: if genuine class politics, with its stress on universal horizontal divisions of wealth and power, is *potentially* internationalist, nationalism, with its vision of the world as a series of discrete national "communities", must *always* restrict its claims and demands to a small part of humanity. In South Africa, this was particularly true, for not one nationalist group at this time envisaged even a single united "South African" nation.

In 1894, a Natal Indian Congress was formed, mainly based amongst merchants: the young Mohandas Kamarchand Gandhi, later central to the independence movement of India, was a founder member. Similar bodies sprung up in later years, including the Colonial Born Indian Association in Natal, mainly based amongst the educated elite, and in 1919 a South African Indian Congress (SAIC) was formed. In 1902, an African Political Organisation was formed in the Cape, mainly amongst the Coloured elite. In 1919 it was renamed the "African People's Organisation", and lasted into the 1950s, when it was succeeded by the South African Coloured People's Organisation, which was renamed the Coloured People's Congress in 1959.

In January 1912, the South African Native National Congress was formed in Bloemfontein, adopting its current name, the African National Congress (ANC), in 1923 (it is today the ruling party in South Africa). The founders were prominent "personalities" from all over southern Africa, who arrived "formally dressed in suits, frock coats, top hats and carrying umbrellas".[238] They were drawn from the educated, commercial and traditional elites, and were mainly professionals, businessmen, farmers, as well as the traditional elite of

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[236] The role of these elites in forming, and leading, these early nationalists groups has been the subject of an extensive literature. On the African elites, see *inter alia*, Marks, 1986, *op cit*; André Odendaal, 1984, *Vukani Bantu! The beginnings of black protest politics in South Africa to 1912*, David Philips, Cape Town, Johannesburg, in association with the Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town; Peter Walshe, 1970, *The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa: the African National Congress 1912-1952*, C. Hurst Company, London, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles. On the Coloured elite, see, *inter alia*, Bickford-Smith, 1995, *op cit*.; Ian Goldin, 1987, *op cit.*; Gavin Lewis, 1987, *Between the Wire and the Wall: a history of South African 'Coloured' politics*, David Philips, Cape Town, Johannesburg. On the Indian elite, see, especially, Maureen Swan, 1985, *Gandhi: the South African experience*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg.

[237] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, pp. 386-7

[238] Walshe, 1970, *op cit*, pp. 33-4

chiefs and kings. The South African Native National Congress was designed as a nationalist organisation: it would unite Africans across the divisions of class and ethnicity to defend the interests of Africans in general, and the African elite in particular, within the broad framework of the capitalist order and the State.

This formation of the South African Native National Congress illustrated a key virtue of nationalism for the African elites: it helped unite the highly differentiated *elites* themselves, replacing ethnic and regional divisions with a "national" identity. Pixley ka Izaka Seme, a landowner, the first treasurer of the South African Native National Congress, and later the ANC president, provided a classic statement of this outlook in the run-up to the Bloemfontein meeting:[239]

> The demon of racialism, the aberrations of the Xhosa-Fingo feud, the animosity that exists between the Zulus and the Tongas, between the Basuto and every other Native must be buried and forgotten…. We are one people. These divisions, these jealousies, are the cause of all our woes and all of our backwardness and ignorance today.

Twelve members of the first executive were ministers of religion, the remainder including a building contractor, a teacher, a newspaper editor, and a labour recruiter and interpreter, while a "house of chiefs" was also built into the organisation.[240] The class character of the organisation was hidden by its nationalist discourse, which united the elite and enabled it to seek allies from the popular classes, while simultaneously denying the relevance of class. To raise class questions was, by definition, to imperil the project of "national unity", and so was a "cause of woes".

Many in the African intelligentsia (perhaps an exception can be made for A.K. Soga, a founder member who was in contact with Kier Hardie)[241] saw the South African Native National Congress as a means of mediating relations with modern South Africa: on the one hand, it would help create a "modern" African able to make modern demands; on the other hands, it would preserve social order by inculcating a conservative outlook and respect for African tradition.[242] Against this backdrop, it is not surprising to note that the 1923 ANC constitution called only for "equal rights for all civilised men".[243]

Representative of this general outlook was Solomon T. "Sol" Plaatje, the first general-secretary of the South African Native National Congress. Sol Plaatje was born on a mission station in the Orange Free State to a well-to-do family, and later lived in Kimberley as part of that town's educated African elite: a noted author and journalist, and a businessman, he was a conservative nationalist who looked to the great mining houses to sponsor the African cause.[244] A prolific writer, his most famous text, the 1916 *Native Life in*

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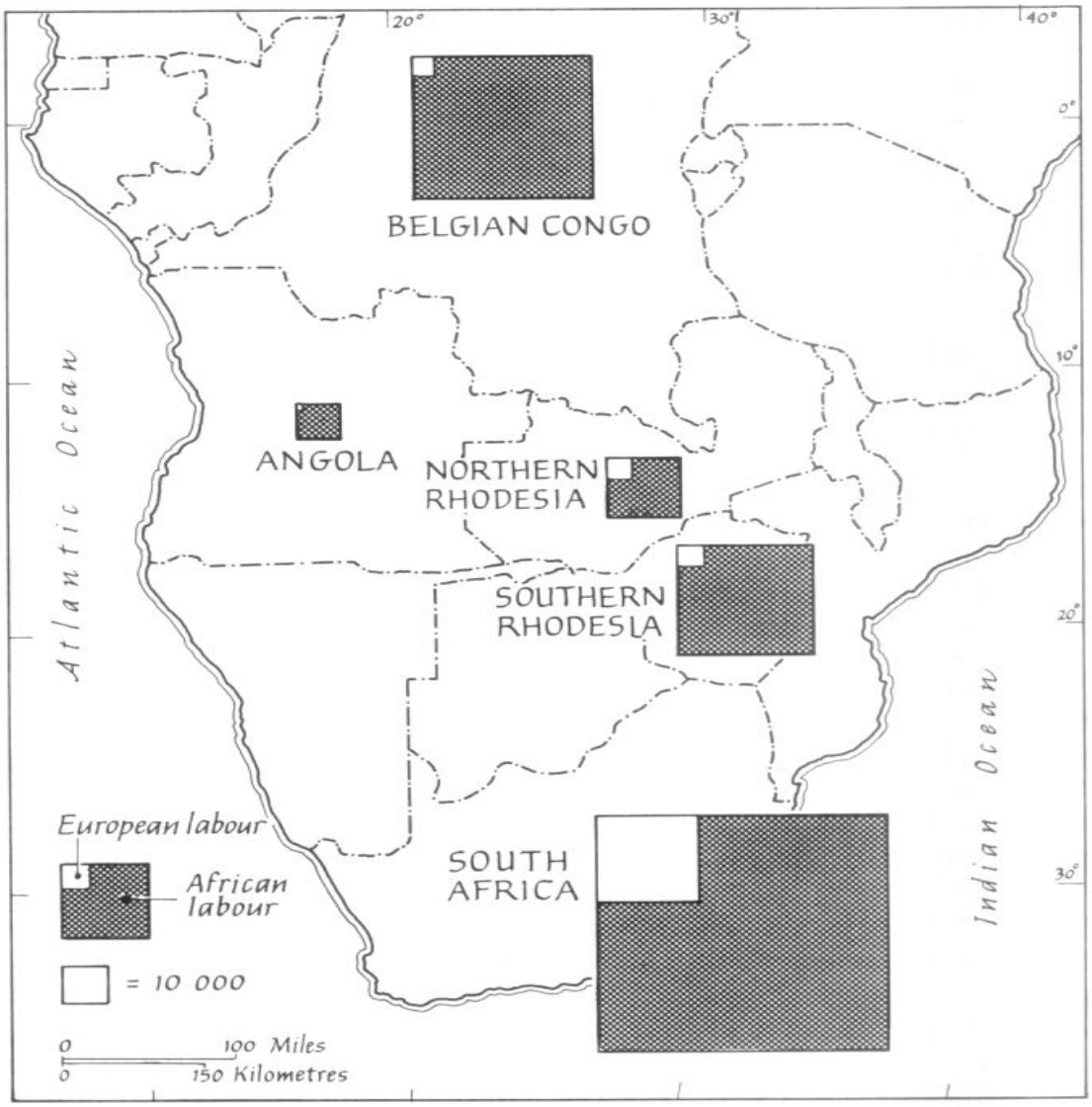
[239] Quoted in Walshe, 1970, *op cit.*, p.33
[240] Walshe, 1970, *op cit.*, p. 36
[241] Drew, 2002, *op cit*., pp. 1-2, 26
[242] See Masilela, 2003, *op cit*., pp. 33-38
[243] Quoted in Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., p. 387
[244] Brian Willan, 1978, "Sol Plaatje, De Beers and an Old Tramshed: class relations and social control in a South Africa Town, 1918-1919", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol.4, no. 2. For more biographical information, see Skota, editor and compiler, [? 1930] n.d, *op cit*., pp. 244-5; Brian Willan, 1984, *Sol Plaatje: a biography*, Ravan Press,



4:2 Labour employed in Central and southern African mining zones, 1937–1939

Note: South Africa (1939) 464359 (incl. 52693 Europeans)
Northern Rhodesia (1939) 24900 (incl. 2700 Europeans)
Southern Rhodesia (1938) 90886 (incl. 3116 Europeans)
Angola (1937) 8697 (incl. 160 Europeans)
Belgian Congo (1939) 157250 (inc. 2250 Europeans)

Figure three: Labour employed on the central and southern African mines by race, 1937-1939

Source: Jean-Luc Vellut, 1983, "Mining in the Belgian Congo," in David Birmingham and Phyllis M. Martin, editors, 1983, *History of Central Africa*, Longman, London, New York, volume two, p. 141 table 4.2

Johannesburg, and Maureen Rall, 2003, *Peaceable Warrior: the life and times of Sol Plaatje*, Sol Plaatje Educational Trust, Kimberley.

South Africa, provided a scathing indictment of the effects of the 1913 Land Act.[245] A powerful account, it was written as an appeal to the British public, including numerous passages "designed to illustrate the loyalty of the African people to the cause of the Imperial Government".[246]

The African, Coloured and Indian nationalist organisations generally fought their campaigns alone, focusing on the issues affecting one race, while membership was typically limited to particular races. A 1906 campaign by the British Indian Association against restrictions on traders in the Transvaal was informed by the view that new restrictions "degraded" the Indians to the level of the Africans.[247] The ANC restricted its membership to Africans until 1969, and only allowed non-Africans to join its executive and serve on its key structures in 1985.

The African Political Organisation initially included some Africans, but focused on the claims of the "educated class" of Coloureds, "as distinguished from the native races".[248] Its focus was offsetting the "the subordinate position of mainly educated and property-owning coloureds in the Cape Colony", a focus it retained when it spread to the Transvaal in 1906, and Orange Free State in 1907.[249] From 1905, Doctor Abdullah Abdurrahman, a prominent Malay medical man, headed the organisation. The Coloured "District Six Ratepayers' Association" regularly helped return Abdurrahman to the Cape Town Council and the Cape Provincial Council from 1904 onwards. He sat on the Cape Town Council from 1904 to 1940, and the Cape Provincial Council from 1914 to 1940.[250]

A central element of the conservative nationalism of these groups was in the field of strategy. At least before the late 1940s, they peppered their demands with professions of loyalty to the Empire, the Union Jack and the local State apparatus, blamed racially oppressive legislation exclusively on the Afrikaners, on the so-called "Boer policy",[251] or the White workers, and placed their hope for redress in a supposedly impartial Imperial power. Caution and moral appeals were the keynote: only rarely did the nationalist groups engage in popular mobilisation, and then only to quickly withdraw from confrontations. The methods were deputations, petitions, and lawsuits: "It is not too much to claim that the courts provided one of the most important political arenas for Africans in the first sixty years of this century".[252] As for the African Political Organisation, if it "ever had a political theory … it was that an expanding, progressive capitalism would

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[245] Sol Plaatje, [1916] 1996, "Native Life in South Africa", abridged version in Brian Willan, editor, 1996, *Sol Plaatje: selected writings*, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, Ohio University Press, Athens

[246] See Willan, editor, 1996, *op cit*., editorial comments, p. 184. See, *inter alia*, Plaatje, [1916] 1996, *op cit.*, pp. 198-9, 204-7

[247] Swan, 1985, *op cit*., pp. 118, also see 145-6

[248] Goldin, 1987, *op cit*., pp. 162-3; also see Bickford-Smith, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 204-7

[249] Caldwell, 1996, *op cit.*, p. 91 n. 3

[250] "Abdurrahman, Dr. Abdullah", in Eric Rosenthal, compiler, 1966, *Southern African Dictionary of National Biography*, Frederick Warne and Company, London, New York, p. 1

[251] See, for instance, Sol Plaatje, [10 July 1917] 1996, "Letter to Mrs Coben Unwin, 10 July 1917", in Willan, editor, 1996, *op cit.,* p. 227. Representative of this line of argument is Sol Plaatje, [1919] 1996, "Pamphlet, Some of the Legal Disabilities Suffered by the Native Population of the Union of South Africa and Imperial Responsibility (London, 1919)", in Willan, editor, *op cit*., especially pp. 256-7

[252] Stanley Trapido, 1970, "Introduction", to Clements Kadalie, 1970, *My Life and The ICU*, London, edited and introduced by Stanley Trapido, pp. 13-14. This introduction is hereafter Trapido, 1970, *op cit*., while the Kadalie book is Kadalie, 1970, *op cit*.

dissolve caste rigidities and give all men equal opportunities in a competitive society" and its middle class leadership "sedulously avoided mass struggles".[253]

The South African Native National Congress responded to the Land Act with a deputation to the British Crown in 1913, which was cancelled to demonstrate loyalty to the British Empire when war started, the organisation "resolving itself at once into a patriotic demonstration, decided to hang up native grievances … till a better time and to tender the authorities every assistance".[254] A 1919 campaign against the pass laws by the Transvaal Native Congress began with the singing of "Rule Britannia", and three cheers for "the King", the Governor-General and the American president, Woodrow Wilson.[255] When arrests began, the leadership called off actions in exchange for an amnesty for protestors and a promised government investigation.[256] That year, a second deputation was sent to Britain to plead the Africans' case to the King and the Versailles Peace Conference. When the State crushed the White workers' militant strikes of 1913, 1914 and 1922, the African Political Organisation and the South African Native National Congress applauded. A partial exception to this pattern of extreme moderation can be made for the Indian Congresses, influenced by Gandhi, and his developing ideas of *Satyagraha*, or "soul-force", and role in a few passive resistance campaigns.[257] However, even Gandhi professed his support for the British Crown, and his appeals for political rights at the time centred on the "non-recognition of the just place of the better class" of Indians, as distinct from the Indian labourers, the "coolies".[258]

Now, although the conservative nationalism of the African, Coloured, and Indian elites reflected their origins in the crippled elites of colour it would be a serious mistake to simply dismiss the nationalist organisations as simply petty bourgeois or bourgeois. Even the most elitist African, Coloured or Indian nationalist was rarely above paternalistic concerns, and the members of the commercial and educated elites were not political homogeneous. Further, the very fact that the African, Coloured and Indian nationalists raised grievances around racial discrimination and prejudice meant that these organisations attracted people from a wide political and social spectrum, including some who broke with the politics of nationalism itself. This was especially the case when the nationalist organisations made an occasional turn towards popular mobilisation (as, for example, did the Transvaal Native Congress from 1918 to 1920). This tended to result in both a rapid expansion of the number of members and supporters, and a rising political temperature that pushed many people to the left. The *possibility*, at least, of transcending not only the domination of the elites, but also the nationalist framework sometimes arose, although it was never actually broken in the ANC, the SAIC, and the African Political Organisation.

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[253] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., pp. 123-124
[254] Quoted in Rall, 2003, *op cit*., pp. 166-7
[255] Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit*., p. 118
[256] Philip Bonner, 1982, "The Transvaal Native Congress, 1917- 1920: the radicalisation of the black petty bourgeoisie on the Rand", in Marks and Rathbone, editors, 1982, *op cit.,* pp. 302-3
[257] A handsome study of these developments, with numerous illustrations, is provided by Eric Itskin, 2000, *Gandhi's Johannesburg: birthplace of satyagraha*, Wits University Press in association with Museum Africa, Johannesburg. Also of interest is Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, n.d. [? 1968], *The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol.3 on *Satyagraha in South Africa*, Navajivan, Ahmedabad
[258] Quoted in Swan, 1985, *op cit*., p. 63

The transnational dimension of these developments is, again, worth noting, as both African and White migration in the region provided important channels for the spread of activists, ideas and models, although these flowed in racially distinct conduits. Class also played a role in shaping the flows of ideas and people. If White Labourism came from Australia, for example, it soon flowed northwards from South Africa as new mines were established. With the opening of coal and gold mines in Southern Rhodesia in the 1890s, and the development of the Copperbelt, many White workers followed the jobs northwards, bringing their political traditions. In 1924, there were 702 Whites and 8,740 Africans employed in mining and prospecting in South West Africa, with three quarters on the diamond fields.[259] In 1931, the mining industry accounted for 35,1 percent of White employment in Northern Rhodesia.[260] By 1939, the Belgian Congo had 157,250 employees, including 2,250 Whites, Northern Rhodesia had 24,900, including 2,700 Whites, South Africa had 464,359 including 52,693 Whites, and Southern Rhodesia had 90,886, including 3,116 Whites.[261] The flows of White labour (unlike African labour) were tightly linked to particular imperial spheres, with very little movement between the British Empire and the Belgian Congo or Portuguese Angola and Mozambique.

In each of these territories, however, a racially divided working class emerged, following the pattern established at Kimberley. Across the region White workers fought bitter battles against employers and the State in the 1910s and 1920s, around issues ranging from wages to replacement by African labour. In 1920 a (Southern) Rhodesian Mine Owners' Association was formed to wage an onslaught on the White miners, who had organised a general union from 1919, and succeeded in inflicting a decisive defeat in early 1921 with a three-week lockout. A successful policy of undermining the railway union inflicted a crushing defeat in 1929. From 1917 to 1921, the Port and Railway Employees Association led a strike wave at Lourenço Marques and on the railways, but the strikes were crushed with martial law; in 1923 troops were used to break a massive strike by White railwaymen in Angola; a 1925-6 railway strike in Mozambique was defeated by heavy repression, and a second strike by electricity workers and railwaymen in 1932 was crushed in a similar way.

As early as 1916, a European Railway Workers' Union managed to establish the job colour bar on the Rhodesian Railways, a private company operating in both Northern and Southern Rhodesia.[262] Following the crushing defeat of 1921, and the subsequent demise of their union, White miners in Southern Rhodesia were without a union until the late 1930s.[263] From 1921, there were attempts to enrol these workers in the South African Mine Workers' Union, and in 1936, the South African Mine Workers' Union formed branches in both Rhodesias.[264] The Southern Rhodesian section initially competed with a local union, later merging to form the Associated Mineworkers of Rhodesia, recognised by employers in 1938.[265] In the meantime, several

[259] Cooper, 1999, *op cit.*, p. 124
[260] Berger, 1974, *op cit*., pp. 16-17
[261] See Vellut, 1983, *op cit*., p. 131 table 4.2. There was also small mining sector in Portuguese Angola, north of South West Africa, with 8,697 employees (including 160 Whites).
[262] Berger, 1974, *op cit*., p. 45
[263] Ian Phimister, 1977, "White Miners in Historical Perspective: Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1953", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol.3, no. 2, pp. 196-7
[264] Berger, 1974, *op cit*., p. 49; Phimister, 1977, *op cit*., pp. 196-7
[265] Phimister, 1977, *op cit*., p. 197

Labour Parties were formed in Southern Rhodesia with trade union backing, championing job colour bars,[266]and in 1933, the Reform Party won the elections (partly due to the support of White labour), and implemented a programme of industrial relations reform, job reservation, and import-substitution industrialisation.[267]

Charlie Harris, secretary of the South African Mine Workers' Union, also went to Northern Rhodesia, to "help make Northern Rhodesia a white country" and ensure that "union men only would be employed on the Copperbelt".[268] The branch of the South African union eventually evolved into a separate body,[269] the Northern Rhodesian (or European) Mineworkers' Union. This was recognised by employers in 1937, and secured a "gentlemen's agreement" securing the job colour bar in 1938. It faced competition from a Mine Workers' Federation, but in 1939 organised 1,000 of the 2,500 daily paid White workers,[270] and in 1940, militants from the union led a week-long strike.

It is not insignificant that Harris found a sympathetic audience amongst South African immigrants: most White mine officials and miners came from South Africa – around 417 out of every 1,000 Whites, as compared to 305 from the United Kingdom and Ireland[271] – bringing with them the racial concepts characteristic of South Africa's industrial structure and relations.[272] A Labour Party was formed in Northern Rhodesia in 1941, which won several seats on the Legislative Council in 1941 and 1944; it collapsed in 1944, but several trade unionists were elected in 1948.[273]

Another outcome of White migration in the region was the somewhat less successful, but far from insignificant, spread of Afrikaner nationalism. It developed a base in South West Africa (where there was growing population of Afrikaner immigrants from both Angola and South Africa) and in 1924 the National Party of South West Africa was established. It was, however, unable to establish much of a foothold elsewhere, despite the widespread existence of Afrikaner communities. The profound alienation from Afrikaner nationalism felt by most Whites in Southern Rhodesia accounted, in part, for the defeat of proposals in the 1920s to join South Africa as its fifth province.

African migration in the region played a similar role in spreading activists, ideas and models. Migrant workers returning from the Witwatersrand spread Protestant Christianity into the hinterland of Mozambique.[274] Migration was also crucial in the spread of the millenarian "Watch Tower" Christian sect in the Rhodesias,[275] which emerged, in turn, from a radical reading of ideas of the doctrines of the Jehovah's Witnesses, then emerging in the West. Both class and race played a role in shaping these transnational

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[266] Ian Phimister, 1988, *op cit*., pp. 173, 179-181, 189-192, 195, 248
[267] See Phimister, 1988, *op cit*., pp. 173, 179-181, 189-192, 195, 248. This parallel is also noted in Patrick Bond, Darlene Miller and Greg Ruiters, 2001, "The Production, Reproduction and Politics of the Southern African Working Class: regional class struggle during sustained economic crisis", *Socialist Register 2001*, Merlin Press, London, which is one of the few attempts to develop a regional analysis of southern African labour.
[268] Meebelo, 1986, *op cit.*, pp. 107-8
[269] Berger, 1974, *op cit*., p. 49; Meebelo, 1986, *op cit*, pp. 107-8
[270] Berger, 1974, *op cit*., p. 49
[271] Berger, 1974, *op cit*., pp. 49-51, 50 note 2
[272] Meebelo, 1986, *op cit.*, p. 64
[273] Berger, 1944, *op cit*., pp. 65-6, 98-
[274] Harries, 1994, *op cit*. chapter 4
[275] See, for instance, Ranger, 1970, *op cit.*

connections. The African elite of Southern Rhodesia formed moderate nationalist groups in the 1920s on the model of the South African Native National Congress, which provided advice, aid, and delegates, and maintained close connections with the "black settlers".[276] Into the 1950s, groups called the African National Congress were the main African nationalist formations in both Southern and Northern Rhodesia.

If the political influences on Whites were shaped by connections outside of southern Africa, so too were those of Africans, Coloureds and Indians. The model of the Indian National Congress in India provided the template for both the Natal Indian Congress and the South African Native National Congress, while the African intelligentsia in South Africa was deeply influenced by African-American intellectuals. Both the moderate tradition represented by men like Booker T. Washington, and the more radical nationalism of W.E.B. Du Bois (and, from around the 1920s, Marcus Garvey) influenced sections of the African elite, and the debates between these traditions were fought out within the African elite as well.[277] Flows of African and Coloured labour also formed an important chapter in the history of regional trade unionism amongst workers of colour, as we shall see below..

Finally, it is important to have a sensitive and historicised view of racial prejudice and nationalist sentiment in southern Africa, and to stress that race did not always trump class. The view that attributes racial divisions solely to Afrikaner nationalism – common to African nationalists as well as (South African) English liberals[278] – ignores the point that racial discrimination was deeply intertwined with capitalist accumulation, and that such a situation also gave rise to class identities and politics. White Labourism itself cannot be seen as the inevitable outcome of the supposedly universal and uniform racial prejudices of White workers,[279] but must be seen as a mixture of class and racial sentiment.

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[276] Phimister, 1988, *op cit*., pp. 148-153; Ranger, 1970, *op cit.,* pp. 56-63

[277] See, *inter alia*, Helen Bradford, 1987, *A Taste of Freedom: the ICU in rural South Africa, 1924-1930*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, chapters 3 and 4; Tim Couzens, 1982, "'Moralising Leisure Time': the transatlantic connection and black Johannesburg, 1918-1926", in Marks and Rathbone, editors, 1982, *op cit.;* Robert A. Hill and Gregory A. Pirio, 1987, "'Africa for the Africans': the Garvey movement in South Africa, 1920-1940", in Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido, editors, 1987,*op cit.;* London; Masilela, 2003, *op cit*.

[278] For a particularly vulgar example, Donald Woods and Mike Bostock 1986, *Apartheid: a graphic guide*, New York, Henry Holt and Company

[279] *Contra.* Van Duin, 1990, *op cit*., pp. 624-5, 627, 631, 645: van Duin tends to ignore the diversity within the "European labour tradition", suggesting that racial discrimination and prejudice by White workers in South Africa was simply the result of a "European superiority-complex" and "categorical imperative" for "status inequality" that was "peculiar" to European labour before 1914. Such claims are historical and inaccurate. Section 2.8 of this thesis, for instance, demonstrates that the anarchist and syndicalist tradition had a strongly rooted internationalist tradition. Van Duin's own evidence also contradicts his sweeping generalisations: while presenting "European labour" as homogenous, van Duin also admits that "British labour-leaders who toured the Empire were sometimes more liberal and enlightened than the rank and file"; Hardie "defended the granting of political rights to the Indians" while Tom Mann was "enlightened" on race; the Independent Labour Party opposed the anti-Semitic Aliens' Act in Britain, opposed a Whites only suffrage, and tried to stop the inclusion of the colour bar in the Union of South Africa Constitution; the London Trades Council opposed restrictions on Indian immigration into South Africa; radical socialists in South Africa were in "theory advocates of international working-class solidarity, and sometimes even spoke of the rights of the non-white population": van Duin, 1990, *op cit*., pp. 625, 632-3, 647 note 57, 648, 649. That these points are always qualified by van Duin does not detract from the broader point that "European labour" was not a unified whole with essential characteristics: there is an enormous difference between the fact of racial prejudice amongst sections of White workers internationally, and a claim that there was a universal "European superiority-complex". Part of the problem lies with Van Duin's tendency towards a psychological explanation of racial discrimination and prejudice by White workers, which is treated as a "complex", a "syndrome", an "outlook", a set of "sentiments and prejudices", of "chauvinism", "colour feeling" and "intolerance", based on a "'categorical imperative' to

There were, moreover, moments in which class politics and interracial class solidarity transcended racial divisions. Outside the mines, there were examples of multi-racial strikes, while some Cape unions had a mixed membership; the rise of manufacturing industry elsewhere in the 1920s saw integrated unions emerge countrywide.[280] If Sachs' recollections, cited above, paint a grim picture, they portray only a part of the socialist experience in South Africa. By 1928, for example, the CPSA claimed 1,750 members, of whom 1,600 were Africans.[281] The 1929 Party congress claimed "nearly 3,000 members",[282] which made the Party at least as big as the South African Native National Congress, and it was, moreover, a more dynamic, disciplined and popular body at the time. While the ICU had many nationalist aspects, it was a trade union that came to embrace tenant farmers: if the CPSA overshadowed the ANC in the 1920s, the ICU overshadowed both. Again, in the 1930s and 1940s, the CPSA was generally far more influential than the ANC, peaking in the 1940s with a popular base that included control over the Council of Non-European Trade Unions (CNETU), with over 100,000 members.[283]

1.8. Bringing anarchism and syndicalism back into southern African history

My research into the early history of socialism and the labour movement in South Africa suggests that it is marked by the same "historical amnesia" regarding anarchism and syndicalism that has afflicted research elsewhere. The role of anarchism and its progeny, syndicalism, in the labour and socialist movements in South Africa between the 1880s and the 1920s was substantial but it has been almost entirely excised from the literature, and is today almost entirely unknown. At the same time, my research argues that the early history of the left in South Africa must be understood within the context of the international history of anarchism and syndicalism, and that a familiarity with that history and those ideas sheds a great deal of light upon the history of socialism in South Africa.

What follows here is a sketch of the core findings of the thesis: a more detailed outline and recapitulation is provided in chapter 10. The view that that there was "no libertarian activity worth mentioning",[284] or that anarchism and syndicalism were "almost completely absent from the South African political scene",[285] is quite incorrect. Indeed, the central claim made in this thesis is that anarchism and syndicalism played an important role in labour and the left in South Africa in the first two decades of the

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status inequality": van Duin, 1990, *op cit*., pp. 624-5, 627, 629, 631, 641 note 40, 642, 645, 647, 648, 651. This combination of essentialism and psychological explanation leads directly to a model that ignores change and difference, while downplaying economic, political and social factors.

[280] See, in particular, Alexander, 2000, *op cit*. Also of interest in this regard is Jon Lewis, 1978, "The New Unionism: industrialisation and industrial unions in South Africa, 1925-1930", in Webster, editor, 1978, *op cit.* and Jon Lewis, 1984, *Industrialisation and Trade Union Organisation in South Africa 1924-55: the rise and fall of the South African Trades and Labour Council*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, London, Melbourne, New Rochelle, New York, Sydney

[281] Brian Bunting, editor, 1981, *op cit*., p. 80

[282] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., p. 406

[283] Alexander, 2000, *op cit*., p. 80-85

[284] Nettlau, [1934] 1996, *op cit.*, p. 262

[285] James Leatt, Theo Kneifel, and Klaus Nürnburger, editors, 1986, *Contending Ideologies in South Africa*, David Philips, Cape Town and Johannesburg, WMB Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, p. 248

twentieth century, as well as in the preceding periods, and in the 1920s. The "glorious period" of anarchism and syndicalism washed across South Africa, and flowed from it across southern Africa.

The ideas of anarchism and syndicalism influenced a substantial layer of local socialists, who published a series of newspapers, a wide range of pamphlets and leaflets, held innumerable public meetings, and engaged in the rallies, solidarity work, mobilisation and trade union work that were characteristic of libertarian socialist revolutionaries. This current, centred on the Witwatersrand, but with real influence in the secondary centres of Cape Town, Durban and Kimberley, can be traced back as early as the 1880s, and it lingered into the 1920s.

Anarchism and syndicalism was a key influence on early groups like the Socialist Club in Port Elizabeth, the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) in Cape Town, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and Socialist Labour Party on the Witwatersrand, and the Pretoria Socialist Society, as well as on the network around the radical paper, the *Voice of Labour*. These early formations, dating to the period before the great general strikes of 1913 and 1914, were primarily organisations of radical White workers. Nonetheless, they developed important and principled critiques of racial discrimination and prejudice, and of nationalism. They advocated interracial working class organisation, although this was largely a theoretical exercise, with the exception of the SDF which organised an interracial General Workers' Union. This helped lay the basis for the genuinely interracial syndicalism that followed a few years later. Syndicalism was also an important factor in the 1913 general strike, although it was more of a diffuse influence, than an organised force, by this time.

A second wave of organised syndicalist activity started from around 1914 with the War on War League and the SDF, followed by the International Socialist League and the Industrial Socialist League. This period of activity was marked by important watersheds. The largely British cadre of the original syndicalist movement was now joined by a substantial Jewish component, and the movement, historically White, became dramatically more multi-racial in character. Not only were the theoretical analyses of the older groups developed and expanded by a lively press and activist culture at this time, but active efforts were made to organise amongst African, Coloured and Indian workers, resulting in a series of syndicalist unions being formed amongst workers of colour, and a number of militants from these unions being recruited into groups like the International Socialist League and the Industrial Socialist League.

The syndicalist unions formed from 1917 onwards included the Clothing Workers Industrial Union, the Durban Indian Industrial Workers Union, the Horse Drivers' Union, the Industrial Workers of Africa, and the Sweet and Jam Workers' Industrial Union. In this respect, the local syndicalists came to more closely parallel the active interracial organising of the IWW in the United States and elsewhere. In addition, syndicalist ideas influenced a wider range of organisations, including the Building Workers' Industrial Union, a predominantly White union, the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU), a predominantly African union, and sections of the local nationalist groups, the South African Native National Congress and the African Political Organisation. Work also continued in the White labour movement, increasingly in the form of attempts to promote a revolutionary (and interracial) shopstewards' movement along the lines of that emerging in Britain.

Subsequently, anarchists and syndicalists played a leading role in the formation of the CPSA in 1921. One result was that while the early Party (for complicated reasons) abandoned the interracialism of the older left in favour of a focus on White workers, its outlook was deeply informed for several years by syndicalist ideas; in addition, there was an organised, anti-parliamentary, syndicalist current within the CPSA in the early 1920s, which was linked to dissident Council Communism abroad. Within the White labour movement, syndicalist influences continued to echo in the 1920s. The most notable example was the Council of Action, the radical group linked to the South African Mine Workers' Union and rooted in the revolutionary shopstewards' movement: it played a key role in the great Rand Revolt of 1922, helping make syndicalist ideas and activists an important influence. The deep imprint of syndicalism on the ICU also gave syndicalism an influence well beyond South Africa: from its beginnings in Cape Town, the ICU spread to South West Africa (today Namibia), and then Southern Rhodesia (today Zimbabwe) and Northern Rhodesia (today Zambia), bearing syndicalism as one of the elements of its complicated ideological mix. The ICU gave anarchism and syndicalism something of a regional presence: if anarchism and syndicalism flowed into South Africa via White labour, they flowed northwards via African labour.

It is important to stress that the story of anarchism and syndicalism in southern Africa is a story of workers of all races, African, Coloured, Indian and White; it is a story of an international movement developing into a multi-racial and internationalist tradition in Britain's African empire. It was the socialist movement, not the nationalist groups like the South African Native National Congress,[286] who pioneered interracial political mobilisation and organisation in southern Africa. And it was the anarchists and syndicalists who established this tradition, later taken up by the CPSA.

The influence of anarchism and syndicalism in the region drew to a close in the late 1920s. The Council of Action was destroyed in 1922. The ICU imploded in South Africa in the late 1920s, and did not last much longer elsewhere. Within the CPSA, the links to the anarchist and syndicalist past were broken from 1928 onwards, when the politics, personnel and practices of the Party were decisively restructured by New Line "Bolshevisation" and the adoption of a two-stage "Native Republic" strategy that replaced class struggle with nationalist mobilisation. By the time the CPSA was dissolved in 1950, and reorganised underground as the SACP in 1953, it was a mainstream Communist Party closely linked to the Soviet Union, and a nationalist Party as well.

This thesis does not, it must be noted, claim that currents like Marxism and nationalism were unimportant forces at the time. I do not claim that anarchism and syndicalism were a mass movement in South Africa or its neighbours (except in diluted form via the ICU). I do not wish to suggest that anarchism and syndicalism assumed the size and power that they assumed elsewhere in the so-called "third world" at this time. Nor do I claim that these currents were ever dominant political forces in southern Africa.

What I do argue, however, is that anarchism and syndicalism were historically significant, played important roles in the drama of social struggles in South Africa, and to a lesser extent its neighbours, and left an important legacy. The southern African influence of anarchism and syndicalism (almost entirely

[286] The South African Native National Congress (African National Congress) only admitted non-Africans to membership in the late 1960s, and then only to senior positions in the 1980s.

excised from the local literature, and today almost entirely unknown to both activists and academics), has significant implications for our understanding of the history of labour and the left in South Africa. It sheds new light on the history of the left before the CPSA, the relationship between socialists (including, of course, anarchists and syndicalists) and nationalists, the rise of ideas of interracial working class solidarity, the early history of unionism and socialism amongst Africans, Coloureds and Indians, the role of anarchism and syndicalism amongst White workers, and also points to the impact of international linkages and regional interconnections in the first decades of the twentieth century.

The anarchist and syndicalist movement that I examine probably never numbered more than a few thousand adherents at its height. While the numbers do not compare necessarily compare too unfavourably with other organisations at the time,[287] it was a minority movement, which does not, however, mean that it was an unimportant one. I argue that anarchism and syndicalism were an important influence on the left in South Africa by 1910, were the dominant current on the revolutionary left in South Africa in the 1910s, pioneered interracial socialist organisation, formed the first African trade union, the Industrial Workers of Africa, on a syndicalist basis, in 1917, organised a number of other syndicalist unions amongst workers of colour at this time, had an influence on sections of the African and Coloured nationalist groups, as well as White labour, and that the influence of anarchism and syndicalism influence continued into the 1920s in the Rand Revolt, the early CPSA, and the ICU.

Without denying that most of the politically active African and Coloured intelligentsia in this period remained wedded to conservative nationalism, I argue that a large group was for a time influenced by socialist ideas – and, specifically, those of the anarchist and syndicalist tradition. Likewise, I argue that anarchism and syndicalism played a central role in pioneering socialism amongst people of colour in South Africa, and that the first generation of these activists was powerfully shaped by anarchist and syndicalist influence. The development of a socialist tradition in South Africa opposed to racial discrimination and prejudice must also, I argue, be dated to the period of anarchist and syndicalist influence. If S.P. Bunting (for instance) helped push the CPSA towards workers of colour in 1924, he was simply *returning* the Party to an older anarchist and syndicalist tradition. Moreover, in that older tradition, he had been – not an isolated iconoclast in an otherwise racially prejudiced organisation – but actually a rather *typical* representative of a local tradition of working class internationalism.

1.9. In conclusion: outline of the thesis

The following chapters will explore these arguments in greater depth, and chapter 10, the concluding chapter, provides a detailed summary of my main findings. The next chapter examines the literature on anarchism and syndicalism, and the relationship between the two, sketching in the broader background of the "glorious period". Chapter 3 provides a critical review of the literature on labour and the left in South Africa, and explains in more depth how this thesis differs from previous studies, and the broader contribution that its arguments make to the existing state of knowledge. From Chapter 4 onwards,

[287] The membership of major craft unions rarely exceeded one thousand before the late 1910s, while the CPSA had, at most, somewhat over 2,000 members at its height in the late 1920s.

the focus shifts to a detailed historical account. Chapter 4 examines the early period, with a focus on developments in Port Elizabeth, Cape Town, and the Witwatersrand, with particular attention to the SDF, the IWW, the Socialist Labour Party and the *Voice of Labour* network. Chapter 5 looks at syndicalism immediately before and during the First World War, and the emergence of the International Socialist League, leading into Chapter 6, which looks at the syndicalist politics of the International Socialist League, and Chapter 7, which looks at the activities of the International Socialist League in fostering an interracial syndicalist movement during and after the war in Natal and the Transvaal. Chapter 8 examines the movement in the Cape in this period, looking at groups like the Industrial Socialist League and the early ICU, followed by Chapter 9, which looks at the legacies of the anarchist and syndicalist tradition within the broad southern African working class via the CPSA, the Council of Action and the ICU. Chapter 10 concludes this study with a detailed outline of core findings, and also examines some broader points arising that are of general relevance to the study of labour history, and particularly the contemporary turn towards transnational concerns. Appendices containing a selection of key documents from South Africa follow.

Chapter 2

Before Communism: Rethinking the world of labour and the left before Lenin

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If ever there was a working class that never neatly fitted the boundaries of a nation-state, it was the multi-racial and multi-national working class of South Africa – by no means a clearly "South African" working class – continually replenished by vast human rivers of labour from across southern Africa and the British Empire more broadly. It follows that any analysis of the impact of anarchism and syndicalism in South Africa cannot be undertaken without sketching out some of the broader context of the world of labour and the left at this time. If, as indicated above, the 1890s to the 1920s were the "glorious period" of anarchism and syndicalism elsewhere, it follows that an examination of the context must pay due attention to anarchism and syndicalism.

Why devote a chapter in a thesis on South Africa (and southern Africa) to a historiography and analysis of international anarchism and syndicalism? There are several main reasons. The first is that any study of anarchism and syndicalism must have a clear understanding of anarchism and syndicalism. As the literature on anarchism and syndicalism these subjects is marked by a serious case of "historical amnesia",[1] and is, furthermore, as argued below, rather uneven, it becomes necessary to take great care in this discussion. The point, it needs to be clearly stated, is not to discuss whether anarchist or syndicalist ideas are convincing, or valid, but to examine to what extent anarchism and syndicalism constitute a fairly coherent and identifiable political tradition that can be historicised, theoretically interrogated, and properly studied.

Secondly, this thesis locates situates developments in South Africa within a transnational context, and argues that the significance of anarchist and syndicalist influences in this country arise, in part, from their place in a fglobal movement, as well as from what they tell us about the global public sphere of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. We are examining an eminently international and transnational movement, and must, therefore, engage with a large body of international literature. This allows the some of the salient features of the "glorious period" of anarchism and syndicalism to be sketched out, as important background to this study material.

In this chapter, a historiography of anarchism and syndicalism is developed, which enables several relevant points to be made. Firstly, it is argued that the standard definition of anarchism, as an ideology

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[1] Allen, 1999, *op cit*., pp. 263-4

centred on anti-Statism and opposition to restrictions on individual freedom, is logically and empirically flawed, and creates serious problems for the study of anarchism and syndicalism. An alternative approach is developed, according to which anarchism is understood as a socialist and rationalist ideology that developed from the late 1860s onwards, distinguished by commitment to a highly social concept of individual freedom, opposed to social hierarchy, and social and economic inequality and its perceived causes – capitalism, landlordism and the State – and advocating an internationalist and revolutionary class struggle, outside and against the State, based upon libertarian and self-organised struggle, and aiming at a self-managed, and Stateless, socialist society.

Anarchism, then, is understood as a modern political tradition that needs to be historicised; it is a tradition that may also be analysed theoretically, for it has core thinkers, amongst whom Bakunin and Peter Kropotkin (1842-1921) are the key examples. This narrower approach is both more *useful* as a means to analyse anarchism, whether theoretically or socially, and more *convincing*, as it is far more consistent with the results of an examination of the history of the anarchist idea and the record of anarchist organisation. This approach is not one that arbitrarily elevates one understanding of anarchism over another, but rather an argument that is logically and empirically sound. Unless it is argued that the definition of anarchism must be always arbitrary and relative, there are few grounds to reject the approach advanced here, and many to recommend it.

Secondly, it is argued that it is possible to distinguish two broad tendencies within anarchism.[2] The smaller is that of "insurrectionist" anarchism, which argues that struggles for reforms, at best, perpetuate the current social order; it is usually coupled with a distrust of mass organisations, including trade unions. In the insurrectionist tradition, the task of anarchists is to inspire the popular classes to direct, revolutionary action through ideas and by example. This has usually meant "propaganda by the deed": spectacular and usually violent actions supposed to rouse the masses, such as bank "expropriations", assassinations and bombings.

The larger anarchist tradition may be referred to, perhaps clumsily, as "mass" anarchism.The main task, from this perspective, was to implant anarchism *within* popular mass movements, such as the trade unions. Anarchists should radicalise these movements, and foster self-management and direct action. These movements will then be able to provide a revolutionary lever, and the organisational nucleus of the future anarchist society. It is this approach that permeates the writings of Bakunin and Kropotkin.

Syndicalism, the view that trade unions can provide the means of immediate defence against employers and governments and overthrow both groups through a revolutionary general strike that places the means of production under the self-management of the working class through the trade union structures was, in turn, rooted in the anarchist movement – specifically, in the mass anarchist approach.

The notion that French philosopher and one-time Marxist Georges Sorel was not simply a leading figure in the syndicalist movement, "the theorist of anarcho-syndicalism",[3] "the leading theorist of

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[2] Also see Schmidt and van der Walt, forthcoming in 2007, *Black Flame: the revolutionary class politics of anarchism and syndicalism*, vol.one of *Counter-Power: new perspectives on global anarchism and syndicalism*, AK Press, Edinburgh

[3] Joll, 1964, *op cit*., p. 207

Revolutionary Syndicalism",[4] or that syndicalism was part of the broader "Revolt against Reason" (in which Sorel was deeply involved), is fundamentally flawed. The syndicalist approach preceded the writings of Sorel by nearly three decades. Neither Sorel's activities nor his writings had a real impact on syndicalism, with which Sorel's views had little in common. . It is more realistic to see Sorel as an intellectual who tried to understand syndicalism, as some writers have recently done.[5]

Furthermore, the "glorious period" of anarchism and syndicalism was not the period of the birth of the syndicalist approach, but of its *revival*, the period of a *second* wave of syndicalism, following a first wave of the 1870s and 1880s. The basic ideas of syndicalism emerged within the anarchist movement at an early stage, and it was Bakunin, not Sorel, who was the "leading theorist of Revolutionary Syndicalism". Not every anarchist accepted syndicalism, and not every syndicalist accepted the label of anarchist. Not all mass anarchists were, however, syndicalists: some distrusted unions, preferring other forms of mass organisation, while others tended to stress pure propaganda work, in isolation from struggles around everyday interests. The latter, the "pure ones", to use Daniel Guérin's phrase,[6] tended to become quite abstract in their outlook, advocating an "educationalist" anarchism centred on the abstract recital of critique and principles.

Within syndicalism there are two main variants: "anarcho-syndicalism" which affirms its anarchist roots, and "revolutionary syndicalism" that either consciously denied its anarchist ancestry, or was ignorant of it, or ignored it. Both of these types will be jointly referred to as "syndicalism", with the terms anarcho-syndicalism and revolutionary syndicalism used when finer distinctions must be drawn. Clearly, it is not possible to use the terms anarchism and syndicalism interchangeably. However, it is possible to speak of a "broad anarchist tradition" that covers all forms of anarchism, including both insurrectionist and mass anarchism, and both types of syndicalism.[7]

It is suggested, finally, that the view that anarchism was an anti-modern movement, the revolt of the doomed classes of the pre-capitalist world against industry and the modern State – a view common to both standard works on anarchism and numerous Marxist analyses[8] – is a flawed one. The largest anarchist movements of all were the syndicalist unions, and the great majority of people involved in anarchist and syndicalist movements were waged workers; peasant anarchist movements existed, but were the exception rather than the rule.

The great strongholds of anarchist and syndicalist power were urban industrial centres, company towns and cities such as Alexandria, Barcelona, Buenos Aires, Chicago, Guangzhou, Havana, Lima, Lisbon, Madrid, Montevideo, Mexico City, Porto Alegre, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo City, Santiago, Shanghai, Tampico,

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[4] Schechter, 1994, *op cit*., pp. 28, 35
[5] For example, Hyslop, 2004, *op cit*., p. 184
[6] Guérin, 1970, *op cit.*
[7] Also see Schmidt and van der Walt, forthcoming in 2007, *op cit*.
[8] For example, James Joll, 1964, *op cit.*, p. 13, 173, 275, 277; Kedward, 1971, *op cit*., pp. 24-6; Marshall Statz, "Introduction", to Marshall Statz, editor and translator, Mikhail Bakunin, [1873] 1990, *Statism and Anarchy*, Cambridge University Press, p. xxxiii-xxxiv; Stekloff, 1928, *op cit*., p. 312; E. Yaroslavsky, n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 26, 28, 41, 68-9. Also see Hobsbawm, 1971, *op cit.,* and Eric Hobsbawm, 1993, "Primitive Revolutionaries", and "The Spanish Background", in his *Revolutionaries*, Abacus, London. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis will rely on Dolgoff's abridged edition of Bakunin's "Statism and Anarchy" this work, rather than the Statz edition: see Bakunin, [1873], 1971, "Statism and Anarchy", in Dolgoff, editor, 1971, *op cit.*

and Tokyo; even in the countryside, anarchism and syndicalism were largely based amongst farm labourers, not peasants.

2.1. The historiography of "anarchism"

Studies of anarchism have been typically characterised by a tendency to define anarchism as an outlook – not necessarily even an ideology – opposed to the State, and to restrictions on the freedom of the individual. Roderick Kedward is representative of this dominant tradition: he asserts that anarchists saw "the root of all evil" in "government, whether by state, church, party or individuals", and that the ""bond that united all anarchists" was "antagonism to any situation regulated by imposition, constraint, or oppression".[9] Corrine Jacker similarly argued that anarchists have a "romantic approach" and maintain that "the individual must be completely free; there must be no authority to dictate his behaviour or its limits:[10] they oppose the State because "rules are an attempt to restrict an individual's freedom", and "another term for anarchism is *antistatism*".[11]

For Robert Hoffman, anarchists maintain that "government creates and perpetuates both disorder and violence" and that "*any* imperative authority, even that of a popular socialist government or the joint decision of an egalitarian community, must violate individual liberty" and "justice" and "community".[12] A person should "obey the dictates of his free will only".[13] There are "few specifications" of belief that can otherwise be "applied equally to all of them", and anarchists lack "the agreement about doctrine and programme that have generally united men in comparable movements".[14]

Marshall Statz argued that anarchism aimed at a society organised through free association, without imposed order, and was a "positive social doctrine" that embodied a "critique of human society as it exists and a vision of a better form of social order".[15] However, Statz reduced the "positive" programme to a variety of schemes to replace the State: anarchism allegedly regarded "political authority, and its modern embodiment the state, as the root of all evil".[16]

Terry Perlin put forward a similar line of argument, and introduced "anarchists of the 'right'", dubbed "anarcho-capitalists" whose quest for individual freedom shares the "common anarchist quest: for the freedom of the individual".[17] These "anarcho-capitalists" essentially took neoliberal views to extreme conclusions. The traditional economic liberal view stressed the benefits of a free and unrestricted market, based on the relentless pursuit of individual self-interest, for individual liberty and economic efficiency.

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[9] Roderick Kedward, 1971, *op cit.*, pp. 5-6
[10] Corrine Jacker, 1968, *The Black Flag of Anarchy: antistatism in the United States*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, p. 1
[11] Jacker, 1968, *op cit*., pp. 1-2, emphasis in the original
[12] Robert Hoffman, editor, 1970, "Introduction", *Anarchism*, Atherton Press, New York, pp. 2, 9, emphasis in the original
[13] Hoffman, 1971, *op cit*., p. 10
[14] Hoffman, 1971, *op cit*., p. 5
[15] Marshall Statz, editor, 1971, "Introduction", to his *The Essential Works of Anarchism*, Bantam, New York, pp. xi-xii
[16] Statz, 1971, *op cit*., p. xiii
[17] Terry M. Perlin, *Contemporary Anarchism*, Transaction Books, New Brunswick, New Jersey, p. 109

However, it also stressed the need for a minimal State to enforce law and order, provide military defence, provide public goods and deal with externalities.[18] By contrast, the so-called "anarcho-capitalists", like Murray Rothbard, went on to advocate the provision of *all* the services provided by the State – including law and order – by private firms and associations. The notion that anarchism might include these heirs of neo-liberalism seems a bit odd, but, because Perlin reduces anarchism to anti-Statism and the "quest … for the freedom of the individual", it is logical.

Once a definition of anarchism as anti-Statism and opposition to constraints on the individual is conceded, two approaches to the history of anarchism tend to follow: either that of anarchism as a universal and timeless longing and outlook, or that regarding anarchism as a relatively modern ideology with diverse roots, but sharing nothing more than an anti-Statist outlook and a stress on individual liberty.[19]

The first historical approach is exemplified by Peter Marshall's 1994 *Demanding the Impossible: a history of anarchism*, widely regarded as the definitive study of anarchism. Marshall defined an anarchist as one who "rejects all forms of external government and the State" and believes that "all individuals" would function well without them.[20] For Marshall, anarchism was a universal human characteristic: the "first anarchist" was the first person who rebelled against "authority".[21] Marshall explained this omnipresent "anarchism" by reference to human nature, and "a timeless struggle between "those who wanted to rule and those who refused to be ruled or to rule in turn", rooted in a "drive for freedom", a "deeply felt human need".[22] It followed that Marshall refused to offer a rigorous definition of "anarchism": "by its very nature", he asserted, anarchism "is anti-dogmatic … it does not offer a fixed body of doctrine based on one particular world view".[23] His "anarchists" thus range from the Taoist philosopher Lao Tzu, to heretical Christian sects,[24] to Gandhi, to so-called "anarcho-capitalists".

The second approach may be found in George Woodcock's study of anarchism, the standard work on anarchism before Marshall. He stressed that "simplicity is the first thing to guard against in writing a definition of anarchism", and that "by no means all who deny authority and fight against it can reasonably be called anarchists".[25] This allows Woodcock to exclude from the "anarchist" category mystics and stoics who "seek not anarchy, but another kingdom" and "mere unthinking revolt" against authority. Woodcock

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[18] The classic statement of the view that free markets enable, through the operations of the price system, both economic efficiency and individual choice, is, of course, Frederick A. von Hayek, 1944, *The Road to Serfdom*, Routledge, London. From such a perspective, individual freedom is an intrinsic good, and the market is the best arena in which this good may be pursued. Concomitantly, the role of the State must be reduced to operations that make the market possible in the first place, but which cannot, it is argued, be provided by the market itself: these are law and order, military defence, public goods, and dealing with externalities. Some of these neoliberals also suggest that the State may provide a limited amount of welfare on "paternal" grounds to those unable to engage in the market, such as orphans and the mentally ill: see Milton Friedman with Rose Friedman, 1962, *Capitalism and Freedom*, Chicago University Press, Chicago

[19] This categorisation is suggested by Marie Fleming, 1979, *The Anarchist Way to Socialism: Elisée Reclus and nineteenth-century European anarchism,* Croom Helm, London, Rowman and Littlefield, New Jersey, pp. 15-25

[20] Marshal, 1993, *op cit.*, p. x iii

[21] Marshall, 1994, *op cit*., pp.3-4

[22] Marshall, 1994, *op cit.*, pp. xiv, 3-4

[23] Marshall, 1994, *op cit.*, p. 3

[24] Following this approach, one finds an ongoing expansion of the "anarchist" tradition by other scholars: for example, Patricia Crone, 2000, "Ninth-Century Muslim Anarchists", *Past and Present*, no. 167

[25] Woodcock, 1975, *op cit*., p. 7

defined anarchism as a "system of social thought, aiming at fundamental changes in the structure of society and particularly … at the replacement of the authoritarian state by some form of non-governmental cooperation between free individuals".[26]

In his view, anarchism as "as a developed, articulate, and clearly identifiable trend" only emerged in "the modern era of conscious social and political revolutions".[27] It was characterised by "shown singular disagreement" on "the tactics needed to achieve" their aims, with "anarchists" lacking "an essential theory", praising the "rejection of dogma, a deliberate rejection of rigidly systematic theory", with a "variety of viewpoints inconceivable in a closely dogmatic system".[28] What it does share is a general approach, a "system of social thought, aiming at fundamental changes in the structure of society and particularly … the replacement of the authoritarian state by some form of non-governmental cooperation between free individuals".[29]

Why then, did anarchism only emerge in "the modern era of conscious social and political revolutions"? Woodcock suggested that anarchism was, above all, a reaction *against* the economic and political centralisation of the modern era which supposedly "drew its support mainly from those social classes that were out of tune with the dominant historical trend and which were steadily declining in influence and in numbers", like independent artisans, peasants, and "those shiftless, rebellious sections of the lower classes … whom Marx dismissed as the *Lumpenproletariat*", "all those thrust aside by the Juggernaut of nineteenth-century industrial progress … superseded by profound changes in the structure of society … and in the methods of production … among the industrial workers, the anarchists won only temporary and limited victories".[30] The *lumpenproletariat*, it should be noted, was understood in the Marxist tradition as "the 'dangerous class', the social scum, that passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of old society", the criminals, vagabonds, habitual drunks, beggars and *déclassé* elements.[31]

Woodcock's claim that anarchism was an anti-modern revolt was shared by James Joll's *The Anarchists*, another classic study, which argued that anarchism was a "product of the nineteenth century" and of the disruptions of industrialisation, with the anarchists as heirs of both "utopian, religious millenarian movements" of the past and the Enlightenment.[32] In his view, "the basic ideas of anarchism are all contrary to the development of large-scale industry and of mass production and consumption" and that the anarchists were convinced that "in the new society man will live in extreme simplicity and frugality and will be quite happy to do without the technical achievements of the modern age".[33] Joll also agreed with the statement that "anarchism" was "not a coherent political or philosophical movement", and full of "contradictions and inconsistencies".[34] For Joll this incoherence was evidence of the flaws of anarchism and the "difficulty, if not

[26] Woodcock, 1975, *op cit*., p. 11
[27] Woodcock, 1975, *op cit*., p. 37
[28] Woodcock, 1975, *op cit*., pp. 13, 15
[29] Woodcock, 1975, *op cit*., p. 11
[30] Woodcock, 1975, *op cit*., pp. 444-5
[31] Marx and Engels, [1848] 1954, *op cit.*, p. 35
[32] Joll 1964, *op cit.*, p. 13
[33] Joll, 1964, *op cit*., p. 277
[34] Joll, 1964, *op cit*., pp. 173, 275

… impossibility" of putting it into practice".[35] Kedward took up this theme, arguing that "the backbone of anarchism" were artisans and poor peasants "threatened" by "industry and mechanisation".[36] According to Marshall Statz, the main anarchists "voiced suspicion of the sturdy, 'class-conscious', urban proletarians upon whom Marx placed his hopes", and looked to peasants, the *lumpenproletariat* and students for revolutionary change.[37]

This line of argument – anarchism as revolt *against* modernity by supposedly doomed classes – was also widely accepted amongst classical Marxists, although not necessarily by Marx himself. While Karl Marx himself originally attacked the anarchists for advising the workers to "only organise themselves by trade unions",[38] and Engels attacked the anarchists for arguing that revolution required the universal organisation of the working class in preparation for a "general strike … the lever employed by which a social revolution is started",[39] both of which suggested that anarchism was basically proletarian, later Marxists argued that anarchism was essentially a "petty bourgeois" movement. The notion of a petty bourgeoisie is rarely used consistently within Marxism, but, in this case, it was clearly used to denote peasants and independent artisans.

Lenin generally argued that anarchism was a petty bourgeois movement, but he also suggested other non-proletarian class bases for anarchism: writing in 1918, for example, he stated that "anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism are *bourgeois* trends … irreconcilably opposed … to socialism, proletarian dictatorship and communism".[40] Nikolai Bukharin would further complicate matters a few years later: in his *ABC of Communism*, something of a manual for the early Comintern; for example, he described anarchism as the socialism of the *lumpenproletariat*.[41] At roughly the same time, however, two Bolshevik studies of anarchism returned to variants of the argument that anarchism was a petty bourgeois, and anti-modern, movement.[42]

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[35] Joll, 1964, *op cit*., p. 275
[36] Kedward, 1971, *op cit*., pp. 24-6
[37] Marshall Statz, "Introduction", to Marshall Statz, editor and translator, Mikhail Bakunin, [1873] 1990, *Statism and Anarchy*, Cambridge University Press, p. xxxiii-xxxiv. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis will rely on Dolgoff's abridged edition of this work, rather than the Statz edition: see Bakunin, [1873], 1971, "Statism and Anarchy", in Dolgoff, editor, 1971, *op cit.*
[38] Karl Marx, [19 April 1870] 1972, letter to Paul Lafargue in Paris, in N.Y. Kolpinsky, editor, 1972, *Marx, Engels, Lenin: anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, p. 48
[39] Friedrich Engels, [1873] 1972, "The Bakuninists at Work: an account of the Spanish Revolt in the summer of 1873", in Kolpinsky, editor, 1972, *op cit*., pp. 132-3
[40] V.I. Lenin, [1918] 1975b, "The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government", in V.I. Lenin, 1975, *Selected Works in Three Volumes*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, revised edition, vol.2, p. 599, emphasis in original. This volume is referred to as Lenin, 1975b, *op cit*., to distinguish it from the other volumes in the series.
[41] For instance, Nicolai Bukharin, [1922] 1966, *The ABC of Communism*, Ann Arbor Paperbacks, University of Michigan Press, Michigan, Ambassador Books, Toronto, pp. 77-8, emphasis in original: "*Lumpenproletarian socialism (anarchism)*… They do not, for the most part, represent the interests and aspirations of the working class; they represent those of what is termed the lumpenproletariat, the loafer-proletariat; they represent the interests of those who live in bad conditions under capitalism, but who are quite incapable of independent creative work". The claim that the anarchists "do not, for the most part", represent the working class indicates an ambiguity in Bukharin, as does his subsequent claim, made a few paragraphs later, that "agrarian peasant socialism" is close to "peasant anarchism"; "peasant anarchism" is not, however, defined or discussed.
[42] Stekloff stated that anarchism was pre-eminently the theory of peasant anti-capitalist and anti-state movements: Stekloff, 1928, *op cit*., p. 312. E. Yaroslavsky's *History of Anarchism in Russia* (published in London by Lawrence and Wishart) is undated, but must have appeared in 1936 or 1937. According to this work, anarchists regarded "the peasantry and the *lumpen*-proletariat" as the main revolutionary force in Russia and elsewhere and argued that peasants

In more recent years, such claims were given an aura of respectability by Hobsbawm's analysis of Spanish anarchism, which described the anarchists as "primitive rebels" caught up in a quasi-religious revolt against the modern world, a movement irrational, utopian and doomed.[43]

2.2. New reflections, new directions

These different approaches – anarchism as anti-Statism and hostility to restrictions on the individual, anarchism as timeless outlook, anarchism as revolt against the modern world – suffer from serious problems. The definition of anarchism must be dealt with first, as it is the basis for deciding what material is to be considered anarchist history in the first instance.

Underlying both approaches is the view that anarchism should be defined as opposition to the State and a stress on individual freedom from restriction. The work that established this definition as the dominant one in the literature was Paul Eltzbacher's *Anarchism: exponents of the anarchist philosophy*, which appeared in 1900, and sought to identify the key features of anarchist thought in one of the first academic studies of the subject. [44] Its conclusions "have become such a commonplace that they have been incorporated into almost every study of the subject up to the present day",[45] including the works of Joll, Kedward, Marshall, Statz and Woodcock.

It is interesting to examine how Eltzbacher, a German judge, arrived at this definition of anarchism. It was, above all, a function of his methodology: he selected a number of thinkers as "representative" examples of anarchists, "not upon the basis of any objective criteria, but rather examined the thought of those who (informed) public opinion of the time regarded as the principal exponents of anarchism".[46] The "(informed) public opinion" consisted largely of Eltzbacher's close associates, and did not, for example, take into account the views of the self-described anarchist movement that was exploding across Europe and the Americas at the time – the movement's whose rise had sparked Eltzbacher's interest in anarchism in the first place.

The selection of the "Seven Sages" was, then, quite arbitrary: Eltzbacher did not provide a reasoned argument for his selection of these figures for his analysis, relying on argument by authority in reference to supposedly "(informed) public opinion". Using this rather questionable approach, Eltzbacher identified several figures for his study: William Godwin, Max Stirner, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Benjamin Tucker, Leo

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were born anarchists, and the claim that later Russian anarchists were based among the "children of ruined petty bourgeois, among the petty-bourgeois intellectuals, among the *lumpen*-proletariat, and sometimes among real criminals", and kulaks, or rich peasants. See pp. 26, 28, 41, 68-9. This is a crude polemic, unlike Stekloff's more scholarly work, but its influence remains considerable even in recent Marxist polemics on anarchism. Stekloff later wrote a biography of Bakunin, but his Bolshevik loyalties notwithstanding, he died in a Siberian labour camp.

[43] Eric Hobsbawm, 1971, *Primitive Rebels: studies in archaic forms of social movement in the 19th and 20th centuries*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, third edition. Also see Eric Hobsbawm, 1999, "Primitive Revolutionaries", and "The Spanish Background", in his *Revolutionaries*, Abacus, London

[44] Paul Eltzbacher, [1900] 1960, *Anarchism: exponents of the anarchist philosophy*, Freedom Press, London

[45] Fleming, 1979, *op cit*., p. 19

[46] Fleming, 1979, *op cit*., p. 19

Tolstoy, Bakunin, and Kropotkin. These have subsequently become known as the "Seven Sages" of anarchism,[47] although most did of the Sages did not use the anarchist label.

Having somewhat arbitrarily created this pantheon – a grouping comprised, as we will see, of radically different thinkers – Eltzbacher faced the problem of definition: what did the "Seven Sages" have in common? Very little, it turned out. Godwin, a largely forgotten Enlightenment thinker, derived a generally anti-Statist position from utilitarian principles in the 1790s,[48] arguing that humans could be perfected through reason and education, and that government would wither away when all people had become sufficiently reasonable to exercise full personal autonomy, by which he meant the application of a utilitarian calculus to all activities. He opposed co-operation for undermining the development of a utilitarian rationality, and hoped unavoidable co-operation (including marriage and sex) would be minimised and unnecessary co-operation (like orchestras) would be abolished. The State was a necessary evil in the unenlightened present, as was its coercion. Beyond a faith in reason typical of the Enlightenment, Godwin offered no strategy for change and no clear model for the future.

In contrast, Stirner was an extreme German individualist of the 1840s, who asserted the right of the individual to do whatever he or she pleased.[49] The mind must be freed of "spooks" and "wheels" in the head, meaning any and all abstract principles that impede individual gratification, including the notions of "the cause of mankind, of truth, of freedom, of humanity, of justice", the "cause of my people, my prince, my fatherland", finally, "even the cause of Mind".[50] Unbridled self-interest was the only true value, the only valid criterion for action was individual satisfaction, the only limit, the power of a given individual; even truth was the product of individual choice, and entirely relative: "You alone are the truth, or rather, you are more than the truth, which is nothing at all before".[51] He advocated a "cult of unlimited self-will".[52] He did not actually advocate the abolition of the State:[53] "my object is not the overthrow of an established order but my elevation above it, my purpose and deed are not … political or social but … directed toward myself and my ownness alone … an egoistic purpose and deed".[54]

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[47] Fleming, 1979, *op cit*., uses this term. I have come across it in works as early as Ernest Alfred Vizetelly's 1911 *The Anarchists: their faith and their record*, Turnbull and Spears Printers, Edinburgh, where it is used in chapter 1.

[48] See William Godwin, [1798] 1971, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, with selections from Godwin's other writings*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, London, edited and abridged by K. Cordell Carter. It should be noted that Godwin revised this work several times – in 1793, in 1796 and 1798 – and this edition is based on the third edition. The editor's introduction to this volume is useful, but John Clark's analysis of Godwin is indispensable: see John P. Clark, 1977, *The Philosophical Anarchism of William Godwin*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey. A fair account of Godwin is presented in Eltzbacher, [1900] 1960, *op cit*., and discussions of Godwin are a standard feature of most general histories of "anarchism" and appear in Joll, 1964, *op cit*., in Marshall, 1994, *op cit*., and in Woodcock, 1975, *op cit.*

[49] The standard edition is Max Stirner, [1844] 1907, *The Ego and his Own*, Benjamin R. Tucker publishers, New York. However, the "Introduction" by J. L. Walker is of limited use. The "Introduction" by James J. Martin to the 1963 New York, Libertarian Book Club edition, is essential reading. Besides the discussion of Stirner in Eltzbacher, [1900] 1960, *op cit*., see also the relevant sections of Joll, 1964, *op cit*., in Marshall, 1994, *op cit*., and in Woodcock, 1975, *op cit.*

[50] Stirner, [1844] 1907, *op cit*., p. 3

[51] Stirner, [1844] 1907, *op cit*., p. 472

[52] Woodcock, 1975, *op cit*., p. 91

[53] "Personal insurrection rather than general revolution": James J. Martin, 1963, *op cit.*, p. xviii

[54] Stirner, [1844] 1907, *op cit*., p. 421

Both men, in turn, differed radically from Leo Tolstoy, the famous Russian novelist who derived pacifist principles from Christian scriptures.[55] Tolstoy favoured a withdrawal from the State (condemned primarily for its violence) into a life of religious contemplation: it was not up to humankind to judge and legislate, for divine law was always superior to human law. Tolstoy stressed individual moral change, divine revelation, and salvation through the recognition that "the Kingdom of God is within you". If Godwin was a rationalist, Tolstoy was a believer; If Stirner opposed all general theories, rationalist, religious, or otherwise, Tolstoy was a man of faith. If Stirner favoured untrammelled expressions of individual desire, Tolstoy was, like Godwin, an ascetic, but his asceticism arose from his quest for religious enlightenment. Godwin opposed the class system for preventing the exercise of reason, Stirner disliked modern industry for mechanising life, but Tolstoy complained that capitalism replaced wholesome rural labour with the factory system.

The remaining "Seven Sages" may be grouped together into two pairs: Proudhon and Tucker, and Bakunin and Kropotkin. Proudhon, a self-taught French artisan of peasant stock, was widely influential in socialist and popular circles between the 1840s to the 1880s, notably in France, Mexico, and Spain,[56] and his ideas were what is today known as "market socialism".[57] His "Mutualism" called on the popular classes to establish their own enterprises and co-operatives: supported by a non-profit and co-operative "People's Bank"; these institutions would eventually supplant capitalism and the State with a competitive and self-managed socialist sector.[58]

This would end "exploitation" – defined as the accumulation of wealth through non-productive means, such as rent, interest, and monopoly pricing – but not eliminate inequality altogether; some inequality was a necessary in the market. There would be co-operation, self-management and social responsibility, with the "People's Bank", the abolition of "usury" and a usufruct property preventing the emergence of a class system. The State would be abolished with the victory of the socialist sector: "Socialism is the opposite of governmentalism ... We want these associations to be ... the first components of a vast federation of associations and groups united in the common bond of the democratic and social republic".[59] The market was merely a *means* to an end, and would be controlled and levelled by society –

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[55] Tolstoy's output was formidable. Marshall S. Statz provides an edited version of the key work – the 1893 "The Kingdom of God is Within You" – in his 1972 collection, *The Essential Works of Anarchism*, published by Bantam, New York. In addition to the relevant sections of Joll, 1964, *op cit*., in Marshall, 1994, *op cit*., and in Woodcock, 1975, *op cit.*, I also found Janko Lavrin's 1944 *Tolstoy: an approach* (Methuen and Co., London) useful.

[56] See, *inter alia*, Murray Bookchin, 1977, *The Spanish Anarchists: the heroic years, 1868-1936*, Harper Colophon Books, New York, Hagerstown, San Francisco, London; Hart, 1978, *op cit*; Thorpe, 1989, *op cit.*

[57] Indeed, this is precisely how David MacNally described Proudhon in his critique of liberal economics and contemporary "market socialism": see David MacNally, 1993, *Against the Market: political economy, market socialism and the Marxist critique*, Verso, London, New York.

[58] Proudhon was a prolific writer, and his ideas were not always consistent: it is important to note that he moved to the right in the 1850s, returning to his original positions in the 1860s. He never opposed collective ownership, notwithstanding a common stereotype. Key texts are excerpted in Daniel Guérin, editor, 1998, *No Gods, No Masters: an anthology of anarchism*, book one, AK Press, Edinburgh, San Francisco, hereafter Guérin, editor, 1998a, *op cit*. A useful anthology is Stewart Edwards' edited 1969 collection, *Selected Writings of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, London. An excellent commentary on Proudhon's ideas is scattered throughout Daniel Guérin, 1970, *Anarchism: from theory to practice*, Monthly Review Press, New York. Also useful is Dennis W. Brogan, 1934, *Proudhon*, H. Hamilton, London. Joll, 1964, *op cit*. and Woodcock, 1975, *op cit.* provide good discussions of Proudhon, with a stress on biography, rather than ideology.

[59] Quoted in Guérin, 1970, *op cit*., 45

something rather different to the so-called "anarcho-capitalist" approach. Tucker's ideas were essentially a revival of Proudhon's doctrines in the United States in the late nineteenth century, and Tucker was the "leading American apostle of Proudhon's doctrines", which he called "individualist anarchism".[60]

Like Godwin, Proudhon and Tucker were rationalists and atheists, and, like him, they saw reason as a necessary means of securing social change. Unlike Godwin, however, they stressed the need for a concrete strategy for change; unlike Godwin, who had no real strategy for change, and distrusted co-operation, Proudhon and Tucker favoured the creation of new institutions that would prefigure the desired future order. Because both Proudhon and Tucker regarded a new type of society as the necessary matrix for individual freedom – a freedom that had to be exercised in a responsible manner, restricted from impeding the freedom of others – they were at odds with Stirner's exaltation of individual revolt and selfishness, as well as Tolstoy's stress on withdrawal and contemplation. The State, for both, must be superseded, although not by revolution but by evolution: it was neither a necessary evil for unreasonable humankind, a perpetual tyrant against over the Ego, nor a corrupt secular authority.

The final two "Sages" identified by Eltzbacher were Bakunin and Peter Kropotkin: both were Russian radicals, born to the nobility, and exiled to Western Europe, where they advocated social revolution to abolish the State, capitalism and economic and social inequality, and create a self-managed socialist society in which individual differences could flourish on the basis of social and economic equality. Their ideas will be discussed in more depth below: suffice it to say that both men were rationalists (indeed, atheists), and advocates of co-operation rather than extreme individualism. They shared the Mutualist opposition to capitalism, admired Proudhon and shared his view that freedom was a social rather than an individual phenomenon, but saw exploitation as taking place in production (rather than through the market), advocated international class war (rather than gradual change), and favoured a planned economy (in place of the market mechanism), looking to the abolition of the commodity form, competition, money, profit, rent and wage labour

Faced with such a diverse group of supposed "anarchists" Eltzbacher was forced to use the lowest common denominator to define anarchism. This was opposition to the State and a stress on individual freedom from restriction, a definition that became the standard one at the cost of making "anarchism" into a vague outlook who's "Seven Sages" did not even concur on the question of whether the State *should* be abolished in the first instance. This effectively removed questions like capitalism and revolution from the definition: this was certainly not the way in which Bakunin and Kropotkin defined anarchism, which both described as a type of socialism.[61]

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[60] For an introduction to Tucker, see, in particular, Paul Avrich's essays on "Proudhon and America", and "Benjamin Tucker and his Daughter", which are both in Paul Avrich, 1988, *Anarchist Portraits*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey. The quote is from the first essay, on p. 140. A useful compilation of Tucker's writings is Benjamin R. Tucker, [1926] 1973, *Selections from the Writings of Benjamin R. Tucker*, Kraus Reprint Company, Millwood, New York: this includes his key essay, "State Socialism and Anarchism: how far they agree, and wherein they differ".

[61] Bakunin, [1873] 1971, *op cit*., p. 332; Kropotkin, [1887], 1970, *op cit*., pp. 46, 61; Kropotkin, [1905] 1970, *op cit*., p. 285

There are a great many problems with Eltzbacher's approach. At a theoretical level, it lacks clear criteria for inclusion into (or exclusion from) the "anarchist" category, and is unable to distinguish anarchism from other schools of thought. If anarchism is simply opposition to the State and a quest for individual freedom then there is simply no good reason to exclude from the category of "anarchist" Marx, Engels, Lenin, Bukharin, or Mao, not to mention Trotsky or Stalin.

All the classical Marxists argued for "fundamental changes" in society, and stressed the ultimate aim of abolishing the State and creating a society based on individual freedom. The *Communist Manifesto*, for example, stressed that the final stage of history, the communist society, would be stateless – "the public power will lose its political character" – and based on individual freedom – "we shall have an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all".[62] This communist society, in the Marxist tradition, is the final result of history. According to Lenin, the "dictatorship of the proletariat" "will begin to whither away immediately after its victory": "We do not at all differ from the anarchists on the question of the abolition of the state as the *aim*".[63] Likewise, Bukharin: the "State will die out … the proletarian State authority will also pass away…".[64]

Logically, if the dominant tradition of defining anarchism as anti-Statism and a stress on individual liberty is accepted, Marx, Engels, Lenin and their heirs *must* be considered anarchists: their ultimate aim is to create the "situation" free of "imposition, constraint, or oppression" that Kedward sees as essentially anarchist, where the individual must be completely free, which Jacker notes; the Marxist era of communism means a person can "obey the dictates of his free will only", which is central to Hoffman's definition of anarchism; it is a "positive social doctrine" with "a vision of a better form of social order without the State", both of which Statz regards as anarchist. If, like Marshall, the reader accepts the definition of "anarchist" as one who "rejects all forms of external government and the State" and believes that "all individuals" would function well without them, then Marx, Engels and Mao were basically anarchists.

Few people would accept such a view, including Eltzbacher and his followers, the latter giving no clear reasons for what must be regarded as the arbitrary exclusion of excellent candidates for inclusion in the "anarchist" pantheon. Accepting Eltzbacher's definition, and applying it consistently must mean that Stalin has every right to a place amongst the "Seven Sages": the logic is inescapable.

It might, perhaps, be suggested that classical Marxists are excluded from the "anarchist" category for advocating a "dictatorship of the proletariat" as a transitional step on the road to stateless communism. Such an approach might be buttressed with a reference to the authoritarian practice of classical Marxism in power.

An approach of this sort would, however, effectively mean that *strategy* was a central component of the definition of "anarchism", but strategy is not part of the definition of anarchism provided by Eltzbacher (or Joll, Kedward, Marshall, Statz, Woodcock or the others in the Eltzbacher tradition).

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[62] Marx and Engels, [1848] 1954, *op cit*., pp. 56-7
[63] Lenin, [1917] 1975, *op cit*., pp. 257, 281, emphasis in the original
[64] Bukharin, [1922] 1966, *op cit*., pp. 74-5

On the contrary, the dominant tradition in the literature continually argues (and logically *must* argue, given its definition of anarchism and its adoption of the "Seven Sages") that "anarchists" lack any shared approach to social change. For Hoffman, as noted above, "anarchists" lack "the agreement about doctrine and programme that have generally united men in comparable movements"; for Statz anarchism involved a variety of schemes to replace the State, "the root of all evil"; according to Woodcock, the anarchists have "shown singular disagreement" on "the tactics needed to achieve" their aims, disagreeing with one another on the "limited regions [sic]" of "revolutionary methods" and "economic organisation";[65] for David Miller, anarchists opposed "existing economic systems", but differed radically on the means to change society.[66] Underlying all of these views is the assumption that anarchism is, by definition, rather incoherent.[67]

Marshall tried to resolve this problem by suggesting that "most anarchists" believe that the means of change must prefigure the ends desired:[68] this would probably exclude the classical Marxists, although it does not stop Marshall counting as anarchists other figures (including Godwin, but there are others)[69] who could accept a transitional State. Yet Marshall's solution does not work, for strategy is not part of his definition of anarchism, while the formulation "most anarchists" suggests at least *some* anarchists can countenance the use of authoritarian means for libertarian ends.

Even if the argument that means must prefigure ends *was* accepted a binding criterion for inclusion in the "anarchist" camp, there remain peculiar and unexplained absences from the "anarchist" tradition as constructed by Eltzbacher and his successors. Notable examples include Council Communism and autonomist Marxism. Now, it might be thought that the explicit refusal of the Council Communists (and autonomists) to accept an "anarchist" label plays a role in this exclusion, but self-identification as an "anarchist" has never been a central criteria in mainstream analyses of anarchism, as the inclusion of people who rejected the anarchist label (like Godwin, Stirner and Tolstoy) shows. Accounts of "anarchism" such as that of Marshall literally abound with individuals and groups that refused the anarchist label. (I will, it should be noted, argue below with reference to cases like the French CGT and De Leon that explicit identification with anarchism is by no means an adequate basis for such distinctions).

The inconsistent use of criteria like strategy and self-identification in the mainstream literature on anarchism points to two important patterns in that literature: on the one hand, a degree of recognition, if only implicit, of the flaws of the Elztbacher definition; on the other hand, ongoing, if implicit, modifications of the definition of anarchism, or, to put it another way, an unstable and inconsistent understanding of

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[65] Woodcock, 1975, *op cit*. pp. 13, 15, 19

[66] David Miller, 1984, *Anarchism*, J.M. Dent and Sons, London, Melbourne, pp. 5-10

[67] The same assumption may be found in debates over the philosophy of science, where Paul Feyerband advocated epistemological relativism and a rejection of basic scientific method in favour of "anything goes" as an "anarchist" approach: Paul Feyerband, 1975, *Against Method, Outline of an Anarchistic Theory of Knowledge*, New Left Books, London

[68] Marshall, 1994, *op cit*., p. 629

[69] For example, Marshall explicitly describes Gandhi as an anarchist, but argues that he did not call for the "immediate abolition of State and government", nor "reject the notion of a State in a transitional period", and was often quite authoritarian in his dealings with others; Herbert Read, the late British philosopher, is called an anarchist, even though Marshall suggests that his strategy and aims were not always "strictly anarchist": see Marshall, 1994, *op cit.*, pp. 422, 425, 42, 591-3

"anarchism". Marshall's discussion of so-called "anarcho-capitalism" provides a good example. Marshall argues that "anarcho-capitalism" is not truly anarchist (even if some of its proponents accept the anarchist label) because it ignores the anarchist "concern for economic equality and social justice".[70] However, "concern with economic equality and social justice" is not part of the definition of anarchism, nor is it shared by all of his "anarchists".

In short, the mainstream definition of anarchism fails some of the most basic requirements of a definition, lacking the ability to effectively exclude from the category phenomena deemed external to the phenomenon under examination. At the same time, the evident pattern of continual, but implicit, modifications of the definition of anarchism – by the writers who define anarchism as anti-Statism and a concern with individual freedom – shows that even these analysts find their definition of anarchism of limited use. The boundaries are never clear and the meaning of anarchism is, in practice, continually shifting, making it impossible to systematically examine anarchism as a theory or a movement.

If anarchism is defined shallowly as anti-Statism and individual freedom, and the anarchists include figures as different as the "Seven Sages", then it is obvious that anarchism – understood this way – must lack a theoretical corpus and that it cannot, therefore, be subjected to a rigorous theoretical interrogation. That is to say, anarchist ideas cannot be properly analysed using this approach.

The effects are evident in most standard studies. Woodcock claims, on the one hand, that "anarchism" is a "system of social thought" and a "developed, articulate, and clearly identifiable trend"; on the other hand, however, he states that anarchism lacks "an essential theory" and has a "variety of viewpoints inconceivable in a closely dogmatic system".[71] Marshall provides a detailed exposition of "anarchist theory" that centres on the constant references to shared anarchist views,[72] yet insists that anarchism is "anti-dogmatic" and "does not offer a fixed body of doctrine based on one particular world view".[73]

More specifically theoretical analyses of anarchism face similar problems. Derry Novak's classic 1958 article, "The Place of Anarchism in the History of Political Thought", admonished Eltzbacher for narrowing anarchism down to a rejection of the State, but nonetheless argued that it is "the nature of anarchism" to lack a "general programme" and a coherent theory, and identified anarchist thought with the work of the "Seven Sages".[74] Carter's *The Political Theory of Anarchism* faithfully restated the "Seven Sages" approach, and succeeds mainly in demonstrating how these "anarchists" were at odds on issues such as the nature of society, the use of violence, class struggle, industrialisation, urbanisation, and democracy.[75] Carter's book is less an essay on the political theory of anarchism than a series of monographs on different themes –

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[70] Marshall, 1994, *op cit*., p. 564-5. Indeed, Marshall admits that not all of his "anarchists" favour positive freedom (i.e. freedom *to* act, which implies "equality and social justice") as well as negative freedom (i.e. freedom *from* direct external coercion, which can take place in an inegalitarian context): see pp. 36-7

[71] Woodcock, 1975, *op cit*., pp. 11, 15, 37

[72] Marshall, 1994, *op cit.*, pp. 12-50

[73] Marshall, 1994, *op cit.*, p. 3

[74] Derry Novak, [1958] 1970, "The Place of Anarchism in the History of Political Thought", reprinted in Robert Hoffman, editor, 1970, *op cit.*, pp. 22, 24-30

[75] April Carter, 1971, *The Political Theory of Anarchism*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, pp. 1-11, 25, 26, 63-73

federalism, the individual, and so on – each drawn exclusively from a single theorist, but with no explanation of why these different theorists should be assumed to share a larger paradigm.[76]

Miller's *Anarchism* aims to study anarchism as a modern ideology, but immediately concedes defeat, arguing that anarchism is full of "paradoxes and contradictions", has no "set of core assumptions" comparable to those of Marxism, and is not, in fact, an ideology but a "point of intersection of several ideologies".[77] Miller is thus faced with a quandary, which he resolves by dividing anarchism into several arbitrary categories – "philosophical" anarchism (Godwin), "Christian anarchism (Tolstoy), "individualist" anarchism (Stirner, Proudhon, Tucker), and "communist" anarchism (Bakunin, Kropotkin)– each of which is investigated separately. Robert Wolff 's well known *In Defence of Anarchism* has a simpler solution: he ignores the "Seven Sages" – indeed, all writers identified with anarchism – to derive his own highly abstract defence of "individual autonomy " from "State authority" from theorists such as Immanuel Kant.[78]

These writers, in other words, replicate the conceptual problems inherent in Eltzbacher's definition, positing an "anarchist" theory that is not a theory, an ideology without shared ideas. However, when the manner in which "anarchism" has been understood by Eltzbacher and his followers is examined more closely, it becomes clear that the problem of radical incoherence that is supposedly characteristic of anarchism *does not lie with anarchism as such, but with the dominant approach to its study* – that is, the manner in which it has been understood (or rather, *misunderstood*) by scholars.

In other words, the apparent lack of an "essential theory" and a "particular world view" attributed to anarchism is a function of the analytical approach applied to anarchism, *not* a feature of anarchism itself. It is the logical outcome of an approach that wrenches quite dissimilar ideas of anti-Statism and individual freedom out of context, grouping them together as "anarchism", while failing to consider a range of other plausible characteristics of anarchism, leading to an analysis that cannot provide a solid reason why Stalin should not be grouped with Stirner.

This has enormous implications for understanding the history of anarchism. Earlier it was stated that there are two approaches to anarchist history that base themselves on Eltzbacher's definition of anarchism as opposition to the State and support for individual freedom: the approach that sees anarchism as a timeless phenomenon, and the approach that sees anarchism as a relatively modern phenomenon with diverse theoretical roots. The first is exemplified by Marshall's claims that the "first anarchist" was the first person who rebelled against "authority", the first act in "a timeless struggle between "those who wanted to rule and those who refused to be ruled or to rule in turn";[79] Eltzbacher himself tended to the latter approach, as he regarded anarchism as a new phenomenon,[80] finding the "first anarchist" in Godwin, rather than in prehistory, where Marshall finds the first rebel.

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[76] Thus, the section on the State draws almost entirely on Kropotkin; that on law, mainly on Tolstoy; that on federalism and nationality, in its entirety from Proudhon; the individual, from Stirner, pp. 1; morality, from Tolstoy: see Carter, 1971, *op cit*., pp. 29-38, 41-46, 61-3, 89-93, 93-5. This is a result of trying to derive a coherent political theory from "Seven Sages" who have little in common.
[77] Miller, 1984, *op cit*., p. 3
[78] Robert Paul Wolff, 1970, *In Defence of Anarchism*, Harper and Row, New York, Evanston, London.
[79] Marshall, 1994, *op cit.*, pp. xiv, 3-4
[80] Fleming, 1979, *op cit*., p. 19

Of Marshall and Eltzbacher, it is Marshall who is truly consistent. If anarchism is simply opposition to the State in favour of the individual, then there is no reason to limit the anarchist gallery to a mere "Seven Sages": Eltzbacher's provides no good reason to start with Godwin, and his definition opens the door wide to an infinite expansion of the "anarchist" tradition.

Marshall, then, takes Elztbacher's approach to its logical conclusion, creating an "anarchist" gallery in which figures as diverse as the Buddha, the Marquis de Sade, Herbert Spencer, Gandhi, Ché Guevara, Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher all make appearances, although Stalin does not. Besides making the possibility of examining anarchist theory remote, this approach effectively renders anarchism into an a-historical impulse, and Marshall is left trying to explain anarchism by reference to instincts, a "drive for freedom", a "deeply felt human need" [81] that simply fails to provide a serious basis for understanding anarchist history.[82]

It is precisely the problems that lie at the very heart of Eltzbacher's analysis that force his followers to implicitly modify his definition, but, as the Marshall example shows, these followers may *recognise* the problem but do not *resolve* it. If Eltzbacher compounded a poor methodology by producing a bad definition, his successors have compounded a bad definition by continually shifting the meaning of "anarchism" and, thus, the boundaries of the "anarchist" movement. In such a situation, it is not just theoretical interrogation that suffers: it becomes impossible to properly historicise anarchism for its boundaries are fluid; consequently, it becomes impossible to seriously analyse anarchism as a historical phenomenon.

2.3. Bringing labour and the left back in: historicising anarchism

In short, the problem is not so much that anarchism, as such, is incoherent, but rather that it has been *defined* in an incoherent manner. A definition that cannot adequately distinguish between "anarchism", classical Marxism and the "anarcho-capitalist" heirs of neo-liberalism has limited value. In short, a new definition is needed, a definition that identifies the distinguishing features of anarchism in a more effective

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[81] Marshall, 1994, *op cit.*, pp. xiv, 3-4

[82] It must be said that this tendency to create a mythical lineage for anarchism – doubtless to bolster its claims – also became a feature of anarchist accounts of the movement's history: Kropotkin, for example, claimed in an article on anarchism for the Encyclopaedia Britannica that anarchist conceptions of society "have always existed in mankind", and claim the Chinese philosopher Lao Tse, and the Greek Stoic, Zeno, for the anarchist pantheon; the anarchist historian Max Nettlau, author of a ten volume history of anarchism that remains unavailable in English, and currently out of print, claimed in his *Short History of Anarchism*, a summary of his lager study of anarchism, that the "history of anarchist ideas" stats from "the earliest favourable historical moment when men first evolved the concept of a free life as preached by anarchists", and suggests that a "small minority" of ancient Greek philosophers arrived at "anarchist principles; Rudolph Rocker, one of the key figures in twentieth century anarchism, also suggested that anarchist ideas are to be found in every period of known history. See Kropotkin, [1905] 1971, *op cit*., pp. 287-8; Nettlau, [1934] 1996, *op cit.*, pp. 1, 3; Rocker, [1938] 1989, *op cit.,* especially chapter 1. The fact that the anarchists themselves increasingly accepted such myths in no way renders such claims authentic: it simply shows that many people are susceptible to the myths of their own creation. Indeed, while Nettlau is fairly consistent in his account, both Kropotkin and Rocker continually contradict themselves: for example, Kropotkin's claims in 1905 for an ancient anarchist lineage are at odds with his earlier stress on the emergence of anarchism in the First International, while Rocker's notion that anarchism existed in "every period" of history is contradicted by his argument in the very same work anarchism was a form of modern socialism, and that modern socialism was the creation of the modern labour movement, itself the product of the industrial revolution: cf. Kropotkin, [1905] 1970, *op cit*., with, for example, with Kropotkin, [1887] 1990, *op cit*.; Rocker, [1938] 1989, *op cit*., chapter 1 with chapter 2 of that same work.

manner than the dominant approach, one that enables an effective theoretical and historical analysis of anarchism. Once this is done, it becomes possible to examine the relationship between anarchism and syndicalism, to consider the social base of anarchism, and to effectively assess the influence of anarchism (and syndicalism) in South Africa.

If the root of the problems with Eltzbacher's approach can be traced back to his flawed methodology – it was the manner in which he selected his "anarchists" that led to his flawed definition of anarchism – then methodology provides an appropriate starting point to rebuild a foundation for analysing anarchism. A different set of "Sages" would suggest quite different conclusions regarding the core features of anarchism, and a different understanding of the anarchist tradition.

Where, then, to start, and how should the "anarchists" be selected? It is Eltzbacher's own work that, ironically, provides a guide. Eltzbacher's interest in anarchism emerged against the backdrop of the rise of a self-described anarchist movement in the late nineteenth century. A "general awareness of an 'anarchist' position did not exist until after the appearance of its representatives in the late 1870s", and anarchism "initially appeared to contemporaries to be a new phenomenon".[83] It was this development that led to the first studies of anarchism, with the movement initially seen as a harmless revival of older utopian ideas, then (following the rise of a terrorist anarchist faction) as a sinister development explained in criminological and psychological terms; only in the early twentieth century did anarchist ideology become a serious object of study, with Elztbacher blazing the trail.[84]

That the anarchist movement only emerged as an identifiable and self-identified current, as a social movement, and as a political force from the late 1860s onwards is beyond any serious dispute. Eltzbacher himself stressed that anarchism was a new phenomenon.[85] Joll states that it was only after 1848 that the "modern revolutionary movement begins", and that it was "in the 1860s that the anarchist movement began to be a practical political force".[86] Kedward speaks of the "great age of the anarchists in Europe and America … between 1880 and 1914".[87] Miller refers to the "eruptions of anarchist activity occurring throughout Europe from the 1860s" and the "origins of anarchism as an organised political force" in splits in the First International,[88] which effectively dates its origins to the involvement of Bakunin and the Alliance.[89] Even Marshall states that it was Bakunin who "turned anarchism into a theory of political action, and helped develop the anarchist movement" into a popular force,[90] while Woodcock states that the "anarchist movement" arose in the First International, the "creation" of Bakunin.[91]

Crucially, this was the context in which the study of anarchism began, and these were the very developments with which scholars grappled. It is, then, perfectly reasonable to take the movement that

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[83] Fleming, 1979, *op cit*., p. 16
[84] Fleming, 1979, *op cit*., pp. 17-19
[85] Fleming, 1979, *op cit*., p. 19
[86] Joll, 1964, *op cit*., p. 58, 82
[87] Kedward, 1971, *op cit*., p. 5
[88] Miller, 1984, *op cit*., pp. 4, 45
[89] Miller, 1984, *op cit*., pp. 4, 45
[90] Marshall, 1994, *op cit*., pp. 3-4, 264
[91] Woodcock, 1975, *op cit*., p. 136, 170

started in the 1860s, the "new phenomenon" that so entranced Eltzbacher, as marking the emergence of the historical anarchist movement, and to select our anarchist "Sages" from amongst its core thinkers. Bakunin and Kropotkin are the most notable examples: only these two, out of Eltzbacher's "Seven Sages", were part of the anarchist movement, and identified with its doctrines. Bakunin was the key founder of the anarchist movement and, after his death in 1876, "Kropotkin was unquestionably the most widely read and respected anarchist theorist" in the world,[92] with an immense influence in Europe, the Americas, and Asia.[93]

The ideas of Bakunin and Kropotkin may, then, be reasonably assumed to be representative of the anarchist position. Having carefully selected the key representatives of anarchism, avoiding Eltzbacher's errors, it can be confidently argued that a definition of anarchist ideas derived from a study of the works of Bakunin and Kropotkin in their period of involvement with the anarchist movement should provide the basis for an accurate definition of anarchism – a definition that captures the key features of anarchism, clearly distinguishes anarchism from other traditions, and provides the basis for an effective theoretical and historical analysis of anarchism.

Of course, no movement is entirely ideologically homogeneous, and it is not the intention of this argument to suggest that the anarchists were an exception. In every movement, there are debates on many issues, and some activists have a clearer grasp of the movement's general theory than others, while movements also attract supporters whose understanding of the ultimate aims of the movement are fairly unformed and mixed. Even so, it is possible to identify the essential features of anarchist thought and thereby lay the basis for a historical analysis of the anarchist movement that is historicised and clearly bounded.

Bakunin was initially a radical pan-Slavic nationalist, active in the European uprisings of the late 1840s; after a spell in Russian prisons, he escaped to the West in 1861, abandoned nationalism for socialism by 1864, and formed a secret organisation of European revolutionaries, the "International Brotherhood". [94] A public group, the "International Alliance of Socialist Democracy", replaced the Brotherhood in 1868, and applied to join the First International. French Mutualists and English trade unionists had formed the First International in 1864 to promote unity between workers in different European countries, but by 1868, the General Council of the International was dominated by German émigrés centred on Karl Marx.[95]

At Marx's insistence, the Alliance was publicly dissolved, and its adherents entered the International as individual members and branches. This had little effect on the political views of the new adherents,[96] and it is certain that the Alliance continued underground: one of its notable achievements was founding the

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[92] Miller, 1970, *op cit*., p. 6

[93] See J. Michael Allen, 2001, "Ambivalent Social Darwinism in Korea", *International Journal of Korean History*, vol.2 and Ruth Kinna, 1995, "Kropotkin's Theory of Mutual Aid in Historical Context", *International Review of Social History*, vol.40, part 2

[94] For a brief biographical background, see James Guillaume, "A Biographical Sketch", in Dolgoff, editor, 1971, *op cit*. Also of interest is K.J. Kenafick, 1990, "Life of Bakunin", in K.J. Kenafick, editor, 1990, *Marxism, Freedom and the State*, Freedom Press, London. The basic documents of the Brotherhood are available in Dolgoff, 1971, *op cit.* and (in slightly different form) Guérin, editor, 1998a, *op cit*.

[95] Stekloff, 1928, *op cit*., remains an excellent history of the First International, albeit one seriously marred by overt hostility towards Bakunin.

[96] Woodcock, 1975, *op cit*., p. 156

International's largest national federation, in Spain; Bakunin himself referred to the Alliance in the present tense in 1872.[97] There was nothing "imaginary" about Bakunin's "secret societies", despite the claims of E.H. Carr and Joll. [98]

Four years later the International split into two wings. Contrary to the commonplace view that the "majority of European sections followed Marx",[99] or that Marxism was "the majority faction within the International Workingmen's Association",[100] the Bakuninist wing (the anarchists, as its adherents were increasingly known) based in continental Europe was by far the largest faction: it attracted the support of most sections, and grew substantially until its dissolution in 1877.[101] The small wing centred on Marx, and

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[97] Mikhail Bakunin, [1872a], 1971, "Letter to *La Liberté*", in Dolgoff, editor, 1971, *op cit*., p. 289

[98] E.H. Carr, in his hostile biography of Bakunin, states, for example, that the Alliance was imply a figment of Bakunin's imagination, and sees this as part of an ongoing pattern. According to Joll, Bakunin showed a lifelong "passion … for establishing largely imaginary secret societies". See E.H. Carr, 1975, *Michael Bakunin*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, London, revised edition, pp.421-3; Joll, 1964, *op cit*., p. 87. The evidence is rather different. In Spain in 1870 there were "secret Bakuninist nuclei" had between twenty and thirty thousand adherents, within the Spanish section of the International, and an Alliance section was formed in Portugal in 1871. There is no reason to suppose the situation differed greatly in Italy, southern France, Belgium, and Switzerland. An Alliance meeting was held in Switzerland in 1877. The anarchists themselves bear some of the responsibility for the veil of myth that shrouds the Alliance, as they often denied the existence of an underground Alliance – this being a contentious issue in the International and a violation of the ruling of the International. This should not, however, detract from the facts. As the Italian anarchist Errico Malatesta, perhaps the most important European anarchist after Kropotkin, and a key Alliance figure, later recalled: "Why try to conceal certain truths now that they are in the domain of history and can serve as a lesson for the present and the future? … We, who were known in the International as Bakuninists … were members of the Alliance … we sought to make use of the International for our own party aims". See Bookchin, 1977, *op cit*., pp. 50, 52, 72, and Woodcock, 1975, *op cit*., p. 168, and Malatesta, quoted in Nettlau, [1934] 1996, *op cit*., p. 131. In claiming that the Alliance (and the Brotherhood) were only "quite informal fraternities of loosely organised individuals and groups", Dolgoff muddied the waters by not taking these groups seriously enough; see Dolgoff, 1971, editorial comments to Mikhail Bakunin, [1870a], 1971, "Letter to Albert Richard", in Dolgoff, editor, 1971, *op cit.*, p. 182

[99] Schechter, 1994, *op cit*., p. 63. David McLellan's biography of Marx is sensitive to the limits of Marx's influence in the International before 1872, and that Marx lost the battle in 1872, but nonetheless tends to judge the strength of the International in direct proportion to Marx's role therein: thus, the International was "at its zenith" in 1869 – a time when Marx had defeated his main rivals and Bakunin was not yet a central figure – while the International began to "supposedly die out" after 1872. In fact, as Stekloff's data shows, the International grew rapidly from 1869 onwards, and again after 1872, with this growth centred on the Bakuninists; it was Marx who was at his "zenith" in 1869, and whose power would "die out" from 1872, not that of the International as a whole. See David McLellan, 1976, *Karl Marx: his life and thought*, Paladin, St. Albans, Herts, pp. 382, 410

[100] Emile Capouya and Keith Tompkins, 1975, "Introduction", to their edited collection, *The Essential Kropotkin*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, London, p. xii. This introduction is subsequently referred to Capouya and Tompkins, 1975a, *op cit*., and the collection as Capouya and Tompkins, 1975b, editors, *op cit.*

[101] In Spain, the largest section of the International, Bookchin notes, one hundred delegates, representing 150 workers' societies, met in June 1870 for the first congress of Spanish section, adopting a broadly anti-Statist and anti-electoral position, and in 1871 the Spanish section converted itself into the Spanish Regional Federation, a broad-based revolutionary trade union structure. At the 1872 congress, delegates represented 20,000 Spanish workers in 236 local federations and 516 trade sections, and in 1873, membership reached 60,000. According to Woodcock, the Italian section of the First International grew extremely rapidly, and under Bakuninist influence: in March 1873, a second national anarchist congress was held, where 53 delegates represented 150 sections, representing a seven-fold growth in sections from the first congress, held but seven months before. According to Carl Levy, the "most striking feature of the Italian section of the International must be the rapidity of its growth" in the 1870s under anarchist leadership, and it was, in a sense, "Italy's first mass political party". The anarchists also dominated Belgium – according to Stekloff, if Spain is excluded, the "only country" in Europe "where a mass movement of the workers existed", and a bastion of anarchist power – and support for the libertarian faction also existed in France, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. By 1877, the anarchists also attracted adherents in Argentina, Britain, Canada, Cuba, Germany, Greece, Egypt, Portugal, the United States of America, and Uruguay. It also had support in Bolivia, Russia and elsewhere. Marx's support was largely confined to small groups in Britain, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, New Zealand, Spain, Switzerland, and the United States: of these, the only substantial groups were the Germans, who were indifferent to the International, and the

based in New York, did not retain control of a single significant national federation of the International: Germany supported Marx, but was largely indifferent to an International in which it played no role; a substantial bloc in the Portuguese federation also supported Marx, although it may be noted that this was hardly an example of the modern workers' movement that Marx claimed to represent; in most cases, Marxist influence was confined to small local circles and branches. As Joll noted, "the proletariat did not seem eager to constitute itself into a political party under the direction of Marx" and Bakunin's "influence remained as great as ever".[102]

Among the key members of the Bakuninist wing – and a member of the underground Alliance – was Kropotkin. Born in 1842 to a princely lineage, he initially worked for the Russian government as an official and a geographer, then resigned, and later visited Switzerland in 1872 where he joined the Bakuninists.[103] He became involved with the Narodniks, was jailed and escaped, and spent his remaining life in prison or in exile. Most of this exile was in Britain, where Kropotkin wrote a series of important books, innumerable articles and pamphlets, and founded the London-based anarchist periodical *Freedom*, and the printing house Freedom Press.

Bakunin was the first great spokesman of the emerging anarchist movement, a movement formed in the First International in the struggles against the older Marxist tradition and other factions. Arguing that "every command slaps liberty in the face",[104] Bakunin insisted that the exercise of individual freedom was only truly possible in a social order that provided opportunities for self-realisation, self-expression and the development of the human personality to all members. He aimed, he said, "to organise society in such a manner that every individual, man or woman, should find, upon entering life, approximately equal means for the development of his or her diverse faculties and their utilization in his or her work".[105] This reordered society would be a form of socialism, but one based on individual freedom, self-management, decentralisation, federalism, and free association, rather than the Marxist model of State power and the rule of a socialist party.

In place of Proudhon and Tucker's vision, Bakunin favoured economic planning from below and distribution on the basis of need rather than output; in place of a centralised "dictatorship of the proletariat", mutual aid, voluntary co-operation, and federal forms of organisation; in place of political homogeneity,

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Portuguese, who hardly fitted Marx's model of an advanced workers' movement. See Bookchin, 1977, *op cit*., p. 51, 54-5, 76-7, 87; Levy, 1989, *op cit*., pp. 26-7; Stekloff, 1928, *op cit*., p. 262, also see pp. 262-7, 287-339; Woodcock, 1975, *op cit*., p. 315 *et seq*. It was hardly "still-born" as Carr claimed, and it cannot be fairly stated, as Carr does, that Bakunin's career "barren of concrete result": cf. Carr, 1975, *op cit*., pp. 440, 452. Such conclusions certainly do not follow from Carr's own data: for example, on pp. 439 and 458 the reader learns that Bakunin had "many followers" in Spain, where his ideas would remain the "accepted doctrine of the most powerful wing of the workers' movement", while in Italy he had enormous prestige, and was a "quasi-legendary figure" for "socialists throughout the land".

[102] Joll, 1964, *op cit*., p. 106

[103] This biographical information is mainly drawn from Martin A. Miller, 1970, "Introduction", to Martin A. Miller, editor, 1970, *Selected Writings on Anarchism and Revolution: P.A. Kropotkin*, M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England. This article is subsequently referred to as Miller, 1970a, *op cit*., and the collection as Miller, 1970b, editor, *op cit.*.

[104] Mikhail Bakunin, [1871a] 1971, "God and the State", in Dolgoff, editor, 1971, *op cit*., p. 240

[105] Mikhail Bakunin, [1871c] 1993, *The Capitalist System*, Libertarian Labour Review, Champaign, Illinois, no pagination



Figure four: Mikhail Bakunin at the 1869 Basel congress of the First International

Source: Wayne Thorpe, 1989, *'The Workers Themselves': revolutionary syndicalism and international labour 1913-23*, Kulwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht, Boston, London, and the International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, p. 8

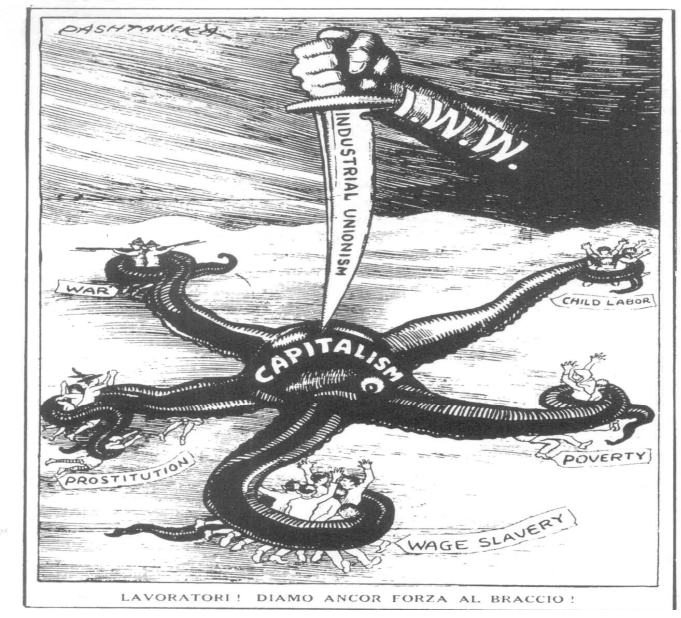

Figure five: "Workers! Give me More Strength in my Arm!" An image from the American IWW press.

Source: Sal Salerno, 1989, *Red November, Black November: culture and community in the Industrial Workers of the World*, State University of New York Press, p. 44

diversity and self-expression. Bakunin expressed this vision in his dictum that "liberty without socialism is privilege, injustice; socialism without liberty is slavery and brutality".[106]

Despite the common presentation of Kropotkin as a gentle "anarchist saint" compared to Bakunin[107] the two did not differ on any substantial issues. Like Bakunin, Kropotkin was an advocate of militant class struggle; like Bakunin, he hoped the social revolution would be peaceful, but concluded that it would probably involve a civil war between the classes; like Bakunin, he placed his faith in the self-activity of the peasants and working class, and their self-organisation, as the motive force of the revolution; like Bakunin, he rejected the strategy of classical Marxism, adding to this a critique of the parliamentary socialism that was developing in the latter nineteenth-century.[108]

The first three congresses of the First International – in Geneva in 1866, Lausanne in 1867, and Brussels in 1868 – were vague affairs, and while the 1868 congress established the "socialised economy as the future aim of the European working-class movement", the meaning of the "socialised economy", and the means whereby it could be realised, remained unclear.[109] With the entry of the Alliance, these issues would become the centrepiece of debate, and tear the International in two.

Bakunin and the Alliance made their first appearance at the Basel congress of the International in 1869, which Bakunin dominated with his striking oratory and personal force, and his victory over Marx – centred on the relatively trivial issue of inheritance rights – opened the struggle with Marx in earnest, with Marx challenged successfully for the first time on matters of policy and doctrine.[110] Perhaps even more important were the discussions on the nature of the "socialised economy": a report by Jean-Louis Pindy, a French trade unionist, suggested the abolition of the State and its replacement by a federation of trade unions and self-governing towns; a debate between the key Belgian delegate, Cesar de Paepe, later close to anarchism, then a State socialist, and Adhemer Scwitzuébel, an associate of Bakunin, raised the question of the role of the State after the revolution.[111]

These were the first of many vital exchanges and debates through which the new anarchist position was defined, in this struggle that anarchism as a coherent ideology and popular movement was born. Some of the ideas of the anarchists were anticipated by the positions of the Brotherhood, although the anarchists rejected that body's internally hierarchical structure and predilection for revolutionary dictatorship.[112]

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[106] This quotation appears on the frontispiece of Dolgoff, 1971, *op cit*., and elsewhere, and is one of Bakunin's best most famous statements. Its source is rarely given. Its derives, in fact, from Bakunin, [1867] 1971, "Federalism, Socialism, Anti-Theologism", in Dolgoff, editor, 1971, *op cit*., p. 127

[107] For example: Joll, 1964, *op cit*., 151; Woodcock, 1975, *op cit*., p. 172.

[108] According to Carr, Bakunin favoured revolutionary violence, whilst the "school of Russian theoretical anarchists, of whom Tolstoy and Kropotkin are the most famous representatives, tended to associate anarchism with non-resistance". Even leaving aside the logic of grouping Kropotkin and Tolstoy, a cursory reading of Kropotkin makes it obvious that he was certainly not a partisan of "non-resistance". Thus Avrich, for example, notes that Kropotkin favoured "a social revolution of workers and peasants", "did not expect the privileged classes to give up their privileges and possessions without a fight", and "condoned the use of violence in the struggle for freedom and equality". See Carr, 1975, *op cit.,* p. 439; cf. Paul Avrich, "Kropotkin's Ethical Anarchism", in Avrich, 1988, *op cit*., pp. 53, 66-7

[109] Woodcock, 1975, *op cit*. p. 227

[110] Joll, 1964, *op cit*., p. 103

[111] The documents in question may be found in Guérin, editor, 1998a, editor, *op cit*., pp. 183-202

[112] See, for example, Bakunin, [1866a] 1971, "Revolutionary Catechism", in Dolgoff, editor, 1971, *op cit*., pp. 76-97. This advocated atheism, class struggle, the abolition of "classes, ranks and privileges", the replacement of the

Proudhon's commitment to self-management, the abolition of the State and voluntary federation deeply influenced the anarchists (although the anarchists rejected the market mechanism and the moderate Mutualist approach to social change); there is also no doubt at all that the anarchists were deeply influenced by Marx's economic analysis (even if they rejected his political views).[113]

It was in the First International, Kropotkin noted, that socialism moved from "Governmentalism" to a new conception "formulating itself little by little in the Congresses of the great Association and later on among its successors",[114] until "modern anarchism" was born.[115] The "central Marxist-Bakuninist conflicts over political action and the state" were thereby defined,[116] and the "great schism" between classical Marxism and anarchism took place.[117] The term "anarchist" itself was initially used interchangeably with terms such as "collectivist", "libertarian communist", "antistate socialist", "anti-authoritarian socialist" and

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"centralised State" with a decentralised order, and complete "individual and collective freedom". On the other hand, the Brotherhood was influenced by the idea of a revolutionary dictatorship, and seems to have been internally hierarchical, and lacked a serious historical and social analysis. It is also worth noting that the evolution of the anarchist position from 1868 onwards is also shown by several other early elements, which later disappear: Bakunin's initial support for the increased centralisation of the International in 1869, something he would later repudiate, and his initial support for participation in local elections. This means, of course, that one must be cautious when reading Bakunin's pre-International writings, as they have certain inconsistencies with his later thought, even if they have many elements quite in line with his later views. Just as it is important to distinguish Bakunin's pan-Slavist period from his socialist period, it is important to distinguish between the transitional period of the Brotherhood, and the anarchist period of the Alliance and International. This is not always done: Carr, for example, claims that the "main lines" of Bakunin's "political creed" had been "finally and firmly" established by August 1867, a claim that fails to take into account the subsequent evolution of his views; Dolgoff imputes to the Alliance the same internal hierarchy as the Brotherhood, which is simply inaccurate: see Carr, 1975, *op cit*., p. 327; Dolgoff, 1971, editorial comments to Bakunin, [1870a], *op cit.*, p. 182.

[113] K.J. Kenafick suggests that Bakunin's "system in fact consists of Proudhonian politics and Marxian economics", a point echoed by Marshall. Bakunin himself described the new movement as "the anarchist system of Proudhon broadened and developed by us and freed from all its metaphysical, idealist and doctrinaire baggage, accepting matter and social economy as the basis of all development in science and history", and as "Proudhonism, greatly developed and taken to its ultimate conclusion". In place of Proudhon's "incorrigible" idealism, anarchism advocated a scientific analysis of society and drew upon Marx's economic analysis whilst rejecting his political strategy: Marx, Bakunin commented, was "on the right path" and his *Das Kapital* "an analysis so profound, so luminous, so scientific, so decisive … so merciless an expose of the formation of bourgeois capital". See Bakunin, [1871b] 1971, "The Paris Commune and the Idea of the State", in Dolgoff, editor, 1971, *op cit.* p.263; on Proudhon compared to Marx, see Bakunin, as quoted in Guillaume, 1971, *op cit*. p. 26; Joll, 1964, *op cit*., p. 108; Bakunin, [1871c] 1993, *op cit*., no pagination; Kenafick, 1990, *op cit*., p. 15; Marshall, 1994, *op cit*., p. 270

[114] Peter Kropotkin, [1886] 1990, *The Place of Anarchism in Socialistic Evolution*, Practical Parasite Publications, Cyrmu, pp. 5-6

[115] Peter Kropotkin, [1905] 1970, "Anarchism", in Roger N. Baldwin, editor, 1970, *Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets: a collection of writings by Peter Kropotkin*, Dover Publications, New York, p. 295

[116] Woodcock, 1975, *op cit*., p. 155

[117] Joll, 1964, *op cit*., p. 84. The actual events of the split need not detain us too much. By 1871, Marx was fighting a rearguard action against the Bakuninists from his position in the General Council. This involved a campaign of personal slander against Bakunin, an improperly constituted private meeting in London in 1871 that changed the statutes of the International, and a carefully manipulated congress at The Hague, the Netherlands, in September 1872, that ratified the 1871 decisions and expelled Bakunin and his Swiss supporter (and Alliance member) James Guillaume. These decisions were repudiated by an emergency congress at St. Imier, Switzerland, and a new General Council formed. The St. Imier resolutions were endorsed by the Belgians, the British, Dutch, Italians, Russian émigrés, the Spanish, the majority of the French, the Swiss and the Americans, and affirmed in 1873. Marx refused to recognise these decisions, and his General Council expelled the supporters of the St. Imier position – the great majority of the International – and the organisation split in two. The details of the split may be found in Stekloff, 1928, *op cit*., as well as in Joll, 1964, *op cit*., and Woodcock, 1975, *op cit*. A representative collection of the key Marxist documents from the split may be found in Kolpinsky, editor, 1972, *op cit.*

"communist anarchist", but eventually became the most common name for the new movement, notwithstanding misgivings about the connotations of the word "anarchy".[118]

It was, in other words, within the *socialist* milieu that the ideas identified with Bakunin, Kropotkin and the anarchist movement emerged from the 1860s onwards, with Bakunin the most prominent spokesperson for the new tendency. Further, to the extent that the First International was a working class movement – which it was, without a doubt – it was in the *labour* movement that anarchism was born. It is important to stress that the issues at stake in the split in the First International were, at heart, differences between competing variants of *socialism*, and cannot be adequately explained as the outcome of a personality clash between Bakunin and Marx, as Woodcock and Joll suggest in different ways.[119]

Nor is an analysis of the political differences that emerged between anarchism and classical Marxism aided by the long-standing tradition of "Bakunin-bashing",[120] of attributing to Bakunin a most enormous series of personal and political failings.[121] Bookchin has commented, not unfairly, "In an age that has made the cooptation of dead revolutionaries into a fine art, "Bakunin enjoys the reputation of being the most denigrated revolutionary of his time".[122]

The effect of these caricatures is to underestimate Bakunin's importance as a revolutionary thinker and organiser of the first order. If Bakunin was the buffoon suggested in these works, it is difficult to explain his pivotal role in founding the Italian and Spanish socialist movements,[123] his fame, or his victory over Marx, a most formidable opponent. Likewise, if Bakunin lacked either "very subtle or very original" thought, as Joll contends,[124] or it is seriously maintained that Bakunin's anarchism was merely the manifestation of supposed

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[118] As recalled by James Guillaume in 1909, quoted in Dolgoff, 1971, editor's notes, in Dolgoff, *op cit.*, p. 158, and as noted by Fleming, 1979, *op cit*., p. 16. States Kropotkin: "After the names of 'federalists' and 'anti-authoritarians' had been used for some time… the name of 'anarchists,' which their adversaries insisted upon applying to them, prevailed… ": Kropotkin, [1905] 1970, *op cit*., p. 294

[119] Woodcock argues "differences in personality" between the two men "projected themselves in differences of principle", whilst Joll suggests that the "difference of temperament between Marx and Bakunin also led to a fundamental difference" on strategic issues: see Woodcock, 1975, *op cit*., p. 158 and Joll, 1964, *op cit*., p. 108

[120] The phrase is from Jon Bekken's review article: see Jon Bekken, 1992, "Bakunin and the Historians", *Libertarian Labour Review*, no. 12.

[121] For Joll, for example, Bakunin was a charming buffoon who advocated "violence" for "its own sake", a "feckless Bohemian" who loved "stirring up dramas", exhibited "childish petulance", and consumed rather to many cigars and brandy. For E.H. Carr, Bakunin was an "eccentric", a morally irresponsible muddle-minded wastrel whose ideas were incoherent, who lived in a fantasy world of conspiracies and intrigues, a man who was, ultimately, no less than an apostle of "pan-destruction" and unconditional dictatorship: his was a "characteristic blend of megalomania, vanity and naïve disingenuousness". Woodcock's *Anarchism* draws heavily on Carr, and his chapter on Bakunin – revealingly entitled "The Destructive Urge" – opens with the claim that Bakunin was "monumentally eccentric" and ends with the image of a Bakunin covered with "shame and bitterness". Marshall is not above arguing that Bakunin was "almost schizoid" in his alleged fantasies about an invisible dictatorship that he would lead, and applies a good dose of amateur psychology to claim that Bakunin suffered severe psychosexual problems. See Carr, 1975, *op cit*., pp. 184, 314-8, 353, 377, 381, 388, 392, 416, 434-440; Joll, 1964, *op cit*., pp. 84, 86, 87, 89, 92, 94, 113; Marshall, 1994, *op cit*., pp. 263-4, 266, 272, 277, 287-8, 299-300, 306-7; Woodcock, 1975, *op cit*., pp. 134, 169. Some of the more bizarre claims about Bakunin's personality are refuted in Brian Morris, 1996, *Bakunin: the philosophy of freedom*, Black Rose Books, Montréal, New York, London. The misrepresentations of Bakunin's politics – and, in particular, the claims that his anarchism masked a profound authoritarianism or was purely destructive – are dealt with in the subsequent discussion.

[122] Bookchin, 1977, *op cit*., p. 22

[123] See, for example, T.R. Ravindranathan, 1981, "Bakunin in Naples: an assessment", *Journal of Modern History*, vol.53, no. 2

[124] Joll, 1964, *op cit.*, p. 86

psychological problems,[125] it becomes difficult to explain why his ideas seemed convincing to the majority within the First International. Posthumous psychoanalysis is a notoriously flawed process, and can hardly be expected to explain Bakunin's popular appeal.[126]

Above all, it must be stressed that Bakunin's ideas were remarkably coherent: rather than present a mass of inconsistencies and incongruities, as critics have claimed, his writings and talks – an "abundant mass of literature",[127] including lectures, organisational reports and manifestos, letters, and pamphlets – reveals a cohesive and striking set of ideas. At the heart of these is a moral opposition to hierarchy and domination, with Bakunin arguing that "every command slaps liberty in the face".[128] The anarchist "insists on his positive rights to life and all of its intellectual, moral and physical joys" because "he loves life and wants to enjoy it in all of its abundance".[129] However, individual freedom could only exist within and through democratic and egalitarian *social* relationships, rather than the revolt against society that Stirner suggested:[130]

> Society, far from decreasing … freedom, on the contrary creates the individual freedom of all human beings. Society is the root, the tree, and liberty is its fruit. Hence, in every epoch, man must seek his freedom not at the beginning but at the end of history … I can feel free only in the presence of, and in relation with other men … I am truly free only when all human beings, men and women, are equally free, and the freedom of other men, far from negating or limiting my freedom, is, on the contrary, its necessary premise and confirmation.

This conceptualisation of freedom necessarily implied some restriction upon individual choice, and individual responsibility towards the collectivity that made freedom possible. Bakunin argued that "Man completely realises his individual freedom as well as his personality only through the individuals who surround him", which implies that individual freedom must be limited by a respect for the rights and freedom of others, and insists that freedom can exist "thanks only to the labour and collective power of society", which in turn necessarily imposed obligations on all to contribute through work to the social matrix of individuality.[131] Elsewhere, he insisted that a person's "duties to society are indissolubly linked with his

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[125] For Arthur Mendel and Aileen Kelly, Bakunin's anarchism is seen as a pathology, which can only be explained by reference to severe psychological problems. See Bookchin, 1977, *op cit*., p. 22, Joll, 1964, *op cit*., pp. 84, 86, 87, 89, 92, 94, 113; Aileen Kelly, 1982, *Mikhail Bakunin: a study in the psychology and politics of utopianism*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, UK; Arthur Mendel, 1981, *Michael Bakunin: roots of apocalypse*, Praeger, New York

[126] Bekken makes this point strongly: see Bekken, 1992, *op cit.* Bekken is, however, too uncritical of Carr's hostile biography of Bakunin, which he describes as the "standard work", and well "worth reading". While it has much useful detail, Carr's work is the quintessential example of the "Bakunin-bashing" that Bekken deplores, centring on the theme that Bakunin's views were an incoherent, ill-conceived, and fantastical mixture of Stirnerism and authoritarianism: see, for example, Carr, 1975, *op cit*., pp. 434-440.

[127] See Statz, 1990, *op cit*., p. xxv

[128] Mikhail Bakunin, [1871a] 1971, "God and the State", in Dolgoff, editor, 1971, *op cit*., p. 240

[129] Bakunin, [1867] 1971, *op cit.*, p. 118

[130] Bakunin, [1871a] 1971, *op cit.*, pp. 236-7

[131] Bakunin, [1871a] 1971, *op cit.*, pp. 236-7

rights",[132] and that society should be organised so that "every individual" will be able to "enjoy the social wealth, which in reality is produced only by collective labour" but "enjoy it only in so far as he contributes directly toward the creation of that wealth".[133] For Kropotkin, "All must be put on the same footing as producers and consumers of wealth", and "everybody" must contribute to "the common well-being to the full extent of his capacities".[134]

When Carr claimed that "Bakunin's conception of freedom was in its ultimate analysis extreme individualism, which he likened to Stirner's views, and insisted that "Individualism remains the essence of Bakunin's social and political system", [135] he misrepresented Bakunin. Bakunin's "conception of freedom" was above all, a *social* doctrine, a vision of freedom *through* community. Kedward's claim that the "bond that united all anarchists" was "antagonism to any situation regulated by imposition, constraint, or oppression",[136] Jacker's assertion that anarchists oppose any "attempt to restrict an individual's freedom",[137] and Hoffman's view that anarchists claim a person "obey the dictates of his free will only",[138] are just as flawed.

Men like Bakunin and Kropotkin certainly opposed "oppression", but held to the view that individual freedom was premised on a certain amount of external "imposition" and "constraint" on the "free will" of individuals. As Bakunin said, "Freedom is … above all, eminently social, because it can only be realised in society and by the strictest equality and solidarity among men".[139] He sneered at individualism of the Stirnerite variety[140] while Kropotkin denounced "misanthropic bourgeois individualism" as a threat to the development of "true individuality", which could only be developed "through practising the highest communist sociability".[141] For Kropotkin, "No society is possible without certain forms of morality generally recognised";[142] he described "anarchist morality" as the principal of "solidarity" – that is, treat others as you would wish them to treat you in similar circumstances.[143]

The corollary of the anarchist conception of freedom *through* community was the argument that real individual freedom could not exist in the absence of economic and social equality. In 1867, Bakunin argued that the "question of daily bread" was the "first question" for the masses, for "man, in order to think, in order to feel himself free, in order to become man, must be freed from the material cares of daily life".[144] The "second question" was "that of leisure after work", being "the supreme condition for all human

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[132] Bakunin, [1867] 1971, *op cit.*, p. 118. The anarchist Spanish federation of the First International adopted the slogan "No Rights without Duties, No Duties without Rights": see Bookchin, 1977, *op cit*., p. 86
[133] Bakunin, n.d., *op cit*., my emphasis
[134] Peter Kropotkin, [1887] 1970, "Anarchist Communism: its basis and principles", in Baldwin, 1970, editor, *op cit*., pp. 56, 59
[135] Carr, 1975, *op cit*., p. 434. Carr attributes this to the supposedly profound influence that Stirner had upon Bakunin. There is no evidence that Stirner had any direct influence on Bakunin, least of all in Carr's study.
[136] Kedward, 1971, *op cit*., p. 6
[137] Jacker, 1968, *op cit*., pp. 1-2
[138] Hoffman, 1971, *op cit*., p. 10
[139] Bakunin, [1871a] 1971, *op cit*., p. 238
[140] Quoted in Guérin, 1970, *op cit.*, p. 33
[141] Peter Kropotkin, [5 March 1902], 1970 "Letter to Nettlau", in Miller, 1970b, editor, *op cit*., pp. 296-297
[142] Kropotkin, [1887] 1970, *op cit.*, p. 73
[143] Kropotkin, [1890] 1970, "Anarchist Morality", in Baldwin, 1970, editor, *op cit*., p. 97
[144] Bakunin, [1867] 1971, *op cit*., p. 114

development, both intellectual and moral".[145] The anarchists aimed, he declared, "to organise society in such a manner that every individual, man or woman, should find, upon entering life, approximately equal means for the development of his or her diverse faculties and their utilization in his or her work".[146]

Only in such a system, argued Kropotkin, people could achieve the "full *individualisation*" impossible under "the present system of *individualism*" – that is, capitalism, or "under any system of State socialism".[147] To this claim he added the argument that, since society's wealth was a collective product, the socialisation of wealth was perfectly justified: "the means of production and of satisfaction of all needs of society, having been created by the common efforts of all, must be at the disposal of all" and used to promote "the fullest possible freedom of the individual".[148]

Once these points are understood, a central feature of anarchism becomes apparent: the fact that it was a tendency *within* socialism, and understood itself as such. Fleming comments that an important consequence of the Eltzbacher approach has been that "the importance of the socialist impulse within the thought of the European anarchists" was ignored, an approach that is still commonly expressed by the tendency of scholars to juxtapose the terms "anarchist" and "socialist".[149]

There is no question that the anarchists regarded themselves as socialists.[150] Bakunin defined the anarchists as the "antistate socialists",[151] and took care to distinguish his views from those of the Marxists, whom he called "authoritarian State Communists".[152] Kropotkin declared: "We are communists" but "our communism is not that of the authoritarian school; it is anarchist communism, communism without government, free communism".[153] In his view, anarchism was the "no-government system of socialism" or "anarchist communism", [154] the "left wing" of socialism,[155] as opposed to the "authoritarian communism" of the Marxists.

A critique of both capitalism and landlordism was central to the anarchist doctrine. "Is it necessary", asked Bakunin, "to repeat here the irrefutable arguments of Socialism which no bourgeois economist has yet succeeded in disproving?" [156] "Property " and "capital" in "their present form" meant that "the capitalist and the property owner" had the power and the right, guaranteed by the State, to live without working", while the worker was already "in the position of a serf" because of the "terrible threat of starvation which daily

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[145] Bakunin, [1867] 1971, *op cit.*, p. 112, 114
[146] Bakunin, [1871c] 1993, *op cit.*, no pagination
[147] Kropotkin, [1905], 1970, *op cit*., p. 285, emphasis in original
[148] Kropotkin, [1887], 1970, *op cit*., pp. 54, 56
[149] Fleming, 1979, *op cit.*, p. 2
[150] Fleming, 1979, *op cit.*, p. 2
[151] Bakunin, [1873] 1971, *op cit*., p. 332
[152] For example, Mikhail Bakunin, [[1870b] 1971, "Letters to a Frenchman on the Current Crisis", in Dolgoff, editor, 1971, *op cit.* pp. 187, 213; Mikhail Bakunin, [1871d] 1971, "The Programme of the Alliance", in Dolgoff, editor, 1971, *op cit*., p. 257
[153] Kropotkin, [1887], 1970, *op cit*., p. 61. Adolph Fischer, an anarchist executed in Chicago in 1887, put the issue succinctly in his remarks to the court: "every anarchist is a socialist, but not every socialist is an anarchist". See Adolph Fischer, [1887], 1971, "Adolph Fischer", in Albert R. Parsons, editor, [1887] 1971, *Anarchism: its philosophy and scientific basis*, Kraus Reprint Co., New York, p. 78
[154] Peter Kropotkin, [1887], 1970, *op cit*., p. 46
[155] Kropotkin, [1905] 1970, *op cit*., p. 285
[156] Bakunin, [1871c] 1993, *op cit*., no pagination

hangs over his head and over his family, will force him to accept any conditions imposed by the gainful calculations of the capitalist".[157] It was a "sad mockery" and a "misrepresentation", said Kropotkin, to call the labour contract a "free contract", for the worker accepted the contract from "sheer necessity", the "force" of need.[158]

Private property thus meant, said Bakunin, "the power and the right to live by exploiting the work of someone else, the right to exploit the work of those who possess neither property nor capital and who thus are forced to sell their productive power to the lucky owners of both". Like Marx, Bakunin and Kropotkin regarded exploitation as the extraction of surplus value at the workplace, rather than unfair market relations, which were what the Mutualists stressed. For Kropotkin, "owing to our wage system" the "sudden increase in our powers of production … resulted only in an unprecedented accumulation of wealth in the hands of the owners of capital; while an increase in misery for great numbers, and an insecurity of life for all, has been the lot of the workmen".[159]

Capitalism also centred on an unfair mode of distribution: distribution according to ability to pay, rather than distribution on the basis of need. According to Kropotkin, the inevitable result of a system where workers were "unable to purchase with their wages the riches they are producing" was an artificial situation of "overproduction" – or rather, he argued, what was actually "underconsumption" by the popular classes.[160] Common consequences were the "wars, continuous wars … for supremacy in the world market", as rival capitalists competed to sell goods to the middle classes of other countries.

Further, the drive to maximise exploitation led to authoritarian work relationships. For "once the contract has been negotiated", Bakunin argued, "the serfdom of the workers is doubly increased", because the "merchandise" that the worker had "sold to his employer" was "his labour, his personal services, the productive forces of his body, mind, and spirit that are found in him and are inseparable from his person – it is therefore himself":[161]

> From then on, the employer will watch over him, either directly or by means of overseers; everyday during working hours and under controlled conditions, the employer will be the owner of his actions and movements. When he is told: 'Do this',' the worker is obligated to do it; or he is told: 'Go there' ' he must go. Is this not what is called a serf?

To the critique of capitalism and wage labour, the anarchists coupled a concern with the peasantry that has no parallel within Marxism. Classical Marxism was, in general, hostile to the peasantry, arguing that it was a decaying and doomed social class, whose political views must be expected to be reactionary. By contrast, the anarchists viewed the peasantry a subject class whose oppression and class interests coincided with those of waged workers. The peasantry laboured under landlordism, debt and State taxation, and felt,

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[157] Bakunin, [1871c] 1993, *op cit*., no pagination
[158] Kropotkin, [1887], 1970, *op cit*., p. 71
[159] Kropotkin, [1887], 1970, *op cit*., p. 48
[160] Kropotkin, [1887], 1970, *op cit*., pp. 55-6
[161] Bakunin, [1871c] 1993, *op cit*., no pagination

Bakunin argued, an "instinctive hatred of the 'fine gentlemen' and … bourgeois landlords, who enjoy the bounty of the earth without cultivating it with their own hands".[162] Kropotkin complained of the injustice of a system in which a man may only farm if "he gives up part of product to the landlord".[163] Bakunin did not deny the difficulties of mobilising the peasantry, or assert, as Carr claims, that the ignorance and "primitive" conditions of the peasant were virtues,[164] but he did believe that the peasantry could be organised in a revolutionary manner, and form an alliance with the urban working class.

Given these points, it is not very useful to suggest, like Woodcock, that the issue of capitalism was only part of a "limited region" of "economic organisation" over which "anarchists" disagreed.[165] Opposition to capitalism and landlordism was fundamental to the anarchist movement. Nor can one readily agree with Miller's view that the anarchists opposed the "existing economic systems" but differed on the question of whether to abolish capitalism entirely, or institute a resolutely free market.[166] This argument misrepresents the anarchists; if it is meant to incorporate the Mutualists, those forebears of the anarchists, it misrepresents them as well. Perlin's notion that the extreme free marketers who describe themselves as "anarcho-capitalists" share the "common anarchist quest … freedom of the individual"[167] is just as flawed: it fails to understand the anarchists' class analysis of society, their acceptance of a theory of exploitation, and their opposition to the use of the market to distribute goods and services.

Indeed, for an analysis that takes the ideas of Bakunin and Kropotkin seriously, the very notion of "anarcho-capitalism" – used in Perlin and in Marshall[168] – should be rejected as a logical *non sequiter*. Bakunin had nothing but contempt for economic liberals, the "passionate lovers of all freedom which they can use to their advantage" and who "demand the unlimited right to exploit the proletariat and bitterly resent state interference".[169]

It is within this context that the anarchist critique of the State must be understood. There is little basis for Kedward's claim that at "the door of government the anarchists laid the multiple ills of the

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[162] Bakunin, [[1870b] 1971, *op cit.* p. 189
[163] Kropotkin, [1887], 1970, *op cit*., p. 55
[164] Carr argued that Bakunin "accepts Rousseau's hypothesis that man, if unperverted by social and political authority, is inherently virtuous", that "the more primitive man is, the more he approximates this ideal", and thus favoured the popular classes as revolutionary agents because of their "primitive" nature: he rested his "fondest hopes on the least civilised European members of these classes – the Russian peasantry". In point of fact, Bakunin specifically argued that the peasantry were harder to organise than urban workers, and described peasants as superstitious, as living in "brutish ignorance", and called this situation the "principal … base for the security and power of states". See Carr, 1975, *op cit*., p. 435, and cf. Bakunin, [1870b] 1971, *op cit* 190, 193, 208. Bakunin specifically rejected Jean-Jacques Rousseau's view of history. See Bakunin, [1867] 1971, *op cit*., pp. 128-147. Rather than accept the notion of the "noble savage", moreover, Bakunin insisted: "Emerging from the state of the gorilla, man has only with great difficulty attained the consciousness of his humanity and liberty … He was born a ferocious beast and a slave, and has gradually humanised and emancipated himself only in society". Further, a "savage and brutish state" constituted humanity's "original nature". See Bakunin, [1871a] 1971, *op cit*., p. 236 and Bakunin, [1871b] 1971, *op cit.* p.271
[165] Woodcock, 1975, *op cit*. p. 19
[166] Miller, 1984, *op cit*., pp. 5-10
[167] T.M. Perlin, *op cit.,* pp. 109
[168] See, *inter alia*, Marshall, 1994, *op cit*., pp. 53-54, 422, 443, 544-545, 559-565, 500-501
[169] Bakunin, [1870b], *op cit*., pp. 216-7

nineteenth century, holding it responsible for all inequality and injustice",[170] or Statz' notion that anarchism "regards political authority, and its modern embodiment the state, as the root of all evil".[171]

Anarchist anti-Statism arose from two separate, but interlocking, lines of argument within anarchist discourse: on the one hand, the anarchist conception of individual freedom within community; on the other, the anarchist class analysis. In the first instance, the anarchists opposed the State on the grounds that it was a highly centralised and authoritarian structure that necessarily concentrated power in the hands of directing elites. As Bakunin argued, "It would be obviously impossible for some hundreds of thousands or even some tens of thousands or indeed for only a few thousand men to exercise this power".[172] A strong State, he argued, can have "only one solid foundation: military and bureaucratic centralisation". [173]

The corollary of this was the stultification of popular initiative and associational life. The State, Bakunin argued, was "like a vast slaughterhouse or enormous cemetery, where all the real aspirations, all the living forces of a country enter generously and happily" but are "slain and buried".[174] For Kropotkin, "centralised government" concentrated power in "Parliament and its executive", which necessarily proved "unable to attend to all the numberless affairs of the community".[175] In *this* sense, certainly, the anarchists laid many "evils" at the "door of government", and opposed the arbitrary "imposition, constraint, or oppression" that a State involves, its restrictions on free will, without in the least opposing the need for some restrictions, some external "imposition" and "constraint" on the "free will" of individuals.

It must also be understood that there was a *second* component of the anarchist critique of the State: the argument that the State was an organ of *class* domination. This was its basic function, and its centralised structure was not accidental, but the necessary *consequence* of the fact that the State was an instrument for imposing the will of exploiting and ruling minorities on the popular classes. The State, Bakunin argued,[176]

> …has always been the patrimony of some privileged class or other: a priestly class, an aristocratic class, a bourgeois class. And finally, when, all the others classes have exhausted themselves, the State becomes the patrimony of the bureaucratic class and then falls – or, if you will, rises – to the position of a machine; but it is absolutely necessary for the salvation of the State that there should be some privileged class devoted to its preservation.

Likewise: "'Class', 'power', 'state' are three inseparable terms, one of which presupposes the other two, and which boil down to this: *the political subjection and economic exploitation of the masses*".[177] For Kropotkin,

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[170] Kedward, 1971, *op cit*., p. 6
[171] Statz, 1971, *op cit*., p. xiii
[172] Bakunin, [1872a], 1971, *op cit*., p. 281. See also Bakunin, [1873], *op cit*., p. 330
[173] Bakunin, [1873], 1971, *op cit*., p.337
[174] Mikhail Bakunin, *op cit.*, in Dolgoff, editor, 1971, *op cit.* p.269
[175] Kropotkin, [1887], 1970, *op cit*., p. 50
[176] Bakunin, [1872b], 1971, *op cit.*, p. 318
[177] Bakunin, [1872a], 1971, *op cit*., p. 280, emphasis in original

likewise, in all ages, the State had been the tool of a ruling class. [178] In the modern period, it was "the chief bulwark of capital", and the State and capitalism were "inseparable concepts".[179] Representative government was, consequently, as much a form of "class-rule" as "absolute monarchy".[180]

If the rationale of State centralisation was the concentration of power in the hands of dominant but numerically insignificant minorities it did not follow that the State was *only* the tool of capitalists, or that the operations of the State could be *reduced* to economic imperatives or, indeed, to the needs of landlords and capitalists. The anarchists continually stressed that the State had its own logic of domination that could not be reduced to the *economic* needs of capitalists or landlords.

Bakunin illustrated this point with a striking discussion of the role of independent national States after decolonisation. In Serbia, which had broken free of Turkey, there were "no nobles, no big landowners, no industrialists and no very wealthy merchants" at independence, but a "new bureaucratic aristocracy" drawn from educated young patriots soon emerged as ruling class in the new State. The "iron logic" of their position transformed them into "cynical bureaucratic martinets" who became "enemies of the people", a class which exploits the masses for their own "comforts".[181]

On the other hand, States operated in a competitive international State system, based on "competition, jealousy, truceless and endless war",[182] and this, combined with clashes between the various State officials, capitalists and landlords, could be read as implying that State policies were complex, even contradictory, and not always in the best interests of the rulers themselves. Further, Bakunin was careful to stress that not all States were the same, and that some State forms were preferable to others: [183]

> We are firmly convinced it is true that the most imperfect republic is a thousand times better than the most enlightened monarchy. In a republic there are at least brief periods when the people, while continuously exploited, is not oppressed; in the monarchies, oppression is constant. The democratic regime also lifts the masses up gradually to participation in public life – something the monarchy never does.

However, both Bakunin and Kropotkin insisted that this did not change the basic character of the State, and that any "democratic regime" would nonetheless be subordinate to the dominant classes.

It cannot be argued that the anarchists opposed the State merely because it implemented *restrictions* upon individuals, as the anarchists themselves advocated restrictions upon individual freedom. At issue was the *class* content of State regulations, which centralised decision making and protected the interests of the dominant minorities. The institution of law, under the cover of creating justice, sanctioned inequality and oppression: according to Kropotkin, all "legislation made within the State … has to be

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[178] Kropotkin, [1912], 1970, *op cit*., pp. 166, 181, 183
[179] Kropotkin, [1912], 1970, *op cit*., pp. 149-150, 181
[180] Kropotkin, [1887], 1970, *op cit*., p. 52
[181] Bakunin, [1873], 1971, *op cit*., pp. 343-4
[182] Bakunin, [1872b], 1971, *op cit*., pp. 314-7; see also Bakunin, [1873], 1971, *op cit*., pp. 337-9
[183] Bakunin, [1867] 1971, *op cit*., p. 144

repudiated because it has always been made with regard to the interests of the privileged classes".[184] For Bakunin,[185]

> Nevertheless, while we prefer the republic, we must recognise and proclaim that whatever the form of government may be, so long as human society continues to be divided into different classes as a result of the *hereditary* inequality of occupations, of wealth, of education, and of rights, there will always be a class-restricted government and the inevitable exploitation of the majorities by the minorities. The State is nothing but this domination and this exploitation, well regulated and systematised.

Anarchist anti-Statism was an element, *one* element, of a broader anarchist social critique, but it had concrete implications for revolutionary strategy. The political conclusion that arose from the anarchist analysis of the State was that States could never be anything but instruments for domination by ruling classes. . Whether these were "nobles … big landowners … industrialists" or "very wealthy merchants" or a "new bureaucratic aristocracy" was secondary: the point was that those who held State power would, regardless of ideology, intent or social origins, by definition comprise a dominant class, and, as such, dominate and exploit the popular classes. Bakunin argued that even the best would be corrupted by their "institutional positions", for it is the "characteristic of privilege and of every privileged position to kill the hearts and minds of men".[186] He commented:[187]

> A strong State can have only one solid foundation: military and bureaucratic centralisation … the people will feel no better if the stick with which they are being beaten is labelled the 'people's stick'. … No State … not even the reddest republic – can ever give the people what they really want …

It followed that a revolutionary strategy premised upon the capture of State power – whether by electoral action or by revolution – would necessarily embody the social evils present in the existing States, i.e., authoritarian centralisation, and class domination. Universal suffrage was an "immense fraud" and a "puerile fiction", argued Bakunin, because elections did not change the nature of the State: "The day after election everybody goes about his business, the people go back to toil anew, the bourgeoisie to reaping profits and political conniving".[188] Decision making taking place without the "intervention" of the people, thus, the "people are committed to ruinous policies, all without noticing".[189] In Bakunin's lifetime, the extension of the franchise to the lower classes was barely on the horizon. Writing some years later,

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[184] Kropotkin, [1912], 1970, *op cit*., p. 165
[185] Bakunin, [1867] 1971, *op cit*., p. 144, emphasis in original
[186] Bakunin, [1871a], 1971, *op cit*., p. 228
[187] Bakunin, [1873] 1971, *op cit*., p.338
[188] Bakunin, [1870c], 1971, *op cit.*, pp. 220-222
[189] Bakunin, [1870c], *op cit*., p. 224

Kropotkin felt that subsequent developments had vindicated Bakunin's views: "Much hope of improvement was placed … in the extension of political rights to the working classes" but "these concessions, unsupported by corresponding changes in economic relations, proved delusions".[190]

A revolutionary dictatorship – which both men identified with classical Marxism and its "dictatorship of the proletariat", the ideas of the French revolutionary Louis Auguste Blanqui,[191] and other types of State socialists – could be even worse. "*I am above all an absolute enemy of revolution by decrees*", Bakunin emphasised, "which derives from the idea of the *revolutionary State*, i.e., *reaction disguised as revolution*".[192] To attempt to "*impose* freedom and equality obliterates both".[193] One could not decree a system of freedom and self-organisation; only the people themselves could create a free order.[194] For "decrees, like authority in general, abolish nothing; they only perpetuate that which they were supposed to destroy".[195] The "authoritarian revolutionists were "ultra revolutionary in words", but "entirely reactionary, in deeds".[196]

Moreover, argued Bakunin, it was impossible for a revolution by decrees to do anything other than crush popular self-activity: "even … the most energetic and enterprising authoritarian revolutionary" could not "understand and deal effectively with all the manifold problems generated by the Revolution".[197] No revolutionary government, wrote Kropotkin in 1919, "would be able to organise production if the workers themselves … did not do it … there arise daily thousands of difficulties which government cannot solve or foresee".[198]

Even if the dictatorship crushed older elites, it would itself operate a system of class oppression. These "new citizens of a new state", Bakunin argued, would "awake to find themselves again the pawns and victims of the new power clusters".[199] For "the proletariat, this will, in reality, be nothing but a barracks: a regime, where regimented workingmen and women will sleep, wake, work, and live to the beat of a drum".[200] Kropotkin added that such a State would be "as great a danger to liberty as any form of

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[190] Kropotkin, [1887], 1970, *op cit*., p. 49

[191] Louis Auguste Blanqui (1805-1881) exemplified a tradition of authoritarian and conspiratorial socialism. A fanatical revolutionary, he spent 40 of his 76 years in jail, being jailed by five successive French regimes. He held to the general notion of an "iron law" of wages, according to which wage increases would always be nullified by price rises, and were therefore useless. Only a revolution could create a just and socialist order. However, the ignorance of the mass of ordinary workers, deliberately created by the ruling classes, was an insuperable obstacle. The solution was a revolutionary *coup d'etat* by a well-organised conspiracy, which educate the masses from above, while suppressing the ruling classes. This required a hierarchical and disciplined secret society. For Blanqui, the "people can only escape from servitude through the impulsion of the great society of the state – for the state has no other legitimate mission". This could later wither away. While Marx distrusted the Blanquists –something of a force in the General Council of the International from 1871 after the fall of the Paris Commune– there are more than a few echoes of Blanqui's arguments in his own strategy and that of Lenin. On Blanqui, see Alan B. Spitzer, 1957, *The Revolutionary Theories of Louis Auguste Blanqui*, Columbia University Press, New York, especially pp. 95-105, 114, 128-144, 153, 157-179. The quote is from p. 173

[192] Bakunin, [1870b], 1971, *op cit.*, p. 193-4, emphasis in the original

[193] Bakunin, [1870b], 1971, *op cit.*, p. 193-4, emphasis in the original

[194] Bakunin, [1870b] 1971, *op cit.*, p. 200

[195] Bakunin, [1870b] 1971, *op cit.*, p. 204

[196] Bakunin, [1870b] 1971, *op cit.*, p. 194

[197] Bakunin, [1870b], 1971, *op cit*., p. 196

[198] Peter Kropotkin, [1919], "Postscript to 'Words of a Rebel'", included as a postscript to Kropotkin, [1887] 1970, *op cit*., p. 76

[199] Bakunin, [1872a], 1971, *op cit*., p. 281

[200] Bakunin, [1872a], 1971, *op cit*., p. 284

autocracy" as government would be "entrusted with the management of all the social organisation including the production and distribution of wealth".[201]

There would be, Bakunin commented, some beneficiaries: the "shrewd and educated will be granted government privileges" and the "mercenary-minded, attracted by the immensity of the international speculations off the state bank, will find a vast field for lucrative, underhanded dealings".[202] As these points suggest, Bakunin indicated that the revolutionary State would, in fact, be a form of State-capitalism: "The State, having become the sole proprietor … will then become the only banker, capitalist, organiser, and director of all national labour, and the distributor of its products".[203] Also,[204]

> … any revolution made *before* a social revolution will necessarily be a bourgeois revolution, which can only lead to a bourgeois socialism – a new, more efficient, more cleverly concealed form of the exploitation of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie.

Moreover, the new State would inevitably continue to compete with others, forcing the new ruling elite to become patriots, warmongers and ultimately, imperialists.[205]

It followed, Bakunin argued, that anarchists sought the "destruction of the State" as an "immediate" goal – rather than its capture for purposes of a revolutionary transition – for the "State means domination, and any domination presupposes the subjugation of the masses" and a "ruling minority".[206] The State, argued Kropotkin, "having been the force to which the minorities resorted for establishing and organising their power over the masses, cannot be the force which will serve to destroy those privileges".[207]

Rather, the anarchists advocated the "social liquidation"[208] of the State, and its replacement by a vast array of self-managed and self-organised associations of the popular classes, operating on democratic and anti-hierarchical principles. Liberty, Bakunin argued, required "social and economic equality", and this "equality must be established in the world by the spontaneous organisation of labour and the collective ownership of property by freely organised producers' associations, and by the equally spontaneous federation of communes, to replace the domineering paternalistic State".[209]"The people, "once convinced", he said, "would organise and federalise spontaneously", "from the bottom up", "never following a prearranged plan imposed upon 'ignorant' masses by a few 'superior' minds".[210]

The revolution, argued Kropotkin, could be nothing but "a widespread popular movement" in "every town and village", in which the masses "take upon themselves the task of rebuilding society".[211] This is a key

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[201] Kropotkin, [1887], 1970, *op cit*., p. 50
[202] Bakunin, [1872a], 1971, *op cit*., p. 284
[203] Bakunin, [1870b], 1971, *op cit*., p. 217
[204] Bakunin, [1870b] 1971, *op cit.*, p. 213, emphasis in the original
[205] Bakunin, [1872b], 1971, *op cit*., pp. 314-7; See also Bakunin, [1873], 1971, *op cit*., pp. 337-9
[206] Bakunin, [1872a] 1971, *op cit*., pp. 276-7
[207] Kropotkin, [1912], 1970, *op cit.*, p. 170
[208] Mikhail Bakunin, [1869a], 1971, "The Policy of the International", in Dolgoff, editor, 1971, *op cit*., p. 172
[209] Bakunin, [1871b], 1971, *op cit.* p.262
[210] Bakunin, [1871b], 1871, *op cit*., p. 263
[211] Kropotkin, [1912], 1970, *op cit*., p. 188

point to explore the divergence between anarchism and classical Marxism. Believing that authoritarian means destroyed emancipatory aims, the anarchists rejected solutions such as nationalisation of industry, or the forced collectivisation of agriculture. In place of coercion, (such as Stalin's war on the peasantry), the anarchists stressed voluntary association and initiative (thus, peasants would be encouraged to form voluntary collectives, but it was preferable to have no collectives at all than have a single one created by coercion).

"Free workers require a free organisation", and this could have no "other basis than free agreement and free cooperation, without sacrificing the autonomy of the individual to the all-pervading influence of a State".[212] Thus, "the no-capitalist system implies the no-government system"[213] because "in a society where the distinction between capitalist and labourer has disappeared" and there is "no need" for government, "it would be an anachronism, a nuisance".[214]

Bakunin had outlined the key anarchist ideas and principles, but it remained to his successors to elaborate upon his vision of a future anarchist society. The classic outline of this vision in the period of the First International was the 1876 classic, *On Building the New Social Order*, written by Bakunin's friend, James Guillaume.[215] This examined, in some detail, how the communal and industrial confederation could operate. Kropotkin's most substantial works were centred on such issues. His works centred on two themes: one, how an anarchist system could emerge from within the existing society through the processes of class struggle and revolution; secondly, how an anarchist economy and society could and should function. To the first theme belong Kropotkin's study of the history of the French Revolution of 1789,[216] which drew the lessons of that epochal transformation for the contemporary movements of the popular classes, and his study of *Mutual Aid: a factor in evolution*, which sought to show that co-operation and sacrifice were as much a part of human nature as competition and coercion.[217] To the second theme belongs Kropotkin's visionary works: *Anarchist-Communism: its basis and principles*, *The Conquest of Bread*, and *Fields, Factories and Workshops*.[218]

2.4. Libertarian socialism versus political socialism

At the heart of the conflict was a deeper split between the two broad variants of socialism that had emerged by the time of the International: "libertarian" socialism, on the one hand, and "political" socialism,

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[212] Kropotkin, [1887], 1970, *op cit*., p. 52
[213] Kropotkin, [1887], 1970, *op cit*., p. 52
[214] Kropotkin, [1887], 1970, *op cit*., p. 52; also see Kropotkin, [1912], 1970, *op cit*., p. 181, 185
[215] James Guillaume, [1876], 1971, "On Building the New Social Order", in Dolgoff, editor, 1971, *op cit*., pp. 356-379
[216] Peter Kropotkin, [1909] 1986, *The Great French Revolution, 1789-1973*, Elephant Editions, London, in two volumes, with introduction by Alfredo M. Bonnano
[217] Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid* was compiled in 1902 from a series of articles on evolution, nature and society dating back to 1890. It was intended as a critique of Social Darwinism and extreme individualism, stressing the central role of cooperation in both animal and human evolution. See peter Kropotkin, [1902] 1939, *Mutual Aid: a factor of evolution*, Penguin Books, Middlesex, with foreword by H.L. Beales. Kinna, 1995, *op cit*, provides a very useful discussion of the aims and context of the book.
[218] Peter Kropotkin, [1887], 1970, *op cit*.; Peter Kropotkin, [1892] 1990, *The Conquest of Bread*, Elephant Editions, London; Peter Kropotkin, [1899] 1974, *Fields, Factories and Workshops Tomorrow*, edited and updated by Colin Ward, George Allen and Unwin, London, second edition

on the other. Libertarian socialists argued that fundamental social transformation could not come about through the State, which was a hierarchical structure and undemocratic, typically captured by the dominant classes, and generally incapable of any progressive social change. Instead of relying on a State apparatus, libertarian socialists have generally stressed self-activity outside of formal political channels to establish a radically democratic socialist order based upon free association and self-management. This either means the State is made redundant, or its role is minimised as far as possible.

In contrast to libertarian socialism, political socialism advocated a "a political battle against capitalism waged through … centrally organized workers' parties aimed at seizing and utilising State power to usher in socialism".[219] The classical Marxism of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and their heirs, exemplified this approach, as did the moderate, parliamentary socialist tradition represented by social democracy and mainstream Labour Parties. In this sense, debates between classical Marxists and moderate "revisionists" within the Social Democratic Party of Germany in the 1890s, between Lenin and other Marxists in the 1910s, and between the followers of Stalin and Trotsky in the 1920s and 1930s were controversies *within* the political socialist tradition. On the other hand, the existence of a current such as Council Communism shows that not all Marxists were political socialists, although classical Marxism was undoubtedly a political socialist current: in this sense, the Leninist critique of Council Communism was thus a debate *within* Marxism, but also a debate *between* political and libertarian forms of socialism.[220]

Within the context of the First International, the Marxist faction represented political socialism, and the emerging anarchist faction, a revolutionary form of libertarian socialism. The "future social organisation", argued Bakunin, should be "carried out from the bottom up, by free association, with unions and localities federated by communes, regions, nations, and, finally, a great universal and international federation".[221] Society must be "reorganised" "from the bottom up through the free formation and free federation of worker associations, industrial, agricultural, scientific and artistic alike", "free federations founded upon collective ownership of the land, capital, raw materials and the instruments of labour".[222] Such federations would be interlinked through councils, based upon mandated delegates.

Clearly Hoffman's assertion that anarchists argue that "*any* imperative authority, even that of a popular socialist government or the joint decision of an egalitarian community, must violate individual liberty" and therefore "justice" is flawed.[223] Equally inaccurate is Woodcock's claim that anarchists opposed majority rule and direct democracy.[224] Bakunin was quite clear: "We too seek cooperation: we are even convinced that cooperation in every branch of labour and science is going to be the prevailing form of social

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[219] Thorpe, 1989, *op cit*., p. 3
[220] Thus, Lenin's argument centres on two themes: affirming the revolutionary necessity of a State power led by a revolutionary Marxist Party, and distinguishing the classical Marxist tradition not only from reformist socialism, but also from "*petty-bourgeois revolutionism*, which smacks of anarchism", and syndicalism: see Lenin, [1920] 1975, *op cit*., pp. 292-4, 300-302, 306, 319, 325-7, 336-7, 348, 354, 366-9, emphasis in original
[221] Bakunin, [1871b], 1971, *op cit*., p. 270
[222] Mikhail Bakunin, [3 January 1872], 1998, "Worker Association and Self-Management", in Guérin, editor, 1998a, *op cit*., p. 182
[223] Hoffman, 1970, *op cit*, pp. 2, 9
[224] Woodcock, 1975, *op cit*., pp. 30, 51

organisation in the future".[225] Anarchism would, then, be nothing less than the most *complete* realisation of *democracy*: democracy in the fields, in the factories, and in the neighbourhoods, co-ordinated through federal structures and councils from below upwards, democracy based on economic and social equality. With the "abolition of the State", Bakunin commented, the "spontaneous self-organisation of popular life, for centuries paralysed and absorbed by the omnipotent power of the State, would revert to the communes" – that is, to self-governing neighbourhoods, towns, cities, and villages.[226]

This raised, of course, the question of *how* exactly the capitalism, landlordism and the State were actually going to be replaced by "free association", "a great universal and international federation" "founded upon collective ownership of the land, capital, raw materials and the instruments of labour" [227] Such federations would be interlinked through councils, based upon mandated delegates.[228]

Three key ideas stand out. First, it involved a revolution based amongst the popular classes, meaning the peasantry and working class – "the only two classes capable of so mighty an insurrection are *the workers and the peasants*"[229] – as only these dominated and exploited classes had any fundamental interest in creating a new social order that would emancipate all humanity. This stress on class struggle and revolution was markedly different from the Mutualist conception: "Proudhon favoured change without violence",[230] peaceful and piecemeal, as a co-operative sector gradually superseded capitalism and the State,[231] and did not like, and did not understand, large-scale industry or strikes.[232] The anarchists envisaged direct confrontation with the existing order, and frankly doubted that co-operatives could pose a real challenge to "monopoly capital and vast landed property".[233]

Secondly, it was necessary to promote popular, mass, self-organisation *in the present*, forming mass organisations that would provide the force to overthrow the current system, and *prefigure* the organisational framework of the coming anarchist society. To make a revolution it was necessary to "foster the self-organisation of the masses into autonomous bodies, federated from the bottom upwards",[234] and to organise a popular militia, wherein "the peasants, like the industrial city workers, … unite by federating the fighting battalions" so that "district by district" there would be a common co-ordinated defence against "internal and external enemies"[235] The issue of violence is an important one: for Bakunin and Kropotkin, while violence was to be avoided if possible, force had to be met with force.

It was these "autonomous bodies", defended by their "fighting battalions", that would take "collective ownership" of the means of production and place these under self-management. Economic

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[225] Mikhail Bakunin, "On Cooperation", in Guérin, editor, 1998a, *op cit*., pp. 181-2
[226] Bakunin, [1870b], *op cit*., p. 207
[227] Bakunin, [3 January 1872], 1998, *op cit*., p. 182
[228] This model is elaborated in detail in Guillaume's 1876 anarchist classic, *On Building the New Social Order*, which examines, in some detail, how the communal and industrial confederation could operate. See Guillaume, [1876], 1971, *op cit*., pp. 356-379
[229] Bakunin, [1870b], 1971, *op cit*., pp. 185, 189, emphasis in the original
[230] Hart, 1978, *op cit.*, p. 5
[231] Thorpe, 1989, *op cit*., p. 4
[232] Brogan, 1934, *op cit.*
[233] Bakunin, [1873], 1971, *op cit*., p. 345
[234] Bakunin, [[1870b] 1971, *op cit.* p. 196
[235] Bakunin, [1870b], *op cit*., p. 190

planning would take place at the local level, where possible, but, ultimately, the "great universal and international federation" of the various "autonomous bodies", freely united, would provide the basis for democratic economic planning from below, a "vast economic federation" of self-managing enterprises, with a supreme assembly at its head that would balance supply and demand, and direct and distribute world production on the basis of need.[236] This was quite different from Proudhon's model, which stressed that the "working brotherhood" supplied "society with the goods and services asked from it at prices as near as possible to the cost of production", and stated that there "can be … no question of destroying competition".[237] Schechter's worry that an anarchist economy would find it difficult to "redistribute resources without a strong central State, and … coordinate activities between autarkic communities"[238] is somewhat misplaced: the anarchists favoured "world-wide" planning, a system of "federalist and noncoercive centralisation".[239]

Thirdly, the anarchists stressed the role of revolutionary ideas. For Bakunin, "misery and discontent" were not sufficient to produce revolutions, because the oppressed classes had always "been poverty-stricken and discontented", and yet even in the "utmost poverty" often "fail to show signs of stirring".[240] At the same time, however, the "material conditions" and "needs" of the popular classes generated a fundamental antagonism to capitalism and landlordism, and the State, and a desire for "material well-being" and to "live and work an atmosphere of freedom".[241]

The popular classes were moved, in the first instance, by immediate concerns – wages, rent, food for the family, and so on – and these had to be related to a broader vision for change. It was necessary, in the first instance, to build popular organisations in which the masses could "learn theory …through practice" for the common struggle and solidarity.[242] The "millions" needed to make a revolution would initially probably only organise according to their "immediate interests and momentary passions".[243] These mass organisations should not, Bakunin stressed, adopt too specific and binding a programme, too excessive a political catechism.[244]

How, then, could these "millions" be moved from pressing "needs" and "immediate interests and momentary passions" into the realm of revolutionary popular action against the very foundations of the current social order? The actual experience of struggle would have a radicalising and educational effect: the experience of struggle and unity, as well as solidarity, including international solidarity, plus the "deep

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[236] Guérin, 1971, *op cit*., pp. 54-5; Guillaume, [1876], 1971, *op cit*., pp. 376-8. Guillaume stresses, also, the international character of the revolution ("revolution cannot be confined to a single country: it is obliged under pain of annihilation to spread, if not to the whole world, at least to a considerable number of civilised countries") and planning ("no country today can be self-sufficient; international links and transactions are necessary for production and cannot be cut off"): p. 378
[237] Proudhon, quoted in Guérin, 1971, *op cit*., pp. 52-3
[238] Schechter, 1994, *op cit*., p. 73
[239] Guérin, 1971, *op cit*., pp. 55, 153
[240] Bakunin, [1870b], 1971, *op cit*., p. 209; also see Bakunin, [1873], 1971, *op cit*., p. 335
[241] Bakunin [1869a], 1971, *op cit*., pp. 166-7, emphasis in the original
[242] Bakunin, [1869a], 1971, *op cit*., pp. 167-8
[243] Bakunin, [1871d] 1971, *op cit.*, pp. 250-1
[244] Bakunin, [1872b], 1971, *op cit*., pp. 293-4

passionate sentiment" and "emotional solidarity" these evoked, would demonstrate anarchist principles by "living and tragic experience".[245]

This was not, however, sufficient. Bakunin stressed, at one level, the need for "propaganda and education", which were "excellent" if "insufficient means" for the revolution.[246] He also stressed the need to develop concrete programmes that related the anarchist vision to the demands of the popular classes.[247] Looking at the peasantry, for example, Bakunin acknowledged that it was made up of "petty landlords" and was "to a considerable extent egoistic and reactionary", full of "prejudices" against the revolution, easily turned into "blind tools of reaction".[248] On the other hand, the peasantry had risen repeatedly against its exploiters, demonstrating their potential. This required both propaganda work – applying the "determined treatment of revolutionary socialism" to the "rash of measles" of reactionary sentiment – and a programme of redistributing "State and Church lands and the holdings of the big landowners" and suspending "all public and private debts" that would pit the peasantry against the upper classes and the State.[249]

All of this required the formation of a nucleus of conscious anarchist militants – a specifically anarchist "political" organisation with clear tactics, aims and structures – that would work within the mass organisations and elsewhere. It was "absolutely necessary", said Bakunin, to build such an organisation, to "stress theoretical principles, to expound these principles clearly and in all their purity, and thus to build a party which, though small in number, would be composed of sincere men, fully and passionately dedicated to these principles".[250] This was precisely the function of the underground Alliance.[251] The convinced revolutionaries had a responsibility to "spread the new social philosophy", to "retain, develop and clarify the new faith" in the mass organisations and struggles, or become "mere debating societies".[252]

The educational work of the revolutionary minority could only succeed on a large scale when it sowed its seeds in mass organisations, where the ground was prepared by actual material conditions and struggles.[253] Here the anarchists must continually prove themselves the most dedicated militants: said Kropotkin, the "party which has made the most revolutionary propaganda and which has shown the most

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[245] Bakunin, [1871d] 1971, *op cit.*, pp. 250-1
[246] Bakunin, [1869a], 1971, *op cit*., p. 167
[247] Bakunin, [1870b], 1971, *op cit*., p. 192
[248] Bakunin, [1870b], 1971, *op cit*., pp. 189, 192
[249] Bakunin, [1870b] 1971, *op cit.*, pp. 189-192, 197, 208-9. These comments referred to West Europe, but Bakunin made similar arguments with regard to Russia: the peasantry retained elements of a democratic communal village organisation, and a profound sense of entitlement to land, but the villages were crippled by their "shameful patriarchal regime", their lack of individual freedom, their "cult of the Tsar", their isolation from one another, and the influence of rich landlords on peasant communes. He advocated ties between peasants and factory workers, an activist network that could keep the villages in communication, and revolutionary agitation. The "most enlightened peasants" and the "revolutionary individuals" emerging in the countryside would do much of this work, but the radical intellectuals could contribute if they went to the people to "share their life, their poverty, their cause, and their desperate revolt". See Bakunin, [1873], 1971, *op cit.*, pp. 346-50
[250] Bakunin, [1870b], 1971, *op cit*., p. 195
[251] Thus, Malatesta, in 1914: "Bakunin expected a great deal from the International; yet, at the same time, he created the Alliance, a secret organisation with a well-determined programme – atheist, socialist, anarchist, revolutionary– which was truly the soul of the International in all the Latin countries and gave the anarchist impulse to one branch of the International just as the Marxists, on the other hand, gave the Social Democratic impulsion to its other branch". Malatesta, quoted in Nettlau, [1934] 1996, *op cit*., p. 131
[252] Bakunin, [1871d] 1971, *op cit.*, p. 249, 250-1
[253] Bakunin, [1871d] 1971, *op cit.*, pp.253- 254; see also, Bakunin, [1872b], 1971, *op cit.*, pp. 300-307

spirit and daring will be listened to on the day when it is necessary to act, to march in front in order to realise the revolution".[254] Armed with confidence, organisation, and ideas, the working class and peasantry could "organise themselves" for the revolution, and "federate spontaneously, freely, from below upwards, by their own movement and conformably to their real interests".[255]

For Bakunin, then, there was a fruitful interaction between revolutionary thought, and the concrete experiences and interests of the popular classes, which would provide the basis to make a revolution.[256] There is no basis for the standard charge that Bakunin favoured a secret and unconditional revolutionary dictatorship, a charge that forms the kernel of most claims that Bakunin's thought was contradictory and incoherent.[257]

These charges first appear in the work of Bakunin's arch-rivals, Marx and Engels, who charged that Bakunin was an advocate of "universal, pan destruction", "assassinations ... *en masse*", and "blind obedience" to the personal dictatorship of "Citizen B". that must lead to a "barrack-room communism",[258] and have been uncritically reproduced ever since. Marx and Engels can hardly be expected to have provided a fair description of Bakunin's ideas, but there are certainly passages in Bakunin that can be construed in such a manner: Bakunin called the Alliance a "powerful but always invisible revolutionary association" that will "prepare and direct the revolution",[259] "the invisible pilots guiding the Revolution … the collective dictatorship of all our allies".[260]

There are, in short, two elements to consider here: first, the fact the Alliance was secret, which might be seen as sinister;[261] second, terms like "dictatorship". Secrecy, however, was more a practical concern than anything else, and was the normal practice of revolutionaries of all stripes in the repressive conditions of nineteenth century Europe. The *Communist Manifesto* itself was issued by a secret society, the Communist League, which Marx and Engels helped found – and to which they had sought to recruit the young Bakunin.[262]

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[254] Kropotkin, [1880] 1970, "The Spirit of Revolt", in Baldwin, editor, 1970, *op cit.,* p. 43
[255] Bakunin, 1990, *op cit.*, pp. 18-19
[256] It may be noted here that this model provides a solution to the contradiction that can appear between "immediate" and "fundamental" class interests: insofar as class interests are expressed in immediate struggles, they can only be linked to a general revolutionary programme to the extent that revolutionaries relate the "immediate interests and momentary passions" to the educational and organisational tasks of the revolution. That is, revolutionary politics must be a practical politics of the everyday, where immediate struggles form a basis for the construction of the conditions for revolution. I have found the following most useful in thinking about Bakunin: *Alliance Syndicaliste Révolutionnaire et Anarcho-Syndicaliste*, 1976, "Putting the Record Straight on Mikhail Bakunin", *Libertarian Communist Review*, London?, no. 2, translated from the French by Nick Heath
[257] According to Carr, Bakunin favoured individual freedom for the popular classes, but a dictatorial style of leadership, and "conferred upon himself the dictatorship of the revolutionary party". For Marshall, Bakunin was "almost schizoid" in that he advocated an invisible dictatorship, under his control. See Carr, 1975, *op cit*., pp. 437-8; Marshall, 1994, *op cit*., pp. 263, 276-8.
[258] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, [1873] 1972, "The Alliance of Socialist Democracy and the International Working Men's Association", in Kolpinsky, editor, 1972, *op cit*., pp. 113, 116, 118, 120
[259] Cited in Dolgoff, "Introduction", *op cit.*, p. 10
[260] Bakunin, [1870a] 1971, *op cit.*, p.180
[261] For Marshall, it shows Bakunin's belief in "manipulating others through secret societies", an "authoritarian strategy": see Marshall, 1994, *op cit.*, p. 277
[262] See McLellan, 1976, *op cit*., pp. 167-188. It operated through a number of "front" organisations, and emerged from the older secret society, the League of the Just. This point was drawn to my attention by an interesting article by

As for the unfortunate terminology, a fuller reading of the relevant documents makes it clear that Bakunin did not mean the rule of a party or a government, but, rather, the leading influence of the anarchist *idea* in the popular classes, and, consequently, the leading role of anarchists in the popular movements. The "*secret and universal association of the International Brothers*" would be "the life and the energy of the Revolution", "men neither vain nor ambitious, but capable of serving as intermediaries between the revolutionary idea and the instincts of the people", but the Revolution itself "excludes any idea of dictatorship and of a controlling and directive power".[263] The "invisible pilots" and "collective dictatorship" would only "awaken and foment all the dynamic passions of the people", who must organise from below upwards, "spontaneously, without outside interference" or "official dictatorship".[264]

The "sole purpose" of the Alliance is to "promote the Revolution; to destroy all governments and to make government forever impossible … [to] give free rein to the … masses … voluntary federation and unconditional freedom … [to] combat all ambition to dominate the revolutionary movement of the people, either by cliques of individuals".[265] Its power, its "dictatorship", would not be based on official positions but only the "*natural but never official influence* of all members of the Alliance".[266] Bakunin recognised a role for practical and libertarian leadership, for in "moments of great … crisis … ten, twenty, or thirty well-organised militants … can easily rally several hundred courageous activists".[267] However, he was against all coercion: revolutionaries must "foster the self-organisation of the masses into autonomous bodies, federated from the bottom upward", and reject the "authoritarian revolutionists".[268] He was equally opposed to the politics of hero worship and the uncritical adulation of leaders:[269]

> Did you not write to me and tell me that I could, if I so desired, become the Garibaldi of socialism? My conceit does not go that far, nor do I aspire to any other title of glory. My dear, I will die and the worms will eat me, but I want our idea to triumph. I want the toilers to emancipate themselves from all authorities and all would-be 'heroes.'

The Bakunin that emerges from the above discussion can scarcely be recognised in a literature that treats him as a man whose work was "erratic and unmethodological", and who despised theory,[270] a

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Andrew Flood, which does not, however, draw a clear distinction between the two Leagues. See Andrew Flood, 2002, "Bakunin's idea of revolution and revolutionary organisation", *Red and Black Revolution: a magazine of libertarian communism*, no. 6, Dublin

[263] Michael Bakunin, [1869b] 1971, "The Programme of the International Brotherhood", in Dolgoff, 1971, *op cit.* p. 154-5, emphasis in the original

[264] Bakunin, [1870a] 1971, *op cit.*, pp.180-181

[265] Bakunin, [n.d], *op cit*., p. 387. This is one of several extracts that were presented in an appendix to the second edition of the Dolgoff collection. Unfortunately these are not clearly dated.

[266] Bakunin, [n.d], *op cit*., p. 387, emphasis in original

[267] Bakunin, [1871d] 1971, *op cit*., p. 258

[268] Bakunin, [1870b], 1971, *op cit.* p. 196

[269] Bakunin, [n.d], *op cit*., p. 385. This is one of several extracts that were presented in an appendix to the second edition of the Dolgoff collection. Unfortunately it is not clearly dated.

[270] Paul Avrich, 1971, "The Legacy of Bakunin", in Dolgoff, editor, 1971, *op cit*., p. xxxiv. This essay also appears in Avrich, 1988, *op cit*. It is a sympathetic paper, but I cannot agree with its author's characterisation of Bakunin's views.

"feckless Bohemian" without a coherent theory, who thought was neither "very subtle or very original".[271] Bakunin may not have been a traditional intellectual, and he produced no *magnum opus* like Marx's *Capital* – this was hardly possible, as Bakunin's life was one of action and persecution – but his ideas remain, nonetheless, cohesive and striking. There is certainly no basis for claims along the lines that Bakunin hoped for "instant socialism" through a "spontaneous" revolt of the masses",[272] that Bakunin advocated "violence for its own sake", thought "the act of destruction was sufficient in itself",[273] or believed that radical students could "alone provide organisation, propaganda, and encouragement" to the masses.[274] Bakunin had a clear strategy, which he applied to different situations on the basis of concrete analyses of different national situations: his nuanced analyses of the contemporary situation and balance of class forces in countries such as France, Russia, Spain and elsewhere[275] underline the subtlety and nuance of his thought.

Finally, it should be stressed that the anarchists were, by no means, opposed to science and reason. According to Marshall, for example, Bakunin's writings "attack the rule of science and … celebrate the wisdom of the instincts",[276] while for Carr, he "accepts Rousseau's hypothesis that man, if unperverted by social and political authority, is inherently virtuous", and "the more primitive man is, the more he approximates this ideal".[277] However, while Bakunin opposed the notion that a technocratic elite of scientists should rule society[278] – just as he opposed any other ruling elite – he was a champion of rationalism: "we do recognise the absolute authority of science", an "immense advance" over theology and metaphysics", "indispensable to the rational organisation of society".[279] Religion, which subjected people to the phantoms of their own minds, was the ultimate authoritarianism,[280] and tended to justify inequitable social relations.[281]

A "general scientific education" must be made available to all, Bakunin argued, "especially the learning of the scientific method, the habit of correct thinking, the ability to generalise from facts and make more or less correct deductions".[282] "Science will constitute in a certain sense society's collective

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[271] Joll, 1964, *op cit*., pp. 84, 92
[272] Avrich, 1971, *op cit*., pp. xx-xxi
[273] Joll, 1964, *op cit*., pp. 84, 87
[274] Statz, 1990, *op cit*., p. xxxiv
[275] Of particular interest are Bakunin [1870b], 1971, *op cit*.; Bakunin, [1873] 1990, *op cit.* and Mikhail Bakunin, [1875] 1971, "Letter to Elisée Reclus", in Dolgoff, 1971, editor, *op cit.*
[276] Marshall, 1994, *op cit*., p. 263
[277] Carr, 1975, *op cit*., p. 435
[278] Bakunin wrote: "We must respect the scientists for their merits and achievements", but "Neither they nor any other special group should be given power over others": see Bakunin, [1873] 1971, *op cit*., p.p. 326-7. Also: "a scientific academy invested with absolute sovereignty" would inevitably devote itself "its own eternal perpetuation" at the expense of the popular classes": Bakunin, [1871a] 1971, *op cit*., pp. 229-230
[279] Bakunin, [1871a] 1971, *op cit*., pp. 230-233
[280] For example, Bakunin argues that the "first revolt is against the supreme tyranny of theology, of the phantom of God … the freedom of mankind will never be complete until the disastrous and insidious fiction of a heavenly master is annihilated", and Kropotkin speaks of "God the universal tyrant" and the "intellectual servility arising from obedience to "mystical and metaphysical entities". See Bakunin, [1871a], 1971, *op cit*., p. 238; Kropotkin, [1887], 1990, *op cit*., p. 17; Kropotkin, [1912], 1970, *op cit*., p. 167
[281] Cf. Bakunin, "All temporal or human authority stems directly from spiritual and/ or divine authority" and Kropotkin, "The mission of the church has been to hold the people in intellectual slavery…[that of] the State to hold them … in economic slavery". See Bakunin, [1871a], 1971, *op cit*., p. 238; Kropotkin, [1912] 1970, *op cit*., p. 183
[282] Bakunin, [1873], 1971, *op cit*., p. 327

consciousness".[283] Kropotkin took up these themes, defining science as "the supreme authority", the "expression and the revelation" of truth, and devoted his studies to providing anarchism with a scientific basis.[284] For Kropotkin, the "method followed by the anarchist thinker entirely differs from that followed by the utopists", as it "does not resort to metaphysical conceptions" but "studies human society as it is now and as it was in the past".[285] Its "method of investigation is that of the exact natural sciences" and its aims include the creation of a "synthetic philosophy comprehending in one generalisation all the phenomena of nature … and societies".[286]

2.5. Anarchism as a political ideology

From the above discussion, it is possible to develop a more effective definition of anarchism than the anti-Statism and opposition to restrictions on individual freedom suggested by Eltzbacher. Anarchism, as it emerged in the 1860s and 1870s, was a variant of socialism distinguished by commitment to a highly social concept of individual freedom, from which basis it opposed social hierarchy, and social and economic inequality; that identified capitalism, landlordism and the State as the key institutions responsible for exploiting and dominaing the working class and peasantry; that advocated rationalism as part of its commitment to the emancipation of the human mind; and that advocated an internationalist and revolutionary class struggle from below, based upon libertarian forms of organisation and self-organised struggle, outside and against the State, as the route towards a non-market, non-State socialism based upon collective ownership and self-management.

The abolition of the State, in short, was only one component of the anarchist project. A stateless society based on, for instance, coercion, social hierarchy and superstition would be no more desirable from an anarchist perspective than a society based on a modern State.

A narrower interpretation of anarchism, centred on a definition of anarchist ideology, developed through rigorous historical study and logical analysis, allows anarchism to be understood for what it was: a coherent political tradition that must be located in the modern period, and properly historicised. This has several advantages over Eltzbacher's "Seven Sages" approach. It provides a comprehensive set of criteria that clearly and consistently differentiate anarchism from other ideologies, and avoids the obvious problems of grouping under the label of "anarchism" an ever-growing range of contradictory views. It also enables a more rigorous theoretical interrogation of anarchism and treats anarchism as a historical phenomenon that emerged within a very particular historical milieu, *viz.*, the socialist and labour movements of the 1860s and 1870s.

This argument suggests the need to move beyond the view that there are varieties of anarchism, with the ideas of Bakunin and Kropotkin merely one subset, a "communist" anarchism as distinct from a "philosophical" anarchism identified with Godwin, a Mutualist anarchism identified with Proudhon and Tucker, an "individualist" anarchism identified with Stirner, a "pacifist" or "religious" anarchism identified

[283] Bakunin, [1871a], 1971, *op cit.*, p. 231
[284] Peter Kropotkin, [1909], "Speech at the Ferrer Meeting", London, quoted in Kinna, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 270
[285] Kropotkin, [1887], *op cit.*, p. 47
[286] Kropotkin, [1912], *op cit.*, p. 150

with Tolstoy, and so on and so forth. This assumes the validity of Eltzbacher's approach – these subsets of "anarchism" can only exist if the larger anarchist set is defined as made up only of anti-Statism and individual freedom – and thereby simply ends up reproducing all the problems of that erroneous approach.

If it is accepted that anarchism is a definite political tradition, with a very specific genesis – the First International – and a coherent ideology with core thinkers – such as Bakunin and Kropotkin – then there are *no* varieties of anarchism with incompatible views of capitalism, class, the abolition of the State and so forth, but only variations *within* an anarchism that must be understood as a revolutionary form of libertarian socialism. Godwin, Stirner, Proudhon, Tucker and Tolstoy might be construed as libertarians, but it would be a mistake to describe them as anarchists.

This narrower approach is both more *convincing* than the approach established by Eltzbacher, as it is far more consistent with the results of an examination of the history of the anarchist idea and the record of the anarchist movement, and more *useful* as a means to analyse anarchism, whether theoretically or socially. It is not an arbitrary preference that elevates one variety of anarchism over another, but a logically and empirically grounded model. There is no good reason to suppose that definitions of anarchism are merely relative matters of opinion; there are few grounds to reject the approach advanced here, but many to recommend it.

A narrower approach also suggests, finally, the need to construct a radically different anarchist canon to that suggested by Eltzbacher's "Seven Sages", and the need to rethink the intellectual antecedents of anarchism. A new canon would be made up of key anarchist figures, part of the movement that emerged from 1868, and would not include Godwin, Stirner, Proudhon, Tucker or Tolstoy.

On the other hand, the intellectual history of anarchism, and its pre-history as well, needs to be recast. Figures with no discernable influence on anarchism, such as Godwin and Stirner, would be removed – resemblance does not imply descent – in favour of cases where an intellectual lineage did exist. A pre-history of anarchism would certainly include Proudhon and Marx, but it needs to be extended to include those who, in turn, influenced Proudhon (such as Charles Fourier, the French Utopian socialist and libertarian) and Marx (like Wilhelm Weitling, the German communist).

2.6. From anarchism to syndicalism: from Bakunin to the IWW

Within anarchism, understood thus, however, there were and are important differences in terms of tactics and strategy. It is possible, as Michael Schmidt and I have argued elsewhere, to identify two broad streams of thought on these issues within anarchism.[287] The smaller stream is that of "insurrectionist" anarchism, which argues that struggles for immediate gains and small reforms, at best, perpetuate the current social order and are therefore a positive danger to the revolution and in violation of anarchist principles. This is associated with a distrust of mass organisations, including trade unions. From this perspective, the anarchists must approach the popular classes directly, the masses to anarchism through word and deed. In practice, this outlook has led to a focus on "propaganda by the deed": spectacular and

[287] Schmidt and van der Walt, forthcoming in 2007, *op cit*.,

usually violent actions designed to rouse the masses, including bank robberies to raise funds ("expropriation"), and retributive assassinations and bombings.[288]

The insurrectionist approach emerged in the late 1870s, and enjoyed a brief period of hegemony amongst the anarchists in the 1880s, after the fall of the First International. It was the dominant current in the Anarchist or "Black" International founded in London in 1881. The wave of anarchist terrorism peaked in the 1890s and early 1900s. Targets included the Paris and New York stock exchanges, both of which were bombed; victims of anarchist assassins included an Italian king, a French president, a Spanish Premier, an Austrian Empress, and an American president. In practice, "propaganda by the deed" was singularly unsuccessful in fostering a popular revolt: not only did it win for anarchism an aura of violence that it has never quite managed to shake, and alienated many members of the very classes from whom the anarchists hoped to draw support, but it provided a pretext for massive repression.

The larger stream of anarchist thought on tactics and strategies may be referred to, perhaps clumsily, as "mass" anarchism. The main task, from this perspective, was to implant anarchism *within* popular mass movements, such as the trade unions. Anarchists, from this perspective, should try to radicalise these movements, spread anarchist ideas and aims within their ranks, and to foster a culture of self-management and direct action. The outcome should be that these movements could provide a powerful lever for revolution, and create the nucleus of the future anarchist society. Bakunin is often identified with an insurrectionist tradition in the literature,[289] but this is quite unfair: his overall approach was that of mass anarchism. Kropotkin flirted with insurrectionist anarchism in the early 1880s, but returned to the mass anarchism of Bakunin by the end of the decade, leading the charge against the insurrectionists within the movement.

The great majority of the mass anarchists – and, therefore, the majority of the anarchist movement – favoured the use of trade unions for revolutionary purposes, but a significant number disagreed. The anti-syndicalist mass anarchists included those who distrusted unions, preferring other forms of mass organisation, and those who tended to stress pure propaganda work. The work of the latter group was

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[288] The classic statement of the insurrectionist approach was provided by the Italian anarchist Luigi Galleani: "The anarchist movement and the labour movement follow two parallel lines, and it has been geometrically proven that parallels will never meet", for trade unions "recognise and consent to the exiting economic system in all its manifestations and relations", while anarchism along is revolutionary: "When we talk about property, State, masters, governments, laws, courts and police, we only say that *we don't want any of them*". He continued to defended "propaganda by the deed" as a "necessary and inevitable medium" between the ideal and the awakening of the "the great mass". See Luigi Galleani, [1925], 1982, *The End of Anarchism?* Cienfuegos Press, Orkney, pp. 47-8, 49, 53, emphasis in the original

[289] For example, Walter Laqueur, in analysing anarchist terrorism, traces it roots to Bakunin. See Walter Laqueur, editor, 1978, *The Terrorism Reader: a historical anthology*, New American Library, pp. 47-49. It should be noted that Bakunin's responsibility for the writings attributed to him by Laqueur is a matter of great controversy, particularly given that their style, content and proposals are sharply at odds with all of Bakunin's other works, even including those of his Pan-Slavist period. It is far more likely that they were the works of Sergei Nechayev, an extremist *narodnik* whom Bakunin sought to convert to anarchism, and with whom he was, consequently, briefly associated. Avrich cautiously suggests that Bakunin was not involved in these writings, while Michael Confino made a stronger and more forceful case for Bakunin's innocence: see Paul Avrich, 1988, "Bakunin and Nechaev", in Avrich, 1988, *op cit.*, which also appeared as separate booklet – see Paul Avrich, 1987, *Bakunin and Nechaev*, Freedom Press, London – and Michael Confino, 1973, *Daughter of a Revolutionary: Natalie Herzen and the Bakunin/ Nechaev circle*, La Salle, Illinois

largely conducted in abstract terms, critical of everyday struggles even where the "pure ones" operated within mass organisations. The "pure ones" tended to reduce anarchist activity to the abstract recital of critique and principles (while they shared the broad outlook of mass anarchism).

This is an appropriate point at which to deal with the question of the relationship between anarchism and syndicalism. The term "syndicalism" derives from the French *syndicalisme révolutionnaire* – literally, "revolutionary unionism" – and refers to the socialist strategy according to which trade unions – *syndicats* – would not only mobilise workers around immediate struggles for better wages and so forth, but also provide the means for the overthrow of capitalism and the State. From this perspective, the trade unions should organise a revolutionary general strike in which organised labour would take control of the means of production, and self-manage them through the trade union structures:[290]

> … according to the Syndicalist view, the trade union, the syndicate, is the unified organisation of labour and has for its purpose the defence of the interests of the producers within existing society and the preparing for and the practical carrying out of the reconstruction of social after the pattern of Socialism. It has, therefore, a double purpose:
>
> 1. As the fighting organisation of the workers against the employers to enforce the demands of the workers for the safeguarding and raising of their standard of living;
>
> 2. As the school for the intellectual training of the workers to make them acquainted with the technical management of production and economic life in general, so that when a revolutionary situation arises they will be capable of taking the socio-economic organism into their own hands and remaking it according to Socialist principles.

The use of the term "syndicalist" to describe this approach is due, in large part, to the fact that it was widely identified with the policies of the main French CGT.

There is, from this perspective, no contradiction between the everyday struggle for immediate gains, and the "training of the workers" for the "remaking" of the world.[291] Unions were, from a syndicalist perspective, the best (but not the only) weapons for socialist revolution, given that they mobilised workers as a class at the point of production on the basis of their class interests, and against capitalism and the State. By contrast, political parties – including labour and socialist parties – were characterised by the

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[290] Rocker, [1938], 1989, *op cit.,* p. 86

[291] In other words, a struggle for reforms was part and parcel of the practice of revolutionary syndicalism. It is, therefore, incorrect to suggest, as does Ruth Thompson, that the day-to-day activities of syndicalist unions reflected an "inconsistency between theory and practice" in that they were "inextricably linked to material improvements" and "practical" and "pragmatic": see Ruth Thompson, 1984, "The Limitations of Ideology in the early Argentinean Labour movement: anarchism in the trade unions, 1890-1920", *Journal of Latin American Studies*, no. 16, pp. 83, 87, 92, 98. The same arguments are made by Thompson in a later article: Ruth Thompson, 1990, "Argentine Syndicalism: reform before revolution", in van der Linden and Thorpe, 1990b, *op cit.*, especially pp. 170-172, 174, 180-181

syndicalists as multi-class institutions led by non-workers: in practice these parties used workers as passive voters in a futile quest to use the capitalist government for socialist transformation.[292]

This view was tied to a strongly libertarian outlook: syndicalists made a virtue of popular self-activity, direct action, and a non-bureaucratic style of trade unionism,[293] and the typical syndicalist union was radically decentralised into self-governing branches; the typical union organiser and official, an unpaid volunteer. Syndicalism was, moreover, characteristically anti-nationalist and anti-Statist: as Thorpe notes, it was "In conception and intent … an international movement", and syndicalists "conceived of their movement as international just as the working class was international, and therefore hoped to co-ordinate their struggle across national boundaries against an equally international capitalist system".[294]

The definition of syndicalism provided above is a standard one, accepted by syndicalists and scholars.[295] Unlike the standard definition of anarchism discussed above, it is also an internally consistent approach that effectively identifies the key features of syndicalism in a manner that clearly distinguishes syndicalism from related movements, such as classical Marxism.[296]

Where problems do arise, however, is on the question of the origins of syndicalism, and of its relationship to the anarchist tradition. The origins of the syndicalist conception are commonly, but inaccurately, attributed to Georges Sorel, a retired French engineer and former Marxist,[297] and, consequently, to his admirers, like Antonio Labriola in Italy. According to Louis Levine, this notion was first developed in Werner Sombart's *Socialism and the Social Movement*, which appeared in English translation in 1909, and thence "made its way into other writings on revolutionary syndicalism".[298]

Nearly a century later, this idea remains pervasive. Joll described Sorel as "the theorist of anarcho-syndicalism",[299] while Kieran Allen claims that the French CGT was "committed to the ideas of Georges

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[292] Thorpe, 1989, *op cit.*, pp. 14-21
[293] See, for example, Rocker, [1938], 1989, *op cit*., pp. 92-4, 116-7, 123-4
[294] Thorpe, 1989, *op cit.*, p.1
[295] See, for example, Joll, 1964, *op cit*., pp. 198-200; Marshall, 1994, *op cit*., p. 9; O'Connor, 1988, *op cit.,* p. 4; van der Linden and Thorpe 1990b, *op cit*., pp. 1-2
[296] The best analysis of classical Marxism and the trade unions remains Richard Hyman, 1971, *Marxism and the Sociology of Trade Unionism*, Pluto Press, London. As Hyman notes, even at their most "optimistic", Marx and Engels argued that unions were basically defensive bodies, which provided some immediate protection for workers, but their real significance was their potential to lay the basis for workers to "adopt political forms of action", helping create the political party that, alone, could "challenge directly the whole structure of class domination". Even this "optimism" was "by no means unqualified", and elsewhere Marx and Engels were far more negative regarding trade unions. Later Marxists have tended to be even more one-sided in their "pessimistic" appraisal of unions, an analysis of unions Hyman critiques as a-historical and inaccurate. Hyman's discussion of what he calls "revolutionary socialist" views on the unions is marred by his weak discussion of syndicalism, caricatured as "the thesis that economic struggles can directly and exclusively generate revolution". See Hyman, 1971, *op cit*., pp. 4-20, 37-43.
[297] The standard study of Sorel is that of J.R. Jennings, 1985, *Georges Sorel: the character and development of his thought*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, London, in association with St. Anthony's College, Oxford. Sorel's views, in fact, underwent continual change, and "cannot be categorised", "Marxism, syndicalism, royalism, fascism, bolshevism excited him one after the other": see Jennings, 1985, *op cit*., p. vii. A good discussion of Sorel is also provided by Joll, 1964, *op cit*., pp. 206-212. The book usually identified with Sorel's "syndicalism" was his meandering *Reflections On Violence*, which came out in 1912, and in English translation soon after: see Georges Sorel, [1912] 1915, *Reflections On Violence*, Allen and Unwin, London, 1915.
[298] Levine, 1914, *op cit.,* p. 155
[299] Joll, 1964, *op cit*., p. 207

Sorel".[300] According to Schechter, Sorel was "the leading theorist of Revolutionary Syndicalism", and Schechter speaks of revolutionary syndicalism's "synthesis of Marx and Sorel".[301] For his part, Charles Bertrand maintains that the syndicalists "attempted to reconcile the positions of Karl Marx and Georges Sorel".[302]

Sorel's ideas were not always consistent – according to one writer, the key feature of Sorel's thought was precisely its "disunity" and "pluralism"[303] – but Sorel was also very much a representative of a particular mood amongst radical intellectuals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a mood that Irving Louis Horowitz called the "Revolt against Reason".[304] This stressed feeling over thought, action over theory, will over reason, and youth over civilisation. It is from this perspective that Sorel's characteristic opposition to rationalism and to parliamentary democracy, and belief in the regenerative power of myth and violence must be understood. Sorel believed that Europe was in a state of decadence, and the bourgeoisie was incapable of carrying out the historic mission ascribed to it by Marx: development of an advanced industrial basis for a future socialist society. It is, perhaps, not surprising that Sorel gravitated towards the French CGT, and he believed that the general strike of the syndicalists was a heroic and gloriously irrational myth that would galvanise the working class into violent action and thereby morally regenerate Europe.[305]

Just as the "Seven Sages" approach led directly to a problematic definition of anarchism, the identification of Sorel with syndicalism has a number of important consequences for the analysis of syndicalism. In the first place, it delinks syndicalism from anarchism, notwithstanding the fact that most anarchists were, as will be noted below, in favour of syndicalism. According to Bertrand, for example, anarchism and syndicalism were rival movements who "agreed on tactics but not on principles", while Levy treats the two as different, but overlapping, approaches, at least in the Italian case.[306] For David MacNally, "some syndicalist viewpoints share a superficial similarity with anarchism" but the syndicalist acceptance of the "need for mass, collective action and decision-making … is much superior to classical anarchism".[307] For Miller, syndicalism was "far from being an anarchist invention", although its stress on class struggle, direct action and self-management helped make it attractive to the anarchists.[308] While Frederick Ridely stresses the similarities between anarchism and syndicalism, he suggests that the "anarchist movement continued in existence parallel to syndicalism and there was considerable interchange between the two".[309]

The identification of Sorel with syndicalism has two further consequences. By linking syndicalism to the "Revolt against Reason", it suggests that syndicalism was an irrationalist movement. For Bertrand, the

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[300] Kieran Allen, 1987, *The Politics of James Connolly*, Pluto Press, London, p. 68
[301] Schechter, 1994, *op cit*., pp. 28, 35
[302] Charles L. Bertrand, 1990, *op cit*., p. 139
[303] Jennings, 1985, *op cit*., pp. 5, 7
[304] Irving Louis Horowitz, 1961, *Radicalism and the Revolt against Reason: the social theories of Georges Sorel*, Humanities Press, London
[305] See Jennings, 1985, *op cit*, pp. 12-122, 134-6; also see Thorpe, 1989, *op cit.*, p. 282, note 41
[306] Bertrand, 1990, *op cit*., p. 145; Levy, 1989, *op cit*., pp. 51-54
[307] David MacNally, 1984, *Socialism From* Below, International Socialist Organization, Chicago, part 3. As far as I know, MacNally subsequently revised his views, but these arguments are, nonetheless, of real interest.
[308] Miller, 1984, *op cit*., p. 124
[309] Frederick F. Ridley, 1970, *Revolutionary Syndicalism in France: the direct action of its time*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 41-44

syndicalists "failed to produce a coherent ideology … the only identifiable common principle … became a belief in the efficacy of violence and direct action".[310] According to Emmet O'Connor, syndicalism was less a strategy than a mood, an "exaltation of will over reason", an "anti-intellectual and anti-rational" trend in the labour movement that infused an "irrational impulse … into industrial unrest".[311] Further, given that the sentiments of the "Revolt against Reason" later found their key expression in Italian fascism – and given that Sorel later associated with the far right, while Labriola became an outright Fascist – the identification of syndicalism and Sorel lends itself to the thesis that syndicalism had close links to fascism.[312] The latter argument is one that will be examined below.

The notion that Sorel was the "leading theorist" of syndicalism was assiduously promoted by the man himself,[313] but is, nonetheless, quite baseless. Sorel was, essentially, a commentator on the syndicalist movement from outside, one who, moreover, tended to see his own convictions – such opposition to rationalism, hostility towards democracy, belief in the power of myth and violence – in the CGT. His actual influence on the syndicalist movement was negligible. As far back as 1914, Levine argued that the notion that Sorel was leader of syndicalism "is a 'myth' and should be discarded", noted that Sorel and his circle did not develop the basic ideas of syndicalism nor act as spokespersons for the CGT: they were "no more than a group of writers … watching the syndicalist movement from the outside … stimulated by it", but whose ideas were often at odds with those of the syndicalists.[314]

Other writers concur. Sorel and his followers "never belonged to the movement itself, nor had they any mentionable influence on its internal development".[315] J.R. Jennings' biography of Sorel supports these claims: Sorel's outline of syndicalist doctrine was unoriginal, his reflections on syndicalism were a "response" to an existing movement, his influence "negligible", and his support for syndicalism lasting only from around 1905 to 1909, when he moved to the far right.[316] In his study of the CGT, Ridley demonstrates that "it is impossible to show a direct link between the militants of the French labour movement and the philosophers

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[310] Bertrand, 1990, *op cit*., p. 139

[311] O'Connor, 1988, *op cit.*, pp. 6-8

[312] Bertrand identifies "syndicalism" in Italy in the early twentieth century Italy with the Italian Labour Union, a radical nationalist trade union formed in the 1910s, a large section of which later specialised in union-bashing as part of Benito Mussolini's prototypical Fascist movement. Emmet O'Connor suggested that revolutionary syndicalism laid "a theoretical basis for post-war fascism". This argument draws, in turn, on the work of A. James Gregor, and David Roberts, both of whom suggest that Fascist ideas drew on syndicalism, and stress the influence of Sorel on Mussolini, but which are careful to stress that the "syndicalists" were not homogenous. Levy, in his study of Italian anarchism, suggests that those "syndicalist intellectuals" influenced by Sorel and his co thinkers, "helped to generate, or sympathetically endorsed" the emerging Fascist movement, which shared the "populist and republican rhetoric" of a section of the syndicalist movement. See Bertrand, 1990, *op cit*., pp. 144-150; A. James Gregor, 1979, *Young Mussolini and the Intellectual Origins of Fascism*, University of California Press, Berkeley; Levy, 1989, *op cit.*, p. 53; O'Connor, 1988, *op cit*., pp. 6-7; David Roberts, 1979, *The Syndicalist Tradition and Italian Fascism*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill.

[313] Sorel "prided himself on writing 'the principal document of syndicalist literature,'" *Reflections On* Violence: see Jennings, 1985, *op cit*., p. 146

[314] Levine, 1914, *op cit*., pp. 153

[315] Rocker, [1938] 1989, *op cit.*

[316] See Jennings, 1985, *op cit*., pp. 118, 120, 143-6, and Levine, 1914, *op cit*., pp. 158-161. While Jennings provides a good account of Sorel's views, he does not, unlike Levine, draw sufficient attention to the gulf between many of these ideas and those of the syndicalists: for example, Sorel's belief that capitalism needed to be "regenerated", or that the general strike was a "myth, "would have been anathema to the syndicalists: cf. Levine, 1914, *op cit*., pp. 157-159. It is also rather too generous of Jennings to describe Sorel's "actual involvement" in the CGT as "minimal".

of the revolt against Reason", that "Sorel had no contact with the labour movement", never set foot in the CGT offices, "played no part, however small, in its affairs" and had "fundamental differences" with the CGT unionists.[317]

That Sorel (and his follower Labriola) provide the supposed link between syndicalism and the "Revolt against Reason" is, concomitantly, incorrect. As Thorpe notes, Sorel "speculated on the syndicalist movement from outside, elaborating ideas that syndicalist militants would not have endorsed even had they been fully familiar with them".[318] According to Woodcock, Sorel "had no direct connection with the syndicalist movement, whose ideas were evolved independently of and indeed, before, the appearance of Sorel, and the real syndicalists certainly did not support his mythical interpretation of syndicalism".[319] Despite his suggestion that Sorel was the "theorist" of syndicalism, Joll admits that "Sorel was not … launching a new strategy for the working classes … but rather trying to fit what they were already doing into his own highly personal, subjective and romantic view of society", and suggests that Sorel was far closer to the extreme right than to the syndicalists.[320] Much of basis for the notion that syndicalism was linked to fascism thereby falls away, a point strongly reinforced by recent studies showing the deep antagonism between the two.[321] This is not to say that some syndicalists did not move towards fascism (as did many liberals, Marxists and so on), or that fascism did not at times exalt direct action, but it is to argue that there was no special affinity between syndicalism and fascism, nor any logical progression from syndicalism towards fascism.

2.7. Anarchism and the two waves of syndicalism, 1869-1886 and 1895 onwards

Where, then, did syndicalist ideas emerge? The evidence supports an alternative argument: that the syndicalist conception emerged within the anarchist movement of the First International.[322] According to Levine, the "Anarchists entering the syndicates" in France "largely contributed to the revolutionary turn which the syndicates took", and the "main ideas" may "all be found" in the First International, "and especially in the writings of the Bakounist or federalist wing": syndicalism was not really a "new theory" but

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[317] Ridley, 1970, *op cit*., pp. 38-44, 192, 249, 250-1
[318] Thorpe, 1989, *op cit.*, p. 282, note 40
[319] George Woodcock, 1944, *Anarchy or Chaos*, Freedom Press, London, p. 61
[320] Joll, 1964, *op cit*., pp. 211-2
[321] The notion that syndicalism overlapped with fascism, or helped generate fascism, is manifestly incorrect. Benito Mussolini himself was never a syndicalist, but he did manage to win a minority of the Italian Syndicalist Union (USI) to his newfound nationalist position – the precursor to his theory of fascism – to his side in early 1915. This faction was soundly defeated at the USI congress, driven out of the union to form a tiny Italian Labour Union, and later occupied much its time in trying to smash the USI. The antimilitarist and internationalist USI, as well as the larger anarchist movement reciprocated this violent antagonism: "It is no coincidence", notes Tobias Abse, "that the strongest working-class resistance to Fascism was in . . . towns or cities in which there was quite a strong anarchist, syndicalist or anarcho-syndicalist tradition". According to Levy, the "anarchists probably suffered greater violence proportionate to their numbers than other political opponents of fascism", and fascist squads played a central role in the destruction of the syndicalist unions in Italy. See Tobias Abse, 1986, "The Rise of Fascism in an Industrial City", in David Forgacs, editor, 1986, *Rethinking Italian Fascism: capitalism, populism and culture*, London, Lawrence and Wishart, p. 56; Levy, 1989, *op cit*., pp. 73-4. That Mussolini would later refer to his State-run industrial relations system as "National-Syndicalism" in no way undermines the fact that his State-corporatism was the antithesis of syndicalism.
[322] I develop this argument in Lucien van der Walt, 2004a, "Bakunin's Heirs in South Africa: race and revolutionary syndicalism from the IWW to the International Socialist League, 1910–21", *Politikon*, vol.31, no. 1, pp. 69-70

"a return to the old theories".[323] For Lewis Lorwin, similarly, the "first anticipations of syndicalist ideas may be found in the discussions and resolutions of the First International between 1868 and 1872 and especially in those of its Bakuninist sections between 1872 and 1876".[324] Reviewing the literature, Thorpe's more recent study revives these arguments, disputing the notion that syndicalism was "far from being an anarchist invention": the syndicalists were "the anarchist current within the workers' movement", representing "the non-political tradition of socialism deriving from the libertarian wing of the First International" and the writings of Bakunin.[325]

Such a view was commonplace in the anarchist literature of the "glorious period",[326] and, as Thorpe notes, many syndicalists viewed "themselves as the descendants" of the anarchist wing of the old International.[327] The writings of Marx and Engels also identified anarchism with the approach later called syndicalism. Marx, for example, complained that anarchists argued that workers "must … organise themselves by trades-unions" to "supplant the existing states",[328] while Engels lamented the "Bakuninist" conception that the "general strike is the lever employed by which the social revolution is started": "One fine morning all the workers of all the industries of a country, or even of the whole world, stop work" to "pull down the entire old society".[329]

It is, indeed, clear that while Marx and Engels regarded trade unions as – at best – movements that could contribute to the formation of a revolutionary political party capable of seizing State power, Bakunin certainly envisaged a revolutionary role for trade unions. If Marx hoped to see the First International become an international grouping of political parties, aiming at political power, Bakunin tended to regard the First International itself as the nucleus of an international, and revolutionary, trade union federation, an "organisation of professions and trades"[330] that should strive for the "immediate aim – reduction of working hours and higher wages", prepare "for strikes", raise "strike funds", and unify "workers into one organisation".[331] The unions must be democratic, participatory, and accountable to the membership to prevent hierarchies emerging, and to promote the self-activity of the rank-and-file: "the absence of opposition and control and of continuous vigilance" by members becomes a "source of depravity for all

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[323] Levine, 1914, *op cit*., pp. 160-161
[324] Lewis Lorwin, 1959, "Syndicalism", *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, vol.13, The Macmillan Company, New York, p. 497
[325] Thorpe, 1989, pp. xiii–xiv
[326] For Kropotkin, the "current opinions of the French syndicalists are organically linked with the early ideas formed by the left wing of the International", while for Malatesta, syndicalism was "already glimpsed and followed, in the International, by the first of the anarchists". Rocker devotes a chapter to demonstrating that modern "Anarcho-Syndicalism is a direct continuation of those social aspirations which took shape in the bosom of the First International, and which were best understood and most strongly held by the libertarian wing of the great workers' alliance". Kropotkin is quoted in Nettlau: "Its theoretical assumptions are based on the teachings of Libertarian or Anarchist Socialism"; Kropotkin is quoted in Nettlau, [1934] 1996, *op cit*., p. 279; Errico Malatesta, [1907], 1977, "Syndicalism: an anarchist critique", in George Woodcock, editor, 1977, *The Anarchist Reader*, Fontana/ Collins, Glasgow, p. 220; Rocker, [1938] 1989, *op cit*., pp. 68-81.
[327] Thorpe, 1989, *op cit*., pp. xiii-xiv
[328] Marx, [19 April 1870], 1972, *op cit*., p. 46
[329] Engels, [1873] 1972, *op cit*., pp. 132-3
[330] Bakunin, [1871d] 1971, *op cit.*, p. 255
[331] Bakunin, [1869a] 1971, *op cit*., p. 173

individuals vested with social power".[332]

For Bakunin, the experience of practical solidarity and immediate struggles– promoted by the Alliance, which would also promote the "new faith" of anarchism – would see the International forge the powerful "ties of economic solidarity and fraternal sentiment" between the "workers in all occupations in all lands".[333] The International should also provide the basis to "erect upon the ruins of the old world the free federation of workers' associations". Its structures, organised along the lines of trades and professions, and crossing national borders, and co-ordinated through "Chambers of Labour", would provide the lever for social revolution, and the basic infrastructure of a self-managed and stateless socialist order:[334]

> The organisation of the trade sections and their representation in the Chambers of Labour creates a great academy in which all the workers can and must study economic science; these sections also bear in themselves the living seeds of the new society which is to replace the old world. They are creating not only the ideas, but the facts of the future itself.

When the "Revolution, ripened by the force of events, breaks out, there will be a real force ready which knows what to do and is capable of guiding the revolution in the direction marked out for it by the aspirations of the people: a serious international organisation of workers' associations of all lands capable of replacing this departing world of *states*".[335] This is hardly an outlook compatible with MacNally's claim that syndicalism differed from "classical anarchism" in accepting "mass, collective action and decision-making". It should be also added here that the assertion that Bakunin distrusted urban workers, and placed his faith, instead, in the unemployed, the *lumpenproletariat*, students and so forth, is a myth.[336]

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[332] Bakunin, [1871d], 1971, *op cit.*, p. 245

[333] Bakunin, [1871d] 1971, *op cit*., pp. 249, 252, also see pp. 253-4

[334] Bakunin, [1871d], 1971, *op cit*., p. 255. It should be noted that Bakunin did not suggest a revolutionary general strike at this time, but the notion was soon current in anarchist circles. Following the 1872 split in the International, the Bakuninist majority held its first properly constituted congress in 1873 in Geneva – the Sixth General Congress of the International, according to the anarchists, who dated their congresses from 1864, as befitted a claim to be the true heirs of the International formed that year- attracting delegates from seven European countries. In addition to restructuring the International, the congress suggested two key tasks – "international trade union organisation" and "active socialist propaganda" – and delegates raised the view that a revolutionary general strike was the key to social revolution, although this was not accepted by all. See Stekloff, 1928, *op cit*., pp. 287-292, and Woodcock, 1975, *op cit*., pp. 232-234. The quotes are from Stekloff.

[335] Bakunin, [1869a], *op cit*., p. 174, emphasis in original

[336] This claim is commonly made: for Avrich, Bakunin placed his hopes in the poorest workers and peasants, in those with "no regular employment", in the unemployed and the outlaws, and in "infuriated urban mobs", rather than urban workers; Bookchin adds "artisans faced by ruin", and "footloose *déclassé* intellectuals and students" to the list; for Statz, Bakunin "voiced suspicion of the sturdy, 'class-conscious,' urban proletarians upon whom Marx placed his hopes". See Avrich, 1971, *op cit*., pp. xv-xvi; Bookchin, 1977, *op cit*., p. 28; Statz, 1990, *op cit*., p. xxxiii-xxxiv. Bookchin uses these claims to buttress his own opposition to class politics: see Bookchin, 1977, *op cit*., pp. 28,304-312; Bookchin, 1994, *To Remember Spain: the anarchist and syndicalist revolution of 1936: essays by Murray Bookchin*, AK Press, Edinburgh, San Francisco, pp. 25-6, 29-33. There is, however, no basis in Bakunin's writings for such claims: as noted above, Bakunin continually stressed the centrality of the working class, and, particularly, its urban component. In France, for example, the peasantry was to a "considerable extent egoistic and reactionary", full of "prejudices", easily used as "blind tools of reaction", while the "vast majority of the city workers" were "immeasurably more inclined towards communism". These "revolutionary city proletarians" must thus take the "initiative" and arouse the peasantry: see Bakunin, [1870b] 1971, *op cit*., 189-190, 192, 197, 208-9. In relatively backward Russia, he

Perhaps just as important as these theoretical positions was the fact that anarchists formed organisations along syndicalist lines from the start of the 1870s. In 1870, the anarchists of the Alliance formed the Regional Workers Federation of Spain (FORE) of the First International, which was to become the largest single section of that body. Now, "whether or not one uses the term, the fundamental structure of anarchism" in Spain, and elsewhere, was "always syndicalist".[337] The FORE structure, for example, anticipated in "many respects the syndicalist form of organisation later adopted by the French CGT", and adopted in 1871, and a vision of syndicalist revolution was widely held by 1873 – the year the anarchists helped organise a general strike in Alcoy and Barcelona, and were driven underground.[338]

The successors of the FORE, such as the Workers' Federation of the Spanish Region, formed in 1881, and the Pact of Union and Solidarity, launched in 1891, revived this approach, and anticipated the better-known syndicalist unions of twentieth century Spain. The FORE model was also adopted in Cuba, where anarchists took control of the labour movement from around 1884, forming a syndicalist Workers' Alliance in 1887 in the tobacco industry, organising amongst White workers and newly emancipated black slaves – abolition took place only in 1886 – which also established affiliates within Cuban communities in the United States.[339] Its successor, the Cuban Workers' Confederation (CTC) of the 1890s, was likewise syndicalist, and a broadly syndicalist approach would continue to inform Cuban anarchism well into the 1950s.[340]

The 1880s also saw a parallel development in the United States, where an anarchist network of "considerable proportions" emerged by the early 1880s.[341] Organised as the International Working People's Association in Pittsburgh in 1883, the American anarchists endorsed a syndicalist approach, according to which the trade union was the vehicle of class struggle, a weapon for revolution, and "the embryonic group of the future 'free society'", "the autonomous commune in the process of incubation".[342] Affiliated to the Black International, it was nonetheless largely within the tradition of mass anarchism.

The International Working People's Association took over the Federative Union of Metal Workers of America, and founded the syndicalist Central Labour Union in their Chicago stronghold in 1884: by 1886, it was the city's biggest union federation, counting among its 24 affiliates the city's 11 largest unions. That

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advocated an alliance between peasants and factory workers: see Bakunin, [1873], 1971, *op cit*., pp. 346-350. Bakunin certainly argued that a small "aristocracy of labour" could exist *within* urban working classes, corrupted by high incomes and "bourgeois prejudices", but he contrasted this "minority" with the "*flower of the proletariat*", the great "rabble of the people", the "underdogs", the "great, beloved, common people", the "great mass of workers", whom Marx dismissed as a *Lumpenproletariat*", and suggested, also, that the labour aristocracy itself included "rare and generous workers", "true socialists": see Bakunin, [1869a], 1971, *op cit*., pp. 166-7; Bakunin, [1872b], 1971, *op cit*., pp. 294-5, emphasis in the original; Bakunin, [1873] *op cit*., pp. 333-4). Bakunin's labour aristocracy thesis was not one of his strongest arguments, and is largely absent from subsequent anarchist discourse.

[337] Temma Kaplan, 1977, *Anarchists of Andalusia, 1868-1903*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, new Jersey, p. 136

[338] Bookchin, 1977, *op cit*., pp. 51-5, 132, 135-7. See also Jon Amsden, who approvingly quotes the Spanish view that "syndicalism had already been invented by Spanish Internationalists" by 1871: see Jon Amsden, 1972, *Collective Bargaining and Class Conflict in Spain*, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London, p. 14

[339] Casanovas, 1994, *op cit*., pp. 8, 300-302, 330-332, 336-341, 366-7

[340] For the later period, see, in particular, Shaffer, 1998, *op cit*., especially chapters 1,4, 7 and 8.

[341] Avrich, 1984, *op cit.*, pp. 51, 55

[342] See Avrich, 1984, *op cit*., pp. pp. 73-5. Also important is Jon Bekken, 1995a, "The First Daily Anarchist Newspaper: the *Chicagoer Arbeiter-Zeitung*", *Anarchist Studies*, no. 3, pp. 13-14

year it was able to mobilise 80,000 marchers on May 1 as part of the America-wide strike for the eight-hour day, in which the anarchists played an important role. This movement was crippled by the Haymarket Affair, which saw eight Chicago anarchists arrested in 1887 for a supposed bomb plot: five were sentenced to death in 1888, and three to life imprisonment.[343] One legacy of the International Working People's Association was May Day, which was chosen as an international day of labour unity and action to commemorate the martyred Haymarket anarchists, and their role in the struggle for the eight-hour day.[344] Another was the syndicalist "Chicago Idea", which would profoundly influence subsequent generations of radicals in America.[345]

In short, it should be clear that syndicalism preceded the French CGT by more than two decades, that it was intrinsically linked to anarchism, and that it had nothing to do with Sorel, the Revolt against Reason, or fascism. In France, it was the anarchists who led the conquest of the CGT commitment for syndicalism, and played key roles in the revolutionary CGT, and it was the victory in the French CGT that helped inaugurate the "glorious period" of anarchism and syndicalism. This was, in essence, a *second wave* of syndicalism, following the first wave of the 1870s to the 1880s,[346] a wave that saw the emergence of the IWW movement.[347] The second wave of syndicalism was started, in turn, when the majority of anarchists turned away from the insurrectionist approach of "propaganda by the deed".

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[343] The standard history is provided by Avrich, 1984, *op cit*. The final speeches of the Haymarket anarchists, and related materials, were collected in Parsons, [1881] 1971, *op cit.*: this was prepared during the trial by the imprisoned Albert Parsons, and published after his execution by his wife, Lucy Parsons, herself an anarchist. A range of primary materials and commentary may be found in Dave Roediger and Franklin Rosemont, editors, 1986, *Haymarket Scrapbook*, Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, Chicago

[344] John Quail, 1978, *The Slow Burning Fuse: the lost history of the British anarchists*, Paladin, Grenade Press, London, Toronto, Sydney, New York, pp. 90

[345] William Z. Foster, an American syndicalist who later became leader of the Communist Party of the United States of America, would recall in his autobiography that his circle, which defined syndicalism as "Anarchism made practical", "consciously defined itself the continuer of the traditions of the great struggle of '86, led by the Anarcho-Syndicalists, Parsons, Spies, *et al*, and we were in constant contact with many of the veterans of that heroic fight": see Foster, 1936, *op cit.*, p. 63. According to Edward Johanningsmeier, Foster was heavily influenced by the anarchist Jay Fox, whose "theories in 1911 were a curious amalgam of the old anarchist 'Chicago Idea' and Social Darwinism": see Edward P. Johanningsmeier, 1985, "William Z. Foster and the Syndicalist League of North America", *Labour History*, vol.30, no. 3, p. 333. For another example of how the continuity between the "Chicago Idea" and the IWW, see Sal Salerno, 1986, "The Impact of Anarchism on the Founding of the IWW: the anarchism of Thomas J. Hagerty", in Roediger and Rosemont, 1986, editors, *op cit*., pp. 189-191

[346] I have previously made the argument for the anarchist roots of syndicalism in elsewhere: see Lucien van der Walt, 1999, "'The Industrial Union is the Embryo of the Socialist Commonwealth': the International Socialist League and revolutionary syndicalism in South Africa, 1915-1920", *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, vol.XIX, no. 1, 1999, pp. 7-9; van der Walt, 2004a, *op cit*., pp. 68-70.

[347] Since the 1920s, there was tendency in the literature to delink the IWW from syndicalism, stressing its American credentials, and downplaying foreign influences. An important restatement of this approach was that of Melvyn Dubofsky, who portrayed the IWW as developing parallel to, and independently of, syndicalism abroad, a movement that emerged from the forged a new ideology from indigenous radical traditions and labour struggles in the harsh conditions of the company towns in the American West from the 1890s onwards. The influence of this line of argument may be judged from the fact that as an important a figure in the syndicalist movement as Rocker could argue that while the IWW had much in common with syndicalism, it "was wholly the outgrowth of American conditions". However, can be little doubt that the basic ideology of the IWW was syndicalist: for Paul Brissenden, "There is no doubt that all the main ideas of modern revolutionary unionism … exhibited by the I.W.W. may be found in the old International Workingmen's Association", a relationship the IWW itself sometimes admitted; for Philip Foner argued that the "basic nature of the I.W.W. was that of a syndicalist organisation", that there was "no difference on most fundamental issues" between the French CGT and the American IWW, that the CGT had a great influence on the IWW, that a close and

Kropotkin had been among the first to call for anarchists to be "with the people, which is no longer calling for isolated acts, but for men of action in its own ranks", arguing for a return to the policies of the early anarchists, but "ten times stronger": "Monster unions embracing millions of proletarians".[348] For Kropotkin, as much as Bakunin, it was necessary to form "revolutionary" unions, a "*revolutionary workers' movement* … the milieu which, alone, will take arms and make the revolution".[349] The most important single statement of this trend, however, was Fernand Pelloutier's *Anarchism and the Workers' Union*, which stressed that the union, "governing itself on anarchic lines", could be "simultaneously revolutionary and libertarian", and take over production: "would this not amount to the 'free association of free producers'" of which the anarchists dreamed?[350]

2.8. Anarcho-syndicalism, revolutionary syndicalism, and De Leon

In short, what is being argued here is that syndicalism was, above all, anarchist *strategy*, at odds with the political socialism exemplified by the Labour and Socialist international (1889–1914) and the Comintern (1919–43). It was not a movement distinct from, parallel to, improving upon, or hostile to anarchism. It was, moreover, to be more precise, the key expression of the mass anarchist tradition, although not every mass anarchist accepted syndicalism, while a vocal insurrectionist minority continued to be active for many years.

It does not follow, however, that all syndicalists regarded themselves as anarchists or were, in fact, even aware of the lengthy and anarchist pedigree of syndicalism. Indeed, much of the confusion about the relationship between anarchism and syndicalism arises precisely from the tendency of a number of important syndicalist unions, most notably the French CGT and the American IWW, to insist that they were independent from all political parties, sects, and ideologies, presenting syndicalism as a neutral and essentially proletarian ideology. This claim functioned to avoid political splits within these unions, and to prevent attempts to affiliate the syndicalist unions to political parties.[351] It also underlines the point that

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ongoing "intellectual kinship" existed between the two, and that virtually "every scholar who has dealt extensively with the IWW has considered it as a form of syndicalism". There is no obvious reason why frontier conditions should produce, quite independently, an ideology quite indistinguishable to the syndicalism that had developed internationally from the 1870s onwards. Indeed, as Sal Salerno shows, the IWW drew heavily on European syndicalist ideas dating back to the "Chicago Idea", was deeply influenced by local and immigrant anarchists and syndicalists, was profoundly influenced by the example and ideas of the French CGT, and included a large component of anarchists and syndicalists, including International Working People's Association veterans. The American anarchist Thomas J. Hagerty drafted the original 1905 *Preamble* of the IWW, and its 1908 revision of the *Preamble* closely echoed the International Working Peoples Association's founding document, the *Pittsburgh Manifesto*. See Paul Brissenden, 1920, *The IWW: a study in American syndicalism*, Columbia University Press, New York, p. 46; Melvyn Dubofsky, 1966,*op cit.*; Melvyn Dubofsky, 1969, *We Shall be All: a history of the IWW*, Quadrangle Books, Chicago, pp. 5, 19-35, 73, 76-77; Foner, 1965, *op cit*., pp. 158-159, also see, in particular, 123-171 for an outline of IWW ideology; Rocker, [1938] 1989, *op cit*., pp. 136-7; Salerno, 1986, *op cit*.; Salerno, 1989, *op cit*., especially pp. 69-90

[348] Quoted in Guérin, 1970, *op cit.*, p. 78

[349] Kropotkin, [1902], *op cit*., pp. 304-5, emphasis in the original

[350] Fernand Pelloutier, [1895], 1998b, "Anarchism and the Workers' Union", in Daniel Guérin, editor, 1998b, *No Gods, No Masters: an anthology of anarchism*, book two, AK Press, Edinburgh, San Francisco, p. 52. This collection is hereafter referred to as Guérin, editor, 1998b, *op cit*.

[351] Thorpe, 1989, *op cit.*, pp. 18-19

explicit identification with anarchism is by no means an adequate basis for deciding whether a group or an individual falls within the anarchist (and syndicalist) stream: it is *ideology* that is crucial.

However, while anarchists played central roles in both these syndicalist unions, the loudly proclaimed "a-political" and "anti-political" claims of the unions implied, at least at an ideological level, a distinction, however specious, between anarchism and syndicalism. It would be, it should be noted, quite mistaken to assume that the loudly proclaimed "a-political" and "anti-political" claims of the syndicalist unions implied the absence of a political ideology, an indifference to political issues, or a failure to develop an analysis of the State. As a key syndicalist statement argued: [352]

> Just as the worker cannot remain indifferent to the economic conditions of his life in existing society, so he cannot remain indifferent to the political structure of his country ... he needs political rights and liberties, and he must fight for these himself in every situation where they are denied him, and must defend them with all his strength when the attempt is made to wrest them from him.

The notion that syndicalism was a form of "economism" – a militant bread-and-butter trade unionism that ignored political issues, or failed to develop an analysis of the State[353] – is a "gross distortion of syndicalist attitudes", "indeed a myth", for syndicalists developed a sophisticated class analysis of the State, and stressed the need to supplant it with "some alternative form of social organisation".[354] What distinguished the syndicalist approach to political issues were a characteristic opposition to reliance on parliaments and political parties, and a stress on direct action, including boycotts, sabotage and strikes in winning political demands.[355] As Thorpe notes, "syndicalist non-politicism was not neutrality at all" but "meant above all anti-electoralism and anti-parliamentarism": whereas "political socialists believed the state merely to be in the wrong hands", the "fully developed syndicalist ideology" was characterised by "anti-statism".[356]

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[352] Rocker, [1938], 1989, *op cit*., 63-5, 88-90

[353] Arguments against syndicalism are often centred on the claim that syndicalism is a form of radical "economism". "Economism: is a term derived from Lenin, who used it to refer to a current in Russian Social-Democratic Workers' Party that supposedly argued for a focus on workplace struggles around wages and working conditions, on the basis that these would spontaneously generate revolutionary consciousness: the implication was that political struggles, and political theory, were irrelevant. It was precisely against this supposed approach that Lenin argued that "trade union consciousness" was "bourgeois consciousness", and that the vanguard Party alone was the source of revolutionary consciousness: see, for example, Lenin, [1902] 1975, *op cit*., pp. 117-132. This is not the place to go into a detailed discussion of the anarchist critique of Leninism, but it is useful to recall that Bakunin was sharply at odds with an "economist" outlook, and would have agreed with Lenin on the need for a revolutionary theory, and a revolutionary political organisation. However, he would have differed in two key respects: his syndicalism denied the crude distinction that Lenin drew between "trade union consciousness" and revolutionary consciousness, and he specifically denied that the need for revolutionary theory and a revolutionary political organisation implied an authoritarian vanguard. A detailed critique of the claims that syndicalism was form of "economism", or of "workerism" is presented in Schmidt and van der Walt, forthcoming in 2007, *op cit*., but Holton, 1980, *op cit*., remains an essential starting point.

[354] See Robert J. Holton, 1980, "Syndicalist Theories of the State", *Sociological Review*, vol.28, no. 1, pp. 5-7, 12-13, 18-19

[355] Rocker, [1938], 1989, *op cit*., 63-5

[356] Thorpe, 1989, *op cit.*, pp. 18-19

For syndicalists, then, political issues were always important, but the "lance head of the labour movement is … not the political party but the trade union, toughened by daily combat and permeated by Socialist spirit".[357] Nonetheless, it would be a serious mistake to assume that this implied a refusal to become involved in neighbourhood struggles, in organising youth, the unemployed, and housewives. It is therefore quite incorrect to suggest that syndicalism was characterised by a narrow "workerism" that refused to engage with constituencies and issues outside of the workplace and the immediate trade union structure.

The International Working People's Association and its associated unions were at the heart of a radical and confrontational popular counter-culture with a vast output of literature, a dense network of "orchestras, choirs, theatrical groups, debating clubs, literary societies, and gymnastic and shooting clubs", mutual aid services, pageants and festivals, picnics, and ongoing demonstrations by communities and the unemployed.[358] In late nineteenth century Spain, the anarchists combined their syndicalism with the organisation of workers' centres, co-operatives, mutual aid associations, and women's sections in order to complement "union strength with community organisation", and consciously used the general strike as a means of mobilising housewives and the unemployed alongside strikers.[359] Their heir, the National Confederation of Labour (CNT), which emerged in 1910, ran the largest newspapers in Spain, and was at the heart of a dense network of peasant and working class associational life, running community centres, popular schools and libraries, ongoing rent strikes, and the anarchist women's movement, *Mujeres Libres*, the Iberian Federation of Libertarian Youth and the Catalan-language Libertarian Youth.[360]

The view that insurrection was something that "trade unions seem never to organise"[361] cannot be reconciled with the history of syndicalism. Syndicalist unions were involved in general strikes that assumed an openly insurrectionary character in Mexico in 1916, Spain in 1917, 1919 and 1936, Brazil and Portugal in 1918, Argentina in 1919 and Italy in 1920. In many cases they organised workers' militias and Red (or Black) Guards, including Ireland in 1913, Mexico in 1916, Argentina in 1919, Italy in 1920 and Spain in 1936.

Nonetheless, the effect of claims that syndicalism was independent of all parties, sects and ideologies was that it became possible for people to accept, and act upon, the syndicalist strategy – that is, a strategy developed by Bakunin and the anarchist wing of the First International – without being in the least aware of the relationship between syndicalism and the anarchist tradition. This meant that it was quite possible to find supporters of revolutionary syndicalism who rejected the label "anarchist", and even some

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[357] Rocker, [1938], 1989, *op cit*., 88-90

[358] Avrich, 1984, *op cit*., pp. 131-149; the quote is from p. 136. Between May and November 1885, its press sold an estimated 387,527 pieces of literature, and would have produced "even more" if it was not based on "impecunious workers": see p. 135

[359] Kaplan, 1977, *op cit*., p. 166

[360] See, *inter alia*, Martha A. Acklesberg, 1985, "Revolution and Community: mobilization, depoliticisation and perceptions of change in Civil War Spain", in Susan C. Bourque and Donna R. Divine, editors, 1985, *Women Living Change*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia; Pepita Carpena, 1986, "Spain 1936: Free Women: a feminist, proletarian and anarchist movement", in Monique Gadant, editor, 1986, *Women of the Mediterranean*, Zed Books, London, New Jersey; Victoria Ortiz, 1979, "Review of Mary Nash, 1975, *Mujeres Libres*: anarchist women in the Spanish Civil War", in *Antipode: a radical journal of geography*, vol.10, no. 3, and vol.11, no. 1, double issue on anarchism; Nicholas Rider, 1989, "The Practice of Direct Action: the Barcelona rent strike of 1931", in Goodway, editor, 1989, *op cit.*

[361] Krikler, 2005, *op cit*., p. 153

who described themselves as Marxists. Such people were, nonetheless, part of the broader anarchist tradition, and constitute as important a part of the history of anarchism as any card-carrying member of Bakunin's Alliance.

It thus becomes possible to draw an important distinction between two main *variants* of syndicalism: revolutionary syndicalism, and anarcho-syndicalism. This distinction is implicit in much of the literature, but bears explication. What both approaches share, and what distinguishes them from other forms of trade unionism, is an emphasis on anti-Statism, a hostility towards political parties and parliament, and a commitment to a social revolution in which trade unions play the key role, and provide the basis for post-capitalist self-management.

However, "revolutionary syndicalism" is a term best reserved for that variant of syndicalism that was characterised by either a conscious denial of the linkage to the broader anarchist tradition, like the French CGT, or was simply unaware of, or ignored, that anarchist ancestry, which was fairly characteristic of the American IWW. The term "anarcho-syndicalism", on the other hand, is best used to describe that variant of syndicalism that was openly and consciously anarchist in origins, orientation and aims. Examples would include the FORE, the Workers' Federation of the Spanish Region, the Pact of Union and Solidarity in Spain, the Workers' Alliance and CTC, and the Central Labour Union in the United States.

In this thesis, the term "syndicalism" will be used to refer to *both* variants; where the distinction drawn here is of direct relevance, the terms "revolutionary syndicalism" and "anarcho-syndicalism" will be used. A related consequence of these arguments is that syndicalism cannot simply be conflated with anarchism – not all anarchists accepted syndicalism, while some syndicalists rejected the 'anarchist' label – although the integral relationship between the two is best understood as an *anarchist strategy* at odds with the political socialism exemplified by the Labour and Socialist International and the Comintern.

A particularly interesting form of revolutionary syndicalism was that developed by Daniel De Leon (1852-1914) of the Socialist Labour Party in the United States. Classical Marxists, associated with the First International, and a number of other socialists, in 1876 formed the Socialist Labour Party.[362] A split saw a large section secede to the International Working People's Association, and the remainder of the party defined itself as the dogmatic champion of the view that the maturation of capitalism would lead to the emergence of a working class majority that would "sweep presidential and congressional elections, and then utilise its governmental majority to legislate into existence public ownership".[363] When the Labour and Socialist International was formed, the Socialist Labour Party joined the new body, as did a second American body, the Socialist Party of America, led by Debs.

Led from 1890 by De Leon, a former University of Columbia lecturer, the Socialist Labour Party developed an unenviable reputation for purism and sectarianism, organisational authoritarianism, and nasty polemic.[364] The Socialist Labour Party press was highly centralised, and the party platform was increasingly stripped of any concessions to reforms – which De Leon considered futile – eventually resulting in a platform

[362] Avrich, 1984, *op cit.*, pp. 23-4, 40-41, 51-55
[363] See Don K. McKee, 1958, "The Influence of Syndicalism upon Daniel De Leon", *The Historian*, no. 20, p. 276
[364] Bernard K. Johnpoll and Lillian Johnpoll, 1981, *The Impossible Dream: the rise and decline of the American left*, Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut, London, England, p. 249

with a single plank: "Abolition of the wage system".[365] By the start of the twentieth century, De Leon's views, followed closely by the party faithful, were those of "revolutionary authoritarianism".[366] Partly because of the antagonism its approach generated, the Socialist Labour Party was increasingly excluded from the existing trade unions, and set up its own unsuccessful trade union wing, the Socialist Trade and Labour Alliance, in 1895.[367] This was rather different from the Socialist Party of America, a loose organisation representing tendencies from Marxism to the most moderate parliamentary socialism, and whose press, other than the official *Appeal to Reason,* was largely privately owned, generally independent of any official political line, and extremely diverse.

Remarkably, by the time of the IWW conference in 1905, which De Leon attended as a delegate of the Socialist Trade and Labour Alliance, his views towards syndicalism were changing. From 1904, as Don McKee noted, the "heart of his revolutionary theory" was undergoing "dramatic and thoroughgoing alterations" towards revolutionary syndicalism, a metamorphosis that was completed during the IWW conference.[368]

De Leon now maintained argued that only "trade union action could transfer property from individual to social ownership".[369] For De Leon, henceforth, a parliamentary road to socialism was "a more gigantic Utopia than Fourier or Owen", the Utopian Socialists, had "ever dreamed" because it was based on the illogical idea that a small clique of elected officials beyond the direct control of the working class could use a State apparatus, "built up in the course of centuries of class rule for the purpose of protecting and maintaining the domination of the particular class which happens to be on top" to overthrow class society.[370] Instead, the working class could only emancipate itself through "Industrial unionism, an economic weapon, against which all the resources of capital ... will be ineffective and impotent".[371]

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[365] Johnpoll, 1981, *op cit*., pp. 252, 267
[366] Johnpoll, 1981, *op cit*., p. 267
[367] Johnpoll, 1981, *op cit*., pp. 259, 262-263
[368]McKee, 1958, *op cit.*, pp. 276-7. Also see Don K McKee, 1960, "Daniel De Leon: a reappraisal", *Labour History*, no. 1. Other writers have noted the fact of a profound shift in De Leon's view. Nomura dates De Leon's shift to around the same time, noting that De Leon suggested in April 1904 that "the revolutionary industrial organisation, the union, is the only force necessary to wrest the industries from the control of the capitalist class", and would provide the parliaments of the socialist society. He adds that De Leon was ecstatic about the 1905 *Preamble* of the IWW, and regarded the IWW conference as an unmitigated triumph of his views. Glen Seretan suggests that De Leon's shift to syndicalism was less dramatic than some have suggested, but concurs with the view that De Leon had, by 1905, "developed" an "enhanced role for the union", advocating the "IWW-inspired theory" of "Industrialism" or "Industrial Unionism" or "Socialist industrial Unionism" that would organise a "general lock-out of the capitalist class". Holton provides a similar account, stressing De Leon's shift to syndicalism and his place in the syndicalist movement. See Holton, 1976, *op cit.*, p. 2; Tasuro Nomura, 1977, "Partisan Politics in and around the I.W.W: the earliest phase", *Journal of the Faculty of Foreign Studies*, no. 1, pp. 98, 105-8, 111-113, 118-120; L.Glen Seretan, 1979, *Daniel De Leon: the odyssey of an American Marxist*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England, pp. 177-9,184-5, 186. I would like to thank Sal Salerno for drawing my attention to McKee's papers back in 1998, and for supplying me with copies of each. I would also like to thank Reiner Torsdoff for drawing my attention to, and supplying me with, the Tasuro Nomura article.
[369] McKee, 1958, *op cit.*, p. 277
[370] Socialist Labour Party [Daniel De Leon], n.d. [? 1908], *The Socialist Labour Party: its aims and methods*, undated reprint by Socialist Labour Press, Edinburgh, p. 18; also see Daniel De Leon, *The Preamble of the Industrial Workers of the World*, address delivered at Union Temple, Minneapolis, Minnesota, July 10, 1905, undated reprint by Socialist Labour Press, Edinburgh, p. 23
[371] Socialist Labour Party [Daniel De Leon], n.d. [? 1908], *op cit.*, p. 21

For the new, syndicalist, De Leon, the "*Industrial Unions will furnish the administrative machinery for directing industry in the socialist commonwealth*" after the "general lock out of the capitalist class" and the "razing" of the State to the ground.[372] Industrial unions were to be built in opposition to existing craft unions, denounced as sectional groupings led by treacherous union leaders, who De Leon memorably described as "labour fakers" or the "labour lieutenants of the capitalist class". Self-management in industry would be impossible under the State, whose electoral districts were based on regional demarcations; only on industrial lines could workers organise direct and democratic control over the different sectors of the economy.[373]

However much De Leon would continue to assert that he worked "with Marx for text" to distinguish his "Socialist Industrial Unionism" from anarchism and syndicalism,[374] his basic approach had shifted from classical Marxism to syndicalism. Indeed, his new approach "ran directly counter to the thought of Marx and Engels".[375] In one of his last writings, a January 1913 editorial in the Socialist Labour Party paper, the *Daily People*, for example, he outlined a basically syndicalist conception:[376]

> The overthrow of class rule means the overthrow of the political State, and its substitution with the Industrial Social Order, under which the necessaries for production are collectively owned and operated by and for the people…
>
> While class rule casts the nation, and, with the nation, its government, in the mould of territory, Industrial Unionism casts the nation in the mould of useful occupations, and transforms the nation's government into the representations from these. Accordingly, Industrial Unionism organizes the useful occupations of the land into constituencies of future society…

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[372] Socialist Labour Party [Daniel De Leon], n.d. [? 1908], *op cit.*, 23, emphasis in original; De Leon, 1905, *op cit.*, pp. 23, 27

[373] De Leon, 1905, *op cit.*, p. 24

[374] See, for example, Daniel De Leon, 29 June 1907, "With Marx for Text", *The Daily People*, New York, and Daniel De Leon, 3 August 1909, "Syndicalism", *The Daily People*, New York. An earlier attack by De Leon on anarchism – more specifically, on insurrectionist anarchism, in the wake of the McKinley assassination – continued to be published by the Socialist Labour Party press well after the adoption of syndicalism by De Leon: see Daniel De Leon, [1901] 1919, *Socialism versus Anarchism*, address delivered at Investigator Hall, Paine Memorial Building, Boston, Massachusetts, 13 October 1901, reprinted with preface by the New York Labour News Company. In trying to demonstrate that his newfound syndicalism was developed "with Marx as text", De Leon repeatedly cited a non-existent quote from Marx ("Only the economic organisation is capable of setting on foot a true political party of labour, and thus raising a bulwark against the power of capital") as the basis from which he supposedly derived his entire conception of Socialist industrial Unionism. The a Socialist Labour Party also prefaced its edition of the *Communist Manifesto* with the absurd claim that the *Manifesto* supported the takeover of the means of production by the trade unions through a revolutionary general strike. On De Leon's non-existent quote, and its place in his thought, see McKee, 1958, *op cit.,* pp. 279-280. For the *Communist Manifesto* in question, see the "Translators Preface", 1909, *Communist Manifesto,* Socialist Labour Press, Edinburgh, Scotland

[375] McKee, 1958, *op cit*., p. 278

[376] Daniel De Leon, 20 January 1913, "Industrial Unionism", *The Daily People*

> Industrial Unionism is the Socialist Republic in the making; and the goal once reached, the Industrial Union is the Socialist Republic in operation. Accordingly, the Industrial Union is at once the battering ram with which to pound down the fortress of Capitalism, and the successor of the capitalist social structure itself.

There was no small irony in the fact that De Leon, famous for his sectarianism and dogmatism, had become an heir of Bakunin: a Marxist coat of paint, however loud, and a denunciation of "the Bakouninism [*sic*], in short, against which the genius of Marx struggled and warned", in no way changed the basically anarchist infrastructure of his syndicalist theory of the Socialist Industrial Union. At the risk of repetition, the point is noting again that explicit identification with anarchism cannot form a basis for inclusion or exclusion within the anarchist (and syndicalist) tradition

It is important to note that De Leon did not repudiate all electoral activity. In his view, Socialist Industrial Unionism must organise on the "economic field" as well as on the "political field". By the "political field" he meant not only elections, but also the realm of ideas. On the one hand, it was important to spread propaganda and win a majority of the working class to Socialist Industrial Unionism. On the other, elections could play an important propaganda role, provided that the Socialist Labour Party advocated nothing but the need to abolish capitalism, rather than a set of reforms.[377]

As the unions grew in strength, De Leon believed, so would the influence of the revolutionary ideas on which they were based, and so too, as a consequence, would the Socialist Labour Party become a powerful electoral force. In his view, electoral victories were not the key, as such, to revolution, but the *result* of growing industrial power, for "the political movement is absolutely the reflex of the economic organisation".[378]

At the same time, his conception that unions would themselves promote "political" action broke down any notion of a neat distinction between the "economic field" and the "political field", as well as the notion that there was always a neat opposition between "syndicalism" and "political action".[379]This was quite typical of syndicalism, where the stress on the revolutionary role of the unions broke with the view that there was a clear distinction between the "economic" and the "political", as well as with the view that the capture of State power on a "political" field was the central task of socialism – a notion central to classical Marxism.

De Leon's view that elections could be used to promote syndicalist ideas was unusual, but, while it was anathema to the anarcho-syndicalists and rejected by most revolutionary syndicalists, De Leon was not the only one to counsel such a course.[380] Even Bakunin had suggested that local elections could be used in

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[377] De Leon specifically denounced the inclusion of any reforms in the Socialist Labour Party's electoral platform: see, for example, Daniel De Leon, 6 September 1910, "Getting Something Now", *The Daily People*

[378] De Leon, 1905, *op cit.*, p .21

[379] Cf. for example, Drew, 2002, *op cit*., pp. 46-47

[380] The syndicalist "Unofficial Reform Committee" of the South Wales Miners' Federation, for example, suggested that the union "organisation shall engage in political action, both local and national, on the basis of complete independence of, and avowed hostility to all capitalist parties, with an avowed policy of wresting whatever advantage it can for the working class": see Unofficial Reform Committee, [1912] 1991, *The Miners' Next Step: being a suggested scheme for*

this way, although this idea was not central to his thought and did not supersede his fundamental anti-Statism.[381]

What distinguished De Leon's version of syndicalism from all others was his suggestion that elections could sometimes serve a purpose beyond propaganda: a socialist majority in parliament could emerge as a *consequence* of the rise of Industrial Unions able to organise the "general lockout of the capitalist class".[382] This suggested that these elected representatives could help paralyse and then dissolve the capitalist State at the very moment of the industrial uprising.

For De Leon, the State was to be "taken" only "for the purpose of *abolishing it*", and the representatives of the working class would then "*adjourn themselves on the spot*". [383] If they did not paralyse and dissolve the State, the capitalists could send the military against the Industrial Unions. If the capitalists tried to prevent the adjournment of the State, the Industrial Unions would provide the popular might to thwart them. If, on the other hand, the workers' representatives in parliament failed to "adjourn themselves on the spot" when required, they would become counter-revolutionary, and "usurp" power to create "a commonwealth of well-fed slaves" ruled by "a parliamentary oligarchy with an army of officials at its back, possessing powers infinitely greater than those possessed by our present political rulers".[384]

It needs to be stressed that for De Leon, elections were *secondary*, a tactic subordinated to the strategy of revolutionary Industrial Unionism: an electoral victory was itself a *consequence* of the rise of One Big Union, and the role of the elected representatives was only an *auxiliary* to revolutionary union action: "the political movement of labour is purely *destructive*",[385] not the battle but the echo of the battle.[386] The "general lockout of the capitalist class" had to coincide with the abolition of the State, for "as the slough" is "shed by the serpent that immediately appears in its new skin, the political State will have been shed, and society will *simultaneously* appear in its new administrative garb".[387] In short, De Leon advocated a variety of syndicalism,[388] rather than classical Marxism,[389] and the debate between De Leonists and other

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the reorganisation of the Federation, originally issued by the Unofficial Reform Committee, and published by Robert Davies and Co., Tonypandy, reprinted in 1991 by Germinal and Phoenix Press, with introduction by Dave Douglass, p. 21.

[381] Editor's comments by Dolgoff, 1971, *op cit*., pp. 218-9

[382] De Leon 1905, *op cit.*, pp. 23-4, 25, 27-8

[383] De Leon, 1905, *op cit.*, p. 23, emphasis in the original

[384] De Leon, 1905, *op cit.*, pp. 23-4; Socialist Labour Party, n.d., *op cit.*, p. 20.

[385] De Leon, 1905, *op cit.*, p. 23, emphasis in the original

[386] Allen, 1990, *op cit*., p. 74

[387] De Leon, 1905, *op cit.*, p. 24

[388] "Another brand of syndicalism … the Socialist Labour Party … believed in a certain amount of political action, but only as a subsidiary to industrial action": N. Milton, 1978a, "Introduction", to N. Milton, editor, 1978b, *John MacLean: In the Rapids of Revolution: essays, articles and letters*, Allison and Busby, London, p. 13

[389] I therefore disagree with both Stephen Coleman and Dave Douglass on this score. Coleman identifies the Socialist Labour Party as an example of "impossibilism", meaning a variant of political socialism, indeed, of classical Marxism, opposed to all reforms, advocating only a "maximum programme" of social revolution. This characterisation, while quite appropriate for the earlier history of the party, is not accurate for the period from 1904 onwards. Douglass suggests that De Leon and his party advocated a "dictatorship by the proletariat" and a "workers' state" but this is not accurate. See Stephen Coleman, 1987, "Impossibilism", in Rubel and Crump, editors, 1987, *op cit.*, pp. 83, 87-88; Dave Douglass, 1991, "Introduction", to Unofficial Reform Committee, [1912] 1991, *The Miner's Next Step: being a suggested scheme for the reorganisation of the Federation*, Germinal and Phoenix Press, p. 21.

syndicalists was a debate over the appropriate role of electoral action within the context of general acceptance of the syndicalist strategy.

This sort of approach was, however, too much for the majority in the American IWW, and matters came to a head at the fourth annual IWW convention, held in 1908 in Chicago. While not in the least opposed to propaganda work, the IWW's "anti-political" majority, centred on Vincent "The Saint" St. John and William "Big Bill" Haywood, argued that participation in elections was futile, created illusions in the capitalist State, divided workers into different political parties, and was, in any case, irrelevant to a large part of the working class that the One Big Union sought to organise: blacks, immigrants, women and children.[390] These political differences were compounded by De Leon's sectarian manner and the widespread belief that the party wanted to make the IWW into its trade union wing, a second Socialist Trades and Labour Alliance.

The 1908 IWW convention was, consequently, the scene of a serious split. Charging that the convention was rigged, De Leon withdrew, and there were henceforth two IWWs, each claiming to be the real one. The majority group, headquartered in Chicago, opposed all participation in elections. The "Chicago IWW" revised the original 1905 *Preamble* to the constitution of the IWW, deleting an ambiguous reference to political action; its 1908 *Preamble*, cited earlier, placed its emphasis on "organising industrially", thus "forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old".[391] Many of the key "anti-political" IWW figures were orthodox anarchists and syndicalists, like St. John, but a section, centred on Haywood, were also members of the extreme left in the Socialist Party of America: the relationship between the IWW and the Socialist Party of America will be discussed in more detail in Section 5.2.

De Leon's IWW faction, based in Detroit, continued to adhere to the 1905 *Preamble*, and renamed itself the Workers' International Industrial Union in 1915 to distinguish it from what its leader referred to as the "anarchist", "bummery" and "physical force" IWW.[392] It lasted until 1924, while the Socialist Labour Party, now styling its views as "Marxism-De Leonism", exists until this day. It is to the Chicago body, rather than the "Detroit IWW", that most of the literature refers when speaking of the IWW, which is not too surprising given that – in the United States – it was by far the more active and dynamic body.

Outside of the United States, however, De Leonist groups proved more effective, playing an important role in Australia and Scotland. In Ireland, De Leon's ideas were an important influence on James

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[390] Foner, 1965, *op cit.*, pp. 167-171

[391] Notwithstanding its anarchist authorship, the 1905 *Preamble* was a moderate document designed to yield maximum unity between the wide range of parties, groups and unions that attended the founding of the IWW. It included, to this end, the statement that the class struggle must continue "until all the toilers come together on the political, as well as on the industrial field", which could be read as suggesting a role in elections. On the other hand, it also included, in the same sentence, the traditional syndicalist stress on independence from all political parties: the "toilers" must "take and hold that which they produce by their labour through an economic organisation of the working class without affiliation to any political party". The 1908 *Preamble* removed all such ambiguity. The 1905 *Preamble* may be found in Dubofksy, 1987, *op cit*., appendix 2, pp. 159-160, and is reproduced in this thesis in the appendices. The background to the 1905 *Preamble* is traced in Tasuro Nomura, 1977, *op cit*., especially pp. 97-113, and Salerno, 1989, *op cit*., pp. 57-90.

[392] Johnpoll, 1981, *op cit.*, p. 301. After the split, De Leon referred to the Chicago group as the "Bummery IWW", the IWW of the "slum-proletariat", a haven of "adventurers and slummists" in search of notoriety and addicted to the use of "physical force" tactics: for quotes, see, *inter alia*, Daniel De Leon, 27 September 1908, "The I.W.W. Convention", *The Daily People* and *The International*, 22 February 1918, "The Two IWW's", Johannesburg

Connolly, who became a syndicalist while working for the IWW in the United States.[393] For Connolly, "they who are building up industrial organisations for the practical purposes of to-day are at the same time preparing the framework of the society of the future … the principle of democratic control will operate through the workers correctly organised in … Industrial Unions, and … the political, territorial state of capitalist society will have no place or function…".[394] In Britain, a Socialist Labour Party was formed in 1903 as a breakaway from Hyndman's Social Democratic Federation in Britain. The breakaway centred on Scotland, where the Socialist Labour Party "took away the majority of the Scottish branches".[395] As will be seen below, De Leon's views would also have an important impact in South Africa, with the British party the key channel of De Leonist influence.

2.9. Class, race, anarchism and syndicalism

This is an appropriate point at which to revisit the question raised earlier: the social basis of anarchism. Above, it was noted that many writers, including classical Marxists, have suggested that anarchism was a social movement based amongst the purportedly doomed classes of the modern world: the independent artisan, the peasant, and the "petty bourgeois"; in some accounts, this list is supplemented with the *lumpenproletariat.* Anarchism, was, the argument goes, a millenarian and utopian movement of "primitive rebels" (Hobsbawm), a "product of the nineteenth century" that was "contrary to the development of large-scale industry and of mass production and consumption" (Joll), the revolt against the future by those "threatened" by "industry and mechanisation" (Kedward), and the victims of the "dominant historical trend" (Woodcock). Concomitantly, the movement had little interest in the "sturdy 'class-conscious', urban proletarians upon whom Marx placed his hopes" (Statz).

Such arguments are misleading, and misrepresent the social base of anarchism. This claim must be prefaced with the point that the classical anarchists would have rejected the very logic of an argument based on the notion of doomed and thus reactionary classes: neither Bakunin nor Kropotkin accepted the teleological view of history that structured classical Marxism. It should also be recalled that the anarchists differed from the classical Marxists on the question of the peasantry, which they regarded as a potentially

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[393] I discuss Connolly in more depth in Lucien van der Walt, 2001b, "'In this Struggle, Only the Workers and Peasants will Go all the Way to the End': towards a history of anarchist anti-imperialism", *Against War and Terrorism: anarchist writings on the war*, Workers Solidarity Movement, Dublin, and in translation as Lucien van der Walt, 2002, "Pour Une Histoire de l'Anti-impérialismeAnarchiste: dans cette lutte, seuls les ouvriers et les paysans iront jusqu'au bout, " *Refractions*, no. 8. A minor error appears in both versions: the name of the Nicaraguan anarchist Augusto César Sandino appears as Augustino César Sandino. For broader introductions to Connolly, see *inter alia*, Allen, 1987, *op cit*., and O'Connor, 1988,*op cit*. It must be noted that Connolly remains a highly contested figure, subject to repeated attempts at appropriation by Irish nationalists, and Marxists. Allen, for example, criticises these attempts at appropriation, only to then present a Connolly who was the "the founder of the Marxist movement in Ireland" and in the "framework of the Marxism of the Second International": see Allen, 1987, *op cit*., pp. ix-xviii, 125. However, the fact of the matter is that Connolly's activity and thinking after 1904 was syndicalist in outlook. Perhaps it is to resolve the contradiction between this fact, and their description of Connolly as a "Marxian revolutionary nationalist" akin to Mao that Owen Dudley Edwards and Bernard Ransome invent a new category, the "Marxian-syndicalist": see Owen Dudley Edwards and Bernard Ransome, 1973, *op cit.*, pp. 25, 27. This collection is subsequently referred to as Edwards and Ransome, 1973a, *op cit*., while this "Introduction" is referred to as Edwards and Ransome, 1973b, *op cit.*

[394] James Connolly, [1909] 1973a, "Socialism Made Easy", in Edwards and Ransome, 1973a, editors, *op cit.*, pp. 271, 274

[395] Milton, 1978a, *op cit*., p. 13

revolutionary class, without in the least opposing science, modern technology, or dismissing "sturdy 'class-conscious', urban proletarians".

At a more empirical level, however, it must be noted that none of these writers provide any substantial evidence for their claims regarding the class composition of anarchism: indeed, their own accounts often contradict these claims.[396] Further, anarchist peasant movements were the exception, rather than the rule: outside of the important cases of Korea, Mexico, Spain and the Ukraine, where the movements emerged against the backdrop of the disintegration of older feudal relations,[397] the largest anarchist movements of all were the syndicalist unions, and the great majority of people involved in anarchist movements were waged workers, while the great strongholds of anarchist and syndicalist power were urban industrial centres, company towns and large cities. Greatest of all was, of course, Barcelona, the famed "fiery rose of Spanish anarchism", the anarchist world capital, centred on the CNT, which would grow to one and half million members by 1936.

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[396] Hobsbawm's study of the Spanish anarchists has become increasingly discredited: the most important study was that of Jerome Mintz, whose painstaking anthropological research on rural Spanish anarchism demonstrated that Hobsbawm's analysis is flawed "on virtually every point", and more a product of a general hostility to anarchism than the outcome of serious research. Bookchin demonstrates that the Spanish anarchists, rather than being irrational utopians, placed a "high premium on scientific knowledge and technological advance", and "expounded continually on such themes as evolution, rationalist cosmologies, and the value of technology in liberating humanity". While Joll suggested that anarchism was anti-modern, he also argued that it was "after all, a working-class movement. It was from among the workers that anarchism recruited many of its most devoted militants; it was in the daily recognition of the realities of the class struggle … that its strength lay". He went on to add that in France and Spain, "anarchism in association with trade unionism was to show itself, for the only time in the history of the anarchist movement, an effective and formidable force in practical politics". Despite his claims regarding anarchism, Kedward's own account suggests that in Spain, where anarchism was "the norm", it was only a "representative creed… among the Spanish workers", while his data elsewhere suggests that a working class base was by no means as unusual as he suggested. Woodcock's historical account, focussed on France, Italy, Russia and Spain, was equally at odds with his conclusion that anarchism was an anti-modern movement with no real connection to the modern working class: in France, for example, the anarchism of the late 1860s "permeated" the emergent "working-class movement; from the mid-1890s, anarchists would "dominate for at least a decade the largest working-class movement of pre-1914 France", the CGT; in Italy, many of the early anarchist leaders were drawn from such quintessentially modern layers as doctors, lawyers and radical students, while the popular base included a substantial number of urban workers and early trade unions, the *fascio operaio*; in the 1890s, it re-emerged as a working class movement, with "many of the workers in times of strife" "guided by anarchist counsels of direct action"; in Russia, the popular base was heavily based among workers and sailors, with a large peasant movement only developing in the Ukraine; in Spain, anarchism "counted its adherents in the hundreds of thousands among the factory workers of Barcelona and the labourers of Madrid"; he adds that it had a massive influence amongst what he calls "the peasants", but, like Kedward, it is quite clear from his account that a great many of these "peasants" were, in fact, day labourers. The notion that Bakunin "voiced suspicion" of urban workers had been refuted earlier, but it is worth noting that Statz' own translation of Bakunin's *Statism and Anarchy*, upon which he bases his claim, states unambiguously that the "milieu of the common labourer … concentrates within itself all the life strength and future of contemporary society" and defines this milieu as the "urban factory workers", "small artisans" and "landless peasants". See Bakunin, [1873] 1990, *op cit*., pp. 6-7; Bookchin, 1977, *op cit*., p. 58; Kedward, 1971, *op cit.*, p. 28, also see pp. 24, 30-33,36-39, 48-59,61-3, 67-78, 117, and figures pp. 8-9; Joll, 1964, *op cit*., pp. 194-5, 205; Jerome R. Mintz, 1982, *The Anarchists of Casas Vejas*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, London, especially pp. 1-9, 217-9, the quote is from p. 271; Woodcock, 1975, *op cit*., pp. 269, 275-7, 309-310, 313-4, 331-4, 335, 343-4, 383-8, 393-6, 401-442, cf. Kedward, 1971, *op cit*., p. 59

[397] This argument is developed in more detail in Schmidt and van der Walt, forthcoming in 2007, *op cit*. To be more specific: peasant anarchist movements emerged when the existing feudal systems were destabilised by rural commercialisation, the destruction of traditional paternalistic class relations, and growing land shortages. When these circumstances were coupled with the existence of a layer of anarchist agrarian militants, immediate circumstances of distress or distress could quickly explode into anarchist-led peasant insurgencies.

Two categories of workers were especially well represented in the syndicalist unions: first, casual and seasonal labourers, including construction workers, dockers, farm workers, and gas workers; second, syndicalism attracted many workers affected by the second industrial revolution that began in the 1890s, centred on electrification, the internal combustion engine, the emergence of new heavy industries and Taylorism, such as mass production factory workers, miners, and railway workers.[398] In general, the syndicalist movement was heavily based amongst unskilled and semi-skilled workers, but also attracted skilled tradesmen. Even in the countryside, anarchism and syndicalism were largely based amongst farm workers, such as ranch hands in Argentina, coffee plantation workers in Brazil and Cuba, the day labourers, or *braceros*, of Andalusia in Spain, farmhands and lumberjacks in the Western grain belt, the deep South and the Pacific Northwest of Canada and the United States, and labourers in the Po Valley of Italy. Peasant anarchism, as indicated above, was the exception, rather than the rule.

While the ability of syndicalism to respond to the immediate needs of workers played a great role in the second wave of syndicalism, the movement's explosive growth in the "glorious period" also reflected a growing disillusionment with political parties and moderate trade unionism, the radicalisation of significant sectors of the working class, the increased use of the general strike, and the need to meet the rise of giant corporations with large trade unions.[399] Syndicalism was generally not the revolt of the small layers of traditional skilled workers against modern technologies: it was more the rank-and-file rebellion of the great masses of the common labourers against repressive employers, job insecurity, rationalisation and the techniques of scientific management and the assembly line.[400]

Syndicalism was, in short, very much a movement of the times, and hardly the attempt at feudal restoration suggested by a large part of the literature. In the "glorious period", it was an integral part of a great wave of class struggle that spanned the world. Anarchist and syndicalist ideologues were drawn from a mix of university trained intellectuals, radical workers, and poor peasants – Bakunin and Kropotkin's origins in the nobility were most unusual, and should not form the basis for generalisations, and their exposure to radical ideas as students played at least an important part in their subsequent careers as their birth into the Russian aristocracy.[401] To characterise the broad anarchist tradition as primarily orientated towards the class

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[398] Van der Linden and Thorpe, 1990a, *op cit*., pp. 7-12. Also see Larry Peterson, 1983, "The One Big Union in International Perspective: revolutionary industrial unionism, 1900-1925", in James E. Cronin and Carmen Sirianni, editors, 1983, *op cit.,* pp. 68-75

[399] Peterson, 1982, *op cit*., pp. 51-68; van der Linden and Thorpe, 1990a, *op cit*., pp. 12-17

[400] See, for example, Mike Davis, *apropos* the American IWW: "Nothing illustrates the specificity of IWW industrial unionism than the IWW's role in the wave of mass strikes initiated by Eastern industrial workers from the first detonation at McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania, in 1909 through the Detroit auto strikes of 913 … these struggles marked the entry of the 'submerged' majority of industrial workers into open class conflict … the storm centres of these strikes were located in the industries being rationalised by scientific management and the introduction of new mass-assembly technologies". The IWW championed their struggles, advocating a "flexible family of different tactics which effectively reduce output and efficiency" through "passive resistance and mass action", and "industrial 'guerrilla warfare,'" combining this with a vision of radically democratic unionism and self-management. See Mike Davis, [1975] 1983, "The Stop Watch and the Wooden Shoe: scientific management and the Industrial Workers of the World", in James Green, editor, 1983, *Workers' Struggles, Past And Present: a "radical America" reader*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, pp. 86-89, 91-97, 98,

[401] University-trained intellectuals who became leading anarchists and syndicalists include Shin, Malatesta, Galleani and De Leon, as well as Pietro Gori in Argentina, Fábio Luz and Neno Vasco in Brazil, Li Shizeng and Liu Shipei in

interests of small independent producers on the basis of a caricature of the leadership, is to create a serious misapprehension of the class basis and radical, modernist, project of anarchism and syndicalism.

In *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois famously opened his discourse on race in America with the statement: "the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the colour-line".[402] This was the view of a man looking upon the miserable conditions suffered by black peasants and labourers in the wake of the American Civil War (1861-1865) and in the lost promise of the Reconstruction that followed, living in the "shadow of a vast despair" in a world assailed by "the sound of conflict, the burning of body and rending of soul".[403]

However, to reduce the "Twentieth Century" to the "problem of the colour-line" is to ignore some of its central features, and, specifically, the rise of organised and revolutionary labour, the great revolts and risings that followed, and the radically emancipatory possibilities that these opened up, not least for those labouring under the "contempt and hate" of the "colour-line". The anarchist and syndicalist currents of the "glorious period" were at the forefront of opposing the colour-line, promoting an internationalist class politics against national and racial prejudice, and propounding a programme of socialism and democracy that would have done much to purge the evils of debt bondage, of grinding toil and grim poverty, of endemic racism that Du Bois condemned so movingly.

"Syndicalist movements", commented Marcel van der Linden in a survey of the movement, "probably belonged to those parts of the international labour movement which were the least sensitive to racism".[404] This is, if anything, an understatement.

From the 1870s onwards, anarchists and syndicalists had been involved in anti-imperial movements in East Europe, Latin America and North Africa, in the forefront of struggles against popular prejudices and official discrimination, and against militarism.[405] This arose, in part, from a moral opposition to inequality and repression. It also reflected an internationalist class politics based on the view that the popular classes shared common interests regardless of nationality or race, and that only the ruling classes gained from hatred and division amongst the working classes and peasantry.

In Cuba, the anarchist labour movement organised an interracial labour movement from the 1880s onwards, including a substantial component of the newly emancipated black slaves, against forced labour,

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China, Jaun Francisco Moncaleono in Colombia, Enrique Roig de San Martìn in Cuba, Elisée Reclus in France, and Ricardo Flores Magón in Mexico. Important examples of working class ideologues include Connolly, Rocker, Tom Mann of Britain, Peter Arshinov of Russia, Buenaventura Durruti and Francisco Ascaso of Spain, Foster, Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman in the United States. Chavez Lopez and Francisco Zalacosta in Mexico, and Nestor Makhno in the Ukraine, provide the key examples of anarchists from the impoverished peasantry.

[402] William Edward Burghardt du Bois, [1903] 1989, *The Souls of Black Folk*, Bantam, New York, Toronto, London, Sydney, Auckland, based on the revised 1953 edition, p. xxxi

[403] Du Bois, [1903] 1989, *op cit*., pp. 7-8

[404] Marcel van der Linden, 1998, "Second Thoughts on Revolutionary Syndicalism", keynote address at *Syndicalism: Swedish and International Historical Experiences*, Stockholm University, Sweden, March 13-14. p. 15

[405] In addition to the examples cited here, a more detailed discussion may be found in van der Walt, 2001b, *op cit*, and in Schmidt and van der Walt, forthcoming in 2007, *op cit*.

social segregation, and job colour bars.[406] This was actively involved in the war of independence that broke out in 1895 – a struggle actively supported by the Spanish anarchists – adopting an anti-nationalist politics that would bring them into confrontation with the postcolonial Cuban State established a decade later. In Argentina, "socialism and anarchism … caught the attention of the black community, particularly its working class", although levels of black involvement in the syndicalist movement are not clear.[407]

In Brazil, where rapid industrialisation led to increasingly "strained" race relations in provinces like São Paulo,[408] labour activists, "inspired by the egalitarian doctrines of socialism, anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism", actively struggled to forge an interracial labour movement.[409] They sought to overcome the divisions between native-born and immigrant workers, and divisions between black and White, making explicit appeals to Afro-Brazilians.[410] This was not always easy, given the fragility of the local unions, an oversupply of labour, and the fact that immigrants often undercut the wages of Brazilians, including blacks.

In Mexico, anarchists and syndicalists were involved in organising Indian and *mestizo* peasant revolts, in mobilising urban workers, and in the struggle against American economic domination. The focus of the syndicalist House of the Workers of the World, and the Mexican IWW, on "'bread and butter' issues combined with the promise of future workers' control struck a responsive chord among workers caught up in a nationalist revolution that sought to regain control from foreigners of the nation's natural resources, productive systems and economic infrastructure".[411]

The stress on integrated unionism and its struggle for the rights of Mexican workers were part of a broader anarchist and syndicalist tradition of opposing the "wage disparity between Mexicans and North Americans", and "discriminatory practices by foreign managers".[412] Also important were the activities of Ricardo Flores Magón of the anarchist Mexican Liberal Party, and editor of *Regeneración* with his brother Jesús Magón.[413] In 1910, the Mexican Liberal Party organised an armed peasant uprising in the state of Baja California, which was crushed in 1911. Ricardo Flores Magón was jailed by the United States government in 1912, and spent his remaining ten years a prisoner.

The International Working People's Association had drawn a section of its leadership from abolitionist and Radical Republican circles and had advocated "Equal rights for all without distinction of race

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[406] Casanovas, 1994, *op cit*., pp. 8, 300-302, 330-332, 336-341, 366-7; also see Joan Casanovas, 1995, "Slavery, the Labour Movement and Spanish Colonialism in Cuba, 1850-1890", *International Review of Social History*, no. 40, especially pp. 381-2

[407] George Reid Andrews, 1979, "Race versus Class Association: the Afro-Argentines of Buenos Aires, 1850-1900", *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol.11, no. 1, p. 27. Andrews' study ends in 1900, a year before the first major syndicalist union was formed in Argentina.

[408] Andrews, 1979, *op cit.*, p. 37

[409] Andrews, 1988, *op cit*., pp. 497-8

[410] Andrews, 1988, *op cit*., pp. 497-500, 511

[411] Caulfield, 1995, *op cit*., p. 52; also see Norman Caulfield, 1998, "Syndicalism and the Trade Union Culture of Mexico", paper presented at Syndicalism: Swedish and International Historical Experiences, Stockholm University, Sweden, March 13-4

[412] Caulfield, 1995, *op. cit.*, pp. 52, 54, 56, 64-5, 67-8, 70-2

[413] See Hart, 1978, *op cit.*, particularly chapters 6, 7 and 8*;* Colin M. MacLachlan, 1991, *Anarchism and the Mexican Revolution: the political trials of Ricardo Flores Magón in the United States,* University of California Press, Berkeley*;* David Poole, editor, 1977, *op cit*.

and sex": it was vigorously opposed to racism, even if it had little impact amongst black Americans.[414] The situation was different with its successor, the American IWW. The IWW stressed the need to organise the millions of workers excluded from the labour movement by craft restrictions and racially discriminatory practises. As Haywood stated in 1905:[415]

> I do not give a snap of my finger whether or not the skilled workman joins this industrial movement at the present time. When we get the unskilled and labourer into this organisation the skilled worker will of necessity come here for his own protection.

In the American case, this meant a focus on immigrants, blacks, and women, and an opposition to prejudice and segregation. For the IWW, "all workingmen were considered equal and united in a common cause", declaring that "the I.W.W. is not a white man's union, not a black man's union, not a red or yellow man's union, but a workingman's union".[416]

The IWW, "was one of the first (not specifically Asian) working-class organisations to actively recruit Asian workers", promoting interracial solidarity, opposing exclusion laws and the "Yellow Peril" climate of the Pacific Coast.[417] It built a number of powerful and racially integrated unions in the American South, the waterfront, and the shipping industry. These included a large number of blacks, attracted by IWW militancy and success, and "egalitarian racial policies"[418] that "from the very first … maintained a definite stand against any kind of discrimination based on race, colour or nationality".[419]

The IWW was the "only federation in the history of the American labour movement never to charter a single segregated local" and "united black and white workers as never before in American history and maintained solidarity and equality regardless of race or colour such as most labour organisations have yet to equal".[420] One of its most striking efforts in this direction was the Brotherhood of Timber Workers, an interracial union in Texas and Louisiana in the American south; another was the Marine Transport Workers'

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[414] The phrase is clause five of the organisation's "Pittsburgh Manifesto" of 1883, cited in Avrich, 1984, *op cit*., p. 75. For details of the Chicago anarchists' general opposition to national and racial prejudice, and the multi-ethnic composition of their movement, see Avrich, 1984, *op cit*., pp. 75-6, 79-98, 106-108, 111, 115-6, 144-8, but cf. 126-7. See also Franklin Rosemont, 1986, "Anarchists and the Wild West", in Roediger and Rosemont, editors, 1986, *op cit*., pp. 101-102. David Roediger is correct to note that the anarchist organisation stressed the similarities between "wage slavery" and chattel slavery, but is, I think, fundamentally incorrect to construe this argument as a denial of the specific disabilities faced by blacks – an argument that tends to follow from Roediger's tendency to overstate racial divisions in American labour. Rather, this was an argument that allowed the anarchists to build bridges between the struggle against capitalism and the older abolitionist struggle, using the language of the latter to indict the former. See David Roediger, 1986, "Strange Legacies: the Black International and black America", Roediger and Rosemont, 1986, editors, *op cit.*

[415] As quoted in Foner 1965, *op. cit*., p. 37

[416] Foner, 1965, *op cit*., pp. 123, 125

[417] Daniel Rosenberg, 1995, "The IWW and Organisation of Asian Workers in early 20th Century America", *Labour History*, vol.36, pp. 77-9

[418] Lisa McGirr, 1995, "Black and White Longshoremen in the IWW: a history of the Philadelphia Marine Transport Workers Industrial Union Local 8", *Labour History*, no. 36, p. 401

[419] Myland R. Brown, 1968, "The IWW and the Negro Worker", PhD thesis, Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana, p. 30

[420] See Philip S. Foner, 1974, *Organised Labour and the Black Worker 1619-1973*, International Publishers, New York, pp. 111, 119; also useful is Philip S. Foner, 1974, "The IWW and the Black Worker", *The Journal of Negro History*, vol.55, no. 1

Industrial Union, an interracial trade union with branches worldwide. The IWW also organised large numbers of immigrants from Latin America, and IWW local sections sent armed detachments to support the Mexican Liberal Party rising in state of Baja California. It is difficult to accept the view that the IWW shared the "American socialist tradition of relative indifference to the situation of African Americans".[421]

Besides developing a multi-ethnic and multi-racial membership and activist layer, the IWW also won respect amongst other black activists. Its position led the radicals associated with the *Messenger*, notably, Chandler Owen and A. Phillip Randolph (later a strident anti-Communist), to hold joint meetings with IWW speakers, and to champion the IWW and revolutionary industrial unionism amongst black workers in the 1910s and 1920s,[422] examples of a layer of radical black intellectuals attracted to the broad anarchist tradition. Du Bois, by no means a syndicalist, could comment in the 1910s that: "We respect the Industrial Workers of the World as one of the social and political movements in modern times that draws no colour line".[423] The growing links between the IWW and black radicals, and potential for rapid membership gains amongst blacks, were mattes of grave concern for official circles in both America and Britain, considered a "political threat" of "potentially explosive force".[424]

It must, however, be noted that the American IWW always faced a powerful rival in the form of the Universal Negro Improvement Association. Led by Marcus Garvey from the West Indies, this was a nationalist movement of the Africanist type, advocating an exclusivist racial separatism and a policy of "Africa for the Africans". Its policies centred on the formation of an independent and united Africa, and the return of Africans from around the world to that continent.[425] In anticipation of this goal, Garvey was crowned emperor of Africa and made a habit of being chauffeured around New York in military regalia of his own design, and the movement launched a Black Star Line Steamship Company to begin the black exodus from the United States. By 1920, the movement claimed two million members, [426] and had sections and supporters across the world, including and Northern Rhodesia, South Africa, and South West Africa.

In Australia, the IWW opposed the White Australia Policy and White Labourism, set out to organise all workers, including immigrants and Asians, into the One Big Union, and maintained close links with anarchists and syndicalists in East Asia: it promoted for "the first time in the labour movement ... a coherent anti-racist view point".[427] In Ireland, the syndicalists James Connolly and Jim Larkin sought to unite workers

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[421] *Contra*, for example, Oscar Berland, 1999/2000, "The Emergence of the Communist Perspective on the 'Negro Question' in America: 1919-1931 Part One", *Science and Society*, vol.63, no. 4, p. 413. Foner maintained a similar position, his own data on the IWW notwithstanding: see, for example, Foner, 1970, *op cit*., pp. 49-50.
[422] Sterling D. Spero and Abram L. Harris, 1931, *The Black Worker: the Negro and the labour movement*, Columbia University Press, New York, pp. 391-2; also see Claude McKay, 31 January 1920, "Socialism and the Negro", *The Workers' Dreadnought*
[423] Quoted by Foner, 1974, *op cit*., 159
[424] J.M. Pawa, 1975, "The Search for Black Radicals: American and British documents relative to the 1919 Red Scare", *Labour History*, vol.16, pp. 272-3
[425] Claude McKay, 31 January 1920, "Socialism and the Negro", *The Workers' Dreadnought*
[426] Claude McKay, 31 January 1920, "Socialism and the Negro", *The Workers' Dreadnought*
[427] Burgmann, 1996, *op. cit.*, p. 81

across sectarian lines in the Irish Transport and General Workers Union (not a syndicalist union, although it had syndicalist elements)[428] which both men hoped could become the nucleus of the One Big Union.

Connolly linked his syndicalism directly to his opposition to British imperialism and to the Irish capitalist class, opposing the nationalist argument that "Labour Must Wait": was it better, he wrote, if the unemployed were rounded up "to the tune of 'St. Patrick's Day'" whilst the bailiffs wore "green uniforms and the Harp without the Crown, and the warrant turning you out on the road will be stamped with the arms of the Irish Republic"?[429] He was executed in 1916 following his involvement in the nationalist-led Easter Rising, which helped spark the first successful twentieth century secession in the British Empire. While the war of independence saw a rapid growth in the Irish Transport and General Workers Union, and a number of workplace take-overs, it signally failed to create a society run by "workers correctly organised in … Industrial Unions".[430]

The record of labour movement internationalism is an uneven one at best, but should also not be underestimated. To claim that the internationalism of "the British and European labour movements" in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries" was "Eurocentric" and "an affair for 'Europeans only'"[431] is misleading. Such claims, if applied to anarchist and syndicalist labour, are most inaccurate. Likewise, the claim that "socialism only became definitely separated from racism through the actions of the international communist movement: this is one of the enduring (but largely unnoted) contributions of communism to socialism more generally"[432] is flawed. Not only did mainstream Communism continually accommodate itself to nationalism, as the "Native Republic" thesis indicates, thereby subverting its internationalist pretensions – in many cases, this involved accommodating popular racial prejudices – but the broad anarchist tradition also made a pioneering and impressive contribution to socialism on issues of questions of national liberation and struggles for racial equality.

2.10. In conclusion: anarchism, syndicalism and South African labour

Anarchism, and its syndicalist progeny were, in short, anything but a revolt against modernity by declining classes: it was, above all, a dynamic and modern working-class movement that sought to collectivise industrial production and replace the State with self-management and a planned economy. The first two decades of the twentieth century, decades central to the "glorious period" and to the second wave of syndicalism, saw the formation of a great many important syndicalist unions. The 1890s had seen the emergence of the French CGT, the CTC, the Pact of Union and Solidarity in Spain, and the National Labour Secretariat (NAS) in the Netherlands.

In 1901, the Regional Workers Federation of Argentina (FORA) was founded, on the model of the old FORE, followed by a Regional Workers' Federation of Uruguay (FORU) and the IWW in 1905. In 1906,

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[428] I would like to thank Alan MacSimoin for his comments on this issue: correspondence with Alan MacSimoin, 3 December 1998, in my possession.
[429] Connolly, [1909], *op cit*., p. 262
[430] See O'Connor, 1988, *op cit.*
[431] Van Duin, 190, *op cit*., pp. 624-5
[432] Krikler, 2005, *op cit*., p. 110

the Confederation of Brazilian Workers/ Regional Workers' Federation of Brazil(COB/ FORB) and the Regional Workers' Federation of Paraguay (FORP) were formed. IWW sections were formed in Britain and Canada in 1906, in Australia in 1911, in New Zealand in 1912, and in Chile and Mexico in 1919, followed by Ecuador in 1922. In Australia and Britain, the 1908 split in the IWW was reflected in the existence of rival De Leonist and "anti-political" groups, while in Ireland, the Transport and General Workers' Union was established in 1913 on the IWW model. The syndicalists Jim Larkin and James Connolly, a De Leonist, led this union, but the union's programme was not fully syndicalist.

In Spain, the CNT emerged in 1910, the same year that the Swedish Central Workers' Organisation (SAC) was founded, and that the Industrial Syndicalist Education League was established in Britain. The year 1912 saw the formation of the Italian Syndicalist Union (USI) and the Syndicalist League of North America emerged, followed by the National Labour Union (UON) in Portugal and the House of the Workers of the World (COM) in Mexico While anarchism had emerged in the Americas, Europe, and North Africa in the 1870s and 1880s, it only spread to East Asia in the "glorious period": It was against this backdrop that anarchism entered East Asia in the twentieth century: by 1917, anarchists had founded the first modern labour unions in China, organising at least forty unions by 1921;[433] in Korea, anarchism became a powerful current in the anti-colonial movement from 1919 onwards;[434] In Japan, anarchism emerged in the first decade of the century, and by the late 1920s anarchists controlled two important syndicalist union federations. [435]

As for southern Africa, anarchism emerged as far back as the 1880s, but it was only in the first two decades of the twentieth century that anarchism and syndicalism became important forces. It is to that story that this thesis now turns. This chapter has undertaken several of the tasks necessary to understand that story. It has outlined the core arguments that will be presented in this thesis, critically discussed the literature on anarchism and syndicalism, provided clear definitions of both, and introduced the barebones of their history. Such material provides a basis for the re-examination of early labour and the left movement in South Africa.

Subsequent chapters will utilise this material to critically examine claims that identify the early left with Marxism, to understand some of the influences that shaped the early left in South Africa, to understand how these influences were carried into South Africa and the impact that they wielded, and how such influences shaped socialist responses to labour organisation and to the country's deep racial divisions and inequalities. The immediate task, however, is to review the existing literature on the history of labour and the left in South Africa.

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[433] Dirlik, 1991, *op cit*., pp. 15, 27, 170

[434] See Ha Ki Rak, 1986, *A History of Korean Anarchist Movement* [sic], Anarchist Publishing Committee, Korean Anarchist Federation, Taegu, Korea, especially pp. 19-69, and John Crump, 1996, "Anarchism and Nationalism in East Asia", *Anarchist Studies*, vol.4, no. 1

[435] A good introduction is John Crump, 1993, *Hatta Shuzo and Pure Anarchism in Interwar Japan*, St. Martin's Press, New York

Chapter 3

Literature review: Solving the curious case of South Africa's missing anarchists and syndicalists

The strikingly transnational character of the emerging "South African" working class in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when set against the broader backdrop of the "glorious period" of anarchism and syndicalism lasting from the 1890s into the 1920s, clearly suggests that anarchism and syndicalism would have impinged on local labour and the left. Nonetheless, the characteristic feature of the relevant literature is the extent to which anarchism and syndicalism simply do not appear as factors in South African history. Most writers would concur with the judgement of the anarchist historian Max Nettlau that "there has been no libertarian activity worth mentioning" in South Africa.[1] A more recent overview of different political ideologies in South Africa claimed, similarly, that anarchism has "been almost completely absent from the South African political scene".[2]

The impression created by these claims is a misleading one, but it follows from a number of striking features of the literature: the history of the left in South Africa has traditionally been dominated by the interpretations of writers linked to the CPSA and its successor, the SACP. In this chapter I describe the core features of this "Communist school", outline its impact upon activist, scholarly and anti-Communist literature – by the latter I mean the genre of "Red Peril" literature that emerged in South Africa from the 1920s – and demonstrate that its influence has effectively closed off a serious study of anarchist and syndicalist influences in South Africa.

The Communist school produced an official Party history, and its relationship to labour, that is presented as a history of the left as a whole. The core structure of the Communist school narrative is a teleological vision of the CPSA and SACP triumphantly progressing, despite obstacles, towards a correct political line, and a proper understanding of the national question in South Africa. The history of socialism in South Africa becomes reduced to a triumphalist history of the Party; the key moments of socialist history are dated by key moments in the Party's historical arc; the significance of events in socialist history is assessed by their significance to the Party's history. It should be noted that the Communist school takes the official Party positions as its main subject, with dissent within the Party either helping to keep the Party moving on its historical trajectory, or playing a destructive, but ultimately insignificant, role.

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[1] Nettlau, 1996, *op cit.*, p. 262
[2] Leatt, Kneifel and Nürnburger, 1986, *op cit.*, p. 248

In this story of triumph, the Party position on the national question is absolutely central as a measure of progress. The commitment of the early CPSA to interracial labour solidarity is followed by a focus on African workers from 1924 onwards, and then the adoption of the "Native Republic" thesis in 1928 that stresses the struggle for African majority rule and a type of deracialised capitalism as a step towards socialism. This was a "remarkable Marxist-Leninist appraisal of the fundamental structure and character of South African society, whose aptness and relevance have been vindicated rather than made obsolete by the passage of time".[3]

From 1928, the key issue was the correct application of the fundamentally correct "Native Republic" thesis: delayed in its early years by internal CPSA problems, and further delayed by debates over its proper implementation, the thesis was finally applied correctly by 1950 in the form of a *de facto* (later a formal) alliance between the CPSA and ANC, which meant that the "class struggle" (represented by the Party) had "merged with the struggle for national liberation" (meaning the ANC).[4] All subsequent Party history is a history of that alliance, which is presented as the best of all possible outcomes, and, indeed, the only outcome that could possibly matter.

It is not the aim of this thesis to examine the roads not taken by the CPSA, to develop a detailed historical assessment of the validity of the "Native Republic" approach, to examine the evolution of CPSA/SACP relations with bodies like the ANC, or, indeed, to assess the Communist school analysis of South African society. What is important, for my purposes, are the consequences of the Communist school approach to the study of anarchism and syndicalism in South Africa. In this chapter, I examine the rise and core theses of the Communist school, and argue that it has had a number of serious consequences for such study.

Firstly, the Communist school has played a pivotal role in marginalising the history of the pre-CPSA left. The left before the CPSA is presented as a preface to the real history of socialism: it is included either as a series of object lessons in the inevitable failings of socialism without adequate exposure to the "light of Marxist-Leninist science" required by "the true vanguard[5]. The SDF, the *Voice of Labour* network, the IWW, the Socialist Labour Party and the Industrial Socialist League fare particularly badly: the International Socialist League is treated somewhat differently, as it is seen as helping lay the foundations for the CPSA, and presented as a sort of CPSA-in-embryo. In all cases, however, the pre-CPSA left is presented as an abysmal failure on the national question, either racially prejudiced or simply disinterested in workers of colour. It is in this context that we encounter what I will call the "S.P. Bunting/Ivon Jones myth", with the two men presented as isolated crusaders for racial justice, "enthusiastic nigrophiles" faced with an "unwilling mass of white followers" in the International Socialist League.[6]

Secondly – and this is something that I will discuss to some extent in this chapter, but also raise repeatedly throughout this thesis – the works of the Communist school are replete with demonstrable errors of fact and interpretation in its dealings with the pre-CPSA left, which is subject to recurring caricatures,

[3] Harmel, 1971, *op cit.*, pp. 58-9
[4] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, p. 609
[5] Dedication on frontispiece of Harmel, 1971, *op cit.*
[6] Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit*., p. 84

misrepresentations and misquotations that create an altogether misleading impression. This is partly the result of the difficulties of placing much of that left in the narrative of the Communist school: the pre-1921 positions on the national question, for example, simply do not fit into the view that it was only in 1921, 1924 and 1928 that this issue was seriously addressed; admitting that radical and egalitarian positions were taken before these dates – which is something that I will demonstrate throughout this work – would subvert the entire triumphalist arc of Party progress, and raise serious questions about the whole story. This is also the result of the attempt to appropriate the history of the International Socialist League: the attempt to present the organisation as containing a "Communist nucleus" of "true socialists"[7] who inevitably ended up good Bolsheviks requires a rather selective and creative reading of the record.

Thirdly, there is the question of the enormous influence of the Communist school version of events to consider. In many countries, official Communist party versions of socialist history have been regarded with a growing scepticism, and a wave of new scholarship has opened new directions in the study of Communist history itself, and socialist history more broadly. One sign of this has been an increasing attention to the broad anarchist tradition. Not so, however, in South Africa, where the Communist school texts have had an enormous influence on scholarship, with its works treated as authoritative and reliable sources by academics and activists alike. In addition to leaving a deep imprint on writings by activists on the left, the Communist school has also exercised a profound influence on the genre of local anti-Communist, "Red Peril", writing.

This impact is most pronounced when studies examine the pre-CPSA period, where the version of events propounded by the Communist school is often, as I discuss below, taken on good faith. Coupled with a general ignorance of anarchism and syndicalism in South Africa in the latter half of the twentieth century – exemplified by the widespread use of the term "syndicalism" to refer to non-political and economistic trade unionism – this reliance has played a central role in delaying the rediscovery of South Africa's anarchist and syndicalist history.

Only by questioning the core assumptions of the Communist school – the centrality of the Party, the presentation of the pre-1921 left as a preface to the real story, the notion that the "Native Republic" thesis was the first time the national question was seriously addressed – and developing a more adequate understanding of the broad anarchist tradition can scholarship move towards a more balanced history of the left in South Africa. This requires a serious critique of the Communist school and its claims. This is not, of course, to suggest that the works of the Communist school are without value, but to argue that they must be used critically and carefully, using the methods of internal criticism applied to other historical sources. The Communist school texts are filled with contradictions, and a close reading provides much material of use to the study of anarchism and syndicalism in South Africa.

It is here that primary research is most important. A re-examination of the primary materials – at the heart of this thesis – serves not only to bring into question many of the sweeping claims that underpin Communist school triumphalism, but demonstrates that anarchism and syndicalism were the predominant force in the pre-CPSA left, and that these libertarian currents developed an approach to the national

[7] Dadoo, 1981, *op cit.*, p. xv

question qualitatively different to that eventually adopted by the CPSA, and that this was an approach that was profoundly committed to national liberation, anti-capitalism and anti-Statism. It follows that the Native Republic thesis, with its two-stage approach, was not the first serious solution to the national question posed by the left, nor was that thesis self-evidently the best (or only) possible approach. An approach that advocated a merger of national liberation and socialist struggle in a *single* movement, structured around One Big Union and a *single* stage of struggle, had already emerged well before 1921.

3.1. The Communist school and its writers

It is far from self-evident that anarchism and syndicalism would play a negligible role in the history of South Africa. The gold discoveries that helped transform a marginal region into one of "focal points of capitalistic activity in the world economy"[8] launched an industrial revolution that drew in a labour force from across the world at the very moment of the "glorious period" of anarchism and syndicalism. As labour flowed into South Africa from across the British Empire and beyond, it seems quite improbable that there would "no libertarian activity worth mentioning",[9] or that anarchism and syndicalism were "almost completely absent from the South African political scene".[10] The role of immigrants in transmitting anarchism and syndicalism into Latin America is well-documented, and there are obvious parallels with South Africa.

Such considerations make the ostensible absence of local anarchist and syndicalist currents quite baffling. Furthermore, when it is noted that South Africa had qualitatively more White immigration than any other African country, a far higher level of capitalist development than any other country in Africa (one more comparable to the leading economies of Latin America, like Argentina and Brazil, which were anarchist strongholds), as well as the continent's largest working class, plus a particularly turbulent labour history, the puzzle (bearing in mind the tendency of anarchism and syndicalism to be based amongst urban working classes at the time) deepens.

To a large extent, the curious case of the missing South African anarchists and syndicalists is easily solved, like another seemingly intractable problem, by a bold stroke:[11] there is no mystery, for there *was*, indeed, a large and vibrant local anarchist and syndicalist movement in precisely the places where one might expect it – the expanding towns and ports of the industrialising country – and in the times when one might expect it to be found – the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This is an issue to which I have referred repeatedly in the opening chapter: the apparent problem is primarily the consequence of a problematic historiography.

The view that anarchism and syndicalism had been "almost completely absent from the South African political scene" may be traced back to the accounts of the history of socialism in South Africa developed by writers associated with the CPSA and SACP, whose main concern has been constructing the

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[8] Bransky, 1974, *op cit*., p. 1
[9] Nettlau, [1934] 1996, *op cit.*, p. 262
[10] Leatt, Kneifel, and, editors, 1986, *op cit.,* p. 248
[11] According to legend, when Alexander the Great came to Phrygia, he was presented with the "Gordian knot", an extremely intricate knot, and challenged to untie it: unable to find the ends, he cut the rope in half with a sword, unraveling it: see Robert Graves, 1993, *The Greek Myths*, Penguin

history of their Party. Their concern was with tracking the ongoing rise and triumphs of the Party: rather than providing a general history of the left, they developed an official Party history, presented as a general history of the left. While this body of work is not entirely homogeneous these writings are nonetheless still sufficiently coherent to be characterised as the Communist school of local socialist history, sharing a number of key elements. Subsequently, as argued below, the Party history produced by these writers became absorbed into scholarly, as well as left-wing activist writings and anti-Communist tracts, and became the accepted picture of South African socialist history.

The key moment in the rise of the Communist school was the 1940s to the 1960s, when number of writers linked to the CPSA and SACP articulated what would become the dominant view of the history of the socialist movement in South Africa, and its relationship with the labour movement. The most important figures were Robert K. "Jack" Cope, Edward "Eddie" Roux, Lionel Forman, and H.J. "Jack" Simons and Ray Simons (née Alexander). From the 1960s onwards, their framework was developed, refined by SACP leaders like Brian Bunting, Michael Harmel ("A. Lerumo"), and popularised by SACP activists like Yusuf Dadoo, Jeremy Cronin and Govan Mbeki. Cronin, the SACP ideologue in the 1980s and 1990s did much to popularise the Communist school approach with a popular account issued in 1991, *The Red Flag in South Africa: a popular history of the Communist Party,* and a series of articles, that was established as the new authority on Party history.[12]

Jack Cope was not a Party leader: he was an idealistic journalist, writer and artist who moved in left-wing circles. He was, however, very close to the CPSA at the time – it is not altogether clear whether he actually joined – and he was, moreover, a great admirer of Andrews, the veteran of the International Socialist League and the CPSA. Andrews was a founder member of the CPSA, served on the executive committee of the Comintern in 1923, edited the *International* in the early 1920s, withdrew from the central Party leadership in the mid-1920s to concentrate on trade union work and became the first secretary of the South African Trade Union Congress (SATUC), formed in 1925, and its successor, the South African Trades and Labour Council (SATLC), formed in 1930.

While the Comintern largely ignored the CPSA in its early years, matters changed in the late 1920s. One effect was the adoption of the two-stage "Native Republic" line under Comintern directives; the other was the imposition of the "New Line", or "Class against Class" policy between 1928 and 1935, in which Communist parties worldwide were purging themselves of unreliable elements.[13] The New Line was taken very seriously indeed in South Africa, where CPSA membership fell from a claimed 3,000 members in 1929, to 150 by 1933.[14] Andrews was among the many veteran activists and trade unionists purged, being expelled in 1931. Then, in 1935, the Comintern did an about-face, stressing the broadest possible co-operation of "democratic" forces in anti-fascist Popular Fronts. If the policy implications for South Africa

[12] Cronin, [? 1991] n.d., *op cit*. See also Cronin, 1991, *op cit.*
[13] Drew, editor, 1996a, *op cit.*, editorial comment, p. 108
[14] Drew, editor, 1996a, *op cit.*, editorial comment, p. 23

were ambiguous,[15] there is no doubt the CPSA was able to recover from the New Line period, and efforts were made to draw back purged members.

Andrews rejoined in 1938, and immediately became the main leader of the Party until its dissolution in 1950, the year of his own death, and the Party made strenuous efforts to promote his stature as a leading White trade unionist and champion of African rights. Andrews was the ideal figurehead for the rejuvenated CPSA, and the approach of his 75th birthday in 1945 helped spur a series of efforts to pay tribute to the veteran activist.

It is against this backdrop that the Communist school emerged. Cope was already on the left, having written a play on the 1913 general strike, called *Nineteen Thirteen: a sketch*, and privately published and circulated a collection of poetry, called *Lyrics and Diatribes: selected poems*, in 100 copies in 1948.[16] The play was a work of didactic political theatre; the poetry varied from sentimental verse to a "Ballad of the Satyagrahis", which praised the Indian independence movement, and an ode "For W.H. Andrews": [17]

> … Each spirit to its age, yours to set free
> Sparks of the true fire, to unlatch the springs of reason …
> Lonely at desertion's hour you kept faith bright
> And we too shall follow, unnumbered in might
> Rising like stars fierce in your light …

As 1945 approached, a "Bust Fund" was also established and a qualified sculptor hired to make a suitable portrait of Andrews.[18] A W.H. Andrews Biography Fund was also established, and it commissioned Cope to write a suitable biography. The resulting study, *Comrade Bill: the life and times of W.H. Andrews, workers' leader*, appeared in 1943.[19] *Comrade Bill* was, without a doubt, an important study of the history of the labour movement in South Africa, and closely followed an account of local trade union history by Andrews, which was published in 1941.[20] More importantly, for our purposes, *Comrade Bill* was the very first history of the left in South Africa. It appeared in an ordinary edition, a discounted "trade union edition" and

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[15] Should the policy link to the national liberation struggles of Africans in South Africa, or would this alienate other "democratic" forces, such as sections of White capital? These issues are discussed in Drew, editor, 1996a, *op cit.*, editorial comment, p. 196

[16] A typescript of the play, and a copy of the poetry collection, may be found in the R.K. Cope Papers, held in the Historical Papers, A953, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand. The full details for the poetry collection are: Robert Cope, 1948, *Lyrics and Diatribes: selected poems*, hand printed for private circulation, Printers: A.E.T. and J.C., Cape Town. The book

[17] Cope [? 1943] n.d., p. 35

[18] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit*., p. 115

[19] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit*. The Cope Papers include the research notes for the book, and what appears to be the original typescript, but these do not differ substantially from the published version; they do not seem to contain extra data that is of especial relevance to my thesis.

[20] The account in question is Andrews, 1941, *op cit.*

a deluxe edition, and was well received.[21] The book was distributed in labour circles in South Africa as well as Bechuanaland and Southern Rhodesia.[22]

Comrade Bill has been characterised, correctly, I think, as an attempt to politically rehabilitate Andrews after the events of the early 1930s.[23] It was also, as I have suggested, part of the process of creating a powerful symbol for the CPSA. A biography of a leading Communist by a supporter who moved in Communist circles, it drew heavily on interviews with Andrews himself, and materials supplied by Andrews, and inevitably reflected Andrews' version of events, which was shaped by his deep loyalty to the CPSA.[24] The book stressed Andrews' role in labour and the left, endorsed every major CPSA policy, unreservedly praised the Comintern and the Soviet Union, and ended with a glowing picture of the "vigorous growth" of the Party and the unions under the benevolent guidance of Andrews, a "hero of his times and country".[25] It was rather quieter on controversial issues like the New Line period.[26]

A second stream fed into the emerging Communist school tradition, from a somewhat unlikely source: Eddie Roux, a former CPSA leader who was embittered towards the Party. While some of his assessments of events were different to those of Cope, his works remain, in broad outline, quite consistent with the premises of the Communist school. Unlike Cope, Roux had been a key figure in the CPSA; further, he had left the Party on bad terms by the time he wrote his main historical works: *S.P. Bunting: a political biography*, which appeared in 1944, and *Time Longer Than Rope: a history of the black man's struggle for freedom in South Africa* in 1948, a work that drew heavily on the first book but placed its account in a broader South African context.[27]

A botanist by training, Eddie Roux was the son of Philip R. Roux, who had been a member of the Socialist Labour Party, and then the International Socialist League. Eddie Roux was not a member of either body, being too young at the time, although the De Leonists with whom his father associated had made a deep impression. He recalled Jock Campbell as a "brilliant orator" whose "erudition and terse logic" kept him "enthralled".[28]

In 1921, Eddie Roux helped form the Young Communist League, the youth wing of the CPSA, in which Emil Solomon "Solly" Sachs, a veteran of the International Socialist League, also played a role. Eddie Roux later became editor of the CPSA newspaper, *Umsebenzi*, from 1930 to 1935, and a member of the CPSA's central executive, or Political Bureau (the "Politburo"), in the same period. *Umsebenzi* ("The Worker" in the Xhosa language) was, in fact, the old *International*, which had undergone a series of name changes:

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[21] See Michael Harmel, 30 September 1943, "'Comrade Bill': biography of a great worker-leader", *The Guardian*, Johannesburg
[22] *The Guardian*, 30 March 1944, "'Comrade Bill' is Widely Read"
[23] See, for example, Baruch Hirson, 1993a, "Lies in the Life of 'Comrade Bill', *Searchlight South Africa*, vol.3, no. 3
[24] Hirson, 1993a, *op cit*., p. 59
[25] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit*., p. 340
[26] See, for example, Baruch Hirson, 1993a *op cit.*
[27] The first was reissued in 1993 with a preface by then-SACP leader Chris Hani, an introduction by S.P. Bunting's son, Brian Bunting, some reminisces by his other son, Arthur H. Bunting: see Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, op *cit*.; see Brian Bunting, 1993, "Introduction", to Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit.*; Arthur H. Bunting, 1993, "Memories of my Father", in Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit.*; Chris Hani, 1993, "Preface", to Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit.* The second appeared in a revised edition in 1978: Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit.*
[28] Eddie Roux with Win Roux, 1970, *Rebel Pity: the life of Eddie Roux*, Rex Collings, London, pp. 6-7

the *South African Worker* (1926), *Umsebenzi* (1930), the *South African Worker* (1936), and was succeeded by *Inkululeko* ("Freedom" in the Xhosa and Zulu languages) from 1939 to 1950; the latter was supplemented by a theoretical review, *Freedom-Vryheid*, from 1941.

Roux's mentor in the Party in the 1920s was S.P. Bunting, the International Socialist League and CPSA founder member, and, like Andrews, a victim of the New Line period. Whereas Cope's *Comrade Bill* glosses over the period of purges, Eddie Roux's *S.P. Bunting: a political biography* examines the problems in the CPSA in this period in great detail. Eddie Roux had joined S.P. Bunting, representing the CPSA majority, in opposing the "Native Republic" line at the 1928 Comintern congress, which was attended by S.P. Bunting, Rebecca Bunting (also a CPSA militant), and Eddie Roux.[29] S.P. Bunting, despite misgivings, followed the new Comintern policy, as did Eddie Roux, but was expelled in 1931. But while Andrews was reinstated and politically rehabilitated, S.P. Bunting had died in 1936 "still officially in disgrace".[30] The "stain on his reputation was only officially removed" in 1989, when he was officially rehabilitated by the SACP,[31] although Party literature had begun to admit that he had been "unjustly" treated some time before.[32]

Eddie Roux had played an important part in the purges, and there is little doubt that much of his writing was an attempt to atone for a deep feeling of guilt over S.P. Bunting's shabby treatment: not only had he been party to his friend and mentor's expulsion, but he had done little to stem the personal abuse that *Umsebenzi* subsequently showered on the old man. *S.P. Bunting: a political biography* was an attempt to make posthumous amends,[33] and it was forthright in its criticisms of the Party in the New Line period, Eddie Roux chiding *Comrade Bill*, which appeared around the same time, for avoiding this issue.[34]

Unsurprisingly, *S.P. Bunting: a political biography* was resented by CPSA loyalists, many of whom wished to put an unpleasant past behind them, and focus, rather, on a period in which the Party developed

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[29] These events have loomed large in a number of publications. Besides Eddie Roux's own account, there are useful discussions in the following sources: Drew, 2002, *op cit*., chapter 5, Baruch Hirson, 1989c, "Bukharin, Bunting and the 'Native Republic' Slogan", *Searchlight South Africa*, vol.1, no. 3, and Sheridan Johns, 1975, "The Comintern, South Africa and the Black Diaspora", *The Review of Politics*, vol.37, no. 2. The S.P. Bunting Papers, in the Historical Papers, A 949, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand, and compiled by Eddie Roux, include some of S.P. Bunting's correspondence on the "Native Republic" thesis, and a typewritten manuscript dated 23 October 1922, "The 'Colonial' Labour Front". Using early Comintern theses, S.P. Bunting here examined the some of the causes of the racial division of workers in South Africa, and advocated an interracial workers' movement, rather than nationalist movements, for thee emancipation of colonial countries and "subject races". This seems to have been S.P. Bunting's position in 1928. The S.P. Bunting Papers also include Eddie Roux's notes for his S.P. Bunting biography. Drew, editor, 1996a, *op cit*., part 2, includes an extensive collection of materials on the "Native Republic" debate, including the CPSA majority statement to the 1928 Comintern Congress. Hirson, 1989c, *op cit*., reproduces, in full, S.P. Bunting's statements at that Congress. Brian Bunting, 1981, *op cit*., provides only the 1928 Comintern resolution on the "Native Republic", as well as subsequent CPSA resolutions.

[30] Brian Bunting, 1996, "Introduction", to Brian Bunting, editor, 1996a, *op cit.*, p. 14: this introduction is subsequently referred to as Brian Bunting, 1996b, *op cit*

[31] Brian Bunting, 1996b, *op cit*., p. 14

[32] "Bunting, among those unjustly accused and expelled, failed to recover from the effects of the vendetta against him": South African Communist Party, 1986, *The South African Communist Party: 65 years in the frontline of struggle*, no publisher given, p. 20. A copy of this document may be found in the Simons Papers, Manuscript and Archives section, African Studies Centre, University of Cape Town.

[33] These motivations are discussed in Eddie Roux's autobiography: Eddie Roux and Win Roux, 1970, *op cit*., pp. 147- Also of interest is Eddie Roux's preface to his study of S.P. Bunting: Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit*., pp. 54-6

[34] Eddie Roux, 22 October 1943, "A Review: biography of W.H. Andrews", *Trek. Trek* was an independent radical journal that carried a range of views. See Baruch Hirson, 1993d, "Profiles of Some South African Trotskyists", *Searchlight South Africa*, vol.3, no. 2, a special supplement "The Trotskyists of South Africa, 1932-1948", pp. 111-2

"unprecedented prominence, respectability and influence" in the unions and in township politics[35] Roux's criticisms of the Party, and claims of Comintern interference, were seen as a threat, and Rebecca Bunting (S.P. Bunting's wife, who had herself been expelled), and his son, Brian Bunting, were in the forefront of an attempt by Party loyalists to stop the publication of Roux's book.[36] They were willing to concede S.P. Bunting's contribution, and the facts of his treatment, but were unwilling to let the S.P. Bunting incident undermine the broader gains of the Party.[37]

Despite the controversy over the New Line period and S.P. Bunting's expulsion, it is important to note that Eddie Roux shared the broader framework of the emerging Communist school. He continued to argue that the CPSA had played an inestimably progressive role in South Africa, "the only political organisation of any consequence in this country which fights in season and out for the political, social and economic emancipation of all the people of South Africa".[38] His complaints were centred on the organisational problems: the purges, the S.P. Bunting expulsion, and the undue Comintern interference that he felt underlay these problems.

For Eddie Roux, the CPSA was, moreover, a great advance on the International Socialist League, which Eddie Roux insisted was oblivious to the national question in South Africa. Eddie Roux provides perhaps the first statement about the "S.P. Bunting/Ivon Jones myth", with the two men (later important in the CPSA) presented having to drag an "unwilling mass of white followers".[39]

In *Time Longer than Rope*, he downplayed the infighting that was so central to *S.P. Bunting: a political biography*. These received only two paragraphs, and Roux insisted that the CPSA had, even in the midst of its difficulties, made the most "strenuous efforts" to carry out its programme and champion African rights. He spent a great many pages outlining the achievements of the Party at this time, and its subsequent recovery, and ended on a positive note indistinguishable to that of Cope.[40] Even those Party loyalists who opposed the publication of the Bunting biography had to admit that Eddie Roux had continued to praise the CPSA, despite his criticisms of its errors in the early 1930s.[41] Like Cope, his work centred on the view that the CPSA was a qualitative improvement on the International Socialist League, and generally saw the history of the CPSA, the New Line period aside, as one of ongoing progress and triumph.

In the 1950s, the historical accounts of Cope and Roux were expanded and brought up to date by Lionel Forman, Jack Simons, Ray Simons (née Alexander), Brian Bunting, and Michael Harmel ("A. Lerumo"). The year 1951 saw the W.H. Andrews Biography Fund succeeded by the W.H. Andrews Memorial Fund, set

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[35] The quote is from Bundy, 1991a, *op cit*., pp. 21. On the Party in the 1940s, see also Luli Callinicos, 1990, "The Communist Party during the War Years: the beginnings of grass-roots politics", *South African Labour Bulletin*, vol.15, no. 3; Peter Delius, 1993, *op cit.*; Tom Lodge, 1985, *op cit.*

[36] See Brian Bunting, 1993, "Introduction", to Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit.*, pp. 14-130

[37] According to Eddie Roux, he had tried to present an "unvarnished record", but had come under a great deal of pressure from "members and sympathisers of the Communist Party" who "felt that it would do harm to that organisation and urged that it should not appear, or at least should be re-written in such a form as not to cause offence": Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit*., p. 55

[38] Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit*., pp. 55-6, 179-9; the quote is from p. 55

[39] Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit*., p. 84

[40] See Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit*., pp. 256-257 for this quick dismissal of the Party's problems; chapters 14 to 25 all include a great deal of material on the Party, with chapters 11 onwards dealing with the Party from 1930

[41] For example, Brian Bunting, 1993, *op cit*., pp. 20-22

up in April 1951, soon after the death of Andrews. Its aim was to "fund research into the history of the labour movement in South Africa", and its trustees included Cope and Ray Simons.[42] Except for Harmel, who was based in Johannesburg, the new generation of writers that elaborated the core arguments of Cope and Eddie Roux lived in Cape Town. Cape Town was the headquarters of the CPSA, as well as the home of the *Guardian*, a nominally independent paper started in 1937 which was, in practice, a Party mouthpiece.[43] It took the place of the official Party papers when the CPSA was dissolved in 1950. The paper – and its subsequent incarnations like *Advance*, the *Clarion*, the *People's World*, *New Age* and, finally, *Spark* – had contributing editors in other towns, but Cape Town was head office.

Cape Town was the site of a thriving left-wing milieu that included Cope, his wife, Lesley Cope (an artist), and Bill Andrews, who lived just outside the city, linked through the CPSA, the *Guardian*, a Socialist Students' Party at the University of Cape Town, discussion circles like the Africa Club and the Modern Youth Society, and common political interests and activities. The "left was remarkably lively in Cape Town those days; it was the Left Bank of South Africa", as a recent autobiography recounts.[44]

Forman, Jack Simons and Ray Simons, Brian Bunting, and Harmel were key Party intellectuals, and did much to develop and consolidate the view of labour and left history set out a decade earlier, consciously creating a usable history of the socialist movement – a record that, unsurprisingly, tended to defend the record and policies of the CPSA and SACP. Eddie Roux's work was carefully appropriated, and the problems of the New Line period were frankly admitted, although the view that the Comintern interfered in the CPSA was not. If *Comrade Bill* avoided discussing the New Line, the new accounts conceded much of Eddie Roux's criticism of the period and its sectarianism, and incorporated it into the vision of a Party that overcame hurdles and errors to emerge ever stronger, ever more dynamic, and ever more correct on the national question.

Lionel Forman had joined the Young Communist League at the age of 15 in 1942, and the CPSA two years later, when he became old enough. Active in the Socialist Students' Party at the University of Cape Town, where Jack Simons taught, he described himself as the "youngest and proudest card-holder in the Party".[45] A lawyer by profession, and a skilled activist and writer, he soon proved his value to the Party. He wrote for the *Guardian* in the 1940s, served as acting editor of *Advance* from 1954, and was a member of the management group of the *New Age*. It was in this capacity that Forman wrote a series of articles on the history of South Africa for *New Age* in 1958 that were subsequently compiled as a popular booklet, *Chapters in the History of the March to Freedom*, published by *New Age* in 1959. Forman made liberal use of Roux's material – although he was also interested in correcting what he saw as "distortions" in Roux's work – and

[42] Mohamed Adhockery, 1997, "Introduction", to Alex La Guma, [1964] 1997, *Jimmy La Guma*, Friends of the South African Library, Cape Town, edited by Mohamed Adhockery, pp. 9. This booklet was produced in 1964 by the "James La Guma Memorial Committee", with funding from the W.H Andrews Memorial Fund, and at the suggestion of Cope and Alexander, but was only edited and published by Mohamed Adhikari in 1997.
[43] Not to be confused with an earlier *Guardian* published in Durban in the first half of the 1920s by the South African Labour Party, as described by Boydell, n.d., *op cit*., pp. 174-177.
[44] Turok, 2003, *op cit*., p. 24
[45] Forman and Odendaal, 1992a, *op cit*., p. xvi

set out to examine the history of the Party, the ANC and other groups against the backdrop of South African society.[46]

Ray Simons arrived in South Africa from Latvia in 1929, immediately joined the CPSA, and spent the rest of her life in that Party and its successor, the SACP.[47] Her deep attachment to the Soviet Union can be judged by the fact that she "cried the whole night" after hearing (mistakenly, it turned out) that there would be no local commemoration of the Russian Revolution.[48] Simons helped form a number of trade unions, served as general-secretary for the African Food and Canning Workers' Union until 1954, and was a member of the Central Committee of the CPSA from 1938 and 1950.

Jack Simons, her husband from 1941, was involved with the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) when studying at the London School of Economics in the early 1930s, became a lecturer in law and administration at the University of Cape Town on his return in 1937, and was a member of the CPSA central committee between 1938 and 1950. At the University of Cape Town, Jack Simons actively propagated Marxist ideas, and ran the Marxist discussion class that later became the Africa Club.[49] He was repeatedly placed under severe political restrictions ("banned") in the 1950s for his political activities and prior CPSA membership, as was Ray Simons. In 1960, Ray Simons edited a second *New Age* collection of Forman's writings, called *Black and White in South Africa*.[50]

The Simons left South Africa for exile in 1965, after Jack Simons was banned from teaching, writing for publications and attending gatherings in 1964. Together they wrote *Class and Colour in South Africa, 1850-1950*, an immensely influential history of union, socialist and nationalist groups in South Africa that appeared in 1969: at nearly 700 pages, it was the most comprehensive of the works of the Communist school, its *magnum opus*.[51] In addition to material on the different political groups, and on the unions, it also includes an account of pre-industrial South Africa, and an attempt to apply a classical Marxist analysis to the country.

By this time, the Simons were based in Zambia, where they worked with the exiled ANC and the SACP. In 1969, when the ANC opened its membership to Whites, the Simons were among the first to join. From 1969 onwards, Jack Simons was involved in various political education classes in Tanzania, Zambia (and later in Angola) for South African exiles, members of MK, as well as members of the Zambian establishment.[52] Many of Jack Simons' Zambian and Angolan lectures were lost: those that remain focus less

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[46] Forman and Odendaal, 1992, *op cit.*, pp. xxxiv, xxv. While Forman declared his intention to correct the "distortions", his account did not, in fact, differ substantively from that of Eddie Roux. For example, he agreed that "it is necessary to note that the influence of the Communist International was a contributory factor to the Party's error" in going to the "extreme" of purging "some of its most loyal members, among them S.P. Bunting": see Lionel Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit.*, in Forman and Odendaal, 1992b, editors, *op cit.*, p. 81

[47] Biographical data on the Simons is drawn from Lynette Simons, [18 April 1986] 2001, "Interview with Jack Simons, 18 April 1986", in Sparg, Schreiner and Ansell, editors, 2001, *op cit.*, and Drew, editor, 1997, *op cit.*, editor's comments, pp. 201 n. 14, 391 n. 15. An autobiography has also appeared in Ray Alexander Simons, 2004, *All my Life and All my Strength*, STE Publishers, Johannesburg, edited by Raymond Sutter, with introduction by Iris Berger.

[48] Ray Simons, 2004, *op cit.*, p. 50

[49] Turok, 2003, *op cit.*, pp. 24, 30

[50] Saunders, 1988, *op cit.*, pp. 139

[51] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*

[52] Sparg, Schreiner and Ansell, editors, 2001, *op cit.*, editors' commentary, pp. 5-9

on South African struggles than on presenting an orthodox Marxist account of political economy and Bolshevik history.[53]

The Simons paid fulsome tribute to Forman in their foreword to *Class and Colour in South Africa, 1850-1950*, a man "whose early death deprived his country of a fine intellect and a brave fighter for freedom".[54] When Forman's *Chapters in the History of the March to Freedom* was reissued in 1992, the Simons added a preface that again made a "special point of our debt to Lionel", and his great contribution to South African studies.[55] While the CPSA crisis of 1928 to 1935 was frankly admitted in *Class and Colour in South Africa, 1850-1950*, and much use made of Roux's work, the Simons insisted that the "Native Republic" thesis followed from the original Comintern platform in 1920, that the move to the new approach issued from *within* Party ranks: the Comintern "could not compel obedience from the South African party, which had a strong tradition of internal democracy".[56]

Michael Harmel and Brian Bunting were important figures in the CPSA from the 1930s, and formed part of the *New Age* management in the 1950s. Only Andrews and Harmel, of the CPSA Central Committee, opposed the dissolution of the Party in 1950. Harmel was a powerful thinker who theoretically "completely dominated the Party", the "key person in developing the line",[57] "the principal theorist of the movement and the most learned Marxist of the Party – our Lenin, in fact".[58] One of the "major CPSA ideologues from the 1940s", he served as a member of the CPSA Central Committee between 1941 and 1950, was a member of the underground SACP leadership structure in the 1950s, and pivotal in the move towards armed struggle in 1961.[59] A rather intolerant enforcer of Party orthodoxy, it was Harmel who forced Forman to revise the *New Age* articles for *Chapters in the History of the March to Freedom* under Party direction prior to publication.[60]

Harmel left South Africa in 1963 for London, where he worked as editor of the SACP's theoretical journal, the *African Communist*, which was founded in 1959. He died in Prague in 1974, the SACP representative on the *World Marxist Review*. Harmel's official Party history appeared in 1971 under the pseudonym "A. Lerumo". The book, *Fifty Fighting Years: the Communist Party of South Africa, 1921-1971*, was issued by the Party's London printing house, Inkululeko Publications. Based on a series of articles that appeared in the *African Communist*, it drew heavily, as Harmel acknowledged, on Cope, Roux, Forman, and the Simons, "the last-named in particular being a monument to the industry of its authors and a rich storehouse of information".[61] The book was dedicated to the "founders of the Party", who formed a "great and enduring Party which was able to withstand every trial and misfortune, to rise above all misconceptions, and with the light of Marxist-Leninist science become the true vanguard of the workers in the fight for the liberation of South Africa".

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[53] Jack Simons, [1969-1976] 2001, "Racism and Revolution: the lectures 1969-1976", in Sparg, Schreiner and Ansell, editors, 2001, *op cit*., and Jack Simons, [1977-1979] 2001, *op cit.*
[54] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., p. 10
[55] Jack and Ray Simons, 1992, "Preface", to Forman and Odendaal, editors, 1992, *op cit*., p. xi
[56] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., pp. 388-415, 438-454: the quote is from 405
[57] SACP activist Rowley Arenstein, as quoted in Lambert, 1988, *op cit*., p. 59
[58] Turok, 2003, *op cit*., p. 110
[59] Drew, editor, 1997a, *op cit.*, p. 290 n. 5. Also see Turok, 2003, *op cit*., pp. 108-111, 115-118
[60] Forman and Odendaal, 1992, *op cit.*, pp. xxvii-xxviii
[61] Harmel, 1971, *op cit.*

While his account drew heavily on Roux, and admitted the "dogmatic, sectarian tendency" of the New Line period, he, like the Simons, specifically rejected Roux's stress on the role of the Comintern; he also claimed, inaccurately, that the Party had rehabilitated S.P. Bunting immediately after his death.[62] Harmel, like other key figures in the second generation of the Communist school, was deeply committed to the "Native Republic" approach, and played the main role in updating this thesis as the "Colonialism of a Special Type" formula in the 1950s,[63] an approach that remains Party orthodoxy today.[64] Like the Simons and Forman, Harmel wanted to defend the "Native Republic" approach from charges that the approach had been imposed by Moscow, a concern that underpins repeated claims that the Comintern did not interfere unduly in CPSA affairs.

For Harmel, the main problem created by the New Line was that this unhappy period hampered the proper implementation of the "Native Republic" approach. Here we have an example of the manner in which "trial and misfortune" plays its role: it steels the Party to "withstand" tribulation, and the Party always manages to "rise" again. Harmel was less interested in the process by which the "Native Republic" policy was adopted than stressing what he regarded as its fundamental correctness. It was a "remarkable Marxist-Leninist appraisal of the fundamental structure and character of South African society, whose aptness and relevance have been vindicated rather than made obsolete by the passage of time".[65]

Brian Bunting was a member of the CPSA central Johannesburg Committee from 1946, and, soon after, of the Central Committee, and was the main editor of *Advance*.[66] Like Harmel, he left South Africa in 1963, and was involved in editing the *African Communist*. Like Harmel, he played a central role in SACP strategy and theory: in exile, he developed the definitive statement of the rather dubious SACP claim that apartheid South Africa was a "fascist" State.[67] Brian Bunting's key contributions to local socialist historiography were a biography of Moses Kotane, CPSA and SACP general-secretary from 1939 until 1978, which was published by Inkululeko Publications in 1975, and the 1981 collection of Party documents, *South African Communists Speak*, issued in the year of the Party's 60th anniversary.[68]

Brian Bunting also helped organise the republication of Roux's *S.P. Bunting: a political biography* in 1993, adding an introduction and footnotes that admitted Roux's claims regarding the problems within the CPSA during the early 1930s, but which, predictably, denied the charge that the Comintern unilaterally imposed policies; he also edited a collection of his father's correspondence with his mother, adding an introduction that drew on his introduction to the reissued Roux biography.[69] Bunting's works drew heavily on those of Cope, Roux, Forman, Harmel, and, above all, the monumental work of the Simons.

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[62] Harmel, 1971, *op cit.*, pp. 64-7
[63] See David Everett, 1991, *op cit.*; Lambert, 1988, *op cit.*
[64] See, for example, Congress of South African Trade Unions and South African Communist Party, 1999, *Building Socialism Now: preparing for the new millennium*, Shereno Printers, Johannesburg
[65] Harmel, 1971, *op cit.*, pp. 58-9
[66] Drew, editor, 1997, *op cit.*, p. 163 n. 70, 72
[67] Brian Bunting, 1969, *The Rise of the South African Reich*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, Baltimore, Victoria, revised edition. The first edition was published in 1964.
[68] Bunting, 1975, *op cit*.; Brian Bunting, editor, 1981, *op cit*.
[69] Brian Bunting, 1996b, *op cit.*

3.2. The Communist school and the left before Communism

The previous section has outlined the key figures involved in the establishing the Communist school of South African socialist history. In this section, I examine the core features of that school of writing, and, specifically, the way in which it engages with the history of the left before the CPSA. The Communist school presents what must be described as an official and triumphalist Party history.

It is centred on a teleological trajectory: like the history of socialism in China, which has been reduced to the "progressive evolution of a correct socialism under the guidance of Mao Zedong or the Communist Party",[70] the history of socialism in South Africa is reduced in the works to an account of the CPSA and SACP's ongoing victories in the struggle to develop a self-evidently correct position on the relationship between class struggle and national liberation. If Eddie Roux's revelations about the New Line period jarred with Party orthodoxy in the early 1940s, by the end of the 1950s the period of crisis, with its purges, infighting and sectarianism, that the New Line helped create had been incorporated into the larger arc of Party triumph, as a regrettable period that should be balanced against the other great triumph of 1928: the adoption of the "Native Republic" line.

In the works of the Communist school, with its teleological vision of the Party and its "progressive evolution of a correct socialism", the key moments of socialist history in South Africa are dated by key developments in Party history. The significance of developments in local socialist history is judged by their significance to the Party's history: there are developments that are irrelevant because they played no role in the history of the Party; there are developments that aided the Party, and which are therefore of great interest; in both cases, it is the contribution of developments to the growth of the Party, under the "light of Marxist-Leninist science",[71] culminating in the moment when the "class struggle … merged with the struggle for national liberation".[72]

Here, the history of socialism in South Africa is the history of its self-declared "true vanguard",[73] and socialism before the CPSA is a preface to the real story, providing object lessons in groups marred by a lack of the "correct socialism" made possible by Marxism and Leninism, as well as a (flawed) precursor of the CPSA in the form of the International Socialist League; it is a prelude to the start of the real drama with the entry of the CPSA onto the stage of history. From this vantage point, the study of structures like the SDF, the *Voice of Labour* network, the IWW, the Socialist Labour Party, the Pretoria Socialist Society, the War on War League, the Industrial Socialist League and the International Socialist League and so forth has no intrinsic merit, and the importance of such groups is contingent upon their legacy for the later period.

The extent to which a group is studied and the manner in which it is assessed is set by its place in the Party's official story. The shortcomings of the left before the CPSA are, of course, stressed. There would, after all, be little point to the formation of the CPSA, Harmel's "great and enduring Party", if this were not so. With the history of socialism before the CPSA reduced to a preface to Party history, the groups that did

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[70] Dirlik, 1991,*op cit.,* p. 8
[71] Dedication on frontispiece of Harmel, 1971, *op cit.*
[72] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, p. 609
[73] Dedication on frontispiece of Harmel, 1971, *op cit.*

not directly play a role in the formation of the CPSA are largely absent, except as object lessons in political errors.

The groups outside of the International Socialist League enjoy – at most – brief mentions but largely figure, in the texts of the Communist school, as object lessons on political confusion and error, and not always very accurately. Only Cope, Forman, Harmel and the Simons discuss these groups, and the accounts are not always reliable, and usually quite brief. In short, forty years of socialist history – if we take Henry Glasse's pioneering work for anarchism, which is not mentioned at all, as a starting point – is reduced to a few chapters.

The SDF, for example, operated continuously from 1904 to 1921, and was at least as important in Cape Town as the International Socialist League was in Johannesburg, but was not examined seriously, in its own right, in any of these works. It appears in Cope as an organisation that claimed to "follow Hyndman in England" as "true Marxists": although Wilfred Harrison, the SDF's leading figure, emerges fairly well as a "staunch and unwavering class fighter" (albeit a "Marxist"), the SDF as a whole is dismissed as "remarkably muddled", "by no means masters of Marxist theory", and "too sectarian for the times".[74]

Serious questions about this account must be raised. Harrison, for example, openly declared himself a "Philosophical Anarchist" at the time,[75] a fact that could hardly have been unknown to Andrews who provided much of Cope's data. The SDF in Cape Town was a broad left group with many different currents, with little in common with Hyndman's dogmatic Marxist party of the same name in Britain, and few links seem to have existed after 1906. Cope also suggested that the local SDF collapsed in 1910 "over the issue of Anarchism",[76] yet the group was clearly still in operation by the late 1910s: as Cope's own account indicates, it played an important role in the move towards the CPSA. The Simons, who had access to Harrison's autobiography, which was printed around 1947 in a small print run,[77] provide a better account of the local SDF, although it is covered very briefly and presented as closely linked to the Hyndman group in Britain.[78]

Cope dismissed the *Voice of Labour* network as "white-hot Socialists", as destructive sectarians, "super-revolutionaries" hostile to organised labour, and "at each other's throats, to the great scorn of the capitalist Press".[79] Yet Cope's own account indicates that these circles made some important contributions to labour and the left, and included many prominent and important activists.[80] The Socialist Labour Party is discussed in favourable terms, mainly as a group that specialised in the "distribution of Marxist books and pamphlets, Daniel De Leon and Kautsky works, and other revolutionary writings", but is mentioned mainly as an aside to the story of Andrews, as is the IWW.[81]

The theme of the incompetence and irrelevance of these circles was taken up by the Simons, who presented the *Voice of Labour* network and the other groups mainly concerned with "bewailing capitalist

[74] Cope, n.d. [? 1943], *op cit*., pp. 96-7
[75] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d *op cit.*, p. 119
[76] Cope, n.d. [? 1943], *op cit*., pp. 96-7, 111
[77] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit.*
[78] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., p 76
[79] See Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit*., pp. 97, 108-111, 116
[80] See, for example, Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit*., pp. 101-105, 113, 123, 125, 136
[81] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit*., pp. 82, 98, 117-119, 122-124

iniquities, working-class frailties, and the 'cowardly incompetence' of the 'Trades Hall clique'".[82] The IWW gets some discussion in the Simons – who make the point that it was linked to the American IWW – but the account is fairly patronising; the Socialist Labour Party is passed over in a few sentences.[83] As for the SDF, it is presented as a group of "evangelical socialists" that left a powerful legacy of class politics for later radicals.[84] Oddly, the reader is told that Harrison "preached armed revolt",[85] although there is no evidence for this, nor are the politics of the SDF explored.

Forman mentions the SDF as a "militant" group, with the distinction of having two members jailed in 1906 during a campaign amongst the unemployed, "the first time … South African socialists found themselves jailed for their beliefs",[86] but the content of those beliefs remains unclear. In Harmel, the SDF, the Socialist Labour Party and several other groups merit a few, rather vague, sentences.[87] Harmel also gives the Industrial Socialist League short shrift: an unimportant group, it was "influenced by ultra-left syndicalist ideas" rather than "revolutionary Marxism".[88]

This, then, is the Communist school on the pre-CPSA groups outside of the International Socialist League, and – with a few exceptions dealing with Archibald "Archie" Crawford and Mary Fitzgerald – the state of research into these groups had not advanced significantly by the 1990s. In the works of the Communist school, it is the International Socialist League that attracted most attention, primarily because of a tendency to regard that organisation as a sort of CPSA-in-embryo. The connection between the International Socialist League and the CPSA might seem obvious: the International Socialist League played a key role in launching the CPSA, in providing resources like early CPSA leaders, including Andrews, S.P. Bunting and Ivon Jones, and the press machinery for the *International*.

There is, however, as I argue below, a profound political *discontinuity* between the two organisations that is obscured by the tendency of the Communist school to project Bolshevism back onto the International Socialist League, and the assumption that the CPSA was the self-evident future of the International Socialist League. The accounts of the Communist school do not stop at the level of simply noting the material contributions of the International Socialist League to the CPSA, but seek to establish a political *identity* between the two groups, with the International Socialist League cast in the role of the CPSAin-embryo.

In this version of history the International Socialist League was essentially a radical, classical, Marxist party that shifted neatly towards Bolshevism from 1915 onwards. The International Socialist League was, argued Eddie Roux, made up of "tireless propagandists" for Marxist ideology, like S.P. Bunting who was supposedly "obsessed with Marxist doctrine".[89] For Forman, the organisation's main work, and great

[82] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., p. 149
[83] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., pp. 106, 146-149
[84] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., pp. 139-140, 142-143
[85] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., p. 139
[86] Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit*., pp. 42-4
[87] Harmel, 1971, *op cit.*, pp. 32-33
[88] Harmel, 1971, *op cit.*, pp. 37, 39
[89] Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit.*, p. 134

achievement was its drive to apply Marxist principles to South Africa.[90] For Dadoo, the International Socialist League was the "Communist nucleus" of "true socialists".[91] For Cronin, it was a singularly Marxist breakthrough, a body launched and led by "revolutionary Marxists".[92] In the works of the Communist school, the "Communist nucleus" of "revolutionary Marxists" is, invariably, centred on three leaders: Andrews, S.P. Bunting, and Ivon Jones.

The accounts of the Communist school are structured around the notion of inevitable movement from the International Socialist League to the CPSA. The views of the "Communist nucleus" are presented as moving directly towards those of the Bolsheviks. Cope suggests that the International Socialist League developed an anti-war analysis "closely approaching the stand of Lenin" as early as 1915.[93] According to Brian Bunting and Harmel, the International Socialist League not only anticipated the formation of the Comintern as early as 1916 but also developed an essentially correct interpretation of the Russian Revolution.[94] For Brian Bunting, the great strength of the organisation's leaders was that "their thinking as socialists kept pace with the revolutionary fountainheads in Europe", by which he meant the Bolsheviks and the groups that gravitated around them.[95]

3.3. "Bolshevising" history: critically assessing the Communist school analysis

The previous section has outlined some of the core features of the Communist school analysis of the left in South Africa before the CPSA. In this section, I will deal with two key issues. Firstly, I examine the consequences of the Communist school treatment of the pre-CPSA left outside of the International Socialist League for the study of anarchism and syndicalism in South Africa. These groups are passed over briefly, mainly because they are not relevant to the narrative constructed by the Communist school. Secondly, I will discuss the unfortunate tendency of the Communist school to distort, caricature, misrepresent and misquote the early left, particularly with regard to the politics of the International Socialist League and the pre-CPSA left. In the next section, I continue this analysis by examining the manner in which the Communist school has generally misrepresented the pre-CPSA left and its views on the national question. This tendency is, I argue, closely linked to the difficulties of locating the pre-CPSA left in the overarching narrative of the Communist school, with its entire triumphalist arc of Party progress.

The writings of the Communist school pay the history of the left before the CPSA – with the important exception of the International Socialist League – very little attention. Writers such as Brian Bunting, Cronin, Dadoo, Mbeki and Eddie Roux almost entirely ignore the left outside the International Socialist League, while those who do examine these groups, like Cope, Forman, Harmel and the Simons, treat them in an inaccurate and vague manner. This may be seen in Cope's suggestion that the SDF was an orthodox Marxist group when the evidence indicates otherwise, in Forman's description of the SDF as a

[90] Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit.*, p. 61
[91] Dadoo, 1981, *op cit*., p. xv
[92] Cronin, [? 1991] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 6; Cronin, 1991, *op cit.*, p. 9
[93] Cope, n.d. [? 1943], *op cit*., p. 205
[94] Brian Bunting, 1981, editor, *op cit.*, p. 48; Harmel, 1971, *op cit.*, pp. 33-7
[95] Brian Bunting, 1975, *op cit.*, p. 20

"militant" group without examining its politics, in the failure of the Harmel and the Simons to examine the ideas and activities of the Socialist Labour Party, and the recurrent tendency to simply dismiss the *Voice of Labour* network as sectarian and destructive. The absence of Henry Glasse, apart from a brief mention as a contributor to the *Voice of Labour*, made by the Simons, is also instructive.[96]

More serious, perhaps, is the very brevity with which these organisations and traditions are treated. The accounts of the Communist school certainly indicate that there is much of interest about these early formations that merits further examination. If Harrison was a "staunch and unwavering class fighter", as Cope suggests,[97] if the SDF had the distinction of being the first socialist group to have members "jailed for their beliefs", as Forman notes,[98] and if it left a powerful legacy of class politics, as the Simons claim,[99] it would certainly seem that the SDF merits more than a few lines in a balanced account of socialism in South Africa.

The same point might be made of the *Voice of Labour* network and the Socialist Labour Party, both of which clearly played an important role yet are either dismissed, or passed over rapidly, in the works of the Communist school. If the Socialist Labour Party was distributing the works of Daniel De Leon, as Cope suggests,[100] or the local IWW was linked to the American Wobblies, as the Simons note,[101] or the Industrial Socialist League was "influenced by ultra-left syndicalist ideas", as Harmel argues,[102] it would certainly seem that there was something of a local syndicalist current that was linked to international developments. Cope even makes the following claim regarding the 1910s:[103]

> ... In common with the Labour movement elsewhere in the world, South Africa passed through a period of vigorous reaction against politics on the working class front ... The disillusion of the workers' movement in the value of parliamentary reform was now spreading from Europe, from Britain, America, Australia and New Zealand ... From America came the ringing call to action of Haywood and Eugene Debs of the IWW, while from France was spreading an enthusiasm for the doctrines of the revolutionary Syndicalists with their faith in the industrial struggle and the general strike and their mistrust of politics ...

All of this points to an important anarchist and syndicalist influence in South Africa in the early twentieth century, but the works of the Communist school do not discuss this is in any sort of serious or systematic way. This is primarily because anarchism and syndicalism are supposedly irrelevant to the story of socialism constructed by the Communist school, with its focus on the CPSA and tendency to view pre-CPSA groups as lessons in failure, or as the CPSA-in-embryo. The reader is left with glimpses of a story untold, and with a

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[96] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., p. 141
[97] Cope, n.d. [? 1943], *op cit*., pp. 96-7
[98] Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit*., pp. 42-4
[99] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., pp. 139-140, 142-143
[100] Cope, n.d. [? 1943], *op cit*., pp. 82, 98, 117-119, 122-124
[101] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., pp. 106, 146-149
[102] Harmel, 1971, *op cit.*, pp. 37, 39
[103] Cope, n.d. [? 1943], *op cit*., pp. 108-110, also see pp. 99-100

partial answer to the question of the curious case of South Africa's missing anarchists and syndicalists: they were not missing from history, but rather, marginalised in the historiography.

This brings us to the second part of this section: the tendency of the Communist school to distort, caricature, misrepresent and misquote the early left, particularly with regard to the politics of the International Socialist League and the pre-CPSA left and the national question.

For the Communist school, it is the International Socialist League that occupies pride of place in the pre-CPSA left, and this is because that organisation is presented as the CPSA-in-embryo. The best elements of that organisation are consistently characterised as "revolutionary Marxists" (Cronin)[104] who followed "the teachings of Karl Marx" (Mbeki),[105] and acted as "tireless propagandists" for Marxist ideology, "obsessed with Marxist doctrine" (Eddie Roux),[106] constituting a "Communist nucleus" of "true socialists" (Dadoo)[107] that logically embraced Bolshevism in 1921 with the formation of the CPSA. Its breakthrough was to apply Marxist principles to South Africa (Forman),[108] and its politics are described as "closely approaching the stand of Lenin" (Cope, Brian Bunting, Harmel)[109] and keeping "pace with the revolutionary fountainheads in Europe" (Brian Bunting).[110] These developments are favourably contrasted with other sections of the local socialist movement, and Andrews, S.P. Bunting, and Ivon Jones occupy centre-stage as the "Communist nucleus" of "true socialists".

However, a closer reading indicates that all is not as it seems, and that the shift from the International Socialist League to the CPSA was neither as neat, nor as inevitable, as these claims suggest, for the Communist school texts certainly suggest that syndicalism had an important impact on the International Socialist League. Cope speaks of the "syndicalist ideas" of activists like Dunbar, the former general-secretary of the IWW and a key figure in the League, and the "strong element" of syndicalism in the ranks; Forman suggests that the founders of the organisation were "socialists of all hues, including fabians [*sic*], co-operators, syndicalists, anarchists and the like"; the Simons speak of a "syndicalist faction"; Harmel states that "pacifist, anarchist, syndicalist" and other currents were present; and Cronin, following Harmel closely, mentions a "very pronounced current known as De Leonism … an extreme workerist or syndicalist approach".[111]

One way in which the apparent contradiction between the admission that "syndicalist ideas" played a role in the International Socialist League, and the claim that the organisation was "obsessed with Marxist doctrine" and was the "Communist nucleus" of "true socialists" that formed the CPSA is to present

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[104] Cronin, [? 1991] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 6; Cronin, 1991, *op cit.*, p. 9
[105] Mbeki, 1992, *op cit.*, p. 27
[106] Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit.*, p. 134
[107] "Introduction by Dr Yusuf Dadoo, National Chairman of the South African Communist Party", in Brian Bunting, editor, 1981, *op cit.*
[108] Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit*., p. 61
[109] Cope, R.K. [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 205; Brian Bunting, 1981, editor, *op cit.*, p. 48; Harmel, 1971, *op cit.*, pp. 33-7
[110] Brian Bunting, 1975, *op cit.*, p. 20
[111] Cope, R.K. [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 178, 206; Cronin, [? 1991] n.d., *op cit*., pp. 6; Cronin, 1991, *op cit*., pp. 8-9; Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit*., pp. 74, also 50; Harmel, 1971, *op cit.*, p. 39; Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, p. 215

syndicalism as a minority trend.[112] Thus, Cope speaks of Andrews and other leaders having to "strive against" the syndicalist tendency, the Simons speak of the leadership as Marxists, Harmel claims that the "dominant trend " was "revolutionary Marxist", while Cronin states that the "dominant trend, certainly amongst the leadership of the ISL, was Marxist".[113]

This approach, however, immediately creates new problems, for the writers of the Communist school also make statements that suggest matters were not at all so clear-cut. Cope, for example, notes that the first conference of the International Socialist League adopted a constitution that included amongst its objects support for industrial unionism "on class lines, irrespective of race, colour or creed as the most effective means of providing the necessary force for the emancipation of the workers",[114] a syndicalist position. Despite having presented Andrews as a man opposed to syndicalism, he notes later that Andrews' views at the time were actually "much absorbed with the principles of industrial unionism", and "underestimated the importance" of the struggle for "political power".[115]

The Simons, for their part, argue that the official policy of the International Socialist League aimed at "one big union of all workers, irrespective of race" that would "ultimately take over the control of industry".[116] This, too, is difficult to reconcile with the view that the organisation had a "syndicalist faction" opposed by a Marxist leadership: either Cope and the Simons have misrepresented the organisation by attributing to it a drive for "one big union" to "take over" industry, as the "most effective means" of struggle, or the syndicalist faction was, in fact, the *majority* faction that dominated the organisation and its policies, in which case the leadership could not have been terribly Marxist.

This contradiction goes unresolved by the Simons, and is indicative of a recurrent tendency to in the Simons' work to misrepresent and caricature the pre-CPSA left, and to continually develop internally contradictory analyses, to which we will have occasion to return in this section and elsewhere. It is, however, worth noting that the evidence strongly suggests that the International Socialist League was profoundly, indeed predominantly, influenced by IWW-style syndicalism, and that there are few signs of a strong Bolshevik current before late 1920. Even the most cursory examination of the *International*, the newspaper of that organisation, provides statements like the following: "One big union is the only form of organisation powerful enough to oppose the united organisation of the capitalist class, a class conscious union of workers to oppose the class conscious association of employers".[117]

Harmel tries to resolve the contradiction between the attempt to present the International Socialist League as the CPSA-in-embryo and the impact of IWW ideas on that organisation by attempting to subsume syndicalist views under the rubric of classical Marxism. Having presented the Industrial Socialist League in

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[112] "Introduction by Dr Yusuf Dadoo, National Chairman of the South African Communist Party", in Brian Bunting, editor, 1981, *op cit.*
[113] Cope, R.K. [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 178, 206; Cronin, [? 1991] n.d., *op cit*., p. 6; Harmel, 1971, *op cit.*, p. 39; Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, p. 215
[114] Quoted in Cope, [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 179
[115] Cope, [? 1943] n.d., *op cit*., p. 183
[116] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, pp. 196-7, 210
[117] *The International*, 9 August 1918, "Craft Unions Obsolete"

the Cape as "influenced by ultra-left syndicalist ideas", he characterises the International Socialist League as "revolutionary Marxist" and influenced by Leninism.[118]

Yet this attempt soon falters, for Harmel later concedes that this "revolutionary Marxism" was actually a "distorted version of Marxism" based on the ideas of De Leon and the "formation of 'one big Industrial Union' and the subsequent calling of a general strike" for the "overthrow of capitalism".[119] This is not an admission easily reconciled with the notion that the International Socialist League held views "closely approaching the stand of Lenin".[120] If it was keeping "pace with the revolutionary fountainheads in Europe", as Brian Bunting suggests,[121] it seems rather more likely it was keeping "pace" with the powerful anarchist and syndicalist currents of the "glorious period" rather than with Bolshevism.

The *International*, again, is revealing, showing a continual tendency to assimilate the Russian Revolution to a pre-existing syndicalist outlook: quoting De Leon, it argued that in revolutionary Russia "industries … regardless of former political boundaries" were the "constituencies of that new central authority",[122] and that the "Industrial Organisation of the Workers", "the embryo that will burst the shell of capitalism and become the directing authority for the administration of things", is "the dictatorship of the proletariat".[123] While Eddie Roux was correct to note that the "the Bolshevik revolution in Russia" was "welcomed by the South African socialist as tangible proof of the ultimate triumph of their faith",[124] the "faith" thus vindicated was more syndicalist than Bolshevik.

The above discussion indicates the difficulties that the Communist school had in assimilating the pre-CPSA left to its larger framework, and suggests that the move from the International Socialist League to the CPSA was rather less natural than that school suggests. The supposed "Communist nucleus" of "true socialists" seems to be made up less of "tireless propagandists for Marxism" battling against a "syndicalist faction" and "ultra-left syndicalist ideas" than the "syndicalist faction" itself, composed of "tireless propagandists" for *Bakuninist* "ultra-left syndicalist ideas.

The tensions in the writings of the Communist school are, in large part, the product of fundamental tensions between the structure and the data used in these accounts. On the one hand, these accounts develop an official Party history that is teleological and triumphalist, the story of "progressive evolution of a correct socialism" by the "true vanguard"; on the other, the historical record does not fit this structure, showing that anarchism and syndicalism played an important role, and indicating that the International Socialist League was itself part of a local anarchist and syndicalist current that that aimed, as the Simons and Harmel note, at "one big Industrial Union" for the "overthrow of capitalism".

The move from the International Socialist League to the CPSA is something, then, that requires *explanation*; it cannot be naturalised by projecting upon the International Socialist League views "closely approaching the stand of Lenin". To the extent that the CPSA was deeply influenced by Bolshevism – and

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[118] Harmel, 1971, *op cit.*, pp. 37, 39
[119] Harmel, 1971, *op cit.*, p. 37, 39
[120] Cope, R.K. [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 205; Brian Bunting, 1981, editor, *op cit.*, p. 48; Harmel, 1971, *op cit.*, pp. 33-7
[121] Brian Bunting, 1975, *op cit.*, p. 20
[122] *The International*, 14 December1917, "The Russian Revolution Explained"
[123] *The International*, 30 November 1917, "The Word becomes Flesh", emphasis in the original
[124] Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit.*, p. 81; also cf. Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 81

the CPSA was certainly far more influenced by Leninism than any earlier group, as I argue in Sections 9.3. and 9.4. – then there was an important political *discontinuity*, a rupture, between the CPSA and the groups that preceded it, including the International Socialist League. Even so, that break was only *partial* for many years: Harmel himself noted that "syndicalist concepts remained within the Communist Party for many years after its foundation; echoes of their approach and phraseology appear in many documents and journals".[125] This is an issue I examine in Sections 9.5. and 9.6.

3.4. The Communist school, the national question and the left before the CPSA

The key points, for now, are that the works of the Communist school construct socialist history in a manner that either neglects or distorts the history of the pre-CPSA left, that the history of the pre-CPSA left is treated as a prelude to the real story, with events before 1921 assessed in terms of their contribution to the rise of the CPSA, whose history is then presented as a series of ongoing advances; from such a perspective, there are no other possible trajectories for the left.

This is starkly evident in the discussion of the relationship between the left and the national question, which is a second key area where the Communist school tendency to distort and misrepresent the left is most obvious. The left's position on the national question is the main index of progress in the narrative of the Communist school, and at the heart of that narrative is the view that it was the Party that solved this, advancing "with the light of Marxist-Leninist science" to become "the true vanguard of the workers in the fight for the liberation of South Africa".[126]

The formation of the CPSA in 1921 marked, according to this version of events, a real advance on all that came before, followed by a second advance when the CPSA, led by S.P. Bunting (and Eddie Roux), finally took a turn to African workers, rapidly changing its membership. The adoption of the "Native Republic" approach in 1928 was the next great advance, and the main achievement over the next decades was the correct application of this thesis, culminating in an alliance with the ANC by 1950. This was the great achievement, the last word, in Party policy on the question of racial oppression.

For Forman, "the liberation movement, whose leaders are today charged with treason, is a fusion of two streams", class struggle, represented by the Party, and national struggle, represented by the ANC, "into one mighty river".[127] By 1950, the Simons argued, clearly echoing Forman, that the "class struggle had merged with the struggle for national liberation".[128] According to Jack Simons, this was part of the international "merger of the two streams" of socialist revolution and anti-colonial revolt in the twentieth century.[129] For Harmel, "the cherished goal of the Communist Party, of unity of Communist and non-Communist patriots in the common liberation struggle" was in place by 1950, and strengthened in the years that followed.[130] For Brian Bunting, "the nationalism of the Congresses developed an international aspect;

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[125] Harmel, 1971, *op cit.*
[126] Harmel, 1971, *op cit.*
[127] Forman, 3 July 1958, quoted in Forman and Odendaal, 1992, *op cit.*, p. xxiv
[128] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983,*op cit.*, p. 609
[129] Simons, [1977-1979] 2001, *op cit*., p. 183, also p. 153
[130] Harmel, 1971, *op cit.*, pp. 86, 87-9, 93-4, 96-7

the Communist Party was indigenised".[131] For Cronin, it was "the Black Republic thesis" that ensured that the "party has never aspired to power on its own" but has "always … since 1928, related to a broad mass movement", the ANC.[132]

No other outcome is imaginable from this perspective: a two-stage policy, with nationalists leading the first stage, is presented as inevitable and necessary, its political logic presented as irrefutable and obvious, the neat distinction between national and class struggles around which the whole two-stage theory is structured presented as natural and inevitable. Nationalism is, here, the self-evident bearer of the "struggle for national liberation", and thus leader of the struggle for the "Native Republic".

This view of the relationship between the left and the national question is premised upon the view that the politics – and, particularly, the position on the national question – adopted by the CPSA were an advance on those of any pre-CPSA group. To the extent that the early CPSA needed to correct itself, first in 1924 and 1928, this was a response to the hangovers from the pre-CPSA past, to be washed away in the maelstrom of history. Discussing the role of the CPSA in the Rand Revolt, for example, the Simons speak of key International Socialist League activists who "remained … unrepentant defender[s] of the colour bar regulations" during the strike.[133]

In the eyes of the Communist school the pre-CPSA left – including, to some extent, the International Socialist League – necessarily failed to develop a correct position on the national question. In the texts of the Communist school, these groups, at worst, accommodated themselves to popular White racism, and, at best, tended to ignore the national question. The main exception is provided by a few key figures: according to the "S.P. Bunting/Ivon Jones myth", these two men – doubtless exemplars of the "Communist nucleus" of "true socialists" – were isolated pioneers of a more progressive position on the national question.

Cope suggests that the SDF were "pioneers in the adoption of an enlightened policy towards the Coloured peoples", Jack (probably Jock) Campbell of the Socialist Labour Party was the first socialist "to make propaganda amongst the African workers", while Crawford "opposed the colour bar platform of the early SA Labour Party".[134] However, they had no clear strategy to deal with the liberation of the "Coloured peoples", and such work did not always take a high priority. According to Eddie Roux, a few socialists before the International Socialist League had advocated "a more strictly 'working class' attitude towards the blacks", but this was rare and sporadic: "no serious attempt or sustained attempt was made to convert the African workers to socialism or to organise them into trade unions".[135]

It is on these issues that the reader will encounter some notable examples of the Simons' tendency to caricature, misrepresent and misquote the pre-CPSA left. The Simons' analysis of the SDF and the national question sets the pattern for the treatment of other pre-CPSA groups.

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[131] See Brian Bunting, 1975, *op cit.*, p. 186
[132] Cronin, 1990, *op cit*., pp. 99-100
[133] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, p. 297. The reader is bemused to note, however, on other pages that the CPSA "condemned in principle" the colour bar as part of their "persistent and vehement rejection of racial discrimination": Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, pp. 292, 294, 298, 299.
[134] Cope, n.d. [? 1943], *op cit*., pp. 96-8, 111, 113
[135] Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit*., p. 129

On the one hand, the reader is informed that the SDF "indignantly rejected" the charge of "colour prejudice", "repudiated a colour line", "gave much attention to the 'Native Question' and the Coloured question', set up a 'Kafir Propaganda Committee'" and found that its ideas evoked a "good deal of interest amongst the Malays".[136] They also provide examples of SDF involvement in interracial trade union work and unemployed mobilisation, as well as election campaigns in District Six, a racially mixed – but predominantly Coloured – working class area of Cape Town.[137] Later, however, the reader is informed that the SDF "ignored" racial prejudice amongst workers, saw the national question as a "side issue", and refused to nominate Coloured candidates when pursuing Coloured votes.[138]

The Simons' two lines of argument are mutually contradictory, and cannot be easily reconciled, and a closer reading points to a tendency to manipulate the evidence in order to buttress the preconception that the left before the CPSA was racially prejudiced or oblivious to the national question. The very page charging that Harrison and the SDF "ignored" racial prejudice states further on that the SDF explained racial hatred as the product of capitalism, took its gospel to "racially mixed audiences", enjoyed many years of mutual "goodwill" and co-operation with the leaders of the African Political Organisation, opposed White Labourism and segregation, and left a powerful legacy of class politics for later radicals.[139]

A tendency to misquotation and misrepresentation is also, sadly, evident at this point. The SDF is presented as viewing the national question as "a 'side issue'", but the source of this quote is not given. Meanwhile, the failure of the SDF to present a Coloured candidate in elections is assumed to provide *prima facie* evidence of racial prejudice: the possibility that the SDF was less concerned with winning elections than using them for propaganda, and chose, therefore, to nominate Harrison, who the Simons indicate was the best known socialist personality and orator in Cape Town, is ignored.

Finally, the bulk of the Simons' own evidence strongly supports the view that the SDF was opposed to racial discrimination and prejudice. It is difficult to see why, for example, the SDF should have addressed racially mixed audiences, striven for interracial unionism and movements of the unemployed, grappled with the "Native Question" and opposed White Labourism, run candidates in District Six, and enjoyed years of mutual "goodwill" with the African Political Organisation if it was a marked by disinterest in workers of colour, or actual racial prejudice. It is worth noting, moreover, that the Simons point out that the SDF won a "good deal of interest amongst the Malays" is supported by the fact that Harrison did surprisingly well in electoral contests against Abdurrahman of the African Political Organisation in District Six: in 1916, for example, he got 212 votes against Abdurrahman's 543.[140] Forman, at least, is a little more generous to the SDF, stating that it held meetings directed at Africans and Coloureds, involved Coloured socialists in committee discussions, and addressed African Political Organisation meetings.[141]

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[136] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., pp. 76-77
[137] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., pp. 74-6, 139-140
[138] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., pp. 139-140
[139] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., pp. 139-140, 142-143
[140] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit*., p. 24
[141] Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit*., pp. 42-4

The case of the SDF is, unfortunately, only one of many occasions where the Simons misrepresent and caricature the pre-CPSA left. Discussing the *Voice of Labour* network, the Simons hint darkly that many socialists on the Witwatersrand were "tempted to compromise" on the issue of race, and cite Crawford as an example of one such figure, a man who "evaded the colour issue", ignored the colour bar, failed to criticise the SA Labour Party for its "betrayal" of socialist principles in "adopting white supremacy policies", and otherwise "studiously refrained" from racial issues.[142]

None of these assertions is substantiated by the Simons, and the reader is bemused to learn – in the very same chapter where the charges are made – that the Witwatersrand "socialists, to their credit, condemned the cruder forms of discrimination in the (labour) movement".[143] Indeed, the Simons concede that Crawford – involved in the early moves towards the formation of the SA Labour Party – demanded that it "reject any policy based on differences of colour" and that the *Voice of Labour* condemned the job colour bar in no uncertain terms.[144] This is hardly the same thing as failing to criticise that party for "adopting white supremacy principles", yet the latter charge is made two pages after the discussion of Crawford and the colour bar just cited.[145]

Discussing Tom Mann's 1910 tour of South Africa, the Simons are similarly unreliable and contradictory in their analysis. They assert, for example, that Mann "made no reference to the place of the dark working man in his public speeches" and "refrained from urging the unions to admit Africans and Coloured", the only evidence provided for these claims are several quotes from Crawford charging that Mann had compromised his principles of working class internationalism.[146] It is, of course, obvious that using Crawford to indict Mann on the question of colour contradicts the earlier claim that Crawford "studiously" and consistently "evaded the colour issue".[147]

Moreover, the data and the claims presented by the Simons are at odds: several pages after being informed that Mann "made no reference to the place of the dark working man in his public speeches" the reader is suddenly informed that Mann "pointed out that there could be no industrial unionism or general strike unless Africans took part".[148] Again, the evidence suggests that Mann, like the SDF, cannot be fitted into the Communist school view that pre-CPSA groups pandered to White prejudice or ignored the national question: Mann was, in fact, presented with a mounted *sjambok* (raw-hide whip) by the African Political Organisation for being the first White man in Johannesburg to champion the rights of Coloureds.[149]

The treatment of the International Socialist League and the national question by the Communist school is somewhat more nuanced, but no less contradictory; here, again, the Simons distinguish themselves with contradictory claims and serious misrepresentations and misquotations.

In the works of the Communist school, it is suggested that a substantial section of the International

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[142] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, pp. 141, 144-145, 154
[143] Cf. Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., pp. 141, 154
[144] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, pp. 142-143, also see p. 154
[145] Cf. Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., pp. 143 and 145
[146] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, p. 147
[147] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, pp. 141, 144, 145, 154
[148] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, pp. 147, 154
[149] Philips, 1978, *op cit.*, p. 123

Socialist League shared many of the views of White Labourism. According to Eddie Roux, there were many "remnants" of White Labourism in the International Socialist League.[150] While the Simons sometimes suggest that the organisation formally accepted segregation and colour bars,[151] Brian Bunting spoke cautiously of a "minority of members who were doubtful of the place the black worker should occupy in what they (the minority) consciously or unconsciously, accepted would continue to be a white-dominated society".[152]

However, the best elements, the story goes, the "Communist nucleus" of "true socialists", opposed these views and reached out towards a Leninist approach. Some did so on principle, advocating working class internationalism but, in practice, focused on White workers: Andrews exemplified this type. Some tried to dodge the question of the specific problems faced by workers of colour: Dunbar is usually cited as an example.

And it is here that we encounter the "S.P. Bunting/Ivon Jones myth", the notion that the two men were among the only activists who showed any real interest in actually organising Africans. According to Eddie Roux, these "enthusiastic nigrophiles" had to "drag along with them an unwilling mass of white followers".[153] There were "some" who "agreed", but "many who in fact did not": some because of prejudice; others, like Dunbar, supposedly rejected any "specific Native programme".[154]

Brian Bunting, following Roux closely, stated that the International Socialist League programme advocated equal rights – this was really the work of S.P. Bunting and Ivon Jones – but "even a majority" of that body did not really see African, Coloured, and Indian workers as playing an independent role in changing South Africa.[155] Most were more interested in converting "more white workers" than the tougher task of "pioneer socialist work amongst the black workers". Even so, the International Socialist League "moved in the right direction", making contact with the "black masses", working with the South African Native National Congress and the ICU.[156] It moved "step by step" towards an "appreciation" of the "true nature" of the problem, and adopted a programme of equal rights, supported universal suffrage, and advocated the abolition of discriminatory legislation like the pass laws.

Harmel, for his part, spoke of "errors of analysis and emphasis" of the International Socialist League, "arising out of the limitations of their origin and outlook" that led them to ignore the "revolutionary significance" of equal rights for Africans, and to be unduly hostile to the South African Native National Congress and other nationalists.[157] And, according to Cronin, the International Socialist League held that "the national oppression of the majority of people in our country was not really very worthy of consideration".[158] The International Socialist league were not "racist" but argued "there was no 'Native

[150] Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit*., p. 125
[151] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, pp. 191-2
[152] Brian Bunting, 1975, *op cit.*, p. 19
[153] Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit*., p. 84
[154] Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit*., p. 74-7; see also Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit*., pp. 129-135
[155] Brian Bunting, 1975, *op cit.*, pp. 18-19
[156] Brian Bunting, 1975, *op cit.*, p. 20
[157] Harmel, 1971, *op cit*., p. 42
[158] Cronin, 1991, *op cit.*, p.12

problem' … no national question in South Africa".[159] This was tied to a practice of concentrating on White workers.

This mixed response to the national question was supposedly carried over into the early CPSA, where struggles between those who wished to focus on White workers, and those who favoured more attention to workers of colour, continued, as did the struggle between those who advocated equal rights for all, and those who rejected any "specific Native programme". The year 1924 saw a victory for the current, headed by S.P. Bunting – now joined by Eddie Roux, his protégé and later biographer – that wanted to pay more attention to African workers. "This perspective was successfully carried, and so from 1924 the Party launched itself upon a programme of 'africanisation'".[160] It was, however, only in 1928, with the "fraternal assistance of the world Communist movement and the inspiration of Lenin's ideas", that the CPSA transcended its previous "errors" and adopted a real programme for national liberation in the form of the "Native Republic" thesis.[161]

Given that there are serious questions about the reliability of the Communist school version of the history of the pre-CPSA left – and the related point that it is problematic to read the history of the early CPSA off the history of the International Socialist League – it is necessary to interrogate the claims that the Communist school makes about the International Socialist League and the national question.

Cope provides a fairly substantial account that makes much use of articles from the *International* and the recollections of Andrews. His account presents the International Socialist League as strongly internationalist, notes its view that "the emancipation of the working class requires the abolition of all forms of Native indenture, compound and passport systems; and the lifting of the Native worker to the political and industrial status of the White", records that the organisation had growing success in attracting African, Coloured and Indian supporters, and indicates that it undertook pioneering organising work amongst workers of colour.[162] This evidence sits somewhat uneasily with Cope's claim that socialists only developed a proper position on the Africans "as a rising proletariat and as an oppressed national majority" at the end of the 1920s.[163]

In *S.P. Bunting: a political biography*, Eddie Roux introduces the "S.P. Bunting/Ivon Jones" myth. He speaks of the majority of the membership of the International Socialist League as reluctant to concede "recognition of the black worker", but provides little evidence to substantiate this claim.[164] Indeed, Roux argues, the "many" who supposedly opposed work amongst the Africans did not "openly" express "race prejudice" or deny "that the black man was entitled to freedom".[165] Nor did this alleged majority organise to change the policies of an organisation that (as Roux notes) adopted a clear "specific Native programme" at an early stage.

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[159] Cronin, 1991, *op cit*., p. 12
[160] Cronin, 1991, *op cit*., p. 14
[161] Harmel, 1971, *op cit*., p. 42
[162] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit*., pp. 179-184, 194-199, 202-204
[163] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit*., p. 179
[164] Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit*., p. 74
[165] Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit*., pp. 74-75

Roux cited the organisation's first conference in January 1916 as an example of the supposed "inner-party struggle" over the "recognition of the black worker", but his own account admits that the "unmistakable majority" voted to adopt a "specific Native programme" with measures like political equality and the abolition of indenture and the pass laws.[166] The 1916 debate – which I discuss in Chapter 6 at some length – certainly showed that at least some early members were influenced by the White Labourite notion that African proletarianisation could be halted, as Eddie Roux notes. However, what he does not mention is that this notion was soon marginalised, and that the majority of recruits from the SA Labour Party "slunk back" over the next year or so, as the organisation "declared for a revolutionary platform regarding the native workers".[167]

It is, in short, problematic to project a debate in early 1916 onto the whole history of the International Socialist League, to speak of a majority opposing "recognition of the black worker" when the organisation consistently adopted a "revolutionary platform regarding the native workers" (even in 1916), and to make continual references to an ongoing "inner-party struggle" when the supposed opponents of S.P. Bunting and Ivon Jones never uttered a word against the "revolutionary platform".

These points are particularly apt when it is noted that *S.P. Bunting: a political biography* generally paints a picture of an International Socialist League that advocated interracial working class unity and sought contacts with workers of colour.[168] Eddie Roux's account of the politics of the International Socialist League in *Time Longer Than Rope* also provides little evidence for his contention that "many" in the International Socialist League doubted the wisdom of a "direct approach to the black worker".[169] The overall impression is of an organisation that promoted interracial labour unity, approached African workers and pioneered African trade unionism with the Industrial Workers of Africa, "on the lines of the America [*sic*] I.W.W.", and suffered repression for its pains.[170]

While Forman's analysis, too, makes much of the International Socialist League's 1916 congress and tends towards the "S.P. Bunting/Ivon Jones myth", it notes the organisation carried the "first article by an African in a socialist publication in South Africa", pioneered African trade unions, held the first May Day (in 1917) addressed by an African and the first May Day directed at workers of colour (in 1918), and experienced the country's first interracial political trial later that year when members of the International Socialist League, the Industrial Workers of Africa and the Transvaal Native Congress were jointly prosecuted after an abortive move to organise an African general strike.[171] Although his account of the organisation speaks of its "theoretical errors" (interestingly, attributed to an attempt to apply "marxist [*sic*] principles",[172]

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[166] Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit*., pp. 74-75
[167] David Ivon Jones, D., [9 June 1921] 1988a", Communism in South Africa [report to the Comintern]", reproduced in B. Hirson, 1988a, "David Ivon Jones: the early writings on socialism in South Africa", in *Searchlight South Africa*, vol.1, no. 1, p. 122
[168] See Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit*., pp. 73-90
[169] Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit*., p. 131
[170] Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit*., pp. 129-135
[171] Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit*., pp. 48-71
[172] Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit*., pp. 61-62

it is not one that fits easily into the larger narrative of Communist triumph that structures his general history of the left.

Brian Bunting's analysis of the International Socialist League and the national question is far less substantial than that of Eddie Roux, and quite different to that of Forman, who was a most conscientious researcher. It cites three articles from the *International* – two by Ivon Jones, one by S.P. Bunting, both from the period of September 1915 to February 1916, and all of which were quoted at length in Forman and the Simons – as well as lengthy quotes from Eddie Roux to discuss the politics of the International Socialist League.[173] This is not a very serious analysis of an organisation that ran for six years, produced over three hundred issues of the *International* – typically around 12-16 pages of dense text on A3 pages per week – as well as numerous leaflets and pamphlets and speeches, and not a very substantial basis for making hard judgements about the politics of the International Socialist League.

Harmel's account is similarly brief, although better researched. Somewhat hampered by attempts to show that the International Socialist League was very close to Leninism, it nonetheless presents the International Socialist League as an organisation that opposed racially discriminatory laws, organised amongst Africans and Indians, and "boldly" and "courageously" addressed racial oppression, even without a "consistently Marxist and revolutionary attitude towards the national struggle".[174] However, besides hints that the organisation retained traces of White Labourism, Harmel did not provide an account of its views on the national question, treating the lack of a Leninist policy as a self-evident sign of inadequacy. This type of reasoning will not convince someone not enamoured of Marxist-Leninism.

Finally, Cronin's accounts of the International Socialist League may be dealt with briefly: they are not based upon original research, and consist largely of reiterations of formulations from Forman, the Simons, Brian Bunting and Harmel.[175]

It is the Simons who provide the most problematic account of the International Socialist League and the national question, one that, again, is characterised by misrepresentations, misquotations and inconsistencies. The Simons, as noted above, actually suggest that the organisation formally accepted segregation and colour bars.[176] Moreover, the organisation apparently "refused" to "support the struggle of the Africans as an oppressed race".[177] These bald claims seems difficult to reconcile with the material presented by other writers in the Communist school – and, indeed, much of the Simons' own material, which covers the same ground as writers like Eddie Roux and Forman[178] – and it is, consequently, useful to examine how the Simons reached a position so diametrically opposed to the evidence.

The Simons' method of analysis in *Class and Colour in South Africa, 1850-1950,* is most revealing. They build their case by, on the one hand, ignoring the many articles in the *International* that specifically opposed segregation, and by, on the other hand, placing great emphasis on two unrepresentative articles

[173] Brian Bunting, 1975, *op cit*., pp. 17-20
[174] Harmel, 1971, *op cit*., pp. 39-41
[175] See, for example, Cronin, 1991, *op cit*., p. 8-13
[176] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, pp. 191-2
[177] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] *op cit.*, p. 210
[178] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, pp. 187-243

from the early *International* that were mildly sympathetic to segregation.[179] These two articles, which appeared in March and May 1916, mention an "ethnologic tendency" for the "natural social apartness of white and black" that would have fair play under a non-capitalist social order, and of "healthy social segregation" as being attained "through Industrial co-operation".[180]

These two articles form the backbone of the Simons' case against the International Socialist League, yet the arguments advanced in these pieces were regularly condemned in the *International*. In June 1916, for instance, the *International* reprinted an angry letter opposing International Socialist League calls to "fraternise with the coloured man", with the comment that it was a "curio for the next generation ... just the kind of vulgar appeals [*sic*] made against the abolition of slavery in America".[181] In place of this disunity, the article continued, workers of all races needed revolutionary industrial organisation: [182]

> Socialism can only be brought about by *all the workers* coming together on the industrial filed to take the machinery of production into their own hands and working it for the good of all. There is no other Socialism. And the man who talks about a Socialism which excludes nine-tenths of the workers is not being honest with himself.

In other words, the Simons used two unrepresentative articles to draw generalisations about the politics of the International Socialist League, while ignoring the plethora of material – including the organisation's constitution, as noted earlier – that advocated the formation of racially integrated revolutionary industrial unions.

The Simons also built their case by a questionable use of quotations. At one point, for example, they cite a passage from the *International* that called for "the fullest rights" for the African working class and an approach to the "problem of the native" that would "shake South African capitalism to its foundations".[183] The Simons, however, left aside the bulk of this passage, and fixed upon the word "problem", from which they inferred that the organisation saw the African worker as "a problem, and not a comrade at this stage", and insinuate that it supported "white supremacy".[184]

That such claims are directly contradicted by the content of the article in question passes without comment. On the contrary, the Simons even insist that the International Socialist League's paraphrase of Marx famous epigram on race,[185] used in the same article – "not until we free the native can we hope to free the white" – is further evidence of the International Socialist League's backwardness. We are told: "the

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[179] *The International*, 17 March 1916, "Segregation Segregated"; *The International*, 19 May 1917, "The Segregational Socialist"
[180] *The International*, 19 May 1916, "The Segregational Socialist"
[181] *The International*, 16 June 1916, "Inviting Jim Sixpence to Tea"; cf. *The International*, 15 November 1918, "A Socialist Africa"
[182] *The International*, 16 June 1916, "Inviting Jim Sixpence to Tea", emphasis in the original
[183] *The International*, 1 October 1915, "The Parting of the Ways"
[184] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983,*op cit.*, pp.192, 212
[185] Marx wrote: "In the United States, every independent workers' movement was paralysed as long as slavery disfigured part of the republic. Labour in a white skin cannot emancipate itself where it is branded in a black skin". See Karl Marx, [1867] 1976, *Capital: a critique of political economy*, Penguin, p. 414

possibility that the African would free himself did not then occur to them".[186] That the formulation in question not only demands, but also prioritises, African freedom does not prevent the Simons from forging ahead to assert the International Socialist League consisted of "missionary socialists" concerned "primarily to save the White proletariat from itself".[187] There are other examples of this approach in *Class and Colour in South Africa, 1850-1950*.

In a number of instances, the Simons did not attempt to substantiate their claims, and relied, instead, upon the citation of non-existent International Socialist League positions. The Simons, for example, charged that the International Socialist League opposed strikes.[188] Further, they baldly stated that the International Socialist League favoured the colour bar and a White Labour policy,[189] something for which there is no evidence. Likewise, they alleged that the International Socialist League opposed mixed marriages because of the "immaturity of the blacks",[190] when the *International* consistently opposed theories of natural inequality and biological racism, the "stale nonsense purveyed in the Labour Movement",[191] "vulgar beliefs regarding the native" disproved by scientific proof that "all the fundamental phenomena and capabilities of man are rooted in ... humanity which is Black, White and Brown".[192]

Furthermore, the Simons' own evidence and statements directly contradict such claims. Three pages after being told that the International Socialist League supported the colour bar and white supremacy, the reader finds that the organisation "condemned the colour bar", called for " one big union of all workers, irrespective of race", argued that "Africans would complete the process of wresting control of the productive system from the ruling class", and welcomed the ''rumblings of a spontaneous, indigenous class conscious industrial movement".[193]

Such data is consistent with the *International*, where many pieces argued that racial prejudice was an *obstacle* to revolution, rather than a momentary abstraction that would automatically disappear,[194] and suggested that One Big Union was the vehicle for a *simultaneous* struggle against capitalism and racial oppression: "The whole of the fight against capitalism is a fight with the prejudices and capitalist-engendered aversions of the workers",[195] and "Once organised, these workers can bust-up any tyrannical law".[196] This is an issue I examine in several sections, notably Section 6.5.

In concluding this section, I wish to make several concluding remarks. Firstly, it has been demonstrated that the Communist school contention that the pre-CPSA shared the prejudices of White

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[186] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., 192
[187] The "missionary" charge by the Simons appears to be a distortion of Cope's original view that that the International Socialist League had "a 'missionary' attitude in its unconscious acceptance of differentiation on the lines of race": Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.* p. 179. But whereas Cope used this phrase to argue that the International Socialist League was paying too much attention to race, thus overshadowing the "working class-solidarity and the class struggle", the Simons use it to suggest that the International Socialist League was paying too *little* attention to race.
[188] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983,*op cit.*, p. 211
[189] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983,pp. 192, 212
[190] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983,*op cit.*, pp. 194
[191] *The International*, 7 April 1916, "Call to the Native Workers"
[192] *The International*, 9 February 1917, "The Great Unskilled"
[193] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, pp. 195-6
[194] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, p. 290
[195] *The International*, 22 September 1916, "Disunity of Labour", emphasis added
[196] *The International*, 19 October 1917, "The Pass Laws: organise for their abolition".

Labourism, or simply ignored racial oppression, is not very convincing: in a number of cases, most notably the Simons, but also to some extent Eddie Roux, the case for this claim is based on misrepresentation and misquotation. Indeed, the accounts of the Communist school are, in this regard, often quite contradictory, for they provide much evidence that the opposite was true.

The point being made is not that the approaches of groups like the International Socialist League were necessarily superior to the "Native Republic" formula. It is a more modest claim, that the pre-CPSA left seriously addressed the national question, and that the simple contrast that the Communist school sets up between a pre-CPSA left that was supposedly racially prejudiced or oblivious to national oppression, and a CPSA that mastered the national question in a progressive manner for the very first time, is a false one. The pre-CPSA left had a *different* approach, rather than no approach at all.

The question, then, arises as to *why* the Communist school consistently sought to portray its predecessors in this manner. After all, given the claim that the International Socialist League "laid the foundation-stone of the Communist Party of South Africa", to quote Cope,[197] it would seem that Communist school writers would have many reasons to stress the progressive credentials of that organisation on the national question.[198]

The reasons are, I believe, two-fold. As I have indicated above, the larger narrative of the Communist school structures the manner in which the pre-CPSA groups are regarded: the pre-CPSA left is slotted into a story of the CPSA and SACP which was one of ongoing advance and ultimate triumph, particularly with regard to the national question. This leads to a lack of attention to groups like the SDF, a tendency to present the International Socialist League as a sort of CPSA-in-embryo that inevitably grew into the CPSA, and – in the case of the national question – the presentation of the pre-CPSA left as lacking an adequate position on the national question.

The triumphalist history of the Communist school is, to a great extent, predicated on the view that all socialist positions prior to the adoption of the "Native Republic" thesis were fundamentally flawed. Now, if pre-CPSA groups like the International Socialist League were admitted to have sophisticated positions on this issue, the view that 1921, 1924, 1928 and 1950 were major advances for the left's appreciation of the national question would lose much of its power. If, for example, the International Socialist League was shown to have paid attention to Africans as early as 1916, the CPSA's decision to pay more attention to Africans in 1924 seems to be less an innovation by a Bolshevik Party than a *return* to policies adopted nearly ten years before by a group with an admitted syndicalist influence. And, if 1924 was indeed a return, it begs the question of why the early CPSA turned *away* from workers of colour from 1921 to 1924, raising uncomfortable questions about the notion that the history of the CPSA was one of ongoing progress on the national question, and the view that the CPSA was necessarily an advance on the groups that preceded it.

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[197] Cope, n.d. [? 1943], *op cit*., p. 175

[198] Caroline Hamilton made this very useful point following presentation of a paper, drawn from this thesis, back in 2004: Lucien van der Walt, 2004", Revisiting and Revising the History of the Early Socialist Movement in South Africa", paper presented at the South African Historical Association congress/ 100th anniversary of History Department, University of Stellenbosch, 5 to 7 April 2004

The other reason is related to the politics of the CPSA from 1928 onwards. There is a deep assumption in the writings of the Communist school that *national liberation* requires *nationalism*: it is only on the basis of the assumption that national liberation and class struggle are two different types of politics, and that they proceed separately, in discrete moments, that the two-stage approach of the "Native Republic" makes sense. It is this line of thought that allows the Simons to argue that "the class struggle" only "merged with the national liberation struggle" when the ANC and CPSA became allies.[199]

An approach, such as that of the International Socialist League, which tried to merge national liberation and class struggle into a single struggle, through a single movement – the working class organised into One Big Union – is, from this perspective, inevitably flawed. National liberation movements are seen as nationalist movements, and socialist movements are, equally, *not* national liberation movements, but – at best – their allies. The approach of the International Socialist League, which saw the tasks of national liberation as having a socialist working class character, and as requiring working class unity across race and nation, simply does not fit this model.

Stated another way, the point is that the Communist school is often chiding the pre-CPSA left less for ignoring national liberation than for its hostility to *nationalism*. For Forman, the ANC was "the most progressive political force amongst the African people", even though the CPSA developed a mass African base,[200] while Harmel writes of the "profoundly revolutionary" nature of the ANC, even at its most moderate – "it truly represented the aspirations and interests of the masses" and led "inevitably" to a "fighting liberation movement" – and criticised the early left for failing to realise this point.[201] It is, from such a perspective, the growing recognition of the Party that nationalism is the vehicle of national liberation that is its triumph.

3.5. The impact and legacy of the Communist school

The flaws in the Communist school would not, perhaps, be very significant if that body of writing had been balanced by a wider historiography that developed a more balanced history of the local left. However, scholarship on the local socialist movement is relatively undeveloped, and has been deeply shaped by the works of the Communist school, which have often been used uncritically as authoritative and reliable sources. In many contexts, official Communist Party histories have been treated with some scepticism, and a wave of new scholarship has opened new directions in the study of Communist history,[202] and socialist history more broadly. The influence of the Communist school may also be seen in writings by local activists on the left, as well as in the genre of local anti-Communist/"Red Peril" tracts. The problem has been compounded by a general ignorance of anarchism and syndicalism in South Africa in the latter half of the twentieth-century, which I examine in the next section.

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[199] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, pp. 10, 578, 609
[200] Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit*., p. 40
[201] Harmel, 1971, *op cit*., p. 28
[202] See, for example, Geoff Andrews, Nina Fishman and Kevin Morgan, editors, 1995, *Opening the Books: essays on the social and cultural history of the British Communist Party*, Pluto Press, London

For many years, the definitive study of the early White labour movement on the Witwatersrand was Elaine Katz's masterful *A Labour Aristocracy: a history of White workers in the Transvaal and the general strike of 1913,* but this relies heavily on the Simons for its interpretation of the *Voice of Labour* network and of the IWW.[203] For example, Katz – citing the Simons – repeats the claim that Crawford traded principles for popular support, ignoring the racial issue, and that Mann remained resolutely silent about workers of colour.[204]

Pieter van Duin's study of race in the early South African labour movement relies, in turn, directly upon Katz and the Simons as the main sources of information on the early left, and repeats that Crawford and Mann traded principles for popular support, ignoring the racial issue.[205] Van Duin also asserted that the SDF "in practice never took steps to organise the non-white worker or to openly propagate racial equality",[206] a claim that goes well beyond the most strident charges of the Communist school. Surveying international syndicalism, Marcel van der Linden, in turn, cites Van Duin as evidence that the South African IWW provides an unusual case of a Wobbly union that accepted segregation.[207]

Martin Legassick's paper, "Class and Nationalism in South African Protest: the South African Communist Party and the 'Native Republic', 1928-34"– written from a Marxist perspective outside the SACP – also characterises the pre-CPSA as either influenced by White prejudices, or disinterested in the national question, almost entirely on the basis of citations from Roux and the Simons.[208] Lungisile Ntsebeza's thesis on "Divisions and Unity in Struggle: the African National Congress, International Socialist League and CP, 1910-28" uses Eddie Roux and the Simons as its main sources in examining the International Socialist League and the Industrial Workers of Africa.[209] The International Socialist League is presented as focused on "applying Marxism to South Africa", and the "S.P. Bunting/Ivon Jones myth" soon makes its appearance.[210] Peter Walshe's standard study of the South African Native National Congress mentions the International Socialist League in a positive light, but repeats the "S.P. Bunting/Ivon Jones myth" in quite a stark form.[211]

Allison Drew has done the most important recent work on the history of socialism in South Africa. However, her two-volume documentary collection on *South Africa's Radical Tradition* the presents Industrial Socialist League and the International Socialist League as oblivious to the national question, and repeats the "S.P. Bunting/Ivon Jones myth". Citing Ntsebeza, who drew on Eddie Roux and the Simons in this regard, Drew argues that the International Socialist League was influenced by segregationist thought and that only a "minority" favoured work amongst Africans.[212] Her selection of documents also, unfortunately, reproduces the pattern of structuring socialist history around the history of the CPSA and SACP: only six out of the

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[203] Elaine Katz, 1976, *A Trade Union Aristocracy: a history of white workers in the Transvaal and the general strike of 1913*, Johannesburg, Institute for African Studies
[204] Katz, 1976, *op cit*., pp. 273, 299, 320
[205] Van Duin, 1990, *op cit*., pp. 648-9
[206] Van Duin, 1990, *op cit*., p. 649
[207] Van der Linden, 1998, *op cit.*, pp. 14-15
[208] Legassick, 1973 *op cit.* p. 3
[209] Ntsebeza, 1988, *op cit.* p 30
[210] Ntsebeza, 1988, *op cit.*, p. 30
[211] Walshe, 1970, *op cit*., pp. 95-6, 169
[212] See Drew, editor, 1996a, editorial comments, *op cit.,* p. 16

nearly 300 documents in the two-volume collection stem from the pre-1921 period, and a substantial proportion of the remaining 294 deal with the CPSA and its critics. The role of syndicalism is given very little attention.[213]

Drew's PhD on "Social Mobilisation and Racial Capitalism, 1928-1960" does not pay much attention to the Industrial Socialist League or the International Socialist League.[214] While the thesis provides a striking analysis of the controversy around the "Native Republic" thesis, and the response of the emerging Trotskyist movement, it adopts key elements of the Communist school approach:[215]

> … the Native Republic thesis was, historically, a significant advance in South African Communist thinking. *For the first time* Communists put South Africa's great social problems, the national and democratic questions, at the top of their political programme …

The same claim is made in the introduction to *South Africa's Radical Tradition*.[216]

Mason's study of the International Socialist League and the early CPSA follows the Simons closely when discussing the SDF and the International Socialist League on the national question.[217] Again, the "S.P. Bunting/Ivon Jones myth" is central, with the International Socialist League majority presented as accepting much of White Labourism; syndicalism is absent, as Mason speaks of the "grounding" of key International Socialist League figures in "Marxism".[218] Colin Bundy, another scholar of the left, takes rather a similar tack: S.P. Bunting is referred to an "international" and "revolutionary" socialist – there is no mention of syndicalism – and the view that the CPSA's 1924 shift to African workers was the first time that the left turned towards the "emancipation of the black majority" is repeated without comment.[219] For Bundy, Eddie Roux's work on S.P. Bunting and the International Socialist League was "even-handed" in "judgements and tone", and remained a "basic source" for historians.

Premesh Lalu repeats the conflation of International Socialist League and CPSA positions characteristic of the Communist school, sometimes quite crudely: a comment that the CPSA "press and the CPSA, more generally, were fashioned by the consistent belief in the pending cataclysmic collapse of capitalism in … Europe" is substantiated by reference to an article from the *International* in 1917,[220] and "*The International* (1915-1925)" is described as the newspaper of the CPSA.[221] Lalu describes the politics of the International Socialist League as a sort of paternalistic "humanism", and attributes this to "Marxism".[222] Examining International Socialist League and CPSA approaches to the national question before 1925, Lalu

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[213] See Drew, editor, 1996a, *op cit*., and Drew, editor, 1997, *op cit*.
[214] Drew, 1991a, *op cit.*, p. 100
[215] Drew, 1991a, *op cit.*, p. 165, my emphasis
[216] Drew, editor, 1996a, *op cit*, editor's comments, p. 22: "… the Native Republic represented a significant advance in South African socialist thinking. For the first time socialists put South Africa's pressing social problems, the national, democratic and land questions, at the top of their political programme…"
[217] Mason, 1971, *op cit.*, pp. 8-18. Cf. Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983,*op cit.*, pp. 191-212
[218] Mason, 1971, *op cit.*, p. 12
[219] Colin Bundy, 1993, "Bunting and Basner", *Southern African Review of Books*, November/ December issue
[220] Lalu, n.d., *op cit*, p. 3, also p.3, note 5
[221] Lalu, 1993, *op cit*., p. 2
[222] Lalu, n.d., *op cit*., p. 8

relies heavily – and, it must be said, quite uncritically – upon Eddie Roux and Simons, and repeats many of the standard claims of the Communist school: the "S.P. Bunting/Ivon Jones myth", the view that socialists first decided to pay serious attention to Africans in 1924 under S.P. Bunting's leadership, and the notion that the "Native Republic" was the first time that socialist programmes made the national question a central issue.

The notion of a clear continuity between the International Socialist League and the CPSA is also clear in Sheridan Johns' PhD on the two organisations, significantly entitled "Marxism-Leninism in a Multi-Racial Environment: the International Socialist League and the South African Communist Party, 1914-32".[223] Here, the International Socialist League is described as having a growing "affinity … for the Marxist left-wing of the European socialist movement" as far back as 1915, and as led by "interpreters of Marx", even though Johns recognises that the IWW had an important impact on many elements of its policy.[224] Johns also argued that "with few exceptions" early South African socialists were in the "forefront of those seeking to strengthen the existing racial structure in the South African economy",[225] and that Andrews "merely tolerated" the efforts of S.P. Bunting and Ivon Jones to reach out to Africans: "direct approaches to non-whites were mostly limited to Jones and Bunting".[226]

Meanwhile, Mia Roth – who has some sharp words about the accuracy of the histories produced by the Communist school, which she views as often unreliable and self-serving in their claims – nonetheless accepted Eddie Roux's claim that the CPSA (and the pre-CPSA left) only began to turn its attention to African workers from 1924 onwards, and cites Cronin as further evidence.[227] If Roth was rightly critical of the writings of Eddie Roux and others, with *S.P. Bunting: a political biography* coming under particularly heavy fire, she did not go far enough in questioning the larger narrative of left history those works constructed.

Likewise, Doreen Musson's biography of John Stephen "Johnny" Gomas – a Coloured activist in the International Socialist League, the CPSA, the ICU and the ANC – was written from a position influenced by Trotskyism, but accepted the Communist school position that socialists first paid attention to African workers in 1924, citing the Simons.[228] Jonathon Grossman's PhD on the CPSA, similarly, described the International Socialist League as mixing an "abstract proletarian internationalism" with a "de facto segregationist position", a "paternalist" position that lingered for years.[229] This argument was launched with reference to the same unrepresentative articles in the *International* on which the Simons focused, and laid the basis for the claim, echoing Eddie Roux, that there was an ongoing battle between a "progressive" tradition – headed

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[223] Johns' study first appeared as a PhD: Sheridan W. Johns, 1965, "Marxism-Leninism in a Multi-Racial Environment: the International Socialist league and the South African Communist Party, 1914-32", Harvard University. For many years the only substantial study of the early CPSA, the thesis reappeared as a slightly abridged book with a new introduction in 1995, under title *Raising the Red Flag: the International Socialist League and the Communist Party of South Africa, 1914-32* from Mayibuye Books, University of the Western Cape, Bellville. All references in my thesis paper are to the Mayibuye edition of Johns, unless otherwise specified, and are indicated thus: Johns 1995, *op cit.*
[224] Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, pp. 52, 61; on the IWW influence, see, *inter alia*, p. 71
[225] See Johns, 1995, *op cit*., p. 30
[226] Johns, 1995, *op cit.,* pp. 98
[227] Roth, 2000, *op cit*., pp. 2-5-6; see also Roth's lengthy paraphrase of Eddie Roux on pp. 192-195
[228] Musson, 1989, *op cit.*, p. 35, 40 n. 30
[229] Grossman, 1985, *op cit.*, pp. 35-36

by S.P. Bunting – and a tendency with "entrenched prejudices largely unchallenged".[230] It is also not insignificant that roughly 100 pages of this thesis, which ostensibly deals with the CPSA, deals with the International Socialist League.

Marc Caldwell has provided a very interesting study of the discourse of the International Socialist League, but does not develop sufficient distance from the writings of the Communist school, which continue to feature as authoritative texts. Eddie Roux is the source for the claim that "the voices of Ivon Jones and Bunting in the cause of black workers were virtually alone in both the columns of the *International*, and in the ISL",[231] and his work also relies heavily upon similar claims by the Simons and Harmel.[232] This reiteration of the "S.P. Bunting/Ivon Jones myth" sits uneasily with much of the evidence mustered by Caldwell, and, as such, indicates something of the continued impact of the Communist school.

Another indicator of the impact of the Communist school on Caldwell's study is the view that syndicalists were a faction within an International Socialist League that was basically Marxist and associated with the radical wing of the Labour and Socialist international.[233] Caldwell notes that De Leonists helped "steer the ISL towards industrial unionism", "industrial unity" and a vision of "industrial democracy", with De Leon described as a "syndicalist",[234] but these themes are not developed, and while Caldwell provides a sophisticated discourse analysis of the *International*, he does not situate it within the larger field of syndicalist discourse.

Philip Bonner's fascinating early study of African protests on the Witwatersrand in the late 1910s pays a great deal of attention to the role of the Transvaal Native Congress, the International Socialist League and the Industrial Workers of Africa, suggesting that the "influence of the ISL and IWA" on the protests should not "be underestimated",[235] a theme which I take up in Chapters 7 and 8. However, Bonner uncritically cites the Simons' view that the International Socialist League used "standard Marxist theory".[236] In a classic paper that complemented that of Bonner, Frederick Johnstone studied the first year of the Industrial Workers of Africa, but remained vague about its politics: the union was an example of early "socialist organising amongst black workers" and a "socialist group of African workers", but the content of that socialism – and its links to syndicalism – remained unclear.[237]

More recently, Edward Johanningsmeier – a historian notable for taking the impact of syndicalism and the IWW seriously – compared the CPSA and the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA), and suggested that the IWW influenced the International Socialist League.[238] At the same time, however, citing writers like Eddie Roux, the Simons and Harmel, as well as Johns, Johanningsmeier

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[230] Grossman, 1985, *op cit*., pp. 55-56
[231] Marc A. Caldwell, 1996, "Struggle in Discourse: the *International's* discourse against racism in the labour movement in South Africa, 1915-1919", MA thesis, Department of Journalism and Media Studies, Rhodes University, p. 101, also see pp. 105-6, 124
[232] Caldwell, 1996, *op cit.*, p. 104, also pp. 106-7
[233] Caldwell, 1996, *op cit.*, pp. 97, 99 n. 3, 123 n. 16, 124, 145, 147, 149, 153
[234] Caldwell, 1996, *op cit.*, pp. 96, 99, 115, 117
[235] Bonner, 1982, *op cit.*, p. 298
[236] Bonner, 1982, *op cit.*
[237] Johnstone, 1979, *op cit.*, pp. 248, 250
[238] Johanningsmeier, 2004, *op cit*., p. 157

suggested there were "openly paternalist racist currents" in the organisation and repeats the "S.P. Bunting/Ivon Jones myth".[239] When the International Socialist League was "reorganised" as the CPSA, it took until 1924 for the old policy to be reversed, with the victory of "two 'nigrophiles', Sidney Bunting and Edward Roux", while "Leninist theoretical innovations" and a "flexible, pragmatic embrace of the 'Black Republic' thesis" enabled the CPSA to forge links with the "vital nationalist movement".[240] Having noted this, however, it is only fair that I point out that Johanningsmeier also gives a "strong syndicalist bent" in the CPSA some credit for its focus on African workers.[241]

In addition to its major impact on scholarly works, the Communist school also had an important impact upon both left-wing and anti-Communist, or "Red Peril", literature. This is not unexpected in the case of writings associated with the ANC, but may also be found in other texts as well: George Padmore, a former CPUSA activist turned radical African nationalist, based his discussion of the early left in South Africa in *Pan-Africanism or Communism: the coming struggle for Africa* almost entirely upon the work of Roux.[242]

Mary Benson's history of the ANC, for example, clearly draws its brief (and unreferenced) account of International Socialist League directly from Forman.[243] John Pampallis wrote an extremely interesting textbook for students at the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College, run by the ANC in Tanzania, which was subsequently published as a book in South Africa.[244] A solid work, certainly superior to the Simons volume, it nonetheless accepted many of the premises of the Communist school narrative, which it drew from Eddie Roux, the Simons and Harmel: the International Socialist League was a "Marxist organisation" and saw the "white working class as the revolutionary vanguard", and the 1928 "Native Republic" was the moment when the left placed national liberation at the centre of its activity.[245]

Francis Meli – a member of the ANC national executive in exile, and editor of the organisation's journal *Sechaba* – discussed the SDF, the International Socialist League and the Industrial Workers of Africa in his semi-official ANC history, *South Africa Belongs to Us: a history of the ANC*, using writings by Forman and Harmel.[246] Thus, he speaks of the International Socialist League as involving "Fabians, co-operators, syndicalists, anarchists and so on", argues that the socialists had "errors of interpretation" and an "inadequate theoretical grounding" that led them to focus on White workers, and suggests the formation of

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[239] Johanningsmeier, 2004, *op cit*., pp. 157-158, 161
[240] Johanningsmeier, 2004, *op cit*., pp. 162, 164, 179
[241] Johanningsmeier, 2004, *op cit*., pp. 176-177
[242] George Padmore, 1956, *Pan-Africanism or Communism: the coming struggle for Africa*, Dennis Dobson, London, pp. 347-8. Padmore had been active in the United States' Communist Party and served as a leading official, and expert on the African question, in the Communist International from 1929 to 1935. He broke with Communism in 1935 when the Soviet Union announced its support for the "democratic imperialisms" of France and Britain (as opposed to the "fascist imperialisms" of Italy and Germany). In 1945 he worked with W.E.B. du Bois to organise the Fifth Pan-Africanist Conference in Manchester, serving as secretary with Kwame Nkrumah. For a trenchant critique, see Paul Trewhela, 1988, "George Padmore, a Critique: pan-Africanism or communism", *Searchlight South Africa*, vol.1, no. 1
[243] Mary Benson, [1963], *South Africa: the struggle for a birthright*, International Defence and Aid Fund, London, pp. 37-8, cf. Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit*., pp. 48-71
[244] John Pampillas, 1991, *Foundations of the New South Africa*, Zed Books, London, New Jersey, Maskew Miller Longman, Cape Town
[245] Pampillas, 1991*, op cit*., pp. 103, 111, 119, 123-124, 135
[246] Francis Meli, 1988, *South Africa Belongs to Us: a history of the ANC*, Zimbabwe Publishing House. Zimbabwe, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, James Currey, London, pp. 56-62

the CPSA laid a "firm basis" for future work with the ANC.[247] It was, however, in 1924 and 1928 that the CPSA finally came to grips with the national question.[248]

From the right, the same reliance on the texts of the Communist school is equally apparent in the anti-Communist genre. F.R. "Red" Metrowich's *Africa and Communism: a study of successes, set-backs and stooge states* based its discussion of the early history of the left in South Africa on Eddie Roux.[249] Nathaniel Weyl's *Traitors End: the rise and fall of the communist movement in South Africa* was reliant upon Eddie Roux and Cope.[250] Henry R. Pike's *A History of Communism in South Africa*, published by the Christian Mission International of South Africa, also made great use of Cope and Roux.[251] The unlikely influence of the Communist school on anti-Communist writings may be partly ascribed to the characteristic features of the anti-Communist historiography. Dating back to at least the time of the Rand Revolt – which many newspapers labelled a "Bolshevik conspiracy" – and strongly associated with Afrikaner nationalism and Cold War politics, the anti-Communist tradition was not known for its scholarly rigour. Heavily marked by conspiracy theory, conservative Christianity and White paranoia,[252] it undertook almost no original research.

3.6. The use and abuse of the terms "anarchism" and "syndicalism" in South African studies

A final obstacle to a serious study of anarchism and syndicalism in South Africa has been a long-standing tendency to misunderstand and misapply these terms. While some early studies of labour and the left were careful to define "anarchism" and "syndicalism" correctly,[253] the great bulk of autobiographies, histories and polemics have used these terms in a highly problematic manner. The early radicals bear some responsibility for the situation, as is evident as far back as 1921. On the eve of the launching of the CPSA, a group of young radicals in Cape Town seem to have tried to prevent Harrison acting as a delegate to the founding meeting, angering S.P. Bunting, who resented that "young boys full of words and abuse" had attacked Harrison "who has more grit and pluck than all of them".[254] He concurred with the opinion of Ralph Rabb, a Socialist Labour Party and International Socialist League activist: "I got a very bad impression of some of them, however active: 'anarchists' as Rabb calls them".

The 1936 autobiography of Gilbert Coka, an ICU organiser in the 1920s and CPSA member in the 1930s, used the term "anarchism" to describe the internal chaos in the ICU.[255] Visiting the union's headquarters, he was shocked to find that "[t]he I.C.U. Head Office showed all signs of anarchism and

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[247] Meli, 1988, *op cit*., p. 58, 61
[248] Meli, 1988, *op cit*., pp. 73-79
[249] F.R. Metrowich, 1967, *Africa and Communism: a study of successes, set-backs and stooge states*, Voortrekkerpers, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Vereeniging, Klerksdorp, pp. 192-196
[250] Nathaniel Weyl, 1970, *Traitors' End: the rise and fall of the communist movement in South Africa*, Tafelberg-Uitgewers, Cape Town, pp. 41-76
[251] Henry R. Pike, 1988, *A History of Communism in South Africa*, Christian Mission International, Germiston, second edition
[252] See Wessel Visser's pioneering paper: Wessel P. Visser, 2004, "The 'Red Peril" and "Total Onslaught" History Production in South African Historiography", paper presented South African Historical Association congress/ 100th anniversary of History Department, University of Stellenbosch, 5 to 7 April 2004
[253] Notably Gitsham and Trembath, 1926, *op cit*., and Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit*.
[254] S.P. Bunting, [letter of 29 August 1921] 1996a, in Brian Bunting, editor, 1996a, *op cit*., p. 37
[255] Gilbert Coka, [1936] 1991, *The Autobiography of Gilbert Coka, 1910-1935*, UWC Historical and Cultural Centre, Bellville, The Mayibuye Library series, no. 1

laxity".[256] Jack Simons, likewise, used the term "anarchy" to suggest chaos: The "so-called 'savages' and 'barbarians' did not live in anarchy" because they "had customs and morals, an economic system and social organisation that worked well for their level of technology and conditions of life".[257] Elsewhere, anarchism was used to refer to terrorism. Ronnie Kasrils, a leading member of the SACP described how Rowley Arenstein, another Party stalwart, opposed the SACP's shift to armed struggle in the 1960s.[258] He described it as "adventurism" and avidly consulted "the texts of Lenin" and "produced screeds of criticisms which declared that the actions were 'anarchistic'". Striving to settle to the argument, Rowley "handed me the Lenin volume and suggested I read the essay on 'anarchism'".[259]

The term "syndicalism" has been just as sloppily applied, mainly as a label for militant but apolitical trade unionism, which was scarcely what syndicalism, as a movement and theory, advocated. This was particularly evident in the debates around the rebirth of African trade unions, where the term was commonly bandied about in this manner, particularly in relation to the "workerists". This was a mixed group who feared ANC control of the unions, exemplified by a 1982 speech by Joe Foster, the general-secretary of the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU), an ambiguous statement that argued that "workers could control their own destiny", and that workers must "strive to build their own powerful and effective organization even whilst they are part of the wider popular struggle" in order "to ensure that the popular movement is not hijacked by elements who in the end will have no option but to turn against their worker supporters".[260]

The Foster speech opened an explosive debate, and it was not long before the "workerists" were being dubbed "syndicalists". A key text was the 1986 "Errors of Workerism", which appeared in *Isizwe*, the journal of the ANC-aligned anti-apartheid United Democratic Front. This polemic, which was probably written by Cronin of the SACP, argued that there were two "brands" of "workerism", both inadequate: first, "economism", which focused on bread-and-butter issues alone, and ignored politics; second, "syndicalism", which was a militant trade unionism that ignored community and political issues, and the need for alliances with groups outside the workplace.[261]

While "Errors of Workerism" showed some familiarity with European syndicalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it caricatured syndicalism by presenting it as hostile to community and political struggles. It also caricatured the "workerists": influenced by New Left ideas and the experiences of earlier South African trade unions, this group did not have any conscious link to the broad anarchist

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[256] Coka, 1991, *op cit.*, p. 45
[257] Simons, [1977-1979] 2001, *op cit*., p. 141
[258] Ronnie Kasrils, 1993, *Armed and Dangerous: my undercover struggle against apartheid*, Heinemann.
[259] Kasrils, *op cit.*, p. 44
[260] Joe Foster, [1982] 1987, "The Workers' Struggle: where does FOSATU Stand?", in Johann Maree, 1987, editor, *The Independent Trade Unions, 1974-84: ten years of the South African Labour Bulletin*, Ravan Press, Braamfontein, pp. 222-3, 226-228
[261] Anonymous [? Jeremy Cronin], 1986, "Errors of Workerism", *Isizwe: the nation: journal of the United Democratic Front*, vol.1, no. 3

tradition or clearly syndicalist politics,[262] and were, in any case, involved in a number of community struggles and political mobilisations.[263] The "workerists" were closest to syndicalism in precisely the opposite manner to that suggested by "Errors of Workerism": it was *precisely* their engagement with issues and constituencies beyond the workplace, and beyond immediate workplace issues, that brought them close to syndicalism, rather than the reverse.

Even so, the notion of "syndicalism" as a sort of radical economism took hold, and the term was widely used in this manner in studies of South African labour.[264] This misapplication and misunderstanding was by no means unique to South Africa, and was widely popularised by a number of Lenin's writings and the works of later Marxists like Nicos Poulantzas.[265] The larger marginalisation of anarchism and syndicalism in the historiography of labour and the left – combined with the serious problems in standard works on anarchism and syndicalism, discussed in Chapter 2 – doubtless also played a major role.

Thus, Gay Seidman's comparative study of the trade unions of Brazil and South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s, for example, uses the term "syndicalism" to describe *both* the tradition of conservative and State-run unions in Brazil, lasting from the 1930s to the 1970s, *and* the militant independent unions that emerged in South Africa of the 1970s and 1980s.[266] This is rather inconsistent, and Seidman compounded the problem by not actually explaining what she viewed as the "syndicalist" characteristics of either set of unions.

In support of the point that the historiographic defeat of anarchism and syndicalism was an important factor in the misuse of the terms "anarchism" and "syndicalism", it is worth adding that Seidman's book made no reference at all to the anarcho-syndicalist tradition that dominated Brazilian labour in the first three decades of the twentieth century.[267] The State-corporatist labour regime introduced by the dictatorship of Getúlio Vargas in 1930 was partly designed to remove syndicalist influence; its progeny, the State-controlled unions of the 1960s and 1970s were, in many ways, the negation of syndicalism.

3.7. Beyond the Communist school: close readings, new writings, primary sources

In the remainder of this chapter, I move beyond a critique of the literature to a consideration of the ways in which a proper study of the influence of anarchism and syndicalism in South Africa – an influence

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[262] See Nicole Ulrich, 2003, "The Origins of the FOSATU: the emergence of trade unions in Natal and the development of a new trade union tradition," presented at Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

[263] I raised some of these issues in an older paper, but, on reflection, I believe I did not do enough deconstruct the very categories of "populist" and "workerist" used in the debate: Lucien van der Walt, 1996, *The 'Workerist- Populist" Debate Revisited: unions, ideology and social change in South Africa 1973-87*, paper presented to the South African Sociological Association Congress, University of Natal-Durban, 7 to 11 July 1996.

[264] Jeremy Baskin, 1991, *op cit.*, pp. 94-5; Alex Callinicos, 1988, *op cit.*, p. 191; Robin Cohen and William Cobbett, 1988, "Popular Struggles or One Struggle: dilemmas of liberation", in Robin Cohen and William Cobbett, editors, 1988, *op cit.*, p. 15; Duncan Innes, 1987, "Worker Politics and the Popular Movement", *Work in Progress*, no. 50; Mosenthal, 1988, *op cit.*, p. 47; Karl von Holdt, 1987, *op cit.*, p. 96; Karl von Holdt, n.d. [? 1988], *op cit.*, pp. 96 note 8, 97 note 10, 98-100

[265] See Holton, 1980, *op cit.*, pp. 5-7, 12-13, 18-19

[266] Gay Seidman, 1994, *Manufacturing Militancy: workers' movements in Brazil and South Africa, 1970-1985*, University of California Press: Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, pp. 161, 199

[267] As discussed in, for example, Dulles, 1973, *op cit*., and Gordon, 1978, *op cit.*

which, I have suggested, was not inconsiderable in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – may be undertaken. Firstly, I argue that the works of the Communist school may make an important contribution, if used carefully. Secondly, I draw attention to a range of recent studies of South African socialism that have questioned many elements of the Communist school narrative, and point to a more substantial role for syndicalism. Thirdly, I examine the question of primary research, and the materials available in this respect.

The writings of the Communist school are, as I have suggested above, quite contradictory: claims that the *Voice of Labour* network ignored the national question, for example, sit uneasily alongside evidence that suggests an alternative interpretation; the International Socialist League is presented as "Marxist", yet the influence of De Leonism continually shines through. Such contradictions indicate that the works of the Communist school that deal with the pre-CPSA left should not be simply dismissed, for they may be used in a study of the impact of anarchism and syndicalism in South Africa, insofar as they are read closely and carefully, subject to the techniques of internal criticism and external criticism, particularly through verification against primary materials.

One important issue that should be noted here is that there is an implicit conflation between two distinct elements of the politics of the pre-CPSA left that needs to be addressed by the reader: the issue of a *strategic* focus on White workers, and the *principled* question of approaches to the national question. The Communist school is, in fact, correct to suggest that at least some elements of groups like the International Socialist League – and Andrews was certainly an example – tended to focus their energies on the large, militant and well-organised White unions. It simply does *not* follow, however, that there was a contradiction between their activities and a radical position on the national question, for these activists consistently championed the interracial (and syndicalist) views of the International Socialist League; it would be a fundamental mistake to assume that a focus on White workers at a given point in time implied a lack of interest in workers of other races, let alone actual racial prejudice.

This is central to the reasoning that leads me to speak of the "S.P. Bunting/ Ivon Jones myth". When writers like Eddie Roux speak of a fierce "inner-party struggle" between those who did not want "recognition of the black worker" and the two "enthusiastic nigrophiles",[268] they fail to recognise that an organisation like the International Socialist League may have be bound together by a common socialist vision and "a revolutionary platform regarding the native workers"[269] that was *simultaneously* manifested in work amongst White labour *and* workers of colour, that was not contradictory but consistent with the strictest internationalism.

Neither Ivon Jones nor S.P. Bunting advocated a narrow "nigrophilism": Ivon Jones, for example, believed "the working class is interdependent … the false idea of Unity which sneers at either section of the proletariat … is anti-proletarian in the below zero direction".[270] Andrews, cast in the role of White Labourite

[268] Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit*., pp. 74-75, 84
[269] Jones, [9 June 1921] 1988a, *op cit*., p. 122
[270] David Ivon Jones, 11 April 1919, "The White Worker's 'Burden'", *The International*

villain by Eddie Roux, believed the International Socialist League must "organise *all* workers by industry, irrespective of race or colour, and demands that all political disabilities shall be removed from all workers.[271]

These are issues I will explore at some length in Section 6.7., but suffice it to say that, contrary to the "S.P. Bunting/ Ivon Jones myth", the two men's views were broadly representative of the views of the official programme and accepted politics of the great majority of members; contrary to this myth, and the notion of an "inner-party struggle", the International Socialist League explicitly refused to focus on any single racial group, defining its target as the working class *as a whole*; finally, Andrews, S.P. Bunting and Ivon Jones all involved themselves with the struggles of both White workers and workers of colour. If anything, this created a problem: a refusal to focus on "either section of the proletariat" might have been commendable, but it lent itself to a vague policy of trying to recruit every worker, everywhere, and all the time, which made it difficult to focus the energies of the organisation.

Secondly, it is important to note that a growing number of works have challenged many of the key elements of the Communist school narrative, even if very few have paid attention to the pre-CPSA period. Questions that about the validity of the Communist school narrative were raised by a number of studies in the 1980s and 1990s that drew attention to South Africa's small Trotskyist tradition, which emerged against the backdrop of the New Line period. The late Baruch Hirson, himself a veteran Trotskyist, played an incomparable role in this work, both as archivist and writer, complemented by the important contributions of other scholars on other aspects of that tradition.[272] Drew's PhD and documentary collections, and a number of other articles, also played a crucial role in this area by examining the intellectual history of the Party and the Trotskyist tradition as part of a single socialist milieu.[273] If these works sometimes exaggerated the importance of the Trotskyists, they raised serious questions about the monolithic image of socialist history presented by the Communist school: local socialism was clearly a far richer and more pluralistic tradition.

While the history of the CPSA and SACP "remained, until recently, largely untouched",[274] a number of works began to develop a more nuanced picture of the Party, which emerged as a far more complex body than the Communist school, with its stress on the official Party line, had indicated. A number of studies of the Party's ideological development showed a Party that was diverse and often contested – for example, the meaning of the "Native Republic" thesis was widely debated, and its stress on anti-imperialism and nationalism opened up a lively debate on the possible role of Afrikaner nationalism in the South African struggle – rather than a single monolithic entity marching determinedly onward under the "light of Marxist-

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[271] William H. Andrews, 14 February 1918, "White and Black Labour in South Africa", *The Call*; also see William H. Andrews, 16 February 1918, "South African Socialism and the War"

[272] Other important studies include Colin Bundy, 1987, "Land and Liberation: popular rural protest and the national liberation movement in South Africa, 1920-1960", in Marks and Trapido, editors, 1987, *op cit*.; Robert Fine, with Dennis Davis, 1990, *Beyond Apartheid: labour and liberation in South Africa*, Pluto, London; Bill Nasson, 1990, "The Unity Movement: its legacy in popular consciousness", *Radical History Review* no. 46/7; Mark Stein, 1978, "Max Gordon and African Trade Unionism on the Witwatersrand, 1935-1940", in Webster, editor, 1978, *op cit.*

[273] See Drew, 1991a, *op cit.*; Drew, 1991b, *op cit.*; Drew, editor, 1996a, *op cit*.; Drew, 1996b, *op cit.*; Drew, editor, 1997, *op cit.*

[274] Drew, 1997, *op cit.*, p. 107

Leninist science".[275] While Krikler's fascinating work on the Rand Revolt suggested that the CPSA, as an organisation, was a fairly marginal force in the Rand Revolt,[276] other social histories indicated that the Party in the 1940s and 1950s was far more influential than has often been supposed, often overshadowing the ANC amongst Africans.[277] Meanwhile, comparative studies, such as that of Johanningsmeier, suggested that the CPSA was far more successful mobilising workers of colour than parties like the CPUSA.[278]

These works open new vistas, but present only a partial, and often implicit, challenge to the Communist school narrative. The literature on Trotskyism obviously focuses on the period after the establishment of the CPSA, and, by presenting the disputes within the socialist movement as disputes between mainstream Communism and Trotskyism, reproduces an identification of revolutionary socialism with classical Marxism. Given the larger tendency of Trotskyism to define itself in opposition to mainstream Communist Parties, this literature also tends to reproduce the notion that developments in the CPSA and SACP are defining moments in South African socialist history. Likewise, the works that show a more complex CPSA and SACP than the Party presented in the Communist school texts take the CPSA as their focus, and do not pay attention to the pre-CPSA period.

As such, the new writings on Trotskyism and the Party complicate our understanding of the role of classical Marxism in South Africa, but do not pose a fundamental challenge to the Communist school interpretation of the pre-CPSA left. There are, however, a number of works that do so, and in a manner congruent with the aims of this thesis.

Several of the studies discussed in the previous section as influenced by the Communist school – for example, Katz, Johns, Caldwell and Johanningsmeier – certainly indicate that syndicalism played some role in the pre-CPSA left. Katz provided a detailed examination of the IWW that, while flawed in some respects, as I argue in Chapter 4, was nonetheless the best study to date. Johns, for his part, spoke in passing of the

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[275] See, for instance, David Everett, 1991, "Alliance Politics of a Special Type: the roots of the ANC/SACP alliance, 1950-54", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol.18, no. 1; Peter Hudson, 1987, "The Freedom Charter and the Theory of the National Democratic Revolution", *Transformation*, no. 1; Derek Mosenthal, 1988, "The Flight from Class and Principle: an examination of Alliance Politics and the role of intellectuals in struggle, towards a discussion of the relation between theoretical conceptualisation of struggle and academic Marxist processes of thought", BA Honours dissertation, Industrial Sociology, University of the Witwatersrand; Lungisile Ntsebeza, 1988, "Divisions and Unity in Struggle: the African National Congress, International Socialist League and CP, 1910-28", B.A. Honours dissertation in Economic History, University of Cape Town; Jonny Steinberg, 1995, *op cit.*

[276] Krikler, 2005, *op cit*., pp. 109-110

[277] See Peter Alexander, 2000, *Workers, War and the Origins of Apartheid: labour and politics in South Africa,* Oxford, James Currey, Athens: Ohio University Press, Cape Town, David Philip; Luli Callinicos, 1990, *op cit.*; Peter Delius, 1993, "Migrant Organisation, the Communist Party, the ANC and the Sekhukhuneland Revolt, 1940-58", in Philip Bonner, Peter Delius and Deborah Posel, editors, 1993, *Apartheid's Genesis 1935-62*, Ravan Press, Braamfontein, Wits University Press, Johannesburg; Tom Lodge, 1985, "Class Conflict, Communal Struggle and Patriotic Unity: the CPSA during the Second World War", paper presented at the African Studies Seminar, University of the Witwatersrand, 7 October 1985. Another important work was Robert Vincent Lambert, 1988, "Political Unionism in South Africa: the South African Congress of Trade Unions, 1955-1965", PhD thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, which was sensitive to the complexities of labour history and politics. Also of interest is Taffy Adler, 1979, "Lithuania's Diaspora: the Johannesburg Jewish Workers' Club, 1928-1948", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol.6, no. 1

[278] Notably Johanningsmeier, 2004, *op cit.*

impact of the IWW, anarcho-syndicalism and "Marxist-syndicalism".[279] Johanningsmeier, as noted above, linked the role of a "strong syndicalist bent" on turning the left towards African workers.[280]

The same is true of some of the other works cited. Musson's study of Gomas notes that he joined the International Socialist League and was involved in its union work amongst Coloureds, and remained "schooled in the tradition" of that organisation for many years, advocating "scientific industrial" principles and One Big Union.[281] Grossman, likewise, spoke of the impact of syndicalism on the International Socialist League, presenting "syndicalism as the only developed attempt to apply at least aspects of Marxist theory [*sic*] to the South African situation" and the main impetus towards attention to African workers, although he repeated the Marxist formula of the of supposed "inability of syndicalism to come to grips with ... state power".[282]

Such analyses begin to indicate that the pre-CPSA did not easily fit into the framework of the Communist school, which treated the early groups as either openly racially prejudiced or oblivious to the national question, and tried to paint the International Socialist League as a proto-Bolshevik party. These studies did not – and this is important to emphasise – develop a general analysis of the influence of anarchism and syndicalism in South Africa, nor examine, in any systematic way. The manner in which the broad anarchist tradition was articulated and applied in South Africa certainly indicated that the views that there was "no libertarian activity worth mentioning",[283] with anarchism and syndicalism "almost completely absent from the South African political scene",[284] were flawed.

It is here that a further body of literature, highlighting anarchist and syndicalist influences – without, however, providing a general and systematic study of the impact of the broad anarchist tradition – proves to be of great interest. Several works produced by the contemporary anarchist and revolutionary syndicalist movement have pointed to anarchist and syndicalist influences on the early history of the South African left. John Philips, an IWW supporter, wrote two articles looking at the impact of the syndicalist union on South Africa.[285] Both were somewhat brief, and heavily reliant on the American IWW press, but nonetheless suggestive.

A political studies student research paper by Alex Gordon, heavily influenced by Philips, looked at the IWW set up in Johannesburg in 1910, but ignored the International Socialist League and other bodies.[286] In *African Anarchism: the history of a movement*, written by the Nigerian anarcho-syndicalists Samuel Mbah and I.E. Igariwey, the International Socialist League and the Industrial Workers of Africa were described as

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[279] Johns, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 52, 61, 71, 141 note 13
[280] Johanningsmeier, 2004, *op cit*., pp. 176-177
[281] Musson, 1989, *op cit.*, pp. 30, 31, 49, 106, 116-126, 132-8
[282] See, *inter alia*, Grossman, 1985, *op cit*., pp. 43,52 67-69
[283] Nettlau, [1934] 1996, *op cit.*, p. 262
[284] Leatt, Kneifel, and Nürnburger, editors, 1986, *op cit.*, p. 248
[285] John Philips, October 1976, "Digging into I.W.W. History: South Africa", *Industrial Worker* and Philips, 1978, *op cit.*
[286] Alex Gordon, 1988, "The Influence of Syndicalism on the South African Working Class", BA (Honours) paper, Political Studies, University of Essex. I would like to Alex Gordon for sending me this paper.

syndicalist; Philips was again the key source used.[287] It is also interesting to note that this type of view could also be found in *Debates in South African Labour History*, a popular history booklet published in South African in 1992 (initially as a series of articles in the left-wing weekly, *the New Nation*); it described the International Socialist League as opposed to racial discrimination and referred to the "the syndicalists within the ISL" and its "syndicalist weaknesses".[288]

These activist writings were complemented by a number of scholarly papers. Hirson, again, made an important contribution, first in a seminar paper on "Syndicalists in South Africa, 1908-1917", which stated of syndicalist influences: "Their impact was not negligible".[289] It looked at the *Voice of Labour* network, the IWW and the Socialist Labour Party, and also, to a lesser extent, at the International Socialist League and the Industrial Workers of Africa. Hirson also co-authored, with Gwyn Williams, a biography of Ivon Jones that suggested he "adopted de Leon's syndicalist views", like many others in the International Socialist League.[290] Both the seminar paper and the biography did tend to suggest, however, that De Leon's influence waned quickly after 1917, a proposition that – I argue in Chapters 6 to 9– is not very convincing.

Several other recent works have also highlighted the role of syndicalism in the pre-CPSA left, although they stopped short of providing a systematic study of anarchist and syndicalist influence, ideology, and practice. A short dissertation by Paul Power counted syndicalism – specifically De Leonism – as a "major influence" on the International Socialist League, and suggested that the class politics of the organisation and its criticisms of the Transvaal Native Congress "do not appear to have been an obstacle to them relating to black workers".[291]

Krikler's impressive study of the Rand Revolt identifies Percy Fisher, the key figure on the extreme left and the main mover behind the shift to insurrection, as a revolutionary syndicalist.[292] He does not, however, explore Fisher's syndicalism or its place in the South African radical tradition, or the politics of the Council of Action with which Fisher, described as a "revolutionary" and "class warrior" of "extreme views", was associated.[293] Wessel Visser's two theses on the history of the early labour and left press are also most useful, providing a systematic and fascinating insight into the world of the early left and a great deal of valuable information.[294]

Drew's recent book on the South African socialist movement – the first general history of the left produced outside of the Communist school – criticised the teleological approach of writers like the Simons,

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[287] Samuel Mbah and I.E. Igariwey, 1997, *African Anarchism: the history of a movement*, See Sharp Press. Tucson, Arizona

[288] LACOM/SACHED, 1992, *Debates in South African Labour History*, LACOM/ SACHED, pp. 3, 6

[289] Baruch Hirson, 12 November 1993e, "Syndicalists in South Africa, 1908-1917", *p*aper for discussion at postgraduate seminar, on "Comparative Labour and Working class History", University of London, p. 3

[290] Baruch Hirson, with Gwyn A. Williams, 1995, *The Delegate for Africa: David Ivon Jones, 1883-1924*, Core Publications, London, 104, 156-7, 166-7

[291] Paul Power, 1995, "The International Socialist League (South Africa) and Black Workers in the Transvaal, 1915-1918", BA (Honours) dissertation, History, University of London, pp. 4-5, 18-19. I would like to thank Peter Alexander for providing me with a copy of this document.

[292] Krikler, 2005, *op cit*., p. 114

[293] Krikler, 2005, *op cit*., pp. 43, 113-115, 159-160, 172-181, 216, 230-232, 238, 280-286

[294] See Wessel P. Visser, 1987, "Suid-Afrikaanse Koerantberriggewing en- Kommentaar ten opsigte van Arbeiderspartye, Socialistiese Partye en ander Radikale Grope en Bewegings, 1908-1915", MA thesis, University of Stellenbosch, and Visser, 2001a, *op cit.*

Harmel and Dadoo, and made a number of other interesting points, such as noting the absence of a local social democratic tradition, and the influence of socialism on A.K. Soga, a prominent early African intellectual.[295] The book was also notable for taking the influence of the IWW and its De Leonist variant, as well as anarchism, seriously, describing the impact on the International Socialist League as "striking".[296]

There are a number of points that I would dispute in Drew's book, such as her claim that the SDF saw itself as "mainstream Marxist Second International Party", her sharp division between syndicalism and political action, her insistence that the pre-CPSA period was characterised by "organisational and ideological eclecticism" rather than clearly defined positions, and her view that the "Native Republic" finally "forced Communists to put South Africa's pressing social problems, the national and land questions, at the top of their political programme".[297] Nonetheless, the work is an impressive achievement by a leading scholar, not least because it takes syndicalism seriously. With two innovative chapters on the pre-CPSA left, a recognition that socialism, even then, could cross the colour line, Drew shook the edifice of the Communist school.

A final book bears mention here: Hyslop's recently published biography of James Thomas ""J.T." Bain, a radical trade unionist who promoted a mixture of romantic socialism and White Labourism on the Witwatersrand from 1890 until his death in 1919.[298] In this excellent study – which does much to demonstrate the value of biography as a means of exploring the complexities of popular consciousness in the era of the "first globalisation" – Hyslop is careful to stress the importance of the international impact of syndicalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which "attached itself to the extraordinary wave of labour militancy that swept around the world in the years immediately before the First World War".[299] His study notes the impact of syndicalism on the network around the *Voice of Labour*, and groups like the IWW and the Socialist Labour Party, and suggests that the influence was also widespread outside these circles, impacting on broader sections of White labour, including figures like Bain.

There are certainly issues on which I disagree with Hyslop, such as his view that syndicalism "is perhaps best thought of as a climate of feeling, rather than a coherent political philosophy, a roar of anger rather than a coherent concept".[300] This is a serious underestimation of the breadth and depth of syndicalist thought and movements, a distinct socialist tradition arising out of anarchism. The view that syndicalism was more an emotional state than a "coherent political philosophy" makes it very difficult indeed to delineate the impact and contributions (as well as failures) of that tradition, and replicates some of the problems in the larger literature on anarchism and syndicalism that I have discussed in Chapter 2. I also disagree with some points of detail, such as the suggestion that Harrison of the SDF was "a follower of the brand of Marxism propagated by HM Hyndman", his view that Andrews was "at heart a white labourist" and S.P. Bunting a

[295] Drew, 2002, *op cit*., pp. 1-2, 26
[296] Drew, 2002, *op cit*., pp. 8-9, 22, 25-7, 30, 37-40, 46-50
[297] Drew, 2002, *op cit*., pp. 8, 22-23, 46-47, 107
[298] Hyslop, 2004, *op cit.*
[299] Hyslop, 2004, *op cit.,* p.183
[300] Hyslop, 2004, *op cit*., p. 184

"Marxist", and the notion that the International Socialist League had an element of White Labourism,[301] none of which I find convincing.

3.8. In conclusion: rediscovering anarchism and syndicalism in South(ern) Africa

All of these secondary sources make a valuable contribution towards the study of anarchism and syndicalism in South Africa. What is still lacking, however, is a systematic study of the role of the broad anarchist tradition in that country – that is precisely what this thesis aims to provide. This requires several key lines of advance. One level is conceptual: in Chapter 2, and again in Section 3.6., I have stressed the need to develop a clear and convincing understanding of anarchism and syndicalism, and have suggested that both these should be understood as part of a broad anarchist tradition dating back to the First International. This provides a useful corrective to the misuse and misapplication of these terms, a practice that does little to advance study into these areas.

A second line of advance is a careful use of available sources. In this chapter, I have suggested that the materials of the Communist school – carefully and critically used – can make an important contribution to the study of anarchism and syndicalism. I have also pointed to a number of other secondary works that provide indispensable resources for this endeavour. None of these secondary sources can, however, substitute for a serious examination of the primary materials. I have been fortunate in being able to locate a large number of contemporary publications, police records and other materials of direct relevance to the subject in a number of collections – these are discussed more fully in the Bibliography and Sources section – and these have revealed a rather different picture than that outlined by the Communist school.

The evidence has led me to conclude, in fact, that anarchism and syndicalism played a very important role in the labour and socialist movements in South Africa between the 1890s and the 1920s. This included some influence amongst sections of White labour, involved a powerful critique of racial discrimination and prejudice and – in the case of syndicalism – the view that One Big Union could simultaneously wage class war *and* secure national liberation. While White immigrants pioneered anarchism and syndicalism in South Africa, the movement was increasingly a multi-racial one, including a significant bloc of trade unions amongst African, Coloured, and Indian workers in the late 1910s. Syndicalism also had an impact on the early CPSA, the Rand Revolt and the ICU, which carried some of its ideas into Northern and Southern Rhodesia and South West Africa. My familiarity with the literature on the broad anarchist tradition is an advantage, for it allows me to systematically situate developments within southern Africa within the context of the larger world of the "glorious period" of anarchism and syndicalism.

This thesis makes, I believe, an important and original contribution that casts new light onto labour and left history in southern Africa. It is to the details of this analysis that I turn in the subsequent chapters, before discussing, in the final chapter, my main findings and the relevance of this thesis to labour history more broadly.

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[301] Hyslop, 2004, *op cit*., p. 194, 274, 291

Chapter 4

The first wave: Henry Glasse, the SDF, the *Voice of Labour*, and the IWW, 1881-1912

It is commonly believed that anarchism and syndicalism have played no part in the history of South Africa, let alone the neighbouring countries. This view can even be found in the writings of prominent anarchists. An example is Max Nettlau (1865-1944), in many ways the official historian of anarchism. [1] Despite his extensive research into anarchist history, Nettlau insisted that "there has been no libertarian activity worth mentioning" in South Africa.[2] Later scholars have done little to reverse this judgment: a recent overview of ideologies in South Africa stated, for example, that anarchism has "been almost completely absent from the South African political scene".[3] And, certainly, in the groundbreaking days of the First International, the emergence of anarchism or syndicalism in isolated and undeveloped southern Africa was a remote prospect.

The explosive birth of the new order in South Africa radically changed the situation. The rapid growth of a working class, drawn from across the British Empire and the southern African region, linked the region to international developments, and it would have been surprising if the "glorious period" of anarchism and syndicalism did not have an impact. This chapter looks at the first wave of anarchism and syndicalism in South Africa, which dates back to the 1880s, focussing on key ideas, figures, groups and organising initiatives. As elsewhere, the history of anarchism and syndicalism in South (and southern) Africa has been "largely been ignored or misrepresented"[4] and "buried under subsequent defeats and political orthodoxies",[5]

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[1] An Austrian linguist with a doctorate in Welsh grammar, and a friend of Kropotkin, Nettlau inherited money that enabled him to devote his life to writing the history of anarchism. He amassed a vast collection of documents (which later formed the core of the early holdings of the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam), wrote an extensive *Bibliography of Anarchism*, followed by a multi-volume Bakunin biography, and a ten-volume history of anarchism that appeared from 1925.Partly because Nettlau's works were initially published in small print runs by struggling anarchist groups, his contribution has never received its proper due: the Bakunin biography exists in only 50 mimeographed copies in Nettlau's script, and has never been republished; the ten-volume history, long unavailable, was reissued in German in the 1970s by Topos Verlag, Vaduz, and in the 1980s by Verlag Detlev Auvermann KG, Glashütten in Taunus, but these editions are very difficult to obtain. Although there have been moves to reissue the materials recently. the series is not available in English, except in the form of a translation of Nettlau's companion volume to the series*, A Short History of Anarchism*, issued a decade ago by Freedom Press, London: see Nettlau, [1934] 1996, *op cit*.

[2] Nettlau, [1934] 1996, *op cit.*, p. 262

[3] Leatt, Kneifel and Nürnburger, 1986, *op cit.*, p. 248

[4] Shaffer, 1998, *op cit*., p. 2

creating a "historical amnesia".[6] It is, however, possible to uncover a rich and important history of local anarchist and syndicalist activity in the region dating back to the 1880s, and this chapter takes us from those early days, to the early years of the Union of South Africa.

The story starts in the coastal centres. The founder of anarchism and syndicalism in South Africa seems to have been Henry Glasse, a radical English emigrant to Port Elizabeth. Closely linked to Kropotkin's Freedom circle in London, he translated Kropotkin's works into English, distributed Freedom Press materials locally, promoted anarchist ideas within local left-wing circles, and helped form a Socialist Club. Amongst the many early European immigrants who helped spread socialist ideas locally from the late nineteenth century onwards,[7] Henry Glasse stands out as one of the earliest and most consistent activists. Based in what was a declining coastal centre, Glasse was fairly isolated for many years: it was the growth of the movement elsewhere in the country that provided his ideas with amore substantial audience.

The period following the Anglo-Boer War saw the rapid spread of socialist ideas across the country, including anarchism and syndicalism. In Cape Town the SDF – the most important socialist organisation in the country before 1910, and active until 1921 – was formed in 1904. A diverse group that provided a home for socialists and radicals of a wide range of persuasions, the SDF always involved a large anarchist section, including its leading figure, Wilfred Henry Harrison, a carpenter and ex-soldier. Based largely amongst skilled immigrant White workers, the SDF engaged in radical propaganda to mixed audiences, promoted interracial working class mobilisation (including the formation of an integrated General Workers Union), and managed to win some influence in the Coloured working class.

The Witwatersrand was also the scene of a series of leftwing initiatives at this time, most notably in Johannesburg. A radical network emerged around the socialist weekly, the *Voice of Labour*, which had been started in 1908 as a "free sheet" to promote a General Workers' Union in Johannesburg. Edited by Archie Crawford, a radical fitter, and published by Mary Fitzgerald, it was an open platform for a wide range of socialist views, and linked up activists like Henry Glasse in Port Elizabeth and Harrison in Cape Town, serving as an unofficial mouthpiece for the SDF as well.

Besides providing the space in which a radical critique of racial discrimination and segregation was developed – a critique that would be more fully developed from 1915 onwards by syndicalists like the International Socialist League – the *Voice of Labour* provided the nexus around which an organised syndicalist current coalesced. Following a visit by British syndicalist Tom Mann in 1910, a major swing towards syndicalism (already somewhat evident amongst local radicals, even Crawford and Fitzgerald) took organised expression with the founding of a Socialist Labour Party and IWW. The two groups faithfully reproduced the split between the Detroit and Chicago IWW's on the streets of Johannesburg: however, while the De Leonist group was mainly a propaganda outfit, the IWW developed a relatively large presence as a militant trade union in Johannesburg and Pretoria, and Durban.

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[5] Howell, 2000, *op cit*., p. 30
[6] Allen, 1999, *op cit*., pp. 263-4
[7] Johns, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 24-30

A radical and vocal minority in the White working class, the Witwatersrand groups promoted interracial organisation in principle, but failed to achieve it in practice: the great breakthrough, the creation of a multi-racial syndicalist movement and syndicalist unions amongst workers of colour, would come in later years. The SDF, however, provided an early organising model, and groups like the IWW and Socialist Labour Party helped pave the way with their principled refusal to flow with the tide of White Labourism, and their willingness to imagine a different type of class politics. In taking this internationalist stance, they were very much in line with the anarchist and syndicalist movement internationally, notable for its opposition to racial prejudice, discrimination, and imperialism (see Section 2.9).

It should, of course, be borne in mind that these developments took place against the broader backdrop of the "glorious period". The 1890s saw the formation of the French CGT, the Cuban CTC, the Pact of Union and Solidarity in Spain, and the NAS in the Netherlands; the first decade of the twentieth century saw the emergence of the Argentinean FORA, the Brazilian COB/FORB, the Paraguayan FORP, a Regional Workers' Federation of Peru (FORP), the Uruguayan FORU, and the United States' IWW, which soon spread into Australia, Britain, and New Zealand, as well as Latin America; the 1910s saw the founding of the Spanish CNT, the Swedish SAC, Britain's Industrial Syndicalist Education League, the Italian USI, the Syndicalist League of North America, the UON in Portugal, the COM and IWW in Mexico, the IWW in Chile, numerous syndicalist unions in China, and the first signs of syndicalism in Japan.

4.1. Early days: Henry Glasse, Peter Kropotkin and Port Elizabeth

It was at declining Port Elizabeth in the eastern Cape, rather than the rapidly growing diamond fields and gold mines of the interior, that the first anarchist known to have been active in what would become South Africa, Henry Glasse, commenced to distribute propaganda materials in the 1880s.[8] Port Elizabeth might seem, at first glance, an unlikely birthplace for anarchism and syndicalism in South Africa, given that the town was fairly marginal to the South African economy by the twentieth century. Yet this had not always been the case.

By the end of the 1850s, Port Elizabeth in the eastern Cape had emerged as a serious economic rival to Cape Town. Known as the "Liverpool of the Cape", its imports and exports would exceed those of the colonial capital for the next two years, and nearly half the ships departing from its port went directly to Britain.[9] Its population, however, always lagged behind that of Cape Town.[10] Cape Town and Port Elizabeth were both initially hampered by fairly primitive port facilities and poor infrastructure in the hinterland, and experienced serious problems in the 1860s from competition from high-quality Australian wool, and adverse weather conditions.[11]

It was also initially Port Elizabeth that benefited most from the subsequent revival of the wool industry, as well as the opening of the Kimberley diamond fields, which created new outlets for its bankers

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[8] H. Oliver, 1983, *The International Anarchist Movement in late Victorian London,* Croom Helm, London and Canberra, St. Martins' Press, New York, pp. 46, 70
[9] Mabin, 1986, *op cit.*, p. 279
[10] Bickford-Smith, 1995, *op cit,* p. 11, table 1
[11] Mabin, 1986*, op cit*., pp. 281-183

and merchants, and became the largest market in the country and, after Cape Town, the largest town.[12] From the late 1870s onwards diamond exports began to exceed the value of wool exports from the Cape Colony,[13] and Port Elizabeth was central to this trade.

The 1880s brought new difficulties. Both Cape Town and Port Elizabeth were affected by the international depression of the 1880s, and growing economic problems in Kimberley, signalled by declining diamond prices, investment and trade.[14] On the other hand, the rapid growth in the territory ruled by the Cape Colony following colonial wars in the eastern Cape led to a growth in the labour supply and new trading opportunities. [15] Port Elizabeth was well positioned to benefit from the rise of wealthy African farmers in the eastern Cape.

However, Port Elizabeth would become permanently marginalised in the new economy centred on the gold mines. In the 1870s and 1880s, its port facilities were overtaken by those of Cape Town, whose powerful, largely English, merchant class helped capture the largest share of the colonial government's rapidly improving finances, and by 1885 Cape Town had also established the fastest railway route to Kimberley.[16] Port Elizabeth remained heavily dependent on manual labour on the docks, encouraging crippling strikes by African and Coloured workers from 1856, just two years after the country's first ever strike, which was undertaken by dockworkers in Cape Town in 1854.[17] Port Elizabeth was further disadvantaged by the decision to link the Witwatersrand to the coast via railways from Kimberley (Cape Town had a line to Johannesburg by 1892),[18] which benefited the cheaper Cape Town line, and by the subsequent reliance on Durban for trade.

Cape Town rapidly drew ahead of its former rival, despite a brief depression in the early 1890s. Its trade boomed, getting a further boost from the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902, which provided a brisk business with both the imperial military and a growing refugee population.[19] The financial sector, tramways and urban railways, building and construction all grew rapidly in this period, a growing number of factories sprang up, and its population grew rapidly. In 1891, Port Elizabeth's population was 23,000 compared to greater Cape Town's 79,000; by 1904, the figures were 33,000 to 170,000, respectively.[20] Port Elizabeth also developed very little in the way of local manufacturing at the time, unlike Cape Town (or Durban).

When Henry Glasse arrived, however, Port Elizabeth was still a thriving centre. Today, Henry Glasse is a forgotten figure, who appears only sporadically, if at all, in the literature: in Nettlau's account, he looms large, but only because he gets a line as the "one exception" to a local history that is scarcely "worth

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[12] Mabin, 1986, *op cit*., pp. 284-285; Roberts, 1976, *op cit*., p. 146; Robert Vicat Turrell, 1987, *Capital and Labour on the Kimberley Diamond Fields, 1871-1890*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, London, New York, New Rochelle, Melbourne, Sydney, pp. 60-1
[13] Mabin, 1986, *op cit*., p. 290: Table 2, p. 295: Table 3
[14] Mabin, 1986, *op cit*., pp. 293-4
[15] Bickford-Smith, 1995, *op cit.*, 44; Mabin, 1989a, *op cit*., pp. 27-31
[16] Mabin, 1986, *op cit*., pp. 288-289, 295-8; also see Bickford-Smith, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 11-13, 16-17, 43-6, 129-130
[17] Mabin, 1986, *op cit*., p. 282
[18] Bickford-Smith, 1995, *op cit*., p. 129
[19] Bickford-Smith, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 130-132
[20] Bickford-Smith, 1995, *op cit*., p. 11, table 1

mentioning";[21] in accounts of British anarchism, he makes brief appearances, but the main part of his activist life, in South Africa, is not examined;[22] in histories of labour and the left in South Africa, particularly those of the Communist school, he is never mentioned at all. This is unfortunate, for Henry Glasse was not only the local pioneer of anarchism, but he was almost unmatched in the first generation of immigrant socialists for his sustained activity and interracial politics.

Born in 1857 in Surat, India, Henry Glasse seems to have grown up in Europe.[23] It is clear that he was well educated, and fluent in French.[24] In his twenties, he became involved in radical circles in London. In the late 1870s, the English Revolutionary Society – founded in 1877 as part of a broader Social Democratic Club that included many German exiles – reissued two pamphlets on communism by Henry Glasse, as well as materials promoting classical Marxism.[25] In 1878, he was a member of the International Labour Union, a politically diverse group founded by members of the English section of the First International in 1878, which viewed Marx's activities in that organisation as having been authoritarian and counter-productive.[26]

By 1881, Henry Glasse seems to have moved towards a more clearly anarchist position.[27] In August of that year, soon after the founding of the Black International, Henry Glasse published an article in an English paper in which clearly he supported anarchism for the first time.[28] Interestingly, the article was written from Port Elizabeth, where Henry Glasse lived from the middle of 1881.[29] The long period of economic growth enjoyed by the town was starting to end, as it became increasingly marginalised in the new economy centred on the mines of the interior.

Henry Glasse's actual occupation in South Africa is somewhat unclear. He was well educated, but had also "worked in the mine" and engaged in "trading";[30] he also had some association with the Mechanic's' Institute in Port Elizabeth.[31] Henry Glasse lived most of the remainder of his life in Port Elizabeth, where he stayed in contact with English anarchist circles, distributed anarchist materials, translated anarchist materials from French to English for the international anarchist movement, and promoted anarchist ideas within local leftwing circles. It was immigrants like Henry Glasse who brought socialist ideas to South Africa, with British,

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[21] Nettlau, [1934] 1996, *op cit.*, p. 262
[22] For example, Oliver, 1983, *op cit.*; Quail, 1978, *op cit.*
[23] Nettlau, [1934] 1996, *op cit*., p. 382
[24] Oliver, 1983, *op cit*., p. 149
[25] Quail, 1978, *op cit.,* pp. 8-9
[26] Oliver, 1983, *op cit*., pp. 4-5, 7, 149
[27] Oliver, 1983, *op cit*., p. 149
[28] Oliver, 1983, *op cit*., p. 149
[29] Oliver, 1983, *op cit*., pp. 4-5, 7, 149
[30] [Henry Glasse], November-December 1905, "International Notes: South Africa", *Freedom*. The author of the letter is not identified in *Freedom*. However, given Glasse's ongoing contact with *Freedom*, and the content of the letter – the familiar tone of the author, the author's comment that he had previously been based in the Cape Colony, and the discussion of the author's progress of *Freedom* materials in South Africa – the conclusion that Glasse was the writer seems inescapable. I would like to thank Marrianne Enckell of the Centre for International Research on Anarchism, Geneva, Switzerland, for sending me this document.
[31] Henry Glasse, 1901, *Socialism the Remedy: being a lecture delivered in the Mechanics' Institute, Port Elizabeth, Cape Colony, by Henry Glasse*, Freedom Press, London, International Institute of Social History library holdings, catalogue no. AN 90/ 65

German, Italian, Irish, and Jewish immigrants bringing ideas ranging from anarchism to Marxism, and distributing overseas publications.[32]

In early 1886, an article on anarchism by Henry Glasse appeared in the *Anarchist*, an early English paper edited by Henry Seymour.[33] In January 1886, Kropotkin moved to London, after serving a jail sentence in France, where he initially edited the *Anarchist,* before establishing his own journal – *Freedom: a journal of anarchist communism.* Henry Glasse kept in contact with the London circles associated with *Freedom*, and seems to have joined the *Freedom* group at some point.[34] Articles by Henry Glasse appeared in *Freedom* from its first year of publication, until at least the end of the nineteenth century.[35] It was Henry Glasse who translated Kropotkin's *The Place of Anarchism in Socialistic Evolution* into English in 1886, where it appeared first in the *Anarchist*, then as a separate pamphlet,[36] and Kropotkin's *Expropriation* in 1895.[37] He also acted as a local distributor of anarchist works by luminaries such as Kropotkin and Errico Malatesta, probably the most prominent anarchist at the time after Kropotkin, published by Freedom Press.[38]

In 1901, Freedom Press published Glasse's *Socialism the Remedy*, which had previously appeared in *Freedom.* [39] An articulate writer, Glasse also wrote *The Superstition of Government*, which had the honour of being jointly published in 1902 with Kropotkin's *Organised Vengeance, Called "Justice"* in a booklet by Freedom Press.[40] Both *Socialism the Remedy* and *The Superstition of Government* were, it should be noted, fairly abstract restatements of the anarchist case against capitalism and the State, stressing the "watchword of the Social Revolution … 'Peasant, seize the land; workman, seize the factory'",[41]

Such statements could as easily have been made in London as in Port Elizabeth: absent in both is a clear appreciation of the very real difficulties that the centrality of racial discrimination, prejudice and identities posed for a revolutionary socialist strategy in what would become South Africa. Who, after all, were the "peasants" and "workers" in the South African context, and could they organise alongside one another to institute a self-managed socialism? There is no doubt that Glasse was a firm internationalist, but these works tend towards an abstract class politics that said little regarding the racial divisions in the South African working class.

A more effective analysis and strategy was developed in Glasse's later works. In 1905, Glasse sent a letter to Kropotkin, which was subsequently published in *Freedom.*[42] Kropotkin, it seems, had been invited to visit South Africa by the British Association in 1905, but had declined the offer. Glasse expressed some relief

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[32] Johns, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 24-30
[33] Quail, 1978, *op cit*., pp. 52-3
[34] For example, an article by Glasse appeared in *Freedom* in 1899: see Oliver, 1983, *op cit*., pp. 46, 70, 145-6, 149
[35] Peter Kropotkin, Oliver, 1983, *op cit*., p. 70 note 34, 145-6, 149
[36] See Kropotkin, [1886] 1990, *op cit.* More details may be found in Nettlau, [1934] 1996, *op cit*., p. 330
[37] Peter Kropotkin, [1895] 1971, "Expropriation", in Miller, 1970b, *op cit.*
[38] Henry Glasse, 6 September 1896, letter to C.M. Wilson, and H. Glasse, 12 December 1900, letter to J. Turner, manager of *Freedom*, both in Freedom and Freedom Press Collection, International Institute of Social History. I would like to thank the International Institute of Social History staff for their efforts, as well as Marianne Enckell of the Centre for International Research on Anarchism, Geneva, Switzerland, for her help.
[39] Henry Glasse, 1901, *op cit.*
[40] Peter Kropotkin/ Henry Glass, 1902, *Organised Vengeance, Called "Justice"/ The Superstition of Government*, Freedom Press, London, International Institute of Social History library holdings, catalogue no. AN 29/ 1202A
[41] Glasse, 1901, *op cit*., p. 11
[42] [Henry Glasse], November-December 1905, *op cit.*

at the cancellation – he characterised the British Association as an organisation that worked for the benefit of the mine-owners – but nonetheless regretted that Kropotkin would not be able to visit South Africa. Kropotkin would have "found South Africa very interesting, especially the natives", who were "much more interesting" than the local Whites. He continued:

> I have worked in the mine with them, and lived amongst them in the Cape Colony, and now I am trading with them; and I can assure you, dear comrade, that I would rather live amongst them, than amongst many who call themselves 'civilised'. You can still find amongst them the principle of Communism – primitive Communism … I have seen amongst them, such brotherly love, such human feelings, such help for one another that are quite unknown between 'civilised' people…

And yet, the Africans were brutally "robbed and ill-treated":

> They must not walk on the pavement, but in the middle of the road. They must not ride in cabs or tram, and in the trains there are separate compartments for them, just like cattle trucks. They must have passes *a la* Russia, and are allowed to live only in the 'location', those Ghettos set aside for them. They are not allowed to be on the streets after 9 p.m., in the land that was once their own – their Fatherland!

This recognition of the specific disabilities under which Africans laboured, and identification with their plight, marks an important step in the application of working class internationalism to the South African situation. Glasse now argued for active working class solidarity across racial lines: "For a white worker in this South Africa to pretend he can successfully fight his battle independent of the coloured wage slaves – the vast majority – is, to my mind, simply idiocy".[43]

Glasse's *Socialism the Remedy* was based on a lecture that he delivered at the Mechanics' Institute in Port Elizabeth in 1901.[44] The audience appears to have been a Socialist Club that Glasse established the previous year, to whom he gave "an exposition of Socialism from the Anarchist or Libertarian Standpoint" to a "very good audience".[45] It is not clear whether this was the same as the Socialist Club that been formed in Cape Town in 1897. That year, Forsyth Bascombe, a member of the Cape Town group, provoked a storm of controversy with a letter to the *Cape Times* attacking racial prejudice, arguing that White workingmen should unite with Africans and Coloureds "to declare to the world that Englishmen really believed in equality of freedom, man and right".[46]

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[43] See, for example, *The Voice of Labour*, 26 January 1912, letter from Glasse
[44] Henry Glasse, 1901, *op cit.*
[45] Glasse, 1900, *op cit.*
[46] Quoted in Bickford-Smith, 1995, *op cit*., p. 163. Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., p. 50 also mentions to the "Socialist Club": noting it was in operation by 1899, he does not, however, give details regarding its allegiances.

It is certainly likely that radical English immigrants were in contact with one another, and that Glasse, with his endless work for anarchism, would have been in contact with other radicals, including Bascombe. For example, Glasse made contact with local Jewish anarchists, and found a ready market for Kropotkin's Russian-language paper, *Kleb i Volya* ("Bread and Liberty") in Johannesburg.[47] It is not unlikely that he would have encountered Bascombe. It is worth noting – even in the absence of evidence of a clear link – that arguments for interracial labour unity were at the time unusual even amongst that small layer of immigrants that identified with the broad socialist tradition.

The views of Bascombe and Glasse may be contrasted with those of Bain on the Witwatersrand.[48] Born in Edinburgh to a working class family ca. 1869, he served in the British army, returned to Scotland, where he trained as a fitter, and came to the Transvaal in 1890, was naturalised, and helped form the Witwatersrand Mine Employees' and Mechanics' Union in 1892, better known simply as the Labour Union (which supported the job colour bar). He pioneered socialist ideas on the Witwatersrand, distributing the *Clarion* to miners and giving speeches in the Market Square. The *Clarion* was a British labour and socialist paper, which was founded in 1891 and edited by Robert Blatchford, a journalist who also established the Independent Labour Party in Manchester from a number of local unions and socialist groups.[49] Its stirring visions of socialism were coupled to a fairly vague approach to changing society. Bain also published the *Johannesburg Witness* in 1898 and 1899, the first socialist paper in South Africa.

Bain knew many of the key radicals of his age, and had some contacts with anarchism: he met Kropotkin in 1890, published a letter in the *Cape Times* defending the martyred Haymarket anarchists; he also serialised Tolstoy – not an anarchist, but certainly a libertarian – in the *Johannesburg Witness*.[50] It was not from anarchism, however, but another set of radical thinkers that Bain drew his inspiration, These included the romantic socialist Thomas Carlyle, a critic of industrialisation, William Morris, a libertarian socialist whose ideas centred on replacing drudgery with creative work, and John Ruskin, whose ideas overlapped with both.[51]

Unlike Henry Glasse, however, an anarchist and an internationalist who advocated interracial labour unity, Bain advocated a mixture of romantic socialism and White Labourism.[52] He was deeply sympathetic to the Transvaal, which he tended to idealise as a sort of democratic and pastoral republic. Thus, the

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[47] [Henry Glasse], November-December 1905, "International Notes: South Africa", *Freedom. Kleb i Volya* was a Russian anarchist paper associated with Kropotkin, which was aimed at factories and villages, and which sympathetic to revolutionary syndicalism and strongly critical of Leninism. See Paul Avrich, 1967, *The Russian Anarchists*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, pp. 54, 61, 63, 84, 107.

[48] On Bain and the Labour Union, see "Bain, James Thomas", in Rosenthal, compiler, 1966, *op cit*., p. 14; Gitsham and Trembath, 1926, *op cit*., p. 159; Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit*., p. 39; Johns, 1995, *op cit*., p. 25; Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., pp. 286-; Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 8-11, 79-81, 83-109; and, especially, Jon Hyslop, 2002b, "A Scottish Socialist Reads Carlyle in Johannesburg Prison, June 1900: Reflections on the Literary Culture of the Imperial Working Class", Wits Interdisciplinary Research Seminar, 15 July 2002, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, and Hyslop, 2004, *op cit.*

[49] On the *Clarion*, see A.L. Morton and George Tate, 1979, *The British Labour Movement, 1770-1920*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, revised edition, pp. 198, 202-4

[50] See Hyslop, 2004, *op cit*., pp. 4, 65, 71, 77-78, 128-129

[51] For Bain's views on Carlyle, see "J.T.B", 25 December 1912, "My Book-Shelf, Part V", *The Worker*. I would like to thank Jon Hyslop for supplying me with a copy of this article.

[52] Hyslop, 2002b, *op cit*., pp. 53-75

Johannesburg Witness "managed to synthesise revolutionary socialism with support for Kruger".[53] He fought for the Afrikaner side in the Anglo-Boer War, helped form the SA labour party, and was prominent in the strikes of 1907, 1913, and 1914. His last major action was his central role in 1919 strike by White employees of the Johannesburg municipality; he died later that year.

4.2. Wilfred Harrison, the SDF, and anarchism in early twentieth century Cape Town

Despite the efforts of men like Glasse, and early efforts such as the Socialist Club in Port Elizabeth, it was only after the turn of the century that socialism, broadly speaking, became a prominent public movement. The pioneering group was the SDF in Cape Town, based largely amongst skilled immigrants, and active until 1921. It was founded in Cape Town on May Day, 1904.[54] A politically diverse group, with some early affiliations to classical Marxism in Britain, it always had a substantial anarchist section – a section whose influence tended to grow over time. In 1905, the SDF co-operated with the local Trades and Labour Council – formed in 1899 and revived after the end of the Anglo-Boer War – to organise Cape Town's first May Day.[55]

Among the SDF's large anarchist section must be numbered Wilfred Harrison. Born in London in 1871, Harrison served on the British side in the Anglo-Boer War, came into conflict with his comrades as a result of his growing antipathy to the war and to military discipline, and finally lost his post as a military artificer for fraternising with Afrikaner prisoners.[56] Having served in the Coldstream Guards for ten years, Harrison, who had already begun to associate with socialist groups in the 1890s, became a "convinced pacifist", resigned in 1903 before his twelve-year term of duty ended, and settled in Cape Town, where he worked at his trade as a carpenter.[57]

Harrison's decision to settle in South Africa should be seen as part of a broader upsurge in White immigration to South Africa at the turn of the century – perhaps 114,000 immigrants arrived within two years of the and of the Anglo-Boer War – with demobilised soldiers an important component of the influx.[58] In 1903, Harrison met a labour orator from London, called J.L. Page, a sculptor who was apparently an orator of "Hyde Park fame" in London, who "held forth in true Cockney dialect" from the plinth of the Van Riebeeck Statue in Adderley Street, near the Dock Road.[59] The area near the Statue was a "rostrum for all creeds and sects, who followed each other all through the day of Sunday, reminiscent of the Hyde Park

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[53] Hyslop, 2002, *op cit*., p. 11, also see Hyslop, 2004, *op cit*., pp. 123, 127
[54] Jack Erasmus, 8 June 1905, "Social Democratic Federation: annual report", *South African News*, press clipping in Max Nettlau Collection, International Institute of Social History
[55] Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., p. 330
[56] Gitsham and Trembath, 1926, *A First Account of Labour Organisation in South Africa,* E.P. and Commercial Printing, Durban pp. 167-8; Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit*., pp. 123-126, 133-140; Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit.*, p. 57
[57] On Harrison generally, see Boydell, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. vii-xiv, 123-126, 133-142; Gitsham and Trembath, 1926, *op cit.*, pp. 167-8.
[58] Visser, 2001a, *op cit*., pp. 2-3
[59] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit*., p. 3

gatherings".[60] Together with some others, they formed a short-lived General Workers' Union – a project revived by Harrison in 1906.

Harrison soon met up with two other socialists. One was called Blagburn (Blackburn?), who had been a member of the West Ham branch of the Social Democratic Federation in Britain. Initially a rather mixed group that had included the famous Pre-Raphaelite artist and libertarian socialist, William Morris, the Social Democratic Federation in Britain was, by the twentieth century, a dogmatic Marxist group linked to the Labour and Socialist International and led by Hyndman. It was renamed the Social Democratic Party in 1908, and, subsequently, the British Socialist Party, but developed a syndicalist faction in its early years. The other was Jack Erasmus, a reporter from New Zealand, who claimed that he had come to South Africa for the express "purpose of introducing Socialism".[61]

The early SDF was decidedly moderate in its first two years, and a Statist outlook prevailed. The 1904 platform of the SDF comprised of a list of reforms, and did not mention socialism.[62] The SDF seems to have been initially affiliated to Hyndman's Social Democratic Federation in Britain, and initially described itself as a branch of that body.[63] The first Annual Report reported that a Mr. Ratchliff was mandated to "denounce the Chinese Labour Ordinance" which brought in Chinese indentured workers from 1903 "throughout England" and "to urge upon the candidates for elections in Great Britain a pledge to nationalise the mines of the Transvaal when granting self-government to that playground of the magnates".[64] In 1905, the SDF co-operated with the Trades and Labour Council around the Cape Town municipal elections, albeit without success, and the Labour Representation Committee set up by the unions supported the unsuccessful municipal candidature of the SDF member Arthur Ridout in 1907.[65]

Matters began to change in 1905 and 1906. Blagburn was called back to England on a family matter, and Harrison and Erasmus had a falling out in 1906 when the SDF published a short-lived periodical. It was meant to be called the *Cape Socialist*, but Erasmus, who arranged the printing of the first issue, changed the title to one he preferred: the *Cape Vanguard*.[66] (No copies seem to have survived,

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[60] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit*., p. 4
[61] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit*., p. 4
[62] Social Democratic Federation, [1904] 1973, "The Cape Town Social Democratic Federation's Fighting Platform, 1904", available as appendix B, I, 2 in Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., p. 497
[63] Erasmus, 1905, *op cit*.: Erasmus, the organising secretary, spoke of the "Cape Town and District Branch of the Social Democratic Federation". Another newspaper report spoke of the organisation as one of the "local branches of the Social Democratic Federation": see "Special Correspondent", 6 February 1905, "Capetown's Meeting of Sympathy", *Cape Daily Telegraph*, press clipping in Max Nettlau Collection, International Institute of Social History. When James Kier Hardie, a member of parliament for the Independent Labour Party in Britain, visited South Africa in 1908, he was hosted by the SDF: it appears in his accounts as both a "strong militant branch of the S.D.F. in Cape Town which carries on a very active propaganda", and as "the Socialist party": see James Kier Hardie, 5 May 1908, "In Cape Colony", *The Labour Leader*; James Kier Hardie, 22 May 1908, "South Africa: Conclusions", *The Labour Leader*
[64] Erasmus, 1905, *op cit.*; also see Drew, 2002, *op cit*., p. 24
[65] Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 330-1, 333-4; Visser, 2001a, *op cit*., p. 18. The 1905 manifesto may be found in Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., p. 498 appendix B, I, 4
[66] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit*., pp. 9-10

unfortunately.)[67] Erasmus, called to order on the matter, angrily left the SDF. He later became a sub-editor on the *Rand Daily Mail*, and then a property speculator in Durban.[68]

The *Cape Socialist* subsequently appeared for several years, apparently as a monthly. [69] It was edited by SDF member Abraham Needham, a sign writer from Australia, and head of the Cape Town sign writing firm of Needham and Burnett. It was composited by another member, Percy McKillop, a union leader ("Father of the Chapel") at the press of the commercial paper, *South African News.* Needham returned to Australia in 1911, where his daughter Elsie later married John Curtin, the future prime minister.

The *Cape Socialist* was superseded by the *Voice of Labour* on the Witwatersrand: initially a Johannesburg-based "free sheet" to promote yet another General Workers' Union, it was relaunched as a socialist weekly from 1909 onwards. There is no mention in the *Voice of Labour* of the *Cape Socialist*, indicating that the paper had become defunct by 1909, and, instead, the *Voice of Labour*, which was open to a very wide range of socialist opinions, carried frequent pieces from people associated with the SDF. The *Voice of Labour* is discussed in more detail below.

The link to Hyndman's Social Democratic Federation broke down soon after Erasmus left. In 1908, relations with the local Trades and Labour Council also soured. In 1908 the Labour Representation Committee, the Trades and Labour Council and other groups joined to launch the Cape Labour Party, which opposed SDF candidates in the 1908 general elections in the Cape.[70] There was little subsequent electoral co-operation between the two sides, with each putting up rival candidates wherever possible.

The SDF had always been a very politically diverse group, one that hardly fits the picture painted by Cope who claimed that the "Federation claimed to follow Hyndman in England, and to be true Marxists",[71] the view that the SDF was "a supposedly Marxist organisation",[72] and, more recently, claims that the SDF was a "mainstream Marxist Second International Party",[73] with Harrison "a follower of the brand of Marxism propagated by HM Hyndman".[74] Its membership included Marxists, but also "anarchists, reform socialists, [and] guild socialists",[75] all of whom seem to have agreed on broad basic goals, the "abolition of Capitalism and Landlordism, the socialisation of all the means of production, distribution and exchange, i.e., the ownership and control of all the means by the people for the people".[76] Such a goal was, it seems, sufficiently elastic for all members.

The "anarchist section" – with which Harrison, as I note below, explicitly identified himself – was quite strong, and its prominent members included "Levinson, Strauss, Hahne, Ahrens and others … all of

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[67] I was unable to locate any copies during my extensive research. Wessel Visser, an expert on the early labour and socialist press, had the same experience: letter from Wessel Visser, 25 May 2001, in my possession.
[68] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit*., p. 10
[69] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit*., pp. 5-6, 9-10. Unfortunately, no copies of this paper seem to have survived.
[70] Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 334-5. A 1907 SDF manifesto, issued subsequent to Ridout election, and apparently a key factor in the split, may be found in Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 501-2 appendix B, I, 7
[71] Cope, [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 96; Visser, 2001a, *op cit*. p. 17 follows Cope uncritically on this point.
[72] Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., p. 339
[73] Drew, 2002, *op cit*., p. 8
[74] Hyslop, 2004, *op cit*., p. 194
[75] Johns, 1995, *op cit*., p. 31
[76] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 5

European origin".[77] Exemplifying a broader pattern on the early radical left in South Africa, the SDF was mainly based amongst skilled workers, most of whom were immigrants, mainly drawn from England, East European Jewry, and Scotland. Afrikaners and poor Whites were largely absent, and Dutch immigrants and influences were marginal. There is little evidence of leaflets and speeches being issued in Afrikaans, which naturally limited the effects of propaganda amongst Afrikaners, as well as the Coloureds, the great majority of whom spoke an Afrikaans dialect. Further, as was the case elsewhere before the 1910s, the movement was overwhelmingly White, although, as Section 4 .3. argues, it had some influence amongst workers of colour.

The "anarchist section" drew much of its strength from the large number of immigrant Jewish waged artisans in the SDF. In both Cape Town and Johannesburg, Jewish immigrants from East Europe formed an important part of the local radical tradition. Often resident in the multi-racial slums of Cape Town and Johannesburg, "the Jewish apostles of socialism preached human equality and the coming Social Revolution with the same vigour and determination they and their comrades had shown in the Pale of Settlement".[78] Like other "Peruvian" Jews, they faced poverty and local prejudice (including the hostility of the established local Anglicised and Hebrew-speaking Jews), being portrayed by sections of public opinion as greedy, dirty, and parasitic aliens.

Besides anarchists, the "Jewish apostles of socialism" in South Africa included classical Marxists, De Leonists, and adherents of the Jewish *Bund* (Yiddish for "union"). Formed in 1897 as the General Jewish Workers *Bund*, and centred on East Europe, it combined Marxism with a strong support for Jewish identity and claims for equal rights, leaving the Russian Social-Democratic Workers' Party in 1903 when that body refused to allow sections based on nationality. As Jews emigrated from the Pale of Settlement, the *Bund* became a truly international movement. There were *Bundists* in Cape Town by the turn of the twentieth century, including S. Gillitz, a member of the SDF.[79]

The most prominent member of the "anarchist section" was, of course, Harrison, the self-described "Philosophical Anarchist".[80] With departure of Blagburn and Erasmus, Harrison dominated the SDF and its public face,[81] a situation that doubtless greatly strengthened the "anarchist section". It has, it should be noted, been suggested in some accounts that Harrison was not really an anarchist in the time of the SDF: according to Cope, Harrison was a Marxist, while for Drew he only began describing himself as an anarchist in the 1930s.

Neither view is convincing, although these errors are understandable. Copies of the *Cape Socialist* (and the minutes and records of the SDF) seem to be lost, and Harrison's *Memoirs of a Socialist in South Africa* was not available until several years after Cope wrote. Moreover, the structure of the *Memoirs* is a

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[77] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 16, 118- 119
[78] Mantzaris, 1988, *op cit*., p. 163
[79] Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 32-4
[80] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit*., p. 119
[81] According to Ticktin, a "during most of its existence" a certain J.H. Howard was the organisation's "main guiding spirit": Ticktin, 1973, *op cit.,* p. 327. There is no evidence to support this claim, and this "guiding light" only appears briefly in the record. He was involved in the pro-war breakaway from the SDF in 1914 and later set up a Labour Advance Party: see Harrison, n.d., *op cit*., pp. 50, 62-64

confusing one, which sometimes makes it unclear whether Harrison was talking about his views in the past or the present. It is also true that Harrison's own views were complex and not always consistent.

Nonetheless, there is ample evidence that Harrison was an anarchist long before the 1930s. Exactly when he became an anarchist is difficult to determine, but his *Memoirs* clearly state that he was advocating a "version of Anarchism" by the 1910s.[82] Harrison also wrote a lengthy article in favour of anarchism in the *Voice of Labour* in July 1910.[83] This was, Visser claims, the very first South African reference to the term "communism".[84] When he visited England in 1911, he conveyed the "fraternal greetings" of the Cape Town SDF to the Social Democratic Party, and also "linked up" with the Kropotkin's *Freedom* group in London.[85]

Tommy Boydell – a SA Labour Party parliamentarian from 1912 onwards, and a minister in the Pact government – met Harrison when he first went to Cape Town to take up his seat:[86]

> He was an inveterate soap-box orator. He called himself, of all things in the world, a philosophic anarchist. On the soap-box he could breathe hell fire and brimstone at capitalism – off the soap-box he wouldn't hurt a fly. He was always active in every Socialist and Communist movement. I was a frequent victim of his fluent tongue, but it made no difference to our friendship because we each recognised honest intention.

Boydell recounted a typical speech by Harrison:[87]

> Capitalism was on its last legs. The seeds of destruction within the system had brought about its own downfall. The hour of its doom was at hand. The workers of the world were about to come into their own. The working class must now be prepared to take over.
>
> Fields, factories and workshops were to be owned and controlled by those who worked in them. There were to be no more capitalists or bourgeois. Only comrades, each working for all, and all working for each. Kropotkin had proved that the problem of production had been solved. It now remained only a question of ownership and distribution.
>
> As all wealth was due to the application of labour to the land, labour should rightfully own all the wealth it created. So that when the working classes took over the ownership and control of the means of production, distribution and exchange they were only taking over what rightfully belonged to them…

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[82] For example, Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit*., p. 38
[83] Wilfred Harrison, 1 July 1910, "Anarchy", *Voice of Labour*
[84] Visser, 2001a, *op cit.*, p. 217; Visser, 2004, *op cit*., p. 2
[85] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit*., pp. 32, 38, 119-120
[86] Boydell, n.d., *op cit*., p. 41
[87] Boydell, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. viii

This was an expression, Boydell added, of "his frequently declared doctrine of 'Philosophical Anarchy'", which favoured a society where "laws – as we know them – will be quite unnecessary".[88] It is not surprising, therefore, that Visser's study of the early labour and radical press in South Africa described Harrison as an anarchist, and noted that his views were similar to those of Henry Glasse.[89]

Harrison's knowledge of the international anarchist movement, and its doctrines, was impressive.[90] His "Philosophical Anarchism" was deeply influenced by Kropotkin, but he was critical of what he regarded as Kropotkin's undue emphasis on revolution and violence. Harrison was similarly critical of the American anarchist Emma Goldman, whom he met in Berlin in 1922, upon her return from a disillusioning stay in Bolshevik Russia.[91]

To use the categories introduced in Chapter 2, Harrison was, generally speaking, a mass anarchist of the "pure one" type, who stressed abstract critique and principles.[92] He saw educational work as the key task of socialists,[93] and felt that the IWW failed to educate people on socialist ideas, its activities being "methods [of education] in name only".[94] This was the central feature of Harrison's entire outlook: a focus on promoting the revolutionary idea, and on showing the connections between current issues and the broader capitalist system, without, however, being drawn into struggles for immediate reforms. The task was to deal "with the cause of the evil and not the effects of it".[95] The task was to "give continuing evidence of what Socialism means" and "not obscure that purpose by attempting to improve a system that the fundamentals of Socialism will actually destroy".[96] He certainly did not preach "armed revolt", as the Simons claim.[97]

It is from this perspective that it is possible to understand the odder features of Harrison's approach. One was a flexibility on elections unusual in an anarchist: while he distrusted elected officials and parliamentarians, and rejected "reformist means of alleviation" and nationalisation,[98] he stood as an SDF candidate on several occasions. The reason seems to have been that Harrison regarded elections as a useful propaganda platform. The other unusual feature was Harrison's opposition to approaches that whipped up

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[88] Boydell, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. ix
[89] Visser, 1987, *op cit.*, pp. 236-9
[90] See, for instance, Wilfred Harrison, 1 July 1910, "Anarchy", *Voice of Labour* and Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit*., pp. xv-xvii, 36-38, 117-120, 131-132, 157
[91] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit*., pp. 36-8
[92] Daniel Guérin, 1970, *op cit.*
[93] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d *op cit.*, pp. 38, 118-9. Interestingly, this position led Harrison to prefer the approach of the Mutualist Tucker – who stressed general ideology – over Kropotkin, who combined immediate social critique with calls to militant action. This is probably why Harrison called his views "Philosophical Anarchism" (which he identified with Tucker's approach), and rejected the term "Communist Anarchism" (which he identified with Kropotkin and Goldman) even though his general views were very much those of Kropotkin and mass anarchism, and showed no traces of Mutualism.
[94] Wilfred Harrison, 21 June 1912, "What's up With the Movement?", *Voice of Labour*
[95] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d *op cit.*, p. 9
[96] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d *op cit.*, p. 144
[97] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, p. 139
[98] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. xvii-xviii, 70, 152



Figure six: Cape Town's anarchist apostle, Wilfred Harrison of the SDF

Source: Ernest Gitsham and James F. Trembath, 1926, *A First Account of Labour Organisation in South Africa.* E.P. and Commercial Printing. Durban, p. 163

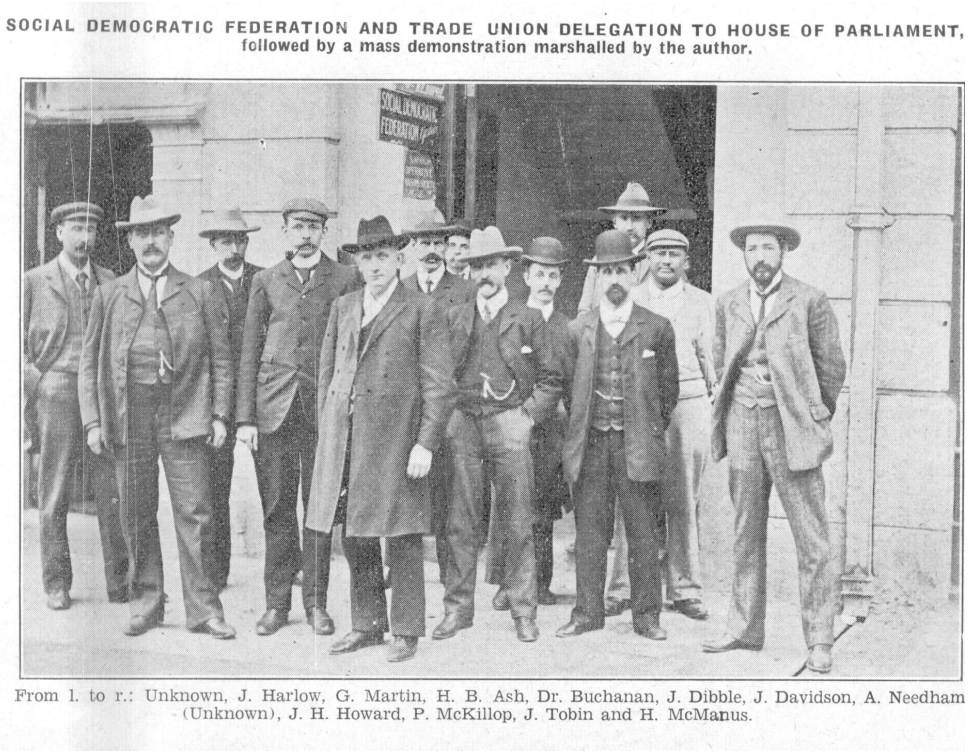

Figure seven: SDF and trade union delegation to parliament, 1906, in front of the SDF rooms. Note SDF members J. Dibble, Jim Davidson and Abraham Needham in back row, and J.H. Howard and Percy McKillop in front. J. Tobin was a leading Coloured trade unionist who associated with the SDF.

Source: Wilfred H. Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *Memoirs of a Socialist in South Africa 1903–47*, Stewart Printing, Cape Town, with foreword by Tommy Boydell, p. 7

"class hatred", as opposed to focusing on promoting the revolutionary Gospel.[99] There "wouldn't be a Capitalist class", he reasoned, "if the working class didn't labour to make it – hence the only people to blame are the workers themselves, who ought not to declare to war on a people who are the products of their own deeds".[100] Again, it was the question of socialist education that was paramount.

The same fairly abstract outlook informed his views on the question of race. Harrison was opposed to "racial prejudices or Colour discrimination", and a controversial figure in the unions because he opposed colour bars, but, even so, he argued that the key task was to expose the "system that is the cause of Coloured and racial prejudices and general exploitation".[101] Given his view that "Socialism is for all people", and his assumption that capitalism could only end, and the State be abolished, when enough people had embraced the ideas of anarchism, it followed the he opposed any approach that focused on a particular racial group.

On the one hand, this meant Harrison was clearly against White Labourism. On the other, however, it also meant Harrison opposed any suggestion that socialists focus on "the Native question or talk of a Native republic" [102] The White workers also had to be won over. Moreover, it was not the task of socialists to get involved in immediate struggles for reforms, remarking that those who "deal with what they call 'the Coloured question' deal with their general grievances", which "are many, we know, but it is not the business of a Socialist propagandist to deal with them".[103]

Harrison was undoubtedly a powerful speaker, one of the most impressive orators in the South African socialist movement, and the "forceful and appealing way" in which he "presented his case might almost have convinced many that the Social and Economic Revolution was about to take place next day, or at the very latest by the end of that week".[104] He was also central to the SDF, lamenting, however, in his autobiography that in a politically diverse group the moderate element often predominated as the more energetic left-wing was occupied with most of the daily "donkey work".[105]

Contrary to Cope's claim that the SDF collapsed in 1910 over the issue of anarchism,[106] a claim repeated by D.G. Thomas,[107] the organisation remained active in the 1910s. There was a dispute in the organisation in 1910 in which anarchists criticised moderate socialists, but nothing that can be called a split. Different currents generally "worked without serious conflict and each was allowed to express its differences of opinion".[108] Harrison was himself strongly opposed to sectarianism. The SDF survived two splits in the 1910s: one to the right, in 1914, with the outbreak of the First World War, the other to the left as the syndicalist Industrial Socialist League broke away.

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[99] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d *op cit.*, p.56, 115; *The Voice of Labour*, 3 May 1912, "Our Postbag", letter on "Syndicalism and Socialism" by Wilfred Harrison; Wilfred Harrison, 5 July 1912, "What's up with the Movement?", *The Voice of Labour*

[100] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d *op cit.*, pp. xix, 144-145, also 115-6

[101] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit*., p. 105

[102] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit*., p. 105

[103] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit*., p. 105

[104] Boydell, [? 1947] n.d *op cit*., p. viii

[105] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d *op cit.*, pp. 14-15, also p. 84

[106] Cope, [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 96

[107] Thomas, 1963, *op cit*., pp. 25-26

[108] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 118- 119

The SDF's platforms were also open to a wide range of speakers, and included on occasion Gandhi, who at the time "declared himself a Socialist and spoke from our platforms".[109] It was also in contact with Olive Schreiner, the South African author, socialist and pioneer of women's rights. Schreiner, who was friends with Hardie, the radical English poet, and libertarian socialist Edward Carpenter and Eleanor Marx-Aveling, sent the SDF letters of encouragement.[110]

SDF talks were obviously popular events. The organisation also established an "International Debating Society" which invited a wide range of speakers and organisations to give presentations, and some members also joined the Cape Parliamentary Debating Society.[111] In 1906 Needham debated a Mr. Makin before "an audience of about 600 persons in the Socialist Hall" on the issue of whether "socialism can regenerate humanity".[112] Needham concluded his remarks, which included a criticism of the church, and of social evils such as alcoholism, defended the "loafer and the bottom dog", and affirmed the benefits of a system in which "social conditions harmonise with liberty"; Needham was judged winner of the debate.

Summing up, Morris Alexander, then a member of the SDF added: "The Socialist movement in Cape Town would lead the masses to think for themselves. (Applause)". There was "no royal road to social advancement – (applause) – and once the masses realised that they would have to fight the battle for themselves, then they would be doing far better for social betterment than relying on philanthropic sops". The SDF set up a bookshop, reading room, refreshment bar, "Socialist Hall" and reading circle at its offices in Cosay's Buildings at the corner of Adderley and Riebeeck streets, adjacent to the Jan van Riebeeck statue, held public debates and talks in District Six and at the foot of the Riebeeck statue, and even public talks at the City Hall.[113]

The public meetings were conducted in a number of languages to racially mixed crowds, and relations with Coloured activists from the African Political Organisation were initially quite warm. As the organisation grew, it relocated to larger offices at the corner of Plein and Barrack streets, where they sublet spare space to trade unions, ran a refreshment bar, and kept a printing press.[114] Members also led an active social life through the organisation, including visits to the beach (where, of course, propaganda speeches were given), and a choir was established.[115]

The actual activities of the SDF went well beyond the narrow focus on education that Harrison claimed to favour, as did many of his own actions. The SDF organised a number of popular campaigns that allowed it to mobilise a wide section of the Cape Town working class.

In 1904, the SDF was involved in meetings with the Minister for Railways to secure reduced fares for workers employed in public works relief projects, and for the unemployed.[116] In February 1905, it organised

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[109] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 36, 143
[110] Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 13-14, 327-8
[111] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 12; also see Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., p. 25
[112] "Socialism and Humanity: debate between Messrs. Needham and Main", 1906 press clipping, no source given, Max Nettlau Collection, folder 471, International Institute of Social History
[113] Erasmus, 1905, *op cit.*; Harrison, n.d., *op cit.*, p. 13
[114] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 6
[115] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 16
[116] Erasmus, 1905, *op cit.*

a mass meeting at the Good Hope Hall in sympathy with the 1905 Russian Revolution.[117] The Hall was "packed to the doors" with 1,500 people, and Olive Schreiner – the well-known Cape Town feminist – assisted the meeting and subsequently entered into correspondence with the SDF. Some members also started soup kitchens in District Six in 1909, which Harrison believed was a futile exercise that dealt with symptoms, not causes.[118]

4.3. The SDF and interracial working class organisation

Like Glasse in Port Elizabeth, and the Socialist Club, Harrison and the SDF were certainly "pioneers in the adoption of an enlightened policy towards the Coloured peoples".[119] The SDF gave much attention to the national question, set up a propaganda commission for Africans, and found a "good deal of interest" in socialism "among the Malays", Harrison making efforts to propagandise in District Six and enrol Coloured members,[120] and the SDF had a number of Coloured members.[121] It held public meetings in four languages ("Dutch, Malay, Kafir and English") involved Coloured socialists in committee discussions, and addressed African Political Organisation meetings on "Socialism and the Native Question".[122] The organisation also opposed British imperialism, even winning praise from the *De Burger*, an organ of the Afrikaner nationalists for this stance.[123]

Jack and Simons tend to treat the organisation's position as a reflection of the "distinctive features" of the Cape, which lent itself to interracial working class organisation: it was the "state of the labour market, the composition of the working classes, and the attitude of their masters", rather than "differences in origin or outlook" that "accounted" for the different labour and left traditions in the Cape and the northern provinces.[124] This crude determinism is not terribly convincing, for the Simons own subsequent analysis provides many examples of White labour prejudice in the Cape: clearly, ideas must play a central role in shaping working class traditions. And here due credit must be given to the SDF's internationalist politics, its support for working class solidarity, regardless of creed or race, and its vision a South African socialist commonwealth.

The anarchists and other currents in the SDF promoted interracial working class unity, and opposed racial discrimination and prejudice, and made propaganda amongst the Coloureds. While the SDF was probably almost entirely White in membership, it had some influence amongst Coloureds. The SDF reported in 1910 that it was making progress amongst Cape Malays,[125] although it is not clear whether it recruited Coloured members. While the African Political Organisation was extremely hostile the SA Labour Party, it was initially very warm towards the SDF for its position on the "Coloured question": Abdurrahman claimed

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[117] Erasmus, 1905, *op cit.*; "Special Correspondent", 1905, *op cit.*
[118] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 9; also see Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 338-9
[119] Cope, [? 1943] n.d., *op cit*., pp. 96-7, 111
[120] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., pp. 76-77
[121] Drew, 2002, *op cit*., p. 23
[122] Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit*., pp. 42-4
[123] Visser, 2001, *op cit*., p. 18
[124] See Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., p. 73
[125] A.W. Noon, 22 April 1910, "Cape Notes", *The Voice of Labour*; Visser, 2001a, *op cit*., pp. 17-18

on several occasions, that he was also a socialist,[126] his writings sometimes showed some socialist influences and appeals for working class solidarity across the colour line,[127] and the African Political Organisation hired the SDF's Socialist Hall for its 1909 conference.[128]

There is no evidence at all for Pieter van Duin's assertion that the SDF "in practice never took steps to organise the non-white worker or to openly propagate racial equality".[129] Harrison was instrumental in the SDF's formation of a second General Workers' Union in 1906, which aimed to organise all workers, and drew in both Coloured and White bricklayers and painters.[130] It was not a syndicalist union, but denounced racial prejudice and stated that "membership was open to every wage-earner, male or female".[131] Its leadership was drawn mainly from Whites of various nationalities, with Jews linked to the SDF and the *Bund* particularly prominent.[132]

Jewish waged artisans had formed some of the earliest interracial trade unions in Cape Town, sometimes with the support of Abdurrahman, and formed a Tailors' Union that affiliated to the SDF's General Workers Union.[133] The union seems to have "tried hard", but apparently "without success", to "enrol the large numbers of Muslims in the trade".[134] Given competition from British imports, and an absence of real tariff protection before 1925, the local tailoring and garment industry was notoriously exploitative, based on intense and long hours of work, piecework, low wages and unsafe conditions in factories and among home workers.[135] In Cape Town, too, local merchants were generally more influential than manufacturers, and strongly opposed a tariff system that would affect the import/export business.[136]

In Cape Town, the garment and tailoring industry comprised mainly local Coloureds and immigrant Jews, and it was the latter that played a key role in union work linked to the SDF. Gillitz of the SDF and H. Alexander of the Tailors' Union advocated the unity of "all nationalities under umbrella unions representing all trades", and favoured solidarity between Jews, local Whites and Coloureds.[137] Jewish boot makers were organised into a union, and joined the General Workers Union.[138] Activists associated with the SDF and the *Bund* also organised Jewish cabinetmakers, printers and paperhangers. Gillitz's appeal for unity "across ethnic and colour lines" had some success as the unions began organising skilled Coloured workers and a number of joint structures were formed, including an interracial union for painters and paperhangers, with the help of Coloured trade unionists and the African Political Organisation.[139]

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[126] Lewis, 1987, *op cit*., p. 98
[127] See, for example, Cope, n.d. [? 1943], *op cit*., p. 143; Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit*., pp. 35, 43-4; Harmel, 1971, *op cit.*, pp. 29-30; Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., pp. 122, 125-128
[128] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., p. 113
[129] Van Duin, 1990, *op cit*., p. 649
[130] Bickford-Smith, 1995, *op cit*., p. 174; also see Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 38-9; Visser, 2001, *op cit*., pp. 10
[131] Quoted in Bickford-Smith, 1995, *op cit*., p. 174
[132] Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit*., p. 53
[133] Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 32-6
[134] Jack and Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., p. 74
[135] Nicol, 1984, *op cit*., pp. 33-55
[136] Nicol, 1984, *op cit*., pp. 80-93
[137] Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 35-6, 38-9; the quote is from p. 38
[138] Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit*., p. 37
[139] Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 39-40

These union initiatives sometimes overlapped with efforts to form workers' co-operatives. There were short-lived co-operatives by bakers and boot makers,[140] but the most important co-operative was formed in 1906 by cigarette rollers organised by the General Workers' Union. These workers first went on strike in January that year after piecework rates were cut, meeting in the Socialist Hall every afternoon, and defeating attempts to split the Greeks and Jews who comprised the bulk of the membership.[141] The strike ended in a clear victory for labour, but was followed by a far more serious and lengthy strike later in the year, which was supported by other unions, by a mass demonstration of 4,000 addressed by SDF speakers, and even by the African Political Organisation.[142] When the employers locked out the approximately 300 strikers, the workers producing the "Knock Out" and "Lock Out" cigarettes on premises supplied by the SDF.[143] The strike eventually petered out, and the co-operative was liquidated in 1907.

SDF activists like Harrison and J. Dibble, both members of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, also sought to have colour bar clauses removed in the trade unions.[144] Other members of the SDF active in the unions included McKillop, in the South African Typographical Union – a union that was open to Coloureds, but excluded Africans and Tom Bolton, a member of the stonemason's union, which was predominantly, if not entirely, White.[145] SDF members also argued that Coloured workers needed to organise unions in order to raise their wages and end wage discrimination on racial grounds.[146]

The politically diverse nature of the SDF meant that a wide range of people passed through its ranks at one time or another. One was Morris Alexander, a left-wing Jewish lawyer and philanthropist who championed a number of causes. In 1902 the Cape government introduced an Immigration Bill that made knowledge of a European language a requirement for immigrants: this was designed to exclude Indians and "Peruvian" Jews, who spoke Yiddish. Alexander managed to get the government to accept Yiddish as meeting this qualification.[147]

In 1904, Alexander was elected to the Cape Town council with the help of the Coloured voters' District Six Ratepayers' Association, where he co-operated with Abdurrahman in trying to keep public facilities open to all races.[148] Several years later, it should be noted, Alexander left the socialist movement: he later became a member of parliament, and spent much of his public life trying to show that Jews were good White patriots, who had nothing at all to do with anarchism, socialism and labour struggles.[149]

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[140] Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 36-37
[141] Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 53; also see Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 10
[142] Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit.*, pp. 53-5
[143] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 10; Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit.*, pp. 56-61; Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., pp. 18-19
[144] Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit.*, pp. 42-4; Harrison, [? 1947] n.d *op cit.*, pp. 17-18, 22-26; Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, p. 139
[145] Harrison, n.d., [? 1947] n.d., p. 17. The racial composition of these unions is discussed in Bickford-Smith, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 175-6. According to the Simons, the union banned people of colour from membership in 1901: Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., pp. 73-4
[146] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 23
[147] Bickford-Smith, 1995, *op cit*., p. 146
[148] Bickford-Smith, 1995, *op cit*., p. 213
[149] Shain, 1994, *op cit*., pp. 82-4, 105, 127

In 1906, the SDF was involved in organising a series of mass meetings amongst the unemployed.[150] This was against the backdrop of the onset of a local depression from the end of 1903, with the withdrawal of troops after the end of the Anglo-Boer War and a loss of trade to Durban and Lourenço Marques. "For a city so dependent on its docks and carrying trade, the effect was immediate": unemployment rose as commerce declined, and falling government revenue led to job losses in public works.[151] Many White waged artisans left for Australia and the United States.[152] African workers either returned to the rural areas, or stayed in Ndabeni, looking for work. For many Africans and Coloureds, one of the few bright spots was the German campaign to recruit experienced Cape workers for the farms, mines and railways of South West Africa with the promise of better wages than those paid on the South African mines.[153] While the recruitment took place across the Cape, Cape Town was the most important collection point.

Those who remained out of work provided a ready constituency for the SDF's campaign in 1906. This went so well that the organisation even rented a large circus tent at the Grand Parade, a public meeting area in Cape Town, for a rally on one occasion, as well as a large march on parliament, where delegates from the SDF and the local unions met government officials and secured a promise of relief work on the railways. The SDF campaign drew an interracial crowd, perhaps tapping into a sporadic tradition of interracial demonstrations in Cape Town that could be traced back to the 1880s.[154] Among the young Coloureds involved was one James Arnold "Jimmy" La Guma. Born in Bloemfontein in 1894, the son of an itinerant cobbler, Jimmy La Guma grew up in Cape Town in District Six. He had apparently already begun reading "working class literature", was looking around for ideas, and was drawn to the growing unemployment movement. His biography notes:[155]

> Around that time, too, large scale unemployment had come onto the scene, and in Cape Town jobless workers were rallying in meetings, airing their grievances. Jimmy attended these meetings, listening and learning about the labour movement which was still in its infancy in South Africa.

Given that Harrison was a talented orator, and the foremost speaker in the SDF, it may be inferred that he was among the speakers from whom Jimmy La Guma was "listening and learning about the labour movement". However, to Harrison's annoyance, several of the meetings developed into rioting and looting, a

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[150] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 8-9
[151] Beinart, 1987, *op cit*., p. 168
[152] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 8-9
[153] See William Beinart, 1981, "Cape Workers in German South-West Africa: patterns of migrancy and the closing of options on the southern African labour market", The Societies of Southern Africa in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, vol.27, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London; Beinart, 1987, *op cit*., especially pp. 167-170; Moorsom, 1978*, op cit*.
[154] For example, there were mixed demonstrations of the unemployed in 1884 and 1886, much to the alarm of the ruling class in Cape Town: see Bickford-Smith, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 108-111
[155] La Guma, [1964] 1997, *op cit*., p. 18

development he attributed to irresponsible speakers and a hooligan element.[156] Jimmy La Guma was one of those involved in these incidents:

> Around 1906 a number of demonstrations took place in the city. At one stage desperate workers took direct action and invaded shops in the centre of the city. Jimmy found himself in the thick of it, hurling armloads of bread out through the smashed windows of bakery shops into the scrambling, clutching hands of cheering workers. With them he dodged the police charges on the demonstrations. For him it was a mixture of fun, adventure and participation in the class struggle.

Both Needham, and Levinson, the anarchist, were subsequently arrested and refused bail.[157] This was, Forman argues, "the first time … South African socialists found themselves jailed for their beliefs".[158]

In 1908, Keir Hardie of the Independent Labour Party (then British Member of Parliament) arrived in South Africa on February 11. This was part of a seven-month world tour that started the previous year, and had proceeded through Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and India. His three-week visit started in Durban, then travelled to Pietermaritzburg, the small Natal town of Ladysmith, which had grown up around coal mining and textiles, Johannesburg and Pretoria, then Bloemfontein, and, finally, ended in Cape Town, where he took another ship. There were clashes at many meetings, and a violent group disrupted a packed public meeting in Durban, with eggs, jeers and "malodorous chemicals" used to prevent Hardie speaking.[159] At every train station on Hardie's route from Durban, "there were crowds of sight-seers to hoot and jeer and threaten".[160] In Pietermaritzburg, a hostile crowd of 500 met him at the railway station, and he had to be escorted to his hotel by local union leaders.[161]

Matters were even worse in Johannesburg where a "howling and insulting crowd"[162] met him on his arrival at the station, and tried to assault him: he had to be escorted out of the station through a side door with police protection (signalled, he noted later, by a young Crawford, of whom more below), and left under a hail of stones on his cab.[163] A subsequent public meeting in Johannesburg met the same fate as that in Durban, and took place against the backdrop of high levels of White unemployment and the abortive Chinese labour experiment.

At the heart of the controversy was Hardie's reported advocacy of equal rights for Indians and Whites and advocacy of interracial trade unionism.[164] Hardie arrived against the backdrop of high levels of

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[156] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 8-9
[157] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 8-9
[158] Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit*., pp. 42-4
[159] Frederick Hale, 1992, "Socialist Agitator, Traitor to the British Empire, or Angel of Peace? James Kier; Hardie's visit to Natal in 1908", *Journal of Natal and Zulu History*, no. 14, pp. 10-11; on the tour, also see Hyslop, 2004, *op cit*., pp. 172-174 and Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 295-6
[160] See Hardie's account: Kier Hardie, [1908] 1996, "Stoned in South Africa", in Drew, editor, 1996a, *op cit*., pp. 42-3
[161] Hale, 1992, *op cit.*, p. 8
[162] Cope, [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 98-9
[163] See Hardie, [1908] 1996, *op cit.*; Cope, [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 98-9.
[164] Hardie, [1908] 1996, *op cit.*; also Cope, [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 98-9; Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 19-22

racial tension in Natal, soon after the Bambatha rebellion of 1906. The Natal government had imposed a £1 poll tax on men, including low-paid African farmers and workers, which led to an armed revolt by a small Zulu clan: between 3,000 and 4,000 Africans (and 24 Whites), were killed, while a further 7,000 were taken prisoner.[165] A large amount of land was expropriated,[166] armed resistance by Africans was effectively ended for decades, and the Zulu king Dinizulu, whom most Whites were convinced had instigated the rebellion, had recently been arrested on 23 counts of treason, and found guilty of three.

Hardie was already unpopular with many Whites in Natal for having spoken out during the Bambatha rebellion in support of what he perceived to be the grievances of the Zulu, and for condemning the executions of African rebels.[167] His first local interview did little to reassure opponents: he stressed his sympathy for African grievances, opposed restrictions on Indian immigration, and stated that all workers should receive equal wages for equal work, regardless of race.[168] He also impressed the local Indian paper, *Indian Opinion*, which Gandhi had helped found in 1903, and met with a group of local Indians, to the horror of many Whites.[169]

In Cape Town, there were no violent incidents surrounding Hardie's arrival, but a planned reception by the local Trades and Labour Council was nonetheless withdrawn.[170] The Trades and Labour Council were backing a Cape Labour Party candidate in the general elections at the time, and worried that association with Hardie would affect their campaign.[171] He was then hosted by the SDF, a meeting he described as "far and away the most enthusiastic I had in South Africa".[172] Harrison wrote to the press condemning the Trades and Labour Council for insulting Hardie, and for its racial prejudice, and while the SDF's election candidate was unsuccessful, the alignment with Hardie won the organisation favourable publicity amongst the Coloureds.[173] Hardie, upon his return to Britain, would try to have the founding Act of the Union of South Africa modified to reduce its explicitly racially discriminatory elements.[174]

Whatever the limitations of Hardie's outlook may have been,[175] the fact of the matter is that the SDF's decision to host so controversial a figure identified the group, unambiguously, with a politics of racial equality. The SDF, alone of all Cape labour and left organisations, publicly condemned the draft Act of the Union of South Africa as "contrary to all Democratic principles, and an insult to the coloured races of South

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[165] Lambert and Morrell, 1996, *op cit*., p. 87-8; Shula Marks, 1986, *The Ambiguities of Dependence in South Africa: class, nationalism, and the State in twentieth-century Natal*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, pp. 29-30
[166] William H. Andrews, 14 February 1918, "White and Black Labour in South Africa", *The Call*
[167] Hale, 1992, *op cit*., pp. 3, 6-9
[168] Hale, 1992, *op cit*., pp. 4-5. There is little doubt that Hardie merited this reputation: speaking of Natal in 1908, for example, he stated that "For callous, cold-blooded heartlessness some of its doings during the past few years would be hard to beat, even in the blood-stained annals of the Congo": Hardie, 17 April 1908, *op cit*.
[169] Hale, 1992, *op cit*., pp. 7-8, 12
[170] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 19-22
[171] Hardie, 22 May 1908, *op cit.*
[172] Hardie, 22 May 1908, *op cit.*
[173] Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 337-8
[174] Hale, 1992, *op cit*., p. 16
[175] Frederick Hale suggests that Hardie actually tended towards a qualified franchise for Africans: see Hale, 1992, *op cit*., p. 16

Africa" for its colour bars.[176] It wrote to the British Labour Party asking for the removal of the phrase "of European descent" from the Act.[177]

On at least three occasions, Harrison ran in elections to the town council and the Cape Provincial Council in District Six against Abdurrahman of the African Political Organisation, who sat on both bodies.[178] These electoral forays, rather odd for an anarchist, were seen as ways of spreading socialist ideas. Abdurrahman's elitist concerns, and his overt support for Botha and Smuts' South African Party seem to have been key factors in the decision to run against the African Political Organisation leader.[179] Although Harrison never won, the results were closer than might be expected. In the 1916 municipal election, Harrison got a surprising 212 votes, as against Abdurrahman's 543,[180] notwithstanding the political machinery at Abdurrahman's disposal. One effect of this electoral competition was, however, a growing estrangement between Abdurrahman and the Cape section of the African Political Organisation on the one hand, and the SDF on the other.[181]

These many actions were a challenge to the tradition of White Labourism, challenging both White working class discrimination and the employer discrimination in wages that helped generate White Labourism. On the other hand, the fairly abstract conception of socialist work advocated by Harrison, and the politically mixed character of the SDF, placed distinct limits on what could be achieved. There was no real strategy to specifically develop an African or Coloured membership, to systematically engage in union work or the mobilisation of the unemployed, or otherwise mobilise people around racial grievances. The very fact that the SDF was so politically diverse tended to prevent the development of any theoretical unity or shared strategy.

Harrison's own stress on abstract propaganda, according to which mobilisation around grievances was "not the business of a Socialist propagandist", had serious limitations. While he was obviously correct to argue that a socialist movement required socialist ideas, it was problematic to suggest that this precluded other activities. In practice, the distinction between propaganda about the *causes* of economic and social problems, and struggles *against* those problems is often blurred, as Harrison's own activities showed. Struggles around immediate grievances help create an audience for radical ideas, and small, immediate victories are thus the key to winning large layers to a radical outlook. There is, on the other hand, a definite limit to how many people can be won over simply by declarations of principles and propaganda.

The lack of a clear strategy, and the tension between propaganda and activism characteristic of the SDF, help account in part for the SDF's limited success in building a Coloured membership. Sporadic activities, and a failure to specifically set out to develop a multi-racial membership, undercut the potential shown in the 1906 unemployment movement. Rather than question his approach, Harrison would later blame the popular classes for their lack of interest: lamenting the SDF's limited progress in District Six, for

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[176] Quoted in Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., p. 340
[177] *The Voice of Labour*, 21 August 1909
[178] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit*., p. 24
[179] Lewis, 1987, *op cit.*, p. 98
[180] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit*., p. 24
[181] Lewis, 1987, *op cit*., p. 98

example, he commented that "my views of a future Socialist paradise seemed to be too much of a heavenly jump from their present state of depravity, hence they concluded it was a white man's bogey, like so many unfaithful promises from politicians in the past".[182]

4.4. Other anarchist radicals, refugees and assassins in South Africa

A number of other anarchists also appear to have made their way to South Africa from the late nineteenth century onwards. The activities of anarchist terrorists abroad doubtless led to some misgivings in government circles about a local anarchist presence developing in South Africa. The Transvaal Embassy in Brussels reported in 1894 that the French anarchist Paul Reclus, whom it described as a dangerous activist, intended to visit the Transvaal, and enquired whether a deportation might be organised in such an event.[183] In 1898, the Austro-Hungarian Vice Consul in Durban informed the Attorney-General of Natal that an Italian anarchist had assassinated the Empress of Austria at Geneva.[184] The Attorney General replied by expressing the "feeling of horror and profound regret" of the government and people of the colony, but said nothing of local anarchists.

The local press reported in July 1904 that three men, alleged to be anarchists, had been deported from the Transvaal in connection with an alleged plot to assassinate Lord Milner, governor of the Transvaal.[185] The Natal government took steps to exclude the men from the colony, and it seems, in fact, that only two men were involved in the supposed plot: one, a Russian sailor and mechanic, who went by the name John Sepoul, was deported to Europe from Delagoa Bay; the other, Henry Larsen, a railway fireman born in Grahamstown, was returned to his home town. In 1907, the Natal Chamber of Commerce forwarded a circular letter from the Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce in the United States, with which it was "entirely

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[182] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit*., p. 24, see also p. 64, 104-5, 114

[183] "Consul-Generaal ZAR Brussels. Bericht Vernomen te Hebben dat de Anarchist P Reclus op weg is naar eeze Republiek. Vraagt of er Uitleveringstractaat met Frankryk Bestaat", RA1010/94, file, Transvaal Archives, held at National Archives, Pretoria; "Consul Generaal ZAR Brussels. Bericht een Exemplaar der 'Gazette des Tribunaux' Gezonden te hebben Bevattende het Vonnis van Paul Reclus", RA176/95, file, Transvaal Archives, held at National Archives, Pretoria. It is unclear whether Paul Reclus did, indeed, arrive in South Africa. However, there is good reason to think that his proposed trip was rather more innocent in intent than these alarmed reports, which suggested barring a visit, suggest. Paul Reclus was the nephew of the leading French anarchist and geographer Elisée Reclus, who wrote the monumental *Nouvelle Géographie Universelle: le terre et les hommes,* which appeared on a weekly basis from 1876 to 1894. Of the nineteen-volume encyclopaedia, four volumes dealt with the physical and social geography of Africa, and were translated into English, and updated volumes on China and South Africa (*L'Afrique Australe*, Librairie hachette et Cie, Paris, 1901, 358pp), appeared in 1901 and 1902, with the help of another brother Onésime. Paul Reclus was trained as an engineer and geographer, and helped update the *Géographie Universelle* from 1903. Given that Elisée Reclus completed the *Géographie Universelle* with the help of his family, drew some of his ethnographic material from his brother Elie, an anthropologist, given the lack of any notable French anarchist interest in South Africa, and the lack of a French anarchist community in the country, and given the young Paul's own interest in geography, it may be inferred that the 1894 trip was to be undertaken mainly for research purposes. Information drawn from Fleming, 1979, *op cit.*, pp. 59-267; Peter Kropotkin, 1905, "Elisée Reclus [obituary]", *Geographical Journal*, no. 26, pp. 337-343; Anarchistic Ephéméride, May 25, online at http://perso.club-internet.fr/ytak/mai4.html, section on Paul Reclus, accessed March 2003. The translated volumes of the *Géographie Universelle*, dealing with Africa, are largely ethnographical and geographical in nature, and appeared as Elisée Reclus, 1899, *Africa and its Inhabitants*, J.S. Virtue, London, edited by A.K. Keane

[184] "Austro Hungarian Vice Consul, Durban- states that the Empress of Austria has been murdered at Geneva by an Italian Anarchist", 1898, NAB CSO vol.1580, reference 1898/6897, Natal Archives, Pietermaritzburg

[185] "'Natal Mercury,' Durban: with reference to the deportation from the Transvaal of Three Men supposed to be Anarchists", IRD 706/1904, vol.29, Natal Archives, Pietermaritzburg

in sympathy", to the Natal Prime Minister.[186] The circular proposed the exclusion of anarchist immigrants and harsh sentences for those counselling violence against authority.

While trade unionism was legalised in Portugal in 1891, in 1892 a law was enacted enabling the deportation of anarchists to the Portuguese colonies, which was followed in 1896 by a new act extending this sanction to the press with retroactive effect.[187] The penalty for speeches and publications that "in any manner or means" defended, applauded, advised or provoked anarchist activities was set at six months imprisonment, followed by indefinite deportation, while any newspaper that reported on anarchist activities or police actions against anarchists faced closure and charges against the editor.[188] As a result of these laws, several hundred anarchists were deported, mainly to East Timor, but a number were also sent to the African colonies and to the Azores.[189]

In November 1896, the Transvaal government was informed by the Portuguese Embassy in Pretoria that the anarchist Joao Manuel Rodrigues had escaped imprisonment on the transport ship *Africa* when it docked in Cape Town *en route* to East Timor, and might be seeking refuge in Pretoria.[190] He was not, it seems, recaptured.[191] Gilberto dos Santos also escaped in Cape Town, but was recaptured, and died soon after of bilious fever.[192] Several anarchists were held in Angola, Guinea Bissau and Mozambique, one of whom, António Caldiera, made a "spectacular escape" from penal servitude in Angola and re-entered Lisbon, where he was recaptured in 1905 and sent to Guinea Bissau.[193]

4.5. The Chinese labour question and the SA Labour Party

At this time, there were important developments on the Witswatersrand. The Anglo-Boer War had greatly disrupted the mining industry, as the great majority of the population of the towns of the Witwatersrand – perhaps three-quarters of the Whites, and five-sixths of the Africans – left the area during the conflict.[194] It was only after the war ended that the labour movement revived, and it was soon evident that there was interest amongst many White workers in the prospect of future elections. While there had been very few initiatives to form a political party for White workers under the old Transvaal, the post-war period saw an explosion of interest in the matter. One factor was the change in the form of the State: while

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[186] "Secretary, Chamber Of Commerce. Forwards Circular Letter from the Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce, USA, having respect to recommendations for legislation which will serve to be effective in dealing with anarchists**",** NAB vol.24, 1901/1744, Natal Archives, Pietermaritzburg

[187] Freire, 2001, *op cit*., pp. 15, 49

[188] Freire, 2001, *op cit*., p. 15

[189] Freire, 2001, *op cit*., pp. 15-16

[190]See "Consul Generaal, Portugal, Pretoria. Beantwoordt op Schryven waarby Signalement Gevraagd Wordt van den Anarchist, zal direct daarom naar Kaapstad En Lourenco Marques Telegrafeeren", RA3744/96, file, Transvaal Archives, held at National Archives, Pretoria. The catalogue for the National Archives in South Africa mentions a second item dealing with this matter – "Staatssecretaris Consul Generaal Portugal Zegt dat van het Transportschip, Afrika gevlucht is een Anarchist Joao Manuel Radrigues [sic.] die Zooals Niedenkt naar Transvaal Gegaan is", SPR6728/96, vol.112, Transvaal Archives, held at National Archives, Pretoria – but this folder appears to be missing.

[191] Freire, 2001, *op cit*., p. 16

[192] Freire, 2001, *op cit*., p. 16

[193] Freire, 2001, *op cit*., p. 16

[194] Grobler, 1968, *op cit.*, pp. 36-7

many *Uitlanders* had been disenfranchised under the old Transvaal, there was every chance that the franchise would be extended to most White men under British crown colony rule.

A further spur towards organisation was provided by the onset of economic depression: like Cape Town, discussed in the previous chapter, the Witwatersrand experienced an economic slump from 1903 onwards, lasting for five years.[195] The departure of Imperial troops removed an important source of demand, and gold mining had been severely disrupted by the war. Despite the formation of WNLA in 1901, there was an enormous and ongoing shortfall in African migrant labour after the Anglo-Boer War, in large part because the Chamber of Mines reduced African wages from 47-shillings-and-one-pence a month to 30-shillings-a-month.[196] Although the wage cut was reversed in 1903, the mines were unable to secure an adequate labour supply for several years, and the shortage was estimated at 129,000 labourers in 1903.[197] At the same time, White unemployment shot up: the state of the mines meant that perhaps 5,000 skilled workers were unemployed by the end of 1903,[198] and there was also a rapid influx into the towns of poor Whites from the devastated countryside.

This was the backdrop for an enormously controversial experiment with indentured Chinese labour on the mines, the third factor in the upsurge of interest in a labour party. After a brief experiment with Italian contract workers, the Chamber of Mines decided in December 1902 to import Chinese indentured workers, to be repatriated on completion of their contracts. In 1904 the Transvaal Legislative Council, then under direct British control, passed enabling legislation: by the end of the year there were 23,000 Chinese workers on the mines; in 1906, there were 51,427 Chinese, 85,556 Africans and Coloureds, and 17,210 Whites employed on the mines of the Witwatersrand.[199]

The Chinese labour question galavnised large sections of White working class opinion. The use of Chinese labour was opposed by Afrikaner nationalists (including Jan Smuts, then in the Afrikaner nationalist camp), some English-speaking sections of the ruling class, and the great bulk of the organised White workers.[200] Protests were made abroad by the Australian and New Zealand governments, the Independent Labour Party and the British unions. A diversity of views that became associated with the cause, ranging from humanitarian concerns about unfree labour to White Labourism.

In 1902, a Witwatersrand Trades and Labour Council brought together a number of unions, and in 1903 and 1904 it ran several candidates in Johannesburg municipal elections.[201] In April 1911 this was superseded by the Transvaal Federation of Trade Unions, followed by the South African Industrial Federation in 1914, which linked the Transvaal unions to those elsewhere in the country, with the notable exception of the Cape Federation of Labour, which remained independent of larger union bodies for many years.

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[195] Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 131-2
[196] Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., p. 15; also see Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., pp. 41-51; also see Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 132-134
[197] Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., p. 16
[198] Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., p. 131
[199] Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., pp. 16-17, including the unlabelled tables on p. 17
[200] See Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 144-152, 160-177
[201] Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., pp. 37- 41, 53-56; Thomas, 1963, *op cit*., pp. 9-10; Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 115-131, 178-182

A number of small political groups also emerged after the war, including a short-lived Labour Party on the Witwatersrand in 1902, a tiny Transvaal Labour Party, and a Political Labour League in 1905[202] – the last a group enjoying some backing from the Witwatersrand Trades and Labour Council, led by the Australian immigrant Peter Whiteside. Born in 1870, Whiteside, an engine driver, became a keen trade unionist.[203] Arriving in the Transvaal in 1893, he was active in the South African Engine Drivers' and Firemen's Association, becoming an executive member in 1898. This union managed to secure the first statutory appearance of the job colour bar in 1896.[204] In 1897 he helped form a short-lived Johannesburg Trades and Labour Council, becoming its president. Whiteside fought for the British in the Anglo-Boer War, served as full-time general secretary of his union from 1902 to 1919, and helped form the Witwatersrand Trades and Labour Council in 1902, serving as its first president. He played a central role in promoting Australian ideas of White Labourism locally. Other small groups emerged in the other provinces, reflecting a growing interest in elections by White trade unionists, but generally hampered by deep divisions in outlook and personality.[205]

The president of the Political Labour League was Bill Andrews.[206] Born in Suffolk in England in 1870, he trained as a fitter and joined the Amalgamated Society of Engineers in 1890, a union for skilled metalworkers. In 1893, Andrews arrived in South Africa where he worked at his trade on a succession of mines, and helped found a local section of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers in March 1894 under a charter from the British parent body. It was Andrews who proposed the formation of the Johannesburg Trades and Labour Council, serving as one of two vice-presidents.[207]

Andrews served briefly in the British forces, and then helped reorganise his union in the closing months of the Anglo-Boer War, and helped found the Witwatersrand Trades and Labour Council in 1902, serving as vice-president until 1903, when he started a two-year stint as president. At this time, he worked the Braamfontein railway yards in Johannesburg, and also acted as district secretary for his union, and becoming a full-time organiser for the Amalgamated Society of Engineers in 1905. The union only obtained its own governing body, the South African Council, in 1906 by which time it was already one of the most influential unions in the country.[208]

Andrews was a central figure in the emerging labour movement: in appearance the epitome of a respectable English craftsman, Andrews was a charismatic man who made a great impression upon

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[202] Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., pp. 57- 64; Thomas, 1963, *op cit*., pp. 2-6; Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 186-209
[203] Gitsham and Trembath, 1926, *op cit*., p. 179; Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., pp. 80-1; Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 117-8; Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., pp. 7-8, 297; "Whiteside, Peter", in Rosenthal, compiler, 1966, *op cit*., pp. 415-6
[204] Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., p. 109
[205] D.G. Thomas describes the period as characterised by "an extraordinary spirit of factionalism and pettiness": Thomas, 1963, *op cit*., p. 7
[206] In addition to Cope's biography – Cope, [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.* – see "Andrews, William Henry", in Rosenthal, compiler, 1966, *op cit*., p.8; Gitsham and Trembath, 1926, *op cit*., pp. 161-2; Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., p. 118; Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., pp. 285-6
[207] Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., pp. 8-9
[208] Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 22-3

contemporaries. Bernard Sachs remembered him as an impressive figure, "supremely dignified", "perfectly composed", "a model of clarity and dignity":[209]

> Both in manner and ability he was qualified to be the editor of *The Times*… One somehow felt that a class which produced an Andrews was a class fit to rule.

Even at this early stage, it was becoming clear that the dominant trend amongst organised White workers was towards White Labourism. Moral panics about supposed Chinese outrages played some role, but the vulnerability of White workers to replacement by cheap and unfree labour – a problem that would not disappear with the end of the Chinese question – was an ongoing and central decisive factor. Whiteside expressed the attitudes of many White workers when he commented in the Transvaal parliament that:[210]

> It is not so much the vices of the Chinese I am afraid of as their virtues. We, the Labour Party know perfectly well that, so far as we have been able to read the intention and desire of the leaders of the mining industry, that intention was never to confine the Chinese wholly and solely to unskilled labour.

Claiming that Chinese were replacing Whites, he went on to claim that: "The results of this policy … have simply been misery, destitution, unemployment and falling revenue".[211] Whiteside was evidently informed by the widespread belief amongst White workers that the Chinese were a more serious threat to skilled White men than the supposedly inferior Africans.

White Labourism was not homogeneous, and was represented in different ways. If Whiteside focused on protecting White labour in the existing system, Bain mixed White Labourism with romantic socialism. Bain helped form a local Independent Labour Party in 1899 – his *Johannesburg Witness* served as its' official organ for a while – but it did not survive the outbreak of the war.[212] In 1906, he initiated another Independent Labour Party on the Witwatersrand: linked to the British party, it drew together the remnants of the Political Labour League, and enjoyed support from sections of the Witwatersrand Trades and Labour Council, and the Trades Council operating in Pretoria.[213] The party favoured the franchise for Whites – it was refused affiliation to the Independent Labour Party in Britain because its advocacy of White suffrage only conflicted with the British party's doctrine of "universal brotherhood"[214] – and an end to Chinese labour.

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[209] Sachs, 1973, *op cit*., 130
[210] Speaking in 1907, and quoted in Thomas, 1963, *op cit*., p. 24; for similar attitudes by other labour figures, see Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 172-3
[211] Speaking in 1907, and quoted in Thomas, 1963, *op cit*., p. 24
[212] Grobler, 1968, *op cit*, pp. 9-10; Hyslop, 2004, *op cit*., pp. 123-133; Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., 90-96
[213] Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., pp. 64-5; Hyslop, 2004, *op cit*., 159-175; Thomas, 1963, *op cit*., pp. 4-5, 7, 11; Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 215-225, 278-283; Visser, 2001a, *op cit*., pp. 7-8, 18-19
[214] Van Duin, 1990*, op cit*., p. 649; this is also mentioned in Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 288-9. Van Duin does not seem to notice that this development contradicts his claims that "contemporary European and South African concepts of 'the place' of the non-European were … very much the same": van Duin, 1990, *op cit*., p. 647

The local Independent Labour Party's programme also included a commitment to "[t]he socialisation of all the means of production, distribution and exchange, to be controlled by a democratic state in the interests of the whole community", and even sent a delegate to the 1907 meeting of the Labour and Socialist International, but its membership seems to have evinced a wide range of views.[215]

Some members were mainstream trade unionists, such as Henry William "Harry" Sampson, an English printer and president of the South African Typographical Union for 25 years.[216] A one-time member of the Independent Labour Party in England, he had served as vice-president of the Johannesburg Trades and Labour Council alongside Andrews, and became involved in the post-war Witwatersrand Trades and Labour Council, becoming chair in 1920. A White Labourite and moderate political socialist, he later served as a Cabinet minister in the Pact government. Sampson favoured another variant of White Labourism, which would see the country partitioned on racial lines and the mines run on an "entirely white basis".[217]

Other members held more radical views, and clearly did not accept the view that the suffrage should be restricted to Whites, unlike Bain. One was the anarchist Harrison,[218] who joined the Independent Labour Party but did not play an active role, preferring to concentrate on the SDF. Another key figure was Archie Crawford. Born in Glasgow, Scotland, in 1883, he qualified as a fitter and turner, and came out with the British forces during the Anglo-Boer War.[219] After demobilisation, Crawford worked in the Pretoria State railway workshops, where he preached socialism at meetings that he organised outside the railway premises. The Pretoria railway workshops were one of the four State workshops that manufactured almost all the rolling stock, with the exception of locomotives: the other important workshops were Durban, Salt River at Cape Town, and Uitenhague in the Cape.[220] In 1906, Crawford was dismissed for agitating against retrenchments.

The next year saw several struggles against unemployment. Around 700 unemployed Whites set up an illegal camp at Milner Park in Johannesburg.[221] In April 1907, Crawford, along with Bain and W.C. Salter – a member of the Independent Labour Party who claimed to have shared platforms with Hardie and other British labour leaders[222] – assumed leadership of an Unemployed Organisation for White workers, leading a march of several hundred people from the Milner Park camp to Pretoria on 1 May 1907 to demand that the government "employ White labour at fair wages",[223] with little success. The government was only willing to

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[215] Thomas, 1963, *op cit*., pp. 11, 17-18; also see Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 279-280
[216] "Sampson, Henry William", in Rosenthal, compiler, 1966, *op cit*., pp. 327-8; Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., p. 107; Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., pp. 294-5; Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 15, 118-9
[217] Speaking in 1907, and quoted in Thomas, 1963, *op cit*., p. 24; also see Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., p. 291
[218] Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., p. 319
[219] For biographical details, see Francis Hunter, n.d., "Who was 'Pickhandle Mary?,'" unpublished mimeo, held at Africana collection, Johannesburg Public Library, pp. 18-26; Gitsham and. Trembath, 1926, *op cit.,* pp. 159-160; Harrison, n.d., *op cit.*, p. 46; Hirson, 1993b, *op cit.,* p. 3; Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.,* pp. 141-2; Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit.*, p. 290; " and "Crawford, Archibald (Archie)", in Rosenthal, compiler, 1966, *op cit*., p. 79
[220] Ferdinand Marais, April 1914, "Labour's Battle in South Africa: South African railway nationalisation and the labour movement", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XIV, p. 583
[221] Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., pp. 19-120
[222] Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., p. 319; Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., p. 17
[223] Quoted in Hunter, n.d., *op cit*., p. 20

offer relief work at low wages on railways several hundred miles from the Witwatersrand, and the movement collapsed.[224]

Also important was Mary Fitzgerald, one of the most prominent women in South Africa at the time. Born Mary Sinnot in Ireland in 1885, Mary Fitzgerald was the third of five children of a peasant family who emigrated with her father, John Sinnot, to Cape Town in 1900.[225] He became a successful salesman for Singer sewing machines, and the outgoing Mary, trained as a typist and as a bookkeeper, began to work at the military base, The Castle. She married a tram conductor, John Fitzgerald, in 1902 and bore five children.

The Sinnots and Fitzgeralds moved up to Johannesburg soon after the end of the Anglo-Boer War, where John Fitzgerald secured a job with the City and Suburban Tramways Company, then operating horse-drawn trams. Mary Fitzgerald began to work as a shorthand typist at the Transvaal Miners' Association, which was a craft union with 300 members, formed in 1902, with only miners who held a blasting certificate eligible for membership.[226] It was a successor to Bain's Labour Union, initially quite weak, and it became the South African Mine Workers' Union in 1913. It was through working for the Transvaal Miners' Association that Mary Fitzgerald became politically radicalised. Worried by the hacking cough of an executive member of the union, she recalled asking:[227]

> 'What is the matter with you, coughing like that? You should have it seen to. Why don't you go to a doctor?'
>
> 'I'm afraid it would be useless. My number's up. A short life and a merry one is the miner's motto, so don't worry about me any more.'
>
> 'What do you mean?'
>
> 'It's phthisis. My lungs are as hard as rock.'

She was horrified, and claimed that, in eight years, she recorded the death of thirty-two executive members of the Transvaal Miners' Association from the occupational disease.[228] She was equally appalled by the unsympathetic attitude of the mine owners, who did not compensate the miners or their families.

Mary Fitzgerald became a familiar sight as she pedalled her bicycle around the mines collecting money for the burial of phthisis victims, and became convinced of the need for a strong trade union

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[224] Hyslop, 2004, *op cit*., pp. 170172; Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., p. 20; also see Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 283-7

[225] See, *inter alia*, Hyslop, 2004, *op cit*., p. 186; Hunter, n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 8-26; Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., pp. 285-6, 300

[226] On the early union, see Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., pp. 40-41; Visser, 2001a, *op cit*., pp. 9-10; Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., pp. 4-5, 22-3

[227] Quoted in Hunter, n.d., *op cit*., p. 11

[228] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983,*op cit.* p. 150; also see Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., p. 35

organisation.[229] At first, she accompanied speakers to meetings but soon became a popular and effective speaker herself, and South Africa's first woman trade union organiser. In the meantime, her mother Margaret Sinnot took care of her children, while the family, including John Fitzgerald, became increasingly unhappy about her growing political involvement.

Moves to form a countrywide Labour Party in South Africa were modelled on contemporary developments in Britain. In 1907, the Independent Labour Party joined the Labour Representation Committee, a federal body established to co-ordinate efforts by trade unions and labour groupings to elect representatives in the Transvaal.[230] Independent Labour Party candidates had to be endorsed by the Labour Representation Committee, but the party retained its own identity in the polls.

That year the committee put up twelve candidates in Johannesburg and the eastern Witwatersrand, or East Rand, for the Transvaal general elections, held under a grant of Responsible Government in February 1907.[231] Strong feeling around the Chinese issue led to electoral pacts between Afrikaner nationalists and Labour candidates in a number of constituencies during the Transvaal elections. Afrikaner nationalism – organised at the time in *Het Volk* and the Responsible Government Association – was an authoritarian, conservative and populist movement, and drew much of its strength at the time from the memory of the horrors of the Anglo-Boer war. Besides Bain, few supporters of White Labourism were sympathetic to Afrikaner nationalism – even if many were nostalgic for Kruger's Transvaal – but the two currents had a great deal of common ground on questions of Chinese labour, job colour bars and segregation.

Whiteside and Sampson were among the three Labour men elected to the Transvaal parliament with the help of the Labour Representation Committee, the smallest "party" in a government dominated by *Het Volk*. There was also some success at local government level: Crawford was one of two labour members elected to the Johannesburg municipal council in 1907 with the backing of the Labour Representation Committee, and served three years; another candidate was elected in 1908 and there were further successes in 1909.[232]

A number of other Labour candidates were elected elsewhere in the country, sometimes as independents, sometimes with the support of local Trades Councils,[233] with three representatives in the Natal parliament.[234] A Natal Labour League had been formed as early as 1890, and the period after the Anglo-Boer War saw the emergence of a number of small labour groupings.[235] The most important were the Natal Labour Representation Committee formed in 1906 and the Natal Labour Party formed in 1907.

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[229] Biographical detail drawn from Hunter, n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 8-26
[230] Thomas, 1963, *op cit*., pp. 15-8; Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 236-239; Visser, 2001a, *op cit*., pp. 11-12
[231] Thomas, 1963, *op cit*., pp. 15-8, 22-3
[232] Archie Crawford, July 1911, "As Others See Us", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XII, p. 40; also see Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 275-6. I would like to thank Morgan of the American IWW for providing me with this and several other articles from the *International Socialist Review.* Other articles from the paper were located at the International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam.
[233] Andrews, 1941, *op cit*., p. 16
[234] Thomas, 1963, *op cit*., pp. 14-15; Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., p. 35
[235] For more on developments in Natal, see Grobler 1968, *op cit*., pp. 107-139; Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 57-76, 355-387; Visser, 2001a, *op cit*., pp. 8-9

In Cape Town, the local Trades and Labour Council, the predecessor of the Cape Federation of Labour Unions, formed a Cape Town Political League, worked with the SDF in the 1905 municipal elections, and established a local Labour Representation Committee in 1907, which also backed an SDF candidate.[236] In 1908, the Labour Representation Committee, the Trades and Labour Council and other groups launched a Cape Labour Party for the upcoming Cape general elections, which opposed the SDF. Subsequently, there was little co-operation between the two sides. An Orange River Colony Labour Party was even formed in the Orange Free State in 1909.[237]

A general pattern of support for Labour candidates was already becoming evident: it was drawn largely from English-speaking White workers, mostly of British origin, with a smattering of professionals and small businessmen: then, as in later years, the Labour candidates had fairly limited support amongst Afrikaner workers, and faced a powerful rival in Afrikaner nationalism, which shared a commitment to colour bars and segregation. When the leadership of the *Arbeid Aldelt* – an early trade union for Afrikaners, linked to *Het Volk*, and which was open to employers – tried to increase its support by dismissing the SA Labour Party as an "English" body for skilled workers,[238] it may be supposed that at least some Afrikaner workers agreed. The persistence of national divisions amongst White workers was not helped by the fact that the great majority of union meetings and labour literature and speeches were conducted in English.

4.6. Crawford, Mary Fitzgerald and the radicals' break with the SA Labour Party

The Chinese labour experiment on the Witwatersrand came to an end in 1907, with the election of a Liberal government in Britain and the victory of *Het Volk* in the Transvaal parliament – the last Chinese workers were repatriated in 1910 – but the momentum for a national labour party continued. An important impetus was provided by the outbreak of the first general strike on the Witwatersrand mines in May 1907, following moves at several mines to cut White wages and increase the number of African drillers ("hammer boys") supervised by underground White miners from two to three.[239] By May 22 the strike, supported by the Transvaal Miners' Association, involved more than 4,000 men, and Mary Fitzgerald, who had also organised a union amongst waitresses, established a number of women's support groups. It quickly spiralled into the first-ever general strike on the Witwatersrand mines.

However, the 1907 miners' strike collapsed in defeat on July 28. One factor was open State repression, including the use of Imperial troops to break up meetings and disperse pickets, with meetings of more than six people within three hundred yards of mine premises prohibited. Another factor was that mining operations were scarcely disrupted due to scab labour: the Chamber of Mines brought in poor White Afrikaners as strike-breakers, and a large number of Chinese "stepped into the places of the striking white

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[236] Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., pp. 135-139; Visser, 2001a, *op cit*., pp. 12-13; Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 46-57, 313-327, 329-350
[237] Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 350-354; Visser, 2001a, *op cit*., p. 11
[238] Visser, 2001a, *op cit*., pp. 13-14
[239] Grobler, 1968, *op cit.*, pp. 71-95; Thomas, 1963, *op cit*., pp. 12-14; Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 248-260; Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., pp. 22-25

miners".[240] The number of White miners fell by 10 percent and the mining costs fell by up to quarter,[241] but the Transvaal Miners' Association, rather than collapse, grew rapidly into a "formidable trade union" in the strike's aftermath.[242]

These events increased the clamour to end Chinese labour, and the State's open support for the mining houses led many trade unionists to throw their weight behind efforts to form a countrywide labour party. The Natal groups took the initiative, and a conference in Durban in 1908 decided to federate the various labour groups.[243] A second meeting in Durban in January 1909 – attended by delegates from all the provinces of the future South Africa, as well as the Witwatersrand Trades and Labour Council and the Labour Representation Committee – drew up a provisional constitution.

The SA Labour Party was established at an inter-colonial labour conference in October 1909, dominated by supporters of White Labourism, and chaired by Andrews, but also including a small radical socialist opposition. A wide range of groups and tendencies, including the Labour Representation Committee, the Independent Labour Party, the SDF,[244] and the newly formed Johannesburg Socialist Society, attended. Crawford and Mary Fitzgerald, dissatisfied with the direction of the Independent Labour Party, had formed the Johannesburg Socialist Society in June 1909.[245] Its membership was initially drawn from the Johannesburg section of the Independent Labour Party, but branches were also formed in Boksburg, Germiston and Pretoria. The organisation maintained links with the Independent Labour Party and the Labour Representation Committee in its first months.

Crawford attended the October 1909 meeting, as did Mary Fitzgerald, the only woman amongst the fifty-four delegates. Crawford carried a mandate from the Johannesburg Socialist Society to move that the new party be named the "South African Socialist Party" and adopt a clear socialist objective.[246] The motion was put forward by Jim Davidson, a Scotsman come to Cape Town in 1898 at the age of twenty-one: a former general-secretary of the SDF,[247] he moved to Johannesburg, joined the Johannesburg Socialist Society, sharing Crawford's general outlook.

The motion was defeated, but with the support of the Independent Labour Party, a socialist objective was included in the organisation's constitution, closely modelled on that of the British Labour Party.[248] However, it was clear that the party would focus on gradual reform, rather than revolutionary change, with a great deal of emphasis placed upon legislative and taxation reform.

A proposal by Crawford that the SA Labour Party recognise class as the basic division in society, and reject any policy based on differences of colour, was also rejected. Although a radical policy of total

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[240] Thomas, 1963, *op cit*., p. 13
[241] Thomas, 1963, *op cit*., p. 13
[242] Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., p. 257
[243] Thomas, 1963, *op cit*., pp. 26-27; also see Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 402-414
[244] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 112
[245] Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 281-283; Visser, 2001a, *op cit*., pp. 19-20
[246] *The Voice of Labour*, 11 September 1909, "The Movement"
[247] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983,*op cit.*, p. 151
[248] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 114; Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., pp. 141-14; Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 416-423

segregation proposed by Sampson was also defeated,[249] the radical socialists were unable to prevent the party adopting a programme of job colour bars, residential segregation, and Asian repatriation.[250] There was some ambiguity on the question of Coloureds, who were union members in the Cape, where the Coloured vote was also significant, but no firm decision on the issue was ever taken on the question admitting Coloured members.[251] A proposal by Crawford that the party only admit individuals to membership was also unsuccessful, and trade unions were allowed to affiliate upon payment of a levy.[252] The Labour Representation Committee became the Witwatersrand District Committee of the SA Labour Party, which also absorbed the Independent Labour Party. Sampson was elected president and a weekly, *the Worker*, was launched in 1910.[253] (This paper has largely been lost.)[254]

The October 1909 conference must be seen as marking a decisive break between radical socialists, and the new SA Labour Party. The SDF and the Johannesburg Socialist Society withdrew from the new SA Labour Party in November 1909, and the Social Democratic Party from Durban also rejected affiliation. That month Crawford also expounded on the need to form a revolutionary socialist party in strict opposition to the SA Labour Party.[255] The Labour Representation Committee subsequently excluded Crawford from its list of nominees for the 1910 general elections and expelled him in early December for failing to carry out his duties.[256] Sampson led the charge against Crawford. Steps were reportedly also taken to expel other members of the Johannesburg Socialist Society.[257]

When Harry Norrie of the Social Democratic Party – the party is discussed below – tried to establish a SA Labour Party branch under his own leadership in early 1910, he was ousted from the chair by the SA Labour Party leadership.[258] He was subsequently suspended for publicly criticising the SA Labour Party's election candidates.[259] The emerging rupture was an important development that helped define radical socialists as a local current distinct and autonomous from mainstream labour.

Personalities and sectarianism certainly played a role in the split: Crawford's all-round defeat at the October 1909 conference must be attributed, in part, to his record of abusive and intemperate attacks on other figures, and his tendency towards a dogmatic and intolerant approach. However, political differences

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[249] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983,*op cit*., p. 142
[250] South African Labour Party, [1910] 1960, *op cit*.; on the details of the debates on this issue, see Ticktin, 1973, *op cit.*, pp. 420-424
[251] Thomas, 1963, *op cit*., pp. 66-70, 74
[252] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, p. 143
[253] No complete set of this paper has, unfortunately, survived: the only set available, held in the Africana collection at the Johannesburg Public Library, runs from July 1913 to October 1914
[254] There are several issues from 1913 and 1914 preserved in the Johannesburg Public Library, which also keeps what remains of the SA Labour Party archive in the Strange Memorial Library. Wessel Visser was able to locate a few scattered copies in the Department of Justice files at the National Archives of South Africa in Pretoria, as well as locate its registration papers in the files of the Department of the Interior: correspondence with Wessel Visser, 28 May 2001. Visser's PhD devotes a chapter to the history of this paper: Visser, 2001a, *op cit.*
[255] See, for example, *The Voice of Labour*, 20 November 1909, "Notes of the Week: no compromise!"
[256] Thomas, 1963, *op cit*., pp. 16-17; Ticktin, 1973, *op cit.*, pp. 431-434
[257] *The Voice of Labour*, 8 April 1910; Katz, 1976, *op cit.*, p. 270
[258] Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., p. 428
[259] Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., p. 451

were primary. The groups that withdrew all seem to have shared an objection to the SA Labour Party's lack of a clear socialist goal and its segregationist platform.

The Johannesburg Socialist Society was, like the SDF, an eclectic group, and the views of the two key figures in that Society, Crawford and Mary Fitzgerald, were likewise eclectic. Although both have often been characterised as syndicalists,[260] the picture was rather more complex, and it would be more accrate to suggest that syndicalism was one of a wide range of radical influences on the pair. On the whole, their views were probably closest to a radical type of political socialism, similar to those of Debs of the Socialist Party of America, but kept shifting: it is probably futile to try and categorise them precsiely . Crawford's early views were probably very close to those of Bain,[261] but by 1909 he was far more radical. Like Debs (and De Leon), Crawford believed in educating and organising the workers on both the "political" and "industrial" fields. But unlike Debs (and like De Leon), Crafwiord refused to link his quest for electortal success to a programme of pragmatic reform: "All reforms are humbug!"[262] Explaining his approach, he wrote:[263]

> Q. Will the emancipation of the working class be won on the political or on the industrial field?
>
> A. It will be won on both if it is to be won speedily and well. All depends on the wisdom of the fighters in using each field in just its proper proportion for just its proper purpose.

This "imposisbilist" approach .[264] was common enough amongst radicals in the Wrst at this time.

Crawford aimed to build a radical Socialist Party, which was essential to conduct "political action", and its "absolute corollary", "parliamentary action".[265] The tasks of such a party were two-fold: to raise consciousness and to capture of State power. It would not focus on reforms in legislation or welfare: in Crawford's view, reformist Labour Parties were outfits run by unscrupulous politicians and union bureaucrats that betrayed the working class and increased the power of capitalism. Crawford was particularly scornful of the Labour Parties of Australia and New Zealand, whose actions in government seemed to bear out his case in all respects.[266] There is no real support for the notion that Crawford "opposed" "participation in elections"

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[260] Hirson, 1993b, *op cit.*; Philips, 1978, *op cit.*; Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, p. 156

[261] In 1907, while declaring himself a socialist, he could also call for the public to support the unemployed movement in order to make the Transvaal "once and for all a white man's country": quoted in Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., p. 289

[262] Archibald Crawford, October 1911, "Reform Legislation in New Zealand", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XII, p. 219

[263] Archibald Crawford, January 1911, "Capital and Labour: a short catechism", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XI, pp. 414.

[264] For example, Coleman, 1987, *op cit.*

[265] Archibald Crawford, 16 February 1912, "The IWW's Augean [sic] Stable", *The Voice of Labour*

[266] Archibald Crawford, 5 January 1912, "The Georgetown Election", *The Voice of Labour*; Crawford, October 1911, *op cit*.; Archibald Crawford, November 1911, "Labour Rule in Australia: how strikes are settled", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XII

on principle:[267] rather, he wanted revolutionary "fighters" to act "speedily and well" to use the "political field" for "its proper purpose".[268]

Crawford's break with the SA Labour Party was not the result of a rejection of parliament, but the result of that party's evolution (evident, for Crafwiord, by the October 1909 conference) into a reformist party. Crawford's misgivings were confirmed by the entry of Frederic H.P. Creswell and Wilfred Wybergh into the leadership of the party. Neither man was a socialist, or, indeed, a member of the labour movement. Creswell was a mining engineer and former mine manager best known for an unsuccessful attempt to run the Village Main mine solely on the basis of White labour in 1903, and became the "great apostle of white labour".[269] Wybergh was a former government Commissioner of Mines, involved with Creswell's experiment. Creswell soon became the leader of the SA Labour Party, despite his class background. Crawford would claim: "Our 'Labour Party' absorbs all the opportunists and reactionaries and keeps the Socialist movement pure".[270]

Even so, Crawford would not have wanted the existing unions to affiliate to even a revolutionary SA Labour Party. On the one hand, he felt unions could be a conservative break on a revolutionary party: such party should be restricted to conscious socialists, and must exclude reformist union leaders as "opportunists and reactionaries". On the other hand, Crafword despised craft unions, and believed that industrial unions were necessary to unite the working class, unlike the craft unions, which divided and betrayed it.[271] Just as it bogus Labour Parties must be replacedwith real Socialist Parties, tereacherous craft unions had to eb replaced with real Industrial Unions.

This idea can be traced back to Crawford's efforts to form a General Workers' Union, and was strongly reinforced by the example of the IWW, whose radical project mnet all of Crawford's criteria: it was revolutionary, it was anti-capitalist, and it aimed to unite the whole working class into One Big Union. Following the 1908 IWW split, Crawford even sided with the Chicago IWW against the Detroit IWW of De Leon.[272] Like many others at the time, during the "glorious period" he was influenced by "the ideas and the mood of anarcho-syndicalism".[273]

Yet Crawford could never really break with a fascination with the State opower, or dowbngrade the socialist party into the supplementary and secondary role that De leon and other syndicalist envisaged: even the IWW was, he insisted, no substitute for a party that could undertake "parliamentary action", which all

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[267] As does Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 27.
[268] Archibald Crawford, January 1911, "Capital and Labour: a short catechism", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XI, pp. 414; also see Archibald Crawford, 24 November 1911, "Our Policy", *The Voice of Labour*.
[269] Thomas, 1963, *op cit*., p. 28; Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 135-144, 152-159. The quote is from Thomas, 1963, *op cit*., p. 28
[270] Archibald Crawford, July 1911, "As Others See Us", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XII, p. 41
[271] Archibald Crawford, September 1911, "The Spectre of Industrial Unionism", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XII. This was reprinted in the journal some years later: Archibald Crawford, August 1917, "The Spectre of Industrial Unionism", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XVIII
[272] For example, Archie Crawford, 29 September 1911, "Round the Industrial World", *The Voice of Labour.* Wessel Visser also drew this point to my attention: correspondence with Wessel Visser, 25 May 2001, in my possession.
[273] Eric Hobsbawm, 1993, "Bolshevism and the Anarchists", in his *Revolutionaries,* Abacus, London, pp. 72-3. The unusual spelling of "marxism" appears in Hobsbawm's text.

"thinking industrialists" knew to be unavoidable.[274] Industrial unions were just one part of a broader socialist movement, and their role was necessarily confined to "economic" issues: the key struggle, the struggle for State power, was the task of the Socialist Party, which dealt in "politics".[275] This neat separation of class struggle into a "political field" (undertaken by a party using the State) and an "industrial field" (where unions fought around "economic" issues) was typical of the Labour and Socialist International, and quite at odds with the syndicalist view that unions were the key force in *both* economic and political struggles. "the time will and must come when the revolutionary working class *must* take parliamentary action".[276] Even syndicalist unions were "merely a means to an end, and of relative importance to other methods of achieving socialism".[277]

Mary Fitzgerald was famous for her support of militant forms of labour struggle, and, while she never produced a clear statement of her aims, the evidence indicates that her views were very close to those of Crawford. Her main activities between 1909 and 1912 centred on women's suffrage, and focused on White women, and she was involved in the production of a short-lived monthly journal called *Modern Women in South Africa*.[278] A number of articles by Mary Fitzgerald at the time show the same fascination with the State that cjhracterised Crawford. In "The Case for Women's Franchise", she started from the proposition that "every individual is an asset to the State", and argued that political rights and duties would "educate" women.[279] Further, "political freedom always precedes economic freedom", meaning that women's suffrage would promote a more progressive use of State power. She was a member of the Women's Enfranchisement League, whose Johannesburg section seems to have agreed to restrict its demands for enfranchisement in the constitution of the Union of South Africa to White women.[280]

There were some divisions within the early Johannesburg Socialist Society, but these did not typically centre on questions of syndicalism,[281] for the fault line typically lay between the more radical and the more moderate elements, with those influenced by syndicalism siding with the radicalss. Typical of the moderates was one W.H. Pritchard, a member of the Independent Labour Party, one of the Johannesburg municipal councillors elected by the Labour Representation Committee in 1909, and one of the Johannesburg Socialist Society's principal speakers. He offered lectures on topics such as "The State and the

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[274] Archibald Crawford, 16 February 1912, "The IWW's Augean [sic] Stable", *The Voice of Labour*
[275] Archibald Crawford, 31 July 1909, "The Alliance", *The Voice of Labour*; Archibald Crawford, 12 January 1912, "Why the IWW is Non-political", *The Voice of Labour*; Archibald Crawford, 16 February 1912, "The IWW's Augean [sic] Stable", *The Voice of Labour*; Archibald Crawford, 22 March 1912, "Socialist Party for South Africa: proposed constitution", *The Voice of Labour*
[276] Archibald Crawford, 16 February 1912, "The IWW's Augean [sic] Stable", *The Voice of Labour*. C.f. Dora B. Montefiore, 8 March 1912, "Clearing the Way: the case for a United Socialist Party in South Africa", *The Voice of Labour*
[277] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983,*op cit.*, p. 151
[278] Haysom, 1993, *op cit.*, p. 31
[279] *The Voice of Labour*, 7 August 1909, "Our Women's Page"
[280] Haysom, 1993, *op cit.*, pp. 31-2: this sort of approach led Olive Schreiner, the prominent Cape novelist, socialist and feminist, to resign from the Cape Women's Enfranchisement League in 1909. See Haysom, 1993, *op cit.*, p. 32, and Ruth First and Ann Scott, 1980, *Olive Schreiner*, Rutgers University Press, New Jersey, pp. 261-2.
[281] *Contra.* Katz, 1976, *op cit*., p. 274, who suggested that syndicalism was a central influence; also cf. Visser, 2001a, *op cit*., p. 20

Child", "The State and the Individual", and "Good Government",[282] and argued that socialists did not aim "to take from the rich and give to the poor" but rather to develop effective and honest government.[283]

In October 1909, Pritchard, along with a Mr. Ware and J. Berman,[284] ran in the elections to the Johannesburg municipal council on manifestoes stressing increased municipal services, the "direct employment of white labour where practicable", and reforms to the electoral system.[285] Mr. Ware was probably John Joseph Ware, an Australian-born stonemason, trade unionist and founder member of the Australian Labour Party who came to the Transvaal in 1897.[286] He had been elected to the Johannesburg Council in 1906.

Following his expulsion from the Labour Representation Committee, Crawford established a short-lived "South African Socialist Federation" in December 1909, at a meeting in Boksburg chaired by Bain,[287] who had a "difficult relationship" with the circles around Crawford and Mary Fitzgerald.[288] It was meant to federate the various socialist groups that rejected the SA Labour Party's moderate approach and colour bar programme, although it was not entirely clear whether the organisation intended to form a new party, or to rally opposition *within* the SA labour Party. This was around the time of the anarchist Ferrer's execution in Spain, and Bain was only prevented from addressing a public protest in Johannesburg, organised by the *Voice of Labour* network, on the subject.[289] However, his relations with the Crawford and Mary Fitzgerald broke down soon afterwards, following an erroneous report in their paper that he would be standing as a South African Socialist Federation candidate in the 1910 elections.[290] He eventually ran as an SA Labour Party candidate in Pretoria.

The South African Socialist Federation had other problems. It only attracted support from Benoni, Johannesburg and Pretoria; the SDF in Cape Town, the Social Democratic Party in Durban, and a small circle in Germiston failed to follow suit.[291] The failure to secure the affiliation of the SDF was a serious blow, as it was the most visible radical socialist group in South Africa at the time. The Social Democratic Party in Durban opposed the SA Labour Party's programme of segregation, but its general outlook – it was a party with a tight programme, as opposed to the SDF- was just as reformist as the new party.

The roots of the Social Democratic Party lay in the Clarion Fellowship formed in Durban in 1903. This helped distribute materials associated with the Independent Labour Party in Britain, like the *Clarion*,

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[282] *The Voice of Labour*, 28 August 1909, "The Movement"
[283] *The Voice of Labour*, 14 August 1909, "Good Government: a noble legacy"
[284] Archibald Crawford, 11 September 1909, "Notes of the Week", *The Voice of Labour*. Articles strongly supporting electoral activity, but not signed by Crawford, also appeared in *The Voice of Labour,* 18 September 1909, "Attention, Comrades! Fall in Line! By the Right Dress! Forward, March!" and *The Voice of Labour,* 23 October 1909, "The Poor Voter on Election Day"
[285] *The Voice of Labour*, 2 October 1909, "Johannesburg Municipal Elections: Labour Candidates' Address"
[286] I would like to thank Jonathan Hyslop for suggesting that the candidate was John Joseph Ware. For biographical details, see Gitsham and Trembath, 1926, *op cit*., p. 160
[287] A draft constitution for this organisation may be found in *The Voice of Labour*, 20 November 1909, "South African Socialist Society". For more on the Federation, *The Voice of Labour*, 20 November 1909, "South African Socialist Society"; *The Voice of Labour*, 31 December 1909, "The S.A.S.F".
[288] Hyslop, 2004, *op cit*., pp. 187-188
[289] Hyslop, 2004, *op cit*., p. 187
[290] Hyslop, 2004, *op cit*., pp. 187-188
[291] See *The Voice of Labour*, 31 December 1909, "The S.A.S.F."; also see Visser, 2001a, *op cit*., pp. 20-

raised funds to send a local delegate to the 1905 congress of the Labour and Socialist International and to support the election campaign of Hyndman in Britain.[292] In its second year, it reportedly sold or distributed 429 books and 7,479 pamphlets.[293] When Kier Hardie visited South Africa in 1908, he met the group, which he described as a branch of the Social Democratic Federation in Britain.[294]

The key figure was Norrie, a Scottish immigrant and a tailor who came after the Anglo-Boer War where he became active in the local Tailors' Trade Union and helped form a local Trades Council.[295] He has been described as Durban's answer to Harrison,[296] but was cast in a rather more moderate mould than Cape Town's leading anarchist: generally an opponent of colour bars in the labour movement, Norrie was, in other respects, a reformist political socialist. During his South African visit, Hardie reported seeing a window devoted to the display of the *Clarion* and other Independent Labour Party material at one of Durban's largest booksellers:[297] this was almost certainly the work of Norrie's circle.

The Social Democratic Party was formed in 1907 or 1908 out of the Clarion Fellowship, and seems to have been affiliated to the Social Democratic Federation in Britain. "On the whole … a decent bunch of fellows",[298] it was very much a party of parliamentary socialism. Norrie was the key figure, giving talks at the Town Gardens every Sunday night where for "seven years he was the only regular speaker, and he often held a crowd for four hours".[299] The meetings became something of a regular forum for a wide range of labour issues, and Norrie ran unsuccessfully as a socialist candidate for the Durban municipality on numerous occasions – he was once elected unopposed, but resigned for lack of time – the Natal parliament, and later the Union parliament. Elections were seen as particularly important as opportunities for propaganda.[300] In 1906, Norrie's circle started a monthly called *the Socialist Spark*, which lingered into 1907 as *the Spark*.[301] (This paper also seems to have been lost.)[302] In 1908, when Andrews helped form a Natal Federation of Trades, Norrie became its first president.

Another important figure in the party was A.L. Clark: also a Scottish immigrant, he was chairman of the Natal Railwaymen's Association formed in 1906, and the first chairman of the Natal Labour Party.[303] Other activists included Harry W. Haynes and a certain Hoggins.[304] Haynes, one of the "most accomplished of the Rand labour journalists",[305] was born in 1897 in England, served in South Africa with the Imperial forces during the Anglo-Boer War, returning in 1904 to work on the mines, became active in the Transvaal

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[292] Drew, 2002, *op cit*., p. 25; Gitsham and Trembath, 1926, *op cit*., pp. 172-3; Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., pp. 102-3; Ticktin, 1973, *op cit.*, pp. 362-364; Visser, 2001a, *op cit*., p. 16
[293] Drew, 2002, *op cit*., p 25
[294] James Kier Hardie, 17 April 1908, "South Africa: in Natal", *The Labour Leader*
[295] Gitsham and Trembath, 1926, *op cit*., pp. 172-3
[296] Boydell, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit.*, p. x
[297] Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., p. 10
[298] Boydell, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit.*, p. xi
[299] Gitsham and Trembath, 1926, *op cit*., pp. 172-173
[300] Boydell, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit.*, p. xi
[301] Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., p. 116
[302] I was unable to locate any copies during my extensive research. Wessel Visser, an expert on the early labour and socialist press, had the same experience: letter from Wessel Visser, 25 May 2001, in my possession.
[303] Gitsham and Trembath, 1926, *op cit*., pp. 164-5; also see Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., p. 72
[304] Mantzaris, 1983, *op cit.*, pp. 117-118; *The Voice of Labour*, 21 June 1912, "Comrade Webber's Attitude".
[305] Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., p. 18

Miners' Association, played a role in a general strike on the Witwatersrand in 1913, and moved to Durban in 1916.[306]

The socialist Laurie H. Greene established a similar group in Pietermaritzburg. This small Socialist Party group advocated the "[s]ocialisation of all the means of life, and the education of the people in the principles of Socialism".[307] Its approach was, however, that of parliamentary socialism, centring on universal adult suffrage, proportional representation, the abolition of hereditary authority, free legal services, free public education, the abolition of child labour and the "repudiation of the National Debt".[308] Greene's Socialist Party was not involved in the South African Socialist Federation.

4.7. The *Voice of Labour* network, anarchism and the politics of interracial labour unity

Like Crawford's efforts to win the SA Labour Party to a radical programme, his efforts in forming a South African Socialist Federation were not a success. It failed to secure the affiliation of most local radicals, or win new recruits, and soon collapsed. In 1910, the Johannesburg Socialist Society also split, and Pritchard and others moved to the SA Labour Party. The most important single achievement of Crawford and Mary Fitzgerald in this period lay not in formal organisations, but in the establishment of the *Voice of Labour* in September 1908. It was originally established as a "free sheet" to promote a new General Workers' Union for unskilled and unorganised workers, and was at the time described as the Union's official organ.

Based on the Witwatersrand, the General Workers' Union also established branches in Bloemfontein and Kimberley.[309] The Orange River Colony Labour Party emerged out of the Bloemfontein branch, but the Kimberley branch collapsed following victimisation by De Beers.[310] Crawford was honorary general-secretary of the union,[311] and Mary Fitzgerald resigned her job at the Transvaal Miners' Association to become involved in the initiative. There is no real evidence for Crafword's claims, years later, that the union was modelled on the IWW, the "ideas and tactics of Industrial Unionism", and inspired directly by the "inauguration of an Industrial Union movement in America",[312] It was hostile to the craft unions, and refused to join the Witwatersrand Trades and Labour Council,[313] but there is no evidence of any syndicalist influence in its politics. The Simons were therefore quite incorrect to link the General Workers' Union with "Industrial unionism, syndicalism and the general strike".[314]

Crawford acted as editor of the *Voice of Labour*, while John Fitzgerald initially owned the Modern Press at 135 Fox Street where the paper was printed: proprietorship soon passed to Mary Fitzgerald. The early paper claimed a circulation of 5,000,[315] but it was a free bulletin, so this figure does not necessarily

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[306] Gitsham and Trembath, 1926, *op cit*., p. 169; Harrison, n.d., *op cit*., p. 47
[307] *The Voice of Labour*, 9 February 1912, "The Socialist Party in Maritzburg"
[308] *The Voice of Labour*, 9 February 1912, "The Socialist Party in Maritzburg"
[309] Visser, 2001a, *op cit*., pp. 10-11
[310] Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 348-9; Visser, 2001a, *op cit*., p. 11
[311] Elaine Katz, 1976, A *Trade Union Aristocracy: a history of white workers in the Transvaal and the general strike of 1913*. Johannesburg. Institute for African Studies. p. 299
[312] Archibald Crawford, August 1911, "The Class War in South Africa", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XI, p. 80
[313] Katz, 1976, *op cit.*, p. 298
[314] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983,*op cit.*, p. 147
[315] *The Voice of Labour*, 26 September 1908

indicate a wide readership or support base. It carried articles in favour of union organisation, and tried to promote a co-operative company, but there was no socialism in the early issues. The General Workers' Union was not very successful, and was accused of "poaching" members from the existing unions linked to the Witwatersrand Trades and Labour Council. It collapsed in early 1909, the General Workers' Union collapsed, and Crawford's focus shifted from popular mobilisation to the development of a specifically socialist movement on the Witwatersrand.

When the General Workers' Union fell apart, the *Voice of Labour* was relaunched as a socialist weekly, *The Voice of Labour: a weekly journal of socialism, trade unionism and politics*"; it claimed a circulation of 2,000. Crawford continued to serve as editor, Mary Fitzgerald as publisher, while Harrison helped by proofreading the text on occasion.[316] It was never the organ of any one organisation, and had no official political line. It acted as a forum for socialists and labour supporters from across South Africa, reaching "the leading Socialists of Durban, Kimberley, Bloemfontein, Pretoria, Cape Town and Johannesburg".[317] It acted as a platform for Crawford, Mary Fitzgerald, and members of the Johannesburg Socialist Society – lengthy articles by Pritchard were a noticeable feature in 1909 – but also carried articles from "our veteran comrade" Glasse in Port Elizabeth,[318] the Social Democratic Party in Durban, and Harrison of the SDF, and members of the Pretoria Socialist Society.[319]

The energetic Harrison had, meanwhile, founded the Pretoria Socialist Society in 1911. Returning from his visit to Britain, he lived in Pretoria for two years, working as a carpenter in the construction of the Union Buildings, the planned seat of government for the Union of South Africa.[320] Here he helped establish the Pretoria Socialist Society with two brothers, Robert and William Blake, and a Miss Hyatt, a niece of Edward Carpenter.[321] This Pretoria Socialist Society was a mixed body, very much in the mould of the SDF, although its general tendency was rather more moderate than the SDF. Many of its activities involved passing resolutions as the "Cabinet" of a "socialist government" for "social revolution" under the auspices of the Pretoria Parliamentary Debating Society, which was allowed to use the Town Council Chamber for its activities.[322] Members of the organisation also worked with the SA Labour Party, and enjoyed good relations with the Mayor, Mr A. Johnson. However, it also held talks of a more radical nature.

In 1912, Dora Montefiore, a socialist and suffragette from a wealthy British family of bankers,[323] reportedly one of the first women imprisoned in the suffragette protests in Britain and a friend of Crawford who she met during his travel, and visited South Africa after a tour of Australia, where she worked on the *Voice of Labour*, and gave several talks to the Pretoria Socialist Society on the general theme of "A Labour Party in Power" in Australia, and went to Durban to aid Norrie in an attempt to win a parliamentary seat

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[316] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 36
[317] *The Voice of Labour*, 14 August 1909, "A Socialist Party" (editorial)
[318] See, for example, *The Voice of Labour*, 26 January 1912, "From the Watch Tower" (by Crawford), which includes a reference to an unpublished letter from "our veteran Comrade Glasse"
[319] See Harrison, n.d., *op cit*., pp. 33-6
[320] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 33-6
[321] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 33-6
[322] Harrison, n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 33-6; *The Voice of Labour*, 12 July 1912, "U.S.P. Notes"; 13 September 1912, "U.S.P. Notes"
[323] Boydell, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. xi-xii

against Boydell of the SA Labour Party. While her later views on race may have been quite liberal,[324] some of her statements at the time were somewhat crude.[325] While I am willing to admit that the IWW might have impressed Montefiore during her stay in Australia, I do not believe that there is any real support for Hyslop's claim that she was a "notable missionary of syndicalism" who had "converted to … IWW politics".[326] Her views were far closer to Crawford's "impossibilism": sympathetic to syndicalism, perhaps even influenced by it, but generally still in the mould of political socialism, an issue to which I return in Section 5.2.

Besides, Harrison, there was at least one other anarchist in the Pretoria Socialist Society, one Davidoff, of "Russian origin", who advocated "propaganda by the deed", the only such anarchist that Harrison had ever encountered.[327] The two publicly debated their different approaches to anarchism at a talk entitled "Propaganda by Thought and Verbal Discussion or Propaganda by the Deed", chaired by Bain, and the vote went overwhelmingly to Harrison.[328] Harrison commented that "As Bain and I concluded discussing the question afterwards, we agreed that I had everything in my favour, because however people may condone, as they do, mass murder in international warfare, they shriek with horror at any thought of individual assassination". Davidoff, according to Harrison, subsequently returned to Russia in the midst of a personal scandal: an S.H. Davidoff joined the syndicalist Industrial Socialist League formed in Cape Town in 1918, but it is not clear if it was the same man.

The *Voice of Labour* has been characterised by the Simons as "the first systematic attempt to spread the doctrines of revolutionary socialism" in South Africa.[329] This is not strictly true – Bain's *Johannesburg Witness* and Harrison's *Cape Socialist* both appeared earlier – but the *Voice of Labour* certainly lasted far longer than either earlier paper, appearing weekly from September 1908 to December 1912 – a considerable achievement. Its greatest achievement, however, was in providing an organisational nexus for socialists, and a central space for the development of socialist analysis.

The *Voice of Labour* thus became the centre of a network of socialists from across South Africa, linking them to common issues across the country, engaging them in common debates, and helping organise their activities around common projects. While readership had fallen by more than half, the paper was now an important point of contact for a wide range of socialists – something that was particularly important given that involvement in the movement for a labour party no longer provided a meeting point, and given the failure of the South African Socialist Federation.

The paper was also important as a forum for the development of an interracial class politics. In August 1909, Crawford attacked Creswell's White labour schemes as a fallacy that drove down White wages

[324] See, for example, Drew, 2002, *op cit*., p. 29
[325] Replying, for example, to an opponent who said that socialism could not work, as it would "have to include the Bantus", Mrs. Montefiore was reported as replying, "that we need not bother about the native, his wives did all the work (loud laughter)". Quoted in Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit*., p. 35
[326] Hyslop, 2004, *op cit*., pp. 192-193
[327] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 38
[328] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 38
[329] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, p.141

while denying Africans their right to live,[330] and the Johannesburg Socialist Society adopted a colour-blind constitution, and stated that workers of colour should be included in the labour movement.[331]

Questions of racial prejudice and discrimination were also, as indicated above, central to the break between the radicals around Crawford, and the new party. The Simons' claim that Crawford "evaded the colour issue", failed to criticise the SA Labour Party for "betraying its principles by adopting white supremacy policies", and otherwise "studiously refrained" from racial issues,[332] was simply wrong. Although Crawford remained focused on White workers, and paid little attention to the specific social problems facing workers of colour, it is misleading to suggest he "evaded the colour issue" in favour of an abstract class politics.

Crawford's early views on race were probably the same as those of Bain, but by 1909 Crawford – who helped rescue Hardie from the hostile crowd that greeted his arrival in Johannesburg in 1907[333] – was a firm internationalist, who opposed White Labourism on principle. In a heated debate on "The Colour Question" in the *Voice of Labour* in 1909, dragging out in the letter columns for the remainder of the year, Crawford consistently opposed White Labourism.

When several participants opposed Africans being admitted to socialist organisations, the franchise, and the "Socialist State",[334] Crawford opposed racial discrimination and prejudice. Replying to one correspondent, "Finem Respice", who criticised the *Voice of Labour's* "strenuous advocacy of the social and political equality of black and white",[335] Crawford insisted that socialist ethics recognised no colour bar, and could countenance no racially based restrictions on political rights.[336]

> I am asked for an explanation of my attitude on the Colour Question. An explanation is simple. I am a Socialist … Socialism … knows no Race, colour or creed. Socialism passes over geographic boundaries and transcends all lines, which some diseased organs of society seek – in the propagation of its own disease – to draw between Races and colours ...
>
> Regarding the Coloured franchise … I do emphatically protest against the extreme political incapacity and want of perception which leads them to deny the privileges of citizenship even unto one Coloured man, irrespective of his ability, morality or extraction …

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[330] Archibald Crawford, 14 August 1909", From the Watch Tower", *The Voice of Labour*; also see Ticktin, 1973, *op cit.*, p. 293
[331] Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 298-9, 305
[332] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, pp. 141, 144, 145, 154
[333] See Hardie, [1908] 1996, *op cit.*; Cope, [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 98-9.
[334] *The Voice of Labour*, 31 July 1909, "Our Postbag", letter on "The Colour Question" by "Finem Respice"; 13 November 1909, "Our Postbag", letter on "Socialist 'Ratting'" by "Cynicus"; 21 August 1909, "Our Postbag", reply on "The Colour Question" by "Finem Respice"; 11 December 1909, "Our Postbag", letter by "Cynicus"; 18 December 1909, "Our Postbag" letter on "Socialism and Colour", by "Cynicus"
[335] *The Voice of Labour*, 31 July 1909, "Our Postbag", on "The Colour Question"
[336] Archibald Crawford, 31 July 1909, "Irrespective … of Colour", *The Voice of Labour*

By December 1909, Crawford was dismissing the very "idea" of segregation as "foolish in the extreme".[337] If segregation meant that the White man or the black man could be segregated from their exploiters, it "would be a fine thing", but the very possibility of segregation was negated by the hunger of the farms and mines for labour, which forced Africans into the labour market.

Segregation was a policy of "race hatred", and its strongest supporters were "white sections of the community who would fain exterminate the whole race".[338] As for miscegenation – usually called "Social Equality" at the time – at worst, "little harm is done". In 1910, he lambasted the Witwatersrand Trades and Labour Council for ignoring the "300,000 coloured workers on the Rand, two-thirds of whom work on the mines".[339]

These articles show the limitations and the strengths of Crawford's somewhat contradictory racial radicalism. His commentary on the "Coloured franchise" could be read as suggesting a qualified franchise, based on "ability, morality or extraction".[340] In speaking of miscegenation, Crawford also assured his readers that "fusion" was not an "inevitable corollary" of "political equality": "under socialism" "a natural form of segregation" would emerge. [341] Crawford's account tended to reduce the question of racial divisions purely as a consequence of racial prejudices: he did not pay sufficient attention to the legal and social disabilities under which workers of colour laboured, nor did he consider that there were benefits to employers of racial domination beyond simply dividing the working class.

On the other hand, Crawford made a claim that went against the grain of any possibility of "a natural form of segregation". This was the claim that all workers of all races had a common class interest, a claim that opened the door to arguments for an interracial labour and socialist movement, an argument that would become the central theme of later syndicalists upon the Witwatersrand: "It is useless for the white worker to kick his coloured brother slave".[342]

Crawford's arguments were accepted, and then further developed, by the other socialists that gravitated towards the *Voice of Labour*: without necessarily sharing Crawford's "impossibilist" position, *Voice of Labour* correspondents tended to identify with the notion that the SA Labour Party was reformist and an obstacle to socialism, and the great majority also opposed the colour bar and segregation. Hostility to the SA Labour Party and its politics, and opposition to racial discrimination and prejudice, soon became defining features of the *Voice of Labour* network, however divided that network may have been in other respects. The debate on the "The Colour Question" was, in this sense, a defining moment in the formation of the network.

Davidson joined "The Colour Question" controversy, supporting Crawford's position, insisting that a united working class movement, across the colour line, was the only force capable of defeating local

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[337] Archibald Crawford, 4 December 1909, "Economic Considerations", *The Voice of Labour*
[338] Archibald Crawford, 4 December 1909, "Economic Considerations", *The Voice of Labour*
[339] Archibald Crawford, 8 March 1910", From the Watch Tower", *The Voice of Labour*
[340] Archibald Crawford, 31 July 1909, "Irrespective … of Colour", *The Voice of Labour*
[341] Archibald Crawford, 4 December 1909, "Economic Considerations", *The Voice of Labour*
[342] *The Voice of Labour*, 23 October 1909, " Notes of the Week"

capitalism.[343] The anarchist Glasse accepted the same line of argument: "For a white worker in this South Africa to pretend he can successfully fight his battle independent of the coloured wage slaves – the vast majority – is, to my mind, simply idiocy".[344]

An F. Murray from Cape Town, probably a member of the SDF, also wrote in support of Crawford. In his view, the practice of excluding workers of colour from the unions could only lead to the replacement of White workers by cheap unorganised labour.[345] Only interracial labour organisation "under the world-encircling banner of Revolutionary Socialism, which stands for the economic equality of every worker no matter of what race, creed, nationality, colour or sex", could end economic competition between workers of different races and ensure a decent life for all.

The political differences between the radicals, coalescing as the *Voice of Labour* network, and the SA Labour Party, played out towards the end of 1909. The Independent Labour Party and the Labour Representation Committee joined the new party, but the Johannesburg Socialist Society and the SDF chose to stay out. The Social Democratic Party in Durban also did not join: it was just as reformist as the SA Labour Party, but favoured a colour-blind platform.

The Johannesburg Socialist Society was renamed the Socialist Party in mid-1910, and ran Crawford and Davidson as candidates in the September 1910 general elections. Rather than betray internationalist principles to avoid "abysmal defeat" in a tough contest against SA Labour Party candidates,[346] Crawford was outspoken on the "colour issue". An observer, reporting in the *Voice of Labour*, noted:[347]

> On the Sunday evening prior to the elections, Comrade Crawford held a platform meeting on the Market Square for two hours and a half, arguing on the question of Colour, and at more than one time it looked like he would be torn to pieces by an ignorant mob. More than one person declared that thousands of pounds could not induce them to defend the same principles before a mob on the eve of an election.

Crawford, who ran against Andrews in Fordsburg, polled only eight votes, and Davidson, who ran against Sampson, twenty-five.[348] Two other socialist candidates – Arthur Noon, of the Cape Town SDF, and Greene in Pietermaritzburg – also stood on a non-racial platform, and fared equally poorly.

The SA Labour Party ran two candidates in the Cape, six in Natal, and eleven in the Transvaal. It won only four seats, all on the Witwatersrand, sending Creswell, Sampson, Walter Madeley and H.C. Haggar, editor of the *Worker*, to parliament, and *Het Volk* successfully nominated Whiteside to a seat in the

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[343] Jim Davidson, 11 December 1909, "Socialism and Colour", *The Voice of Labour*
[344] See, for example, *The Voice of Labour*, 26 January 1912, letter from Glasse
[345] F. Murray, 28 August 1909, "Our Postbag", letter on "The Colour Question", *The Voice of Labour*
[346] *Contra*. Katz, 1976, *op cit*., p. 273; also cf. Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983,*op cit*., pp. 141, 154; van Duin, 1990, *op cit*.
[347] *The Voice of Labour*, 16 September 1910
[348] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit*., p. 116; Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983,*op cit*., p. 144

Senate.[349] Following the pattern set in 1907, there were again electoral arrangements with the Afrikaner nationalists.[350]

Both Andrews and Bain stood unsuccessfully, but Andrews was elected in 1912 in a by-election in Germiston. Boydell, who won the Greyville constituency in Durban the same year, joined Andrews in parliament, and the SA Labour Party representatives became an effective caucus. Although Haggar was suspended from the party, the other "five Labour men almost usurped the functions of opposition", intervening in debates on every occasion, criticising the legislation introduced by other parties, trying to pass amendments wherever possible, introducing their own Bills, including an unsuccessful Bill for White women's suffrage, and otherwise using parliament "as a propaganda platform with great skill".[351]

Clearly, there is little support for the Simons' claims regarding Crawford's position on the "colour issue": indeed, their text soon contradicts itself – and not for the last time, either – with the statement that the early "socialists, to their credit, condemned the cruder forms of discrimination in the movement".[352] Unfortunately, the Simons' account has been quite influential. Johns, for instance, claimed that the early socialist groups in South Africa "with few exceptions" were in the "forefront of those seeking to strengthen the existing racial structure in the South African economy".[353] Katz, citing the Simons, and Van Duin, citing Katz, repeat the Simons' views: Crawford traded principles for popular support, ignoring the racial issue.[354] John Philips also relied on the Simons in analysing the early left.[355]

The effect is to treat Crawford's views as barely distinguishable from the SA Labour Party. This is quite misleading. The SA Labour Party was deeply influenced by the Australian Labour Party's combination of social democracy and the White Australia Policy, while Crawford regarded the Australian Labour Party government as a strikebreaking regime headed by careerists and opportunists.[356] The SA Labour Party favoured a colour bar and segregation, and defined itself as a party for White workers only, while Crawford opposed racial discrimination and prejudice, and moved towards a position supporting an interracial labour movement. That position would be strongly supported by the local syndicalist current that emerged in the *Voice of Labour* network in the course of 1910. The first major break between mainstream White labour and the far left, then, had taken place back in 1909, and not in 1915. Contrary to the view that "the adoption of a segregationist policy" by the unions and the SA Labour Party "did not produce a split" with the socialists,[357] the question of segregation was absolutely central.

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[349] Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., pp. 152-159; Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., p. 145
[350] Ticktin, 1973, *op cit.*, pp. 452-457
[351] Cope, [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 125-161, with the quotes from p. 125
[352] Cf. Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., pp. 141, 154, also see p. 145
[353] See Johns, 1995, *op cit*., p. 30
[354] See Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., pp. 141, 154; Katz, 1976, *op cit*., p. 273; van Duin, 1990, *op cit*., p.
[355] Philips, 1978, *op cit.*, p. 123, 132, note 13
[356] For instance, when on tour in the United States in 1910, Crawford gave talks on topics such as "The Failure of Palliative Legislation in New Zealand" and "How the Australian Labour Party Smothers Strikes": See the I.W.W. journal *Solidarity*, 10 June 1911, "South African Editor in the West" and John Philips, October 1976, "Digging into I.W.W. History: South Africa", *Industrial Worker.* I am grateful to William LeFevre of Wayne State University in Detroit, and to Jon Bekken, the current editor of the *Industrial Worker*, for helping me obtain these and other articles from the American IWW press.
[357] Drew, editor, 1996a, *op cit.*, editors comments p. 16

4.8. Australasian connections and Tom Mann's South African tour

Anarchist and syndicalist materials had been present in the *Voice of Labour* from the start of its relaunch as a socialist weekly. The *Voice of Labour* also acted as the local distributor of the *International Socialist Review*, a socialist journal that was published in Chicago by Charles H. Kerr. Kerr was associated with the left wing of the Socialist Party of America, and favoured strong industrial unions as well as "electing as many officials as possible" to government,[358] views substantially similar to those of Crawford, who often wrote for the paper. Kerr was also sympathetic to the Chicago IWW, however, and the *International Socialist Review* carried numerous articles by leading Wobblies. Subscriptions to the Chicago paper were offered in the pages of the *Voice of Labour*, and the headquarters of the Modern Press carried copies of the journal along with a selection of other materials – perhaps the first radical bookshop on the Witwatersrand.

From 1909, the *Voice of Labour* also carried full-page extracts from the *International Bulletin of the Syndicalist Movement*, which had been established after the 1907 International Anarchist Conference in Amsterdam. This was one of the "liveliest anarchist conferences" in many years, and "took place in an atmosphere of confidence, largely because of the impetus given to the spread of anarchistic teachings through the extension of revolutionary syndicalism from France to Spain, Italy, Latin America, and the Germanic countries of the north, where vigorous anarcho-syndicalist minorities existed in Germany, Sweden and Holland".[359] Among the key figures present were Malatesta, the German anarcho-syndicalist Rudolph Rocker, Pierre Monatte of the French CGT, and Tom Keell, editor of *Freedom*.

The *International Bulletin of the Syndicalist Movement* was started as the result of a decision by a number of delegates to foster "the establishment of closer bonds between syndicalist oriented organisations".[360] Its editor was Christiaan Cornelissen, a Dutch syndicalist who played a central role in founding the NAS, which had been formed in 1893 and which was, for ten years, the "most active and influential organisation amongst the Dutch trade unions".[361] The NAS, which had 20,000 members at its height, declined quickly from 1903 in the wake of a failed general strike on the railways, falling to 3,000 by 1910, mainly comprising dockers in Amsterdam and Rotterdam.[362] With the decline of the NAS, Cornelissen moved to Paris where he associated with the CGT, and it was here that he published the *International Bulletin of the Syndicalist Movement*.[363]

These overseas publications were supplemented by Glasse and Harrison, who promoted anarchist ideas locally. Harrison wrote in favour of anarchism in July 1910, stressing that anarchism was a type of socialism.[364] In September 1910, Glasse wrote a lengthy article defending "My Notion of Anarchism":[365]

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[358] Charles H. Kerr, September 1912, "Editorial: what the Review stands for", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XIII
[359] Woodcock, 1975, *op cit*., p. 249
[360] Thorpe, 1989, *op cit.*, pp. 31-2
[361] Woodcock, 1975, *op cit*., pp. 412-3
[362] Marcel van der Linden, 1990, "The Many Faces of Dutch Revolutionary Trade Unionism", in van der Linden and Thorpe, 1990b, *op cit*., pp. 47-51; Woodcock, 1975, *op cit*., pp. 412-3
[363] Nettlau, [1934] 1996, *op cit*., pp. 234-6, 375
[364] Wilfred Harrison, 1 July 1910, "Anarchy", *Voice of Labour*
[365] *The Voice of Labour*, 15 September 1910, "My Notion of Anarchism", article by Glasse, also quoted in Visser, 1987, *op cit.*, p. 238

> Anarchists are not opposed to organisation and cooperation, but they are not prepared to admit that a majority must necessarily always be regarded as right in its decisions, nor that its will must always be accepted without resistance by those who feel that their personal and equal rights are assailed thereby …
>
> I am also a Communist, believing, as I do, that the wealth of the world belongs to its people – all its people … In regard to the products of labour, I prefer the maxim 'To each according to his Needs' to the formula 'To each according to his Deeds' …
>
> I believe the terms 'Libertarian' and 'Free Socialist' to be preferable to the word 'Anarchist', inasmuch as the last is to some extent ambiguous and often taken in the sense of a favourer of disorder and confusion …

In other pieces, he called on the paper to give preference to "direct action … over politics – I mean of course Parliamentary politics" which acts to "chill and paralyse natural energy and initiative".[366] At the same time, he praised the paper for its position "in regard to the native and coloured question", arguing that racial hatred was used to divide workers in the interests of capitalists.[367]

Nonetheless, it should be noted that the first two years of the *Voice of Labour* tended to focus on Crawford's activities and views. It was only from late in 1910 that syndicalist ideas and materials became dominant in the paper. It never lost its open character, but syndicalism was the main theme into 1912.

A number of factors account for the marked shift in emphasis. One was the South African tour of the English syndicalist Tom Mann in 1910. Tom Mann, a British trade unionist and radical, was a skilled metal worker and a member of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers from 1881 onwards. He joined the Social Democratic Federation in 1884, helped found the Independent Labour Party and became its secretary, and was also active in the wave of trade unionism that swept Britain from the late 1880s onwards. He was influenced by Blatchford and Hardie, with a smattering of Kropotkin and Marx, and his basic views at the time were those of a moderate political socialist.

Mann's views changed greatly after he immigrated to New Zealand in 1901, and then Australia in 1902.[368] In New Zealand, the Amalgamated Society of Engineers complained of job dilution and unemployment, and opposed the compulsory arbitration system of labour relations introduced by the Liberal/Labour Party government. In Australia, Mann was initially active in the unions and the Australian Labour Party in Melbourne, and wrote articles for the *Clarion*. He became deeply disillusioned by the Labour Party government: formed in 1904, it was the world's first Labour government, and its policies were a mixture of social reform and White Labourism, including an end to Asian immigration and the repatriation of workers of colour.

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[366] See, for example, *The Voice of Labour*, 26 January 1912, letter from Glasse
[367] *The Voice of Labour*, 1 July 1910, "Anarchy", by Harrison
[368] See Holton, 1976, *op cit.,* pp. 53-5 and Tsuzuki, 1991, *op cit.,* 125-171

Mann was involved in the Victoria Socialist Party formed in 1906, and by 1907 he believed the Australian Labour Party was not a party of the working class. In 1907, the party hosted a national socialist meeting, which was attended by a range of groups. Although the local De Leonist group, the Socialist Labour Party, withdrew, the conference formed a Socialist Federation of Australasia. It adopted the resolution, moved by delegates from the mining company town of Broken Hill, for the "reorganisation of the Australian working class on the lines of the Industrial Workers of the World" and adopted the IWW *Preamble* of 1905.[369]

A number of IWW Clubs also emerged in Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney from 1907 onwards.[370] While the Socialist Labour Party played an important role in forming the IWW Clubs, the Clubs were soon influenced by the Chicago IWW approach. In 1913, the Adelaide and Sydney Clubs helped form an "Australian Administration" of the IWW, linked to the Chicago IWW, and published *Direct Action*. On the other hand, other IWW Clubs formed a Workers' International Industrial Union in Sydney and Melbourne, linked to the Detroit IWW.

In 1908, Mann visited New Zealand, and made contact with the New Zealand Socialist Party: this had been formed 1901 and was a mixed group not unlike the SDF. After 1905 it paid greater attention to the IWW,[371] and in 1908, it decided on "increased economic organisation and no political action of the present", and affiliated to the Socialist Federation of Australasia.[372] While Robert Hogg, editor of the party's paper, the *Commonweal*, promoted the IWW, the Canadian immigrant H.M. "Fitz" Fitzgerald helped establish a Wellington IWW in 1908, the first of several IWW groups. Syndicalist ideas played a role in the Federation of Miners formed in 1907, and its successor, the New Zealand Federation of Labour, and were given a further boost by the arrival of several American IWW militants in 1911.[373] The "Red Fed " adopted a revolutionary programme in 1912, but the subsequent formation of a Social Democratic Party, with union support, showed the limits of syndicalist influences.

Mann, meanwhile, returned to Australia after being involved in several strikes, becoming an organiser for the Miners' Federation of Broken Hill. Labour laws prevented the union from resolving its grievances peacefully; a lockout at the start of 1909 was followed by a huge strike. Despite numerous arrests, the struggle lasted twenty-one weeks, but ended in union victory. Mann was now convinced of the need for industrial unionism: it was the railwaymen who had allowed police to be transported into Broken Hill. He wrote *The Way to Win: an open letter to trades unionists on methods of industrial organisation*,[374] for a union conference in Adelaide, and also recommended the conference read James Connolly's 1909 *Socialism Made Easy*,[375] a clear exposition of syndicalist ideas.[376]

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[369] Quoted in Tsuzuki, 1991, *op cit*., p. 134; also quoted in Olsen, 1988, *op cit.,* p. 41
[370] Burgmann, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 11-40
[371] Olsen, 1988, *op cit.*, pp. 9-29
[372] Quoted in Tsuzuki, 1991, *op cit*., p. 136
[373] Olsen, 1988, *op cit*., pp. 107-176
[374] *The Voice of Labour*, 31 December 1909, "The Way to Win: an open letter to trades unionists on methods of industrial organisation, by Tom Mann, Broken Hill, May 1909"
[375] Tsuzuki, 1991, *op cit*., p. 139
[376] James Connolly, [1909] 1973a, *op cit.*

Mann left Australia in January 1910. The Witwatersrand Trades and Labour Council had announced in September 1909 that it had invited Mann to interrupt his return trip to Britain to address the local labour movement.[377] Radicals on the left awaited the imminent arrival with great enthusiasm. At a time when the attention of large numbers of trade unionists was being drawn towards the new SA Labour Party, the radicals focused their attention on Mann, seeing him as a counterweight to local reformist and racially discriminatory trends.

A number of articles explaining Mann's views, including *The Way to Win*, appeared in the *Voice of Labour*,[378] and were applauded by many correspondents.[379] A stream of locally written articles, expounding syndicalism, also began to appear in the paper. Not all readers were convinced: one "Bob Burns", for example, described syndicalist ideas as nonsensical.[380] Bob Burns was probably Robert Burns Waterston: an Australian-born trade unionist who came to South Africa with the British forces in the Anglo-Boer War, Waterston worked on the mines and joined the South African Engine Drivers' and Firemen's' Association, and later became secretary of the SA Labour Party, a town councillor for the party, and a member of parliament in 1920.[381] Crawford, as editor, expressed his support for Mann's support for industrial unionism and claimed to have long held "identical" views,[382] which was not strictly true.

Mann arrived in South Africa on 21 February 1910 *en route* to Britain, and his tour of Durban, Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Pretoria "sparked new interest in the question of industrial unionism".[383] In every centre he met groups of "Socialists who were keeping touch with Europe, by literature, when not by correspondence".[384] His speeches made a deep impression on local audiences, with Boydell recalling:[385]

> I found that off the platform he had a personal charm which was very alluring. On the platform he was the vehement and vigorous protagonist of the class war. Certainly one of the most forceful and fluent speakers I have heard – a regular spellbinder. He always seemed to put his tremendous physical and mental strength into his arguments. His gestures were always indicative of great muscular strength. The older he got the more enthusiastic and dynamic he became. A remarkable man.

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[377] *The Voice of Labour*, 11 September 1909. He was obviously not, therefore, invited by the SA Labour Party, as Eddie Roux suggested: Cf. Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit.*, p. 126

[378] *The Voice of Labour*, 11 December 1909, "Industrial Unionism: Tom Mann's views" and *The Voice of Labour*, 31 December 1909, "The Way to Win: an open letter to trades unionists on methods of industrial organisation, by Tom Mann, Broken Hill, May 1909".

[379] For example, *The Voice of Labour*, December 18 1909 issue, Our Postbag", letter on "Industrial Unionism"

[380] "Bob Burns", 4 December 1904, "The Industrial and Economic Outlook in South Africa- I", *The Voice of Labour*; "Bob Burns", 11 December 1909, "The Industrial and Economic Outlook in South Africa- II", *The Voice of Labour.*

[381] Gitsham and Trembath, 1926, *op cit*., p. 178. I am grateful to Jonathan Hyslop for suggesting Waterston as candidate for the identity of "Bob Burns".

[382] A supportive editorial accompanied the publication of "The Way to Win: an open letter to trades unionists on methods of industrial organisation, by Tom Mann, Broken Hill, May 1909" in *The Voice of Labour*, 31 December 1909, in which Crawford stated that he had "identical" views.

[383] Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 32

[384] Tom Mann, 1923, *Tom Mann's Memoirs*. The Labour Publishing Company. London. p. 247. See also Katz, 1976, *op cit.*, pp. 219-222, 230, 27, 299

[385] Boydell, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. xii

He stayed until 13 April 1910, preaching the "gospel … of a complete change of society" and the "perfected system industrial organisation to make this possible", urging at all times "the need for economic organisation, and an amalgamation of the unions on the basis of industrial unionism".[386] In his speeches, he declared that industrial unionism was impossible if 80 percent of the workers – the Africans – were excluded from the unions: "Whatever number there are, get at them all, and if there are another 170,000 available, white or black, get at them too".[387]

Mann's speeches met with a mixed response. His views were obviously at odds with local labour traditions, centred on craft unionism and colour bars, and the Witwatersrand Trades and Labour Council had encountered serious problems during Hardie's unhappy tour in 1908. Mann was therefore asked by his hosts not to speak too freely on racial issues as it might "spoil his tour", but he refused to comply.[388] While Mann believed that the existing unions should be reformed, rather than replaced, he also suggested that workers outside the existing unions could be organised into new unions, to be amalgamated with the existing unions at some future point.

Mann was able to convince the Witwatersrand Trades and Labour Council to sponsor the formation of an "Industrial Workers' Union" in March 1910. It appointed Jack P. Anderson as organising secretary, and paid his wages for two months.[389] Anderson was a militant trade unionist: the first secretary of the local Bakers' Union formed in 1905, organiser of a Johannesburg Tramwaymen's Union in 1906, and a former secretary of the Independent Labour Party, he served on the executive of the South African Industrial Federation in 1913 and 1914.[390] Mindful of its experiences with Crawford's General Workers' Union, the Witwatersrand Trades and Labour Council inserted a clause in the new union's constitution barring recruitment amongst workers eligible to join existing unions.[391] This clause was in line with Mann's stress on reforming the existing unions, rather than destroying them, but the Industrial Workers' Union was at odds with Mann's broader outlook: it was a union for White workers only.

The response of the radicals associated with the *Voice of Labour* to Mann's tour was more mixed. While some correspondents, such as Harrison, were deeply impressed by Mann, Crawford accused Mann of watering down his ideas in deference to the trade union officials and SA Labour Party leaders. Crawford believed Mann had failed to properly confront the Witwatersrand Trades and Labour Council on the question of colour,[392] and was also not impressed by Mann's view that the existing unions could be reformed. Crawford publicised the founding of the Industrial Workers' Union in the overseas IWW press,[393] but refused to accept the view that the existing unions could be changed from within.

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[386] Mann, 1923, *op cit.*, pp. 245, 247
[387] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 110; Katz, 1976, p. 271
[388] Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit.*, p. 125-6
[389] Katz, 1976, *op cit.*, p. 299
[390] Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., p. 285; also see Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 209, 224
[391] Katz, 1976, *op cit.*, p. 299
[392] See Philips, 1978, *op cit.*, p. 123.
[393] *Industrial Worker*, 7 March 1912, "Letter from Archibald Crawford"

Crawford favoured the creation of a new labour movement, outside the existing bodies – a movement that was shared by sections of the broad anarchist tradition. The question of whether to try to capture the existing unions was a matter of some controversy amongst mass anarchists and syndicalists. Mann favoured a strategy of "boring-from-within" the existing unions in order to restructure them into syndicalist bodies – a policy identified with the French anarchists and syndicalists who conquered the CGT.[394] The case can also be made that "boring-from-within" had worked in other instances, leading to the development of the Argentinean FORA, the Portuguese UON, the Spanish CNT and other bodies into syndicalist unions. Bakunin, too, had favoured a policy of "boring-from-within" the First International through the Alliance.

On the other hand, a number of other syndicalist unions had been formed outside of the existing unions, either as a result of expulsions – the USI in Italy – or choice – the SAC in Sweden, and the Free Association of German Trade Unions, which was a tendency within the German SDP-linked unions that reorganised, with the aid of Rocker, into a separate Free Workers' Union of Germany (FAUD) in 1919. The American IWW and the Socialist Labour Party made a principle of this "dual unionist" approach: it insisted that the mainstream American Federation of Labour was beyond redemption, and that an entirely new union movement had to be built in opposition.

The American IWW split over the question of "boring-from-within" in 1912. William Z. Foster broke away to form a Syndicalist League of North America, designed to work within the American Federation of Labour, but the IWW majority remained faithful to the "dual unionist" position.[395] Outside of the United States, supporters of both the Chicago IWW and the Socialist Labour Party tended to take a variety of positions on the question of "boring-from-within". In Canada, Chile and Mexico, the IWW operated as a separate union. The IWW Clubs in Australia, by contrast, tended to act as propaganda groups within the existing unions. The Socialist Labour Party in Britain began with a strict "dual unionist" approach, but shifted its position during the First World War, as noted in a later chapter.

While Mann was criticised by Crawford, the African Political Organisation in the Cape lavishly praised him for his:[396]

> ... vigorous appeal to all wage-earners to organise and present a united front to the power of capitalism which ever sought to enslave the wage-earner. We are pleased to see indications here and there throughout the Coloured world of the superlative need of organisation being gradually recognised by wage-earners; but in South Africa there is little evidence of any such desirable lesson being learnt.

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[394] Foner, 1965, *op cit.*, pp. 417-8; Tsuzuki, 1991, *op cit*., pp. 146-7

[395] See Foner, 1965, *op cit.*, pp. 415-43; Johanningsmeier, 1985, *op cit.*; Foster's recollections of the split may be found in Foster, 1936, *op cit*., while his manifesto of 10912 is available as Earl C. Ford and William Z. Foster, [1912] 1990, *Syndicalism*, Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, Chicago, facsimile copy with new introduction by J.R. Barrett.

[396] Quoted in Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit.*, p. 43

> Instead of that, we notice increasing tokens of division, distinct sectional hatred and antagonism. Added to all the ignorance that prevails amongst even skilled white artisans as to the necessity for integrating all their unions, there is a strong prejudice against their Coloured co-workers...
>
> It is time that the white labour leaders told their rank and file that the driving of white and Coloured people into separate kraals will play into the hands of their enslavers.

The African Political Organisation also presented Mann with a curious gift upon his departure – a mounted *sjambok* (raw-hide whip) – for being the first White man in Johannesburg to champion the rights of Coloureds.[397]

In a subsequent article on South Africa, Mann showed his awareness of the many obstacles to an interracial labour movement in South Africa: the entrenchment of a "suicidal sectional unionism" as "antiquated as the old blunderbuss"; the isolation of many radicals from the unions; the influence of an SA Labour party with a policy of "vague indefiniteness" on the question of socialism; and the deep racial divisions, with White workers acting "towards the black man as a most superior and lordly personage" and African migrants seeking escape from wage labour.[398] Nonetheless, he believed his tour had given a "considerable stimulus … to organisation", and helped "impress the wisdom of and the necessity of industrial unionism".[399]

It might be noted at this point that the Simons' account of Mann's tour was, like the characterisation of Crawford, inaccurate and contradictory. The Simons asserted that Mann "made no reference to the place of the dark working man in his public speeches" and "refrained from urging the unions to admit Africans and Coloured".[400] The Simons' claim was accepted by Katz,[401] and repeated by Van Duin.[402] However, the Simons provided no evidence for this sweeping claim other than several quotes from Crawford claiming – as noted earlier– that Mann had buckled before the mainstream labour leaders. Ticktin, who made a similar indictment of Mann, also relied on Crawford's claims to suggest that Mann had "carefully avoided" the colour question.[403]

The claim that Mann ignored workers of colour was – as the material above indicates – clearly inaccurate. The error in Ticktin may be explained by his reliance on Crawford's commentary, without bearing in mind Crawford's tendency towards sectarianism, or checking his claims against other sources. Indeed, as Ticktin admitted, Crawford was soon praising Mann for advocating the organisation of workers of colour.[404]

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[397] Philips, 1978, *op cit.*, p. 123
[398] Tom Mann, July 1910, "Diamond Mining in South Africa", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XI, pp. 3-6
[399] Mann, July 1910, *op cit*., p. 3
[400] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, p. 147
[401] Katz, 1976, *op cit*., p. 299
[402] Van Duin, 1990, *op cit*., pp. 648-9
[403] Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., p. 297
[404] See Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., p. 297

It is not, however, possible to be similarly generous to the Simons' account. The Simons' use of Crawford's commentary to indict Mann contradicted the Simons' earlier claim that Crawford "evaded the colour issue".[405] Furthermore, there was a direct contradiction within the Simons' account of Mann himself: several pages after being informed that Mann "made no reference to the place of the dark working man in his public speeches" the reader is suddenly told that Mann "pointed out that there could be no industrial unionism or general strike unless Africans took part".[406] This pattern of unsubstantiated assertion, misrepresentation and contradiction is, unfortunately, recurrent in the Simons' account, as later chapters show.

After leaving South Africa, Mann went to England, where he joined the British Socialist Party, linking up with syndicalists in the party such as Guy Bowman.[407] The two men went to Paris to study the French CGT, published a monthly, the *Industrial Syndicalist*, from July 1910, and Mann shared platforms with Haywood, then visiting Europe, and Hyndman. Mann's own views on the question of parliament were still evolving. In September 1910, he could state, "I favour using all effective weapons at our disposal, and I include in these industrial organisations, parliamentary action, and voluntary co-operation".[408] He soon lost all interest in "parliamentary action", resigning from the British Socialist Party in May 1911 over the question of elections: "I declare in favour of direct industrial organisation, not as a means, but THE means whereby the workers can ultimately overthrow the capitalist system and become the actual controllers of their own industrial and social destiny".[409]

In November 1910, Mann helped form an Industrial Syndicalist Education League at a conference attended by delegates representing sixty thousand workers, including Jim Larkin and representatives of the militant syndicalists of Wales, active amongst the South Wales Miners Federation.[410] Despite opposition from local IWW and Socialist Labour Party supporters, it was a loose organisation determined to bore-from-within" the existing unions.[411] In 1911, Mann also started and edited the *Transport Worker*, which attained a circulation of over 20,000, and from 1912 the Industrial Syndicalist Education League issued its own monthly, the *Syndicalist*, which was edited by Bowman.[412]

The organisation, and Mann himself, played an important part in the working class unrest and massive strike wave that swept Britain from 1911 to 1914, a period of unrest arising from growing disillusionment with the British Labour Party, falling real wages, rising unemployment, labour militancy and widespread syndicalist influence. Mann also visited France, Sweden and the United States (where he took Foster's side in the IWW split) to assist the local syndicalist movements.[413] In Ireland, Connolly and Jim Larkin were at the forefront, and the rapidly growing Irish Transport and General Workers' Union clashed

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[405] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, pp. 141, 144, 145, 154
[406] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983,*op cit.*, pp. 147, 154
[407] Tsuzuki, 1991, *op cit*., pp. 142-3, 145-8
[408] Quoted in Holton, 1976, *op cit.* pp.64-5
[409] Quoted in Tsuzuki, 1991, *op cit*., p. 150
[410] The views of this group are stated in Unofficial Reform Committee, [1912] 1991, *op cit*. Mann considered the pamphlet "an exceedingly well written and well thought out product": quoted in Tsuzuki, 1991, *op cit*., p. 162
[411] Tsuzuki, 1991, *op cit*., pp. 148-9
[412] Tsuzuki, 1991, *op cit*., pp. 157-60
[413] Foner, 1965, *op cit.*, pp. 415-43; Tsuzuki, 1991, *op cit*., pp. 165-6, 168

unsuccessfully with employers in the 1913 Dublin Lockout. A striking feature of the latter struggle was the formation of a workers' militia to protect strikers, called the Irish Citizens Army.

4.9. The emergence of an organised syndicalist movement on the Witwatersrand

While Mann's visit provided an important stimulus for the growing interest in syndicalism, and provided an important link to the larger world of the "glorious period" of anarchism and syndicalism, local factors also played an important role. The split in the Johannesburg Socialist Society, and the loss of Pritchard, undermined Crawford's political project, while Crawford and Davidson's abysmal electoral results raised serious questions about the feasibility of creating a local Socialist Party capable of challenging the SA Labour Party.

Crawford was bitterly unhappy with the election results, despite putting on a brave face,[414] and also faced a serious personal crisis. He was deeply in love with Mary Fitzgerald, and, at some point, the two became romantically involved. Disappointment with his efforts to form a revolutionary socialist party, and an attempt to end the relationship with Mary Fitzgerald, clearly played a role in Crawford's decision to embark on a thirteen-month tour of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United States and Germany at the end of 1910. Crawford continued to correspond from abroad, but his ability to shape the *Voice of Labour* and the local left was limited. Mary Fitzgerald remained involved with the paper, but continued her traditional focus on publishing and speaking, and did not play a direct role in editing.

The editor of the paper from October 1910 to the end of November 1911 was an unidentified Cape Town writer known as "Proletarian". Judging by his writing style and line of arguments, "Proletarian" was possibly "Ferdinand Marais", another pseudonymous writer who also wrote articles for the *International Socialist Review*.[415]

A fervent syndicalist, "Proletarian" favoured the Chicago IWW approach,[416] and used every opportunity to promote syndicalism. "Proletarian" advocated "an organisation of wage-workers, black and white, male and female, young and old" which would proclaim "a universal general strike preparatory to seizing and running the interests of South Africa, for the benefit of *workers* to the exclusion of *parasites*".[417] Under "Proletarian's" editorship, the *Voice of Labour* began to reprint materials from the Chicago IWW, including a lengthy serialisation of the *History of the Industrial Workers of the World*, reportedly "specially written for *The Voice*" by the United States' IWW general-secretary and treasurer Vincent St. John.[418]

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[414] For example, *The Voice of Labour*, 16 September 1910
[415] Ferdinand Marais, April 1914, "Labour's Battle in South Africa: South African railway nationalisation and the labour movement", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XIV; Ferdinand Marais, June 1914, "The Value of the Strike", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XIV; Ferdinand Marais, October 1914, "Workers Arise and Seize the Earth!", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XV
[416] For example, "Proletarian", 27 October 1911, "Sundry Jottings", *The Voice of Labour*
[417] *The Voice of Labour*, 27 October 1911, "The Problem of Coloured Labour", emphasis in original.
[418] *The Voice of Labour*, 27 October 1911, "History of the Industrial Workers of the World", by Vincent St. John



Figure eight: The key figure in the South African IWW, Andrew Dunbar, blacksmithing at 80 years of age in 1960.

Source: Ivan L. Walker and Ben Weinbren, 1961, *2000 Casualties: a history of the trade unions and the labour movement in the Union of South Africa*, South African Trade Union Council, Johannesburg, plate 12

During 1910 anarchists like Glasse and Harrison also began to make more use of the paper, and a new layer of Witwatersrand activists, influenced by syndicalism, began to write regularly. An important figure was Andrew B. Dunbar, one of the most important figures in the early socialist movement, but largely forgotten today. A giant of a man, a fierce polemicist, and a dynamic organiser with a common touch, he was born in Scotland in 1879, and trained as a blacksmith. Arriving in South Africa in 1906, Dunbar, the "hefty, stubborn-headed, well-meaning Scotsman", worked on the Natal railways.[419]

In 1909, Dunbar led 2,500 workers in the dramatic Natal railways strike: the immediate case was the introduction of piecework in the workshops, but there were longstanding grievances over wages and working hours.[420] The strike committee was a mixed group, including figures later prominent in the SA

[419] Boydell, n.d., *op cit*., p. 35
[420] See W.H. Andrews, 23 July 1937, "Natal Railway Strike", *The Guardian*, copy available in folder 8.1, W.H. Andrews Papers, Mayibuye Centre, University of the Western Cape; Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 103-7; Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., pp. 123-133; Ticktin, 1973, *op cit.*, pp. 387-392; Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit.*, pp. 26-28

Labour Party, such as Boydell, and Natal's three Labour representatives – then including Haggar– also supported the strike. It was, however, Dunbar who played the central role. A local paper, the *Pictorial*, commented:[421]

> The men have a born leader in Mr. Dunbar, their chairman. At a mass meeting in the Town Gardens, held immediately after they had laid down their tools, he kept the excited audience well in hand. He played upon their emotions, now with flashes of fervid eloquence, now with gleams of spontaneous wit. He infused the men with his own spirit of earnestness, and at the same time kept them in the best of humour.

According to Boydell,[422]

> The strike ran true to form – pickets, strike processions, mass meetings, leaflets, street collections towards the strike funds, baiting blacklegs, committee meetings, rumours – mostly false – brass bands to keep the spirits up, newspaper attempts to knock the spirits down, letters in the Press, etc., to say nothing of loud cheering at every declaration that 'if we all stand together we're bound to win'.
>
> But we didn't win. The strike lasted about two weeks. The men drifted back to work – that is, those who were allowed – on the understanding that the Government would appoint an impartial Commission presided over by the Chief Justice of Natal, Sir William Beaumont, and all grievances would be submitted and considered.
>
> Two hundred and forty-three strikers were victimised and blacklisted – it was a regular slaughter … The Commission sat in public, the proceedings lasting several weeks. The findings were innocuous …
>
> At this stage bigger things loomed. The Natal industrial unrest became overshadowed by a political interest. The Convention to bring about the Union of the four provinces … had finished its work …

The union was devastated,[423] and Dunbar was among those who lost his job. He subsequently moved to Johannesburg, and began to work on the tramways. Dunbar was initially a leading figure in the SA Labour Party in Germiston, but left the party over a dispute about the selection of candidates,[424] and joined

[421] Quoted in Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit.*, p. 28
[422] Boydell, n.d., *op cit*., p. 35
[423] Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., p. 24
[424] Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., p. 45

the Johannesburg Socialist Society.[425] He was initially sympathetic to a De Leonist position, but soon became convinced that political parties and electoral action were a positive hindrance to the revolutionary union movement,[426] and became a staunch supporter of the Chicago IWW.

Another local supporter of the Chicago IWW was Tom Glynn. Born in Galway, Ireland in 1881, immigrated to Australia in 1900, he came to South Africa as a soldier in the Anglo-Boer War, worked afterwards for the Transvaal Police, and was discharged for refusing to shoot a Zulu during a raid on African rebels.[427] A close friend, Tom Barker of the Australian IWW, recounted the story in his memoirs:[428]

> He [Glynn] had been in the South African police when there was a rebellion, I think, in part of Cape Colony and the police were directed in searching the woods and thickets to shoot on sight. That was the order. He refused. In one case a boy was there; he refused to shoot anybody and he was arrested for not carrying out his duties as a policeman and was sentenced to prison and discharged from the South African police.

Barker is discussed in more detail in Section 8.3. Glynn left South Africa in 1907, going to New Zealand where he joined the local Socialist Labour Party, moved to a Chicago IWW position,[429] and became active in the New Zealand Socialist Party, aiming to organise its "revolutionary element". In 1910, he returned to South Africa and worked on the Johannesburg trams.

A key local De Leonist was Israel Israelstam, a Jewish immigrant from Eastern Europe, who connections with local adherents of the *Bund*.[430] In 1903, Israelstam had helped form a local Socialist Labour Party on the Witwatersrand: despite a promising start, with 300 present at its launch, it was a short-lived organisation. It agitated for "representative" government and the abolition of private property through enabling legislation.[431] Predating De Leon's conversion to syndicalism, and identified with the Socialist Labour Party tradition abroad, it was a political socialist group focused on electoral issues: there is no evidence at all to suggest the view that the party was anti-parliamentary.[432]

Several of its members – most notably Israel Israelstam – were subsequently involved in the Transvaal Labour Party and an ephemeral Socialist Democratic Federation (sometimes called the Social Democratic Organisation).[433] The latter organisation was not linked to the SDF in Cape Town. Its programme was "far from being revolutionary", but its platform was notable for the absence of clauses based on racial

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[425] See Katz, 1976, *op cit.*, p. 196
[426] Andrew B. Dunbar, 21 July 1911, "IWW Notes", *The Voice of Labour*; Andrew B. Dunbar, 29 September 1911, "IWW Notes", *The Voice of Labour*
[427] Burgmann, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 36, 77, 88, 207
[428] Tom Barker, [1965] 1998, *Tom Barker and the I.W.W.*, recorded, edited and with an introduction by E.C. Fry, first printed by the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Canberra, and reprinted in 1998 by the Industrial Workers of the World, Melbourne. My copy is not paginated; the quote is from the start of chapter three.
[429] He was no "Marxist", as Burgmann claims: Burgmann, 1995, *op cit*., p. 44
[430] Mantzaris, 1988, *op cit*., pp. 161, 163
[431] Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., p. 51; Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 182-3; Visser, 2001, *op cit*., pp. 15-16
[432] *Contra*. Harmel, 1971, *op cit*., p. 31, Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., 102 and Visser, 2001a, *op cit*., pp. 15-16
[433] Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., pp. 57, 60

discrimination.[434] It was prominent at the 1904 May Day demonstration in Johannesburg – the first May Day in South African history – where members gave speeches in Dutch, English, German and Yiddish. There were at the time several small socialist circles amongst Germans, Italians and Jews.[435] Israelstam was subsequently involved in the early SA Labour Party, but did not accept its moderate strategy or colour bar positions.

Another important De Leonist on the Witwatersrand was Jock Campbell.[436] Jock Campbell was a "Clydeside Irishman, a self-educated working man", who "had long ceased to work at his trade and now lived for and on the movement".[437] The Clyde Valley in Scotland was one of the largest industrial areas in the world, and the site of Glasgow, the second most important city in the British Empire and the centre of the world's shipping industry.[438] It was also the stronghold of the Socialist Labour Party in Britain, which had been formed in 1903 as a breakaway from Hyndman's Social Democratic Federation. The party published *the Socialist*, which had been started in 1902 in Edinburgh, transferring the paper to Glasgow in 1912. In 1910, as in later years, it was the Socialist Labour Party in Britain, rather than the main parent body in the United States, that provided the key overseas link for local supporters of De Leonism.

The Scottish origins of men like Jock Campbell doubtless played a key role in creating this channel of influence. Speaking at the 1904 May Day rally, Jock Campbell memorably criticised crown colony rule: to call it a government, he stated, was to insult the Tsar.[439] He was subsequently involved in the Independent Labour Party's left wing,[440] and was also remarkable as the "first socialist to make propaganda amongst the African workers", advocating "unity among all wage slaves, regardless of colour".[441] Jock Campbell was almost certainly the "J. Campbell" who was a member of the Johannesburg Socialist Society in 1910.[442]

Jock Campbell was a friend of Philip R. Roux, an Anglicised and unorthodox Afrikaner who had fought for the British in the Anglo-Boer War, and who established a pharmacy in Johannesburg in 1907.[443]

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[434] Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 183, 229. The 1904 programme of the organisation may be found in Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., p. 518 appendix B, IV, 6

[435] Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., p. 185

[436] Cope gave the name as *Jack* Campbell, as did David Ticktin, while Johns gave it as *James* Campbell: see Cope [? 1943] n.d., pp. 82, 93; Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 28, note 8: Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., p. 184. Eddie Roux, who knew the man personally, however, gave the name *Jock* Campbell: Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit.*, p. 129, footnote; Eddie Roux and Win Roux, 1970, *op cit.*, p. 7

[437] Eddie Roux and Win Roux, 1970, *op cit*., pp. 6-7

[438] Milton, 1978a, *op cit*., p. 14

[439] Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., p. 184

[440] Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 222-223

[441] Cope [? 1943] n.d., p. 93. Eddie Roux disputed this claim suggesting that only Whites attended Campbell's meetings: it is difficult to judge the accuracy of this claim, or the source of Eddie Roux's information, for he also admitted that never actually heard Campbell "address a public meeting": see Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit.*, p. 129, asterixed footnote; Eddie Roux and Win Roux, 1970, *op cit.*, p. 7. Johns' followed Roux on this question, but phrased his point as "Campbell's meetings were *restricted* to Whites only", which could be taken to mean something else entirely: Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 28, note 8, my emphasis.

[442] See Katz, 1976, *op cit.*, p. 194.

[443] Eddie Roux and Win Roux, 1970, *op cit*., pp. 3-7



Figure nine: Ralph Rabb of the Socialist Labour Party in South Africa

Source: Wilfred H. Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *Memoirs of a Socialist in South Africa 1903–47*, Stewart Printing, Cape Town, with foreword by Tommy Boydell, p. 113

This was situated along Kitchener Avenue in the working class suburb of Bezuidenhout Valley – the same suburb in which Dunbar lived at the time. The Roux family lived behind the shop, and included in its number the young Eddie Roux, later a key figure in the CPSA and the Communist school.

Philip Roux entertained his friends in the evenings with endless arguments and discussions, and apparently become a convinced socialist around 1911 under the influence of two Australian cobblers, the Furseys, who ran a nearby shop. He was also a friend of Jock Campbell: a frequent visitor to the Roux home, Jock Campbell was remembered as a "brilliant orator" whose "erudition and terse logic" held the young Eddie Roux "enthralled".[444] Philip Roux became a De Leonist, and collected a large number of Socialist Labour Party materials, mostly published by the De Leonists in Edinburgh and New York.[445]

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[444] Eddie Roux and Win Roux, 1970, *op cit.,* pp. 6-7

[445] Quite by chance I came across a bound collection of Socialist Labour Party pamphlets owned by "P.R. Roux, Chemist, Bezuidenhout Valley, Corner First St. and Kitchener Ave". at the Wartenweiler Library of the University of the Witwatersrand in 1999. This was incorrectly labelled, and located in an obscure part of the open shelves, but left no doubt about the availability of De Leonist material in South Africa in the early twentieth-century, or about Philip Roux's reading habits. The majority of pamphlets were by De Leon, followed by several works by Marx and Engels, Kautsky, Debs and Gustav Hervé. The collection was placed with the Historical Papers, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand in 2000, but I believe it may have been moved back to the open library shelves.

An important effect of the growth of a local syndicalist current was a shift in the *Voice of Labour*. As Davidson would note in 1911: "From Trades Unionism and Politics it has flowed to Industrial Unionism and Direct Action".[446] The IWW became a strong influence on the paper, and debates between those who favoured the Chicago IWW, and those who favoured the Detroit IWW, and those who maintained a political socialist perspective, were common.[447] Other correspondents – like "Vanduara" of Roodepoort, a supporter of the IWW – also promoted syndicalist ideas in its columns.[448]

In 1910 two syndicalist organisations were established on the Witwatersrand. The first was the Socialist Labour Party, formed in March 1910. This should not be conflated with the short-lived Socialist Labour Party of 1903, which is an error made by most of the literature.[449] The organisation's own account stated that it was formed in 1910.[450] Israelstam and Jock Campbell were both key figures, with the latter often described as "leader" of the party.[451] Philip Roux also joined, as did John Campbell (apparently not a relation to Jock Campbell), J.M. Gibson, who was a skilled writer and theorist, Charlie Tyler, an English immigrant and trade unionist, Ralph Rabb and W. Reid. Described in the literature as a "Marxist" organisation,[452] it was, in fact, a syndicalist group along the lines advocated by De Leon.

Two months later, in June 1910, Dunbar and Glynn established a functioning local IWW union in Johannesburg. It emerged out of the Industrial Workers' Union that had been sponsored by the Witwatersrand Trades and Labour Council, and had been fairly successful, holding regular meetings on the Market Square in Johannesburg on Sunday evenings, and securing the affiliation of several small unions, such as the Bootmakers' Association, the Bakers' and Confectioners' Society, and the Tailors' Society.

It was, however, strongly criticised by local syndicalists: the "Rand Industrial Union at present constituted", Glynn argued, was a "disgrace to the originators of the movement in America".[453] "Messrs. Sampson, Wybergh and Creswell etc.", leaders in the SA Labour Party, "the guests at the local Industrial Union's first smoker, held at the Trades Hall – the headquarters of Craft Unionism – are actually the men who will yet have to be fought by Industrial Unionists". Glynn was the union's only member on the tramways at the time.[454]

Perhaps because the Witwatersrand Trades and Labour Council was increasingly preoccupied with the upcoming general elections,[455] a "a number of … industrialists", including Davidson, Dunbar, and Glynn

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[446] Jim Davidson, 4 August 1911, "Can We Save the 'Voice'", *Voice of Labour*
[447] Visser comments "Dit blyk verder dat *Voice* in hierdie periode gewedlig baie deur die Chicago-tak van die Industrial Workers of the World beïnvloed is" ("It appears further that the *Voice* was, in this period, strongly influenced by the Chicago section of the Industrial Workers of the World".): Visser, 1987, *op cit*., p. 234.
[448] "Vanduara", 18 December 1909, "Industrial Unionism", *The Voice of Labour*
[449] For example, Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 82; Harmel, 1971, *op cit*., p. 31, Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., 102; Visser, 2001a, *op cit*., pp. 15-16.
[450] The Socialist Labour Party itself claimed to have been constituted in March 1910. See "Socialist Labour Party of South Africa - Incorporation", Department of Law, file LD 1806-AG677/10, National Archives, Pretoria
[451] Thomas 1963, *op cit*., p. 4; Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., p. 319
[452] Eddie Roux and Win Roux, 1970, *op cit.*, p. 7
[453] Tom Glynn, 15 July 1910, "The Movement: present and future", *The Voice of Labour*
[454] Archibald Crawford, August 1911, "The Class War in South Africa: the growth and outcome of industrial unionism", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XI, p. 82; Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit.*, pp. 28-9.
[455] Katz, 1976, *op cit.*, p. 300; also see Philips, 1978, *op cit.*, p. 123.

successfully "captured the organisation and put it on a proper basis" in June.[456] Anderson, the organiser, played an important role in the *coup*, apparently defecting to the radicals associated with the *Voice of Labour*.[457] Anderson became involved in local socialist circles, and later moved to Southern Rhodesia.[458] Glynn, who had earlier been elected general secretary of the Industrial Workers Union,[459] was also pivotal in the takeover.

Dunbar and Glynn were subsequently the main figures in the Industrial Workers' Union, which was soon described as a "class-conscious revolutionary organisation embracing all workers regardless of craft, race or colour".[460] It declared its opposition to craft unionism, and broke off ties with the Witwatersrand Trades and Labour Council. At a conference in September, the union elected a new executive comprised of radicals.[461] Davidson replaced Glynn as general secretary, and Glynn turned his attention to the tramway workers. The American IWW paper, *Solidarity*, noted these developments with approval, describing the reconstituted Industrial Workers' Union as a "new link in the international chain that is forming the Industrial Workers of the World".[462] It is, of course, worth noting the irony in the situation: the local IWW was essentially established by the strategy of "boring-from-within".

Finally, in January 1911 a meeting of the union's executive formalised what had taken place six months before, renaming the organisation the "Industrial Workers of the World (South African Section)", and explicitly identifying the organisation with the American IWW.[463] The new direction had some casualties – the Bootmakers' Union left in protest – although Glynn was able to win a good deal of credibility amongst the tramway men.

4.10. The activities of the Socialist Labour Party and the IWW in Johannesburg

While the local Socialist Labour Party and IWW had a great deal in common, there were also political differences, and conflicts quickly developed between the two organisations. The Socialist Labour Party held public meetings in the Market Square in Johannesburg on Sunday mornings,[464] where it sold a "steady stream of journals and pamphlets" published in Glasgow and Chicago.[465] These included the *Socialist* from Britain, and the *Weekly People*, organ of the Socialist Labour Party in America. The *Socialist* was also distributed through press agents in Germiston and Johannesburg in 1910,[466] and the *Weekly People*

[456] Crawford, August 1911, *op cit.*
[457] Andrew B. Dunbar, 24 November 1911, "IWW Propaganda Notes", *The Voice of Labour*
[458] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 111; Philips, 1978, *op cit.* p.123
[459] *Solidarity*, 1 October 1910, "Industrial Unionism in South Africa"
[460] *The Voice of Labour*, 22 July 1910; also see Philips 1978, *op cit.*, p. 123
[461] Katz, 1976, *op cit.*, p. 301; Philips, 1978, *op cit.*, p. 123.
[462] *Solidarity*, 1 October 1910, "Industrial Unionism in South Africa"
[463] Katz, 1976, *op cit.*, p. 301
[464] Andrew Dunbar, 24 November 1911, "IWW Propaganda Notes", *The Voice of Labour*; *The Socialist*, June 1912, "South African S.L.P"
[465] Eddie Roux and Win Roux, 1970, *op cit.*, p. 7
[466] *The Socialist*, October 1910, "The 'Socialist' May be Obtained at the Following Newsagents"

developed a local readership.[467] It would have been at these meetings that Jock Campbell was most likely to have "make propaganda amongst the African workers".[468]

The Socialist Labour Party did not produce its own newspaper, but used the *Voice of Labour* as a platform. Philip Roux was, perhaps, the single most prolific contributor from the organisation. He wrote a series of critiques of the local labour movement and the SA Labour Party, criticised free trade, colonialism and militarism, and rejected organised charities as futile attempts to cure capitalism of its social ills.[469] Other party members and supporters also wrote articles and letters.[470]

The local IWW was a different type of organisation: it was both a propaganda league and a functioning union. It made far more use of the *Voice of Labour* than the Socialist Labour Party. Dunbar and Glynn contributed a steady stream of "I.W.W. Notes" to the *Voice of Labour*, reporting on the union's activities, promoting its ideas, and soliciting funds. Regular news about the struggles of the Chicago IWW appeared in the paper.

The IWW adhered to the position of the Chicago IWW, and the IWW *Preamble* that appeared in the *Voice of Labour* was the 1908 anti-parliamentary version. While Socialist Labour Party meetings at the Market Square were held on Sunday mornings, IWW meetings were held in the evening at the same venue. At a speech in 1910, reported in the *Voice of Labour*, and reprinted in *Solidarity*, Glynn set out the differences "between the socialism of the industrial unionist and other socialisms".[471] The "other socialisms" confined their activities to propaganda, but the revolutionary unionist aimed to also actively organise for revolution, forming "the structure of the new society within the shell of the old".

The workers, Glynn argued, did not need "so-called labour politicians" but strong organisation in the struggles of the "here and now".[472] Dunbar concurred, and characterised the SDF as armchair revolutionaries without a strategy, men who "changed their views every few hours".[473] He preferred a "fighting organisation", One Big Union.

While Davidson remained a member of the IWW, Dunbar replaced him as general secretary. Davidson was no syndicalist, as a debate on strategy in the *Voice of Labour* revealed. The controversy centred on the question of whether the ruling class held power "as a reflex of the ideas of the masses

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[467] *The Socialist*, January 1912, "The I.W.W. in the United States"
[468] A " little knot of native and coloured men" regularly attended the public meetings of the International Socialist League held at the same venue from 1915 onwards: *The International*, 1 October 1915, "Branch Notes"
[469] His writings in *The Voice of Labour* include Philip R. Roux, 29 March 1912, "Our Postbag", letter entitled "An Open Letter to Socialists", *The Voice of Labour*, and a series on "Products of Capitalism that have become Obsolete and Retrogressive": Philip R. Roux, 7 June 1912, "The Labour Party", *The Voice of Labour*; Philip Roux, 14 June 1912, "The Rationalist Association", *The Voice of Labour*; Philip R. Roux, 21 June 1912, "Charitable Institutions", *The Voice of Labour*; Philip R. Roux, 28 June 1912, "Foreign Markets", *The Voice of Labour*; Philip R. Roux, 12 July 1912, "Patriotism", *The Voice of Labour*; also see Philip R. Roux, 11 October 1912, "the Truth About the Defence Act: straight talk to workers", *The Voice of Labour*
[470] For example, *The Voice of Labour*, December 18 1909, "Our Postbag", letter on "Industrial Unionism"
[471] *Solidarity*, 1 October 1910, "Industrial Unionism in South Africa"
[472] *Solidarity*, 1 October 1910, "Industrial Unionism in South Africa"
[473] See *The Voice of Labour*, 1 December 1911, "Our Postbag", letter entitled "Dunbar's Reply"; see also *The Voice of Labour*, 24 November 1911, "Our Postbag" for some for the controversy Dunbar's attacks invoked.

expressed in the State or ideological institutions".[474] This was Davidson's view: it suggested both that the "ideas of the masses" were an essential bulwark for the system – a view that Dunbar and Glynn shared – and *also* that changing the "ideas of the masses" would change the State into an instrument for working class emancipation, as the nature of the State was simply a "reflex" of popular ideology – a view that the IWW activists rejected.

Glynn disagreed. The power of the ruling class did not depend on the support of the exploited.[475] The "power and privileges of the exploiting class" existed even where the "masses were deprived of the opportunity of giving expression to their ideas", or disagreed with the ruling class on a large scale. The basic structure of power centred on the capitalist economy, defended by the State, and it was the exploitation entailed by this system that was *reflected* in "capitalist law, capitalist morality, capitalist ethics, and … industrial warfare, turmoil and confusion". It was futile to advocate the use of parliament: revolutionaries must undermine workers faith "in capitalistic institutions, the institution of Parliament included", and wield the axe of revolutionary unionism at the root of capitalist power, the point of production.

"Proletarian" agreed, arguing that a thoroughly organised "strike of wage-slaves" could never be defeated.[476] The "parliamentary gas-house" was the "biggest farce imaginable", a place where the "scum always rises to the top":[477]

> Please remember that when a man becomes a politician, he ceases to be a class-conscious proletarian ... Politicians, whatever they may choose to style themselves go to Parliament on the one condition that they use constitutional methods, and constitutional methods will abolish capitalism. Any measure for the abolition of capitalism is bound to be unconstitutional and illegal. Serfdom and slavery were not destroyed by representatives, but by the people themselves.

Relations between the Socialist Labour Party and the other socialists appear, however, to have been fairly poor. Crawford made it quite clear that he was no De Leonist, describing the Socialist Labour Party as "'The Sanitary Labour Party' … comprised of about half a dozen cranks who spend most of their time slinging dirt at anyone connected with any movement outside their own".[478]

The local Socialist Labour Party also made it a mission to combat the "physical force" IWW, and point out the "danger in Anarchism to the labour movement".[479] Dunbar complained that the party was disrupting IWW activities, making a habit of appearing at the Sunday night meetings, literature in hand,

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[474] *The Voice of Labour*, 27 October 1911, "Our Postbag", letter on "'Economic Power'" by Tom Glynn; also quoted in Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, p. 151.
[475] *The Voice of Labour*, 27 October 1911, "Our Postbag", letter on "'Economic Power'" by Glynn.
[476] "Proletarian", 27 October 1911, "Sundry Jottings", *The Voice of Labour*
[477] "Proletarian", 9 February 1912, "How Labour is Robbed", *The Voice of Labour*
[478] *The Voice of Labour*, 7 April 1911; quoted in Visser, 1987, *op cit*., p. 246
[479] *The Socialist*, April 1912, "Down with Sabotage and other Forms of Physical Force"

loudly claiming to be the real representatives of the IWW.[480] Indeed, "the most bitter opponents we have had to fight are the members of the S.L.P."[481] "It is all very well", Dunbar commented, "to come around the IWW meetings, use foul language, and sell papers to defray the expense of keeping their Party together, for that is the main object of the sales".[482] Matters were not so clear-cut, however, for Dunbar himself was prone to a certain amount of sectarianism, while some members of the Socialist Labour Party joined the IWW.[483]

In May 1911, an attempt was made to unite the Socialist Party, the Socialist Labour Party, the SDF, and the Social Democratic Party in Durban and the IWW in an "Industrial Freedom League" with a "united advocacy of Industrial Unionism".[484] The group collapsed within a month, in part because of differences between the IWW and the Socialist Labour Party. Nonetheless, syndicalist ideas were gaining in influence:[485]

> ... In common with the Labour movement elsewhere in the world, South Africa passed through a period of vigorous reaction against politics on the working class front ... The disillusion of the workers' movement in the value of parliamentary reform was now spreading from Europe, from Britain, America, Australia and New Zealand ... From America came the ringing call to action of Haywood and Eugene Debs of the IWW, while from France was spreading an enthusiasm for the doctrines of the revolutionary Syndicalists with their faith in the industrial struggle and the general strike and their mistrust of politics ...

4.11. The IWW and the Johannesburg tramways strikes of 1911

The IWW made headlines through its involvement in two spectacular strikes in 1911, both on the Johannesburg tramways. The tramway workers had tried to organise a union previously, but had failed in the face of management opposition.[486] In 1910, Glynn had agitated amongst the tramway workers for the IWW. The tramways in Johannesburg had been horse drawn until February 1906, when they were replaced by an electric tram system.[487] The first electric tramway route ran along Market Street to Siemert Street, both single and double-decker trams were used, and the trams were housed and repaired adjacent to the municipal power station in Newtown, the sheds being located on President Street near the Market Square.[488] Like the tramways in the major centres – with the exception of Cape Town and East London – [489] the

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[480] Andrew B. Dunbar, 21 July 1911, "IWW Notes", *The Voice of Labour*; Andrew B. Dunbar, 24 November 1911, "IWW Propaganda Notes", *The Voice of Labour*
[481] *The Voice of Labour*, 21 July 1911, "IWW Notes", by Dunbar
[482] *The Voice of Labour*, 29 September 1911, "IWW Notes", by Dunbar
[483] Katz, 1976, *op cit.*, p. 301
[484] Visser, 1987, *op cit*., pp. 247-8
[485] Cope, n.d. [? 1943], *op cit*., pp. 108-110
[486] Crawford, August 1911, op *cit.*, p. 81
[487] Hunter, n.d., *op cit*., p. 23
[488] As indicated in A.H. Smith, 1956, *Pictorial History of Johannesburg*, Juta and Co. Ltd for the Africa Museum, Johannesburg, City of Johannesburg, Africana Museum, Frank Cannock Publications, no. 2, p. 69, sections and photographs 245-7
[489] Chris Giffard, 1984, "'Cutting the Current': Cape Town tramway workers and the 1932 strike", unpublished mimeo, Department of Economic History, University of Cape Town, p. 3

Johannesburg tramways were owned by the municipality, which also operated its own power stations, partly for this purpose.

In January 1911, the composition of the staff at the Johannesburg tramways was as follows: 1 waiting room attendant, 5 pointsmen, 11 inspectors, 150 motormen, and 153 conductors, a total of 351 employees.[490] The tramway men, conductors and motormen, or drivers, complained of difficult working conditions: in particular, the motorman drove in an open cab without protection from the elements, and was often not provided with a seat.[491]

Yet these were not the main cause of a dramatic strike that took place in January 1911 under the leadership of Glynn. Rather, the strike arose out of the tramway men's apprehension about the impending return of an unpopular Inspector, J.E. Peach, who was due to return from a temporary reassignment to the administration.[492] On Monday the 16th, the tramway men sent a letter signed by 174 conductors and motormen to the Tramway Committee, which responded by posting a notice in the sheds on the 18th, Thursday, that Peach would be resuming his duties at once.[493] The workers attended a meeting organised by Glynn the same day, and another letter was sent protesting Peach's return.[494]

This was ignored and the tramway workers held a second meeting at 1 a.m. on Saturday the 21st. Glynn moved for a strike, despite the opposition of SA Labour Party officials who were in attendance, one of whom – Tom Matthews of the Transvaal Miners' Association – was told to "beat it".[495] Matthews, a Cornish immigrant, was general secretary of the Transvaal Miners' Association: a onetime Populist representative in the Montana senate, he worked with Bain on the now defunct *Johannesburg Witness* and died of silicosis in South Africa in 1915.[496]

The strike was on: Saturday morning saw Glynn and a small delegation approached the nearby power station, where workers agreed to shut down all power to Johannesburg at 1 p.m. if the demands were not met, and a tramway delegation also went to meet management, the Municipal Streetcar Committee. A newspaper report gave a vivid sense of the mood:[497]

> Down at the tram yards the strikers gathered in force. Little bits of red ribbon marked the adherence of all to the cause. Speech followed speech from an improvised rostrum which is a repairing car when the system is at work. The big sheds were packed with idle cars and the iron doors were closed. Gossip was mainly on the mysterious conference proceeding between strike leaders and the emissaries of the municipal authorities, which proceeded

[490] *The Star*, "The Strength of the Staff", undated press clipping, in "Tramway Strike Johannesburg. Report by Inspector White Labour on above dated 24 January 1911", Mines and Works, SAB89127355, National Archives, Pretoria
[491] Hunter, n.d., *op cit*., p. 23
[492] Letter from Inspector of White Labour to Acting Secretary for the Mines, 24 January 1911, Mines and Works, SAB89127355, National Archives, Pretoria
[493] Letter from Inspector of White Labour to Acting Secretary for the Mines, 24 January 1911, Mines and Works, SAB89127355, National Archives, Pretoria
[494] Crawford, August 1911, *op cit.* p. 81.
[495] Katz, 1976, *op cit.*, p. 303
[496] See Hyslop, 2004, *op cit.*, pp. 124-126; Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., pp. 293-4
[497] *The Star*, "Tram Strike: scenes in the city", undated press clipping, in "Tramway Strike Johannesburg. Report by Inspector White Labour on above dated 24 January 1911", Mines and Works, MM331/11, National Archives, Pretoria

> interminably in a car which was converted for a space into an impromptu committee-room …
>
> It was a strike under the most cheerful of circumstances. A nice, fine day. Nobody feeling very much like work anyhow. No bother about strike funds. Just an opportunity for a little pleasant chaff with intelligent policemen, or leg-pulling of the more fervent agitators. Outside the yard a few hundred of the idle public gazed patiently at the peaceful scene and waited hopefully for something to happen. A little hustling of an individual suspected of complicity with an unpopular journal, and again the veil of perfect peace descended on the scene. Meanwhile the clock crawled slowly to the fateful hour of one, and the upshot of the negotiations remained a matter of simple conjecture.

At 10 a.m. the Municipal Streetcar Committee, the under pressure from the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce, proposed that the strike be called off in return for an enquiry, but the strikers remained unmoved.[498] Sometime in the morning the engines supplying power to the trams ceased to run, greatly encouraging the strikers.[499] Glynn was threatened with arrest, but responded, "You can start with me and my place will be filled in regular order until we are all in jail, and who then will run your cars?"[500] Addressing the strikers, he stated, "For every leader seized there are half a dozen here to take his place", to great enthusiasm.[501]

The municipal officials also threatened the strikers with arrest in terms of the 1909 Industrial Disputes Prevention Act. The Act, introduced by Smuts, then Minister for the Mines, was passed in the Transvaal legislature in July 1909; it only applied to "White persons" and was modelled on labour legislation in Australia and Canada. The first real industrial relations legislation in the country, it provided that no party to industrial relations could undertake any action to change working conditions without 30 days' notice.[502] If the two parties deadlocked after notice was given, neither lockout nor strike could take place until a government-appointed conciliation board had investigated the dispute, and a month had elapsed following the publication of the report. The findings would, however, become legally binding if both parties accepted it. In practice, the Act was a failure, because it was unable to establish viable conciliation procedures or curb industrial unrest.[503]

The Municipal Street Car Committee retracted the threatened use of the Industrial Disputes Prevention Act, and capitulated at 12:52 p.m., half a day after the start of the strike. The Mayor of Johannesburg appeared and announced that Peach would not be employed as an Inspector, and promised

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[498] Crawford, August 1911, *op cit.* p. 82.
[499] *The Star*, "Tram Strike: scenes in the city", *op cit.*
[500] Crawford, August 1911, *op cit.* p. 82.
[501] *The Star*, "Tram Strike: scenes in the city", *op cit.*
[502] Jeff Lever, 1978, "Capital and Labour in South Africa: the passage of the Industrial Conciliation Act, 1924", in Eddie Webster, editor, 1978, *Essays in Southern African Labour History*, Ravan Press, Braamfontein, pp. 84-6.
[503] Van Duin, 1990, *op cit*., p. 646 note 56

an inquiry into the men's grievances.[504] Shortly before one o'clock, the tramway cars came out in a long and "triumphant procession",[505] met, Crawford reported, by "a cheering and sympathetic populace".[506]

Greatly cheered by the lightening victory, a triumph of direct action, the "three hundred" motormen and conductors – the whole workforce bar one – joined Glynn in the IWW.[507] A Municipal Industrial Union was constituted as a division of the IWW,[508] with Glynn as president. The January 1911 tramway strike attracted a great deal of press and public attention, and worried government officials discussed the import of the defiance of the Industrial Disputes Prevention Act that had taken place.[509] At one point, the Acting Chief Police Commissioner mooted the idea of suppressing the *Voice of Labour*, but J. de V. Roos, acting secretary for the mines, argued that making a martyr of Crawford would serve no useful purpose.[510]

The success of the January 1911 tramway strike also led to a more general growth in the IWW.[511] Besides having recruited almost all of the Johannesburg tramway workers, the union held meetings in Pretoria amongst railway workers,[512] probably those concentrated at the State railways workshops. This led to some alarm amongst government officials, who speculated on the prospect of IWW ideas of direct action affecting the railwaymen,[513] who were forbidden to strike. The Railways Regulation Act of 1908 made striking a criminal offence, and established the principle of compulsory arbitration in the event of any dispute.[514] Other regulations forbade railway workers from joining political associations. The Act was replaced by the 1912 Railways and Harbours Service Act, which also forbade strikes by railway workers.

An IWW "Pretoria Local" was nonetheless formed that attracted "some of the Railway Servants Association",[515] that is, members of the Amalgamated Society of Railway and Harbour Servants, later the National Union of Railway and Harbour Servants, or NURHAS. The NURHAS was a union outside the Transvaal Federation of Trade Unions, and aimed in the 1910s to become a single industrial union embracing all harbour and railway workers.[516] This goal was perhaps the result of the prominence of several

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[504] *The Star*, "Tram Strike: scenes in the city", undated press clipping, in "Tramway Strike Johannesburg. Report by Inspector White Labour on above dated 24 January 1911", Mines and Works, MM331/11, National Archives, Pretoria
[505] *The Star*, "Tram Strike: scenes in the city", *op cit.*
[506] Crawford, August 1911, *op cit.* p. 82.
[507] W.H. Andrews, 6 August 1937, "Tram and Typo Strikers 1911", *The Guardian*, copy available in folder 8.1, W.H. Andrews Papers, Mayibuye Centre, University of the Western Cape; Archibald Crawford, "The Class War in South Africa", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XI, p. 82; Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., pp. 159-167; Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit.*, pp. 28-9
[508] *The Voice of Labour*, 9 February 1912, "IWW (S.A. Section): Annual General Meeting: New Officers Elected"
[509] See "'Industrial Workers of the World' Union expresses contempt for the 'Industrial Disputes Prevention Act'. Inspector's comments", a letter to Acting Secretary for Mines by Inspector of White Labour (R. Shanks), Department of Mines and Works, National Archives, Pretoria
[510] See "The Voice of Labour", 1911, Justice Department Files, vol.126, 3/1442/11, National Archives, Pretoria
[511] Crawford, August 1911, *op cit.* p. 82.
[512] Tom Glynn, 24 November 1911, "'Recognition'", *The Voice of Labour*; Andrew B. Dunbar, 24 November 1911, "IWW Propaganda Notes", *The Voice of Labour*; Andrew B. Dunbar, 1 December 1911, "The 'Sherman' Agitation", *The Voice of Labour*
[513] See "'Industrial Workers of the World' Union expresses contempt for the 'Industrial Disputes Prevention Act'. Inspector's comments", letter to Acting Secretary for Mines by Inspector of White Labour, Department of Mines, SAB89128145, National Archives, Pretoria. The functions of the Government Inspector of White Labour were later taken over by a specific Department of Labour: Cope, [? 1943] n.d., *op cit*., p. 133
[514] Lever, 1978, *op cit.*, pp. 83-4
[515] Andrew B. Dunbar, 24 November 1911, "IWW Propaganda Notes", *The Voice of Labour*
[516] Gitsham and Trembath, 1926, *op cit*., p. 56; Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., p. 519

political socialists in the leadership: A.L. Clark of the Social Democratic Party in Durban, previously linked to the Natal Railwaymen's Association, joined the NURHAS when it was formed in 1910, became the union's first president in 1918, and advocated interracial unionism in the *Railway Review.*[517]

Another important figure was the NURHAS secretary, Hessel J. Poutsma, a Dutch immigrant with connections to political socialism in the Netherlands. The year 1881 saw the formation of the Social Democratic Union, a Dutch body modelled on the German SDP, which developed an anarchist current centred on Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis in the 1890s. Nieuwenhuis, a popular young Lutheran minister, left the church in 1879 and joined the Social Democratic Union, becoming the first socialist senator in the Netherlands in 1888.[518] When the Social Democratic Union split in 1893 – with orthodox Marxists leading a breakaway Social Democratic Workers' Party – Nieuwenhuis, like the majority of members, remained loyal to the existing organisation. Nieuwenhuis' views moved towards anarchism by 1897: from the next year onwards he published the paper *De Vrije Socialist* ("The Free Socialist"), which still exists today as *De Vrije (*"The Free"), wrote a number of tracts and studies of anarchist history, supported syndicalism, associated with Cornelissen, and was the doyen of Dutch anarchism. He died in 1919.

Born in the Netherlands in 1866 to a working class family, Poutsma trained as a printer, became a socialist in the early 1890s, joined the Social Democratic Union in 1892, edited the sympathetic paper *De Sneeker Courant*, and was arrested in 1893 for involvement in an unemployment protest by his party.[519] By 1894, he was associated with the political socialists of the Amsterdam section of the Social Democratic Workers' Party, and in 1900, somewhat disillusioned, he came to South Africa as a war correspondent. Instead, he worked for the Red Cross. He stayed in South Africa, working as a printer for a newspaper concern in Bloemfontein, and was naturalised in 1906. He became involved in what would become the NURHAS from 1912 onwards, leaving his job to work full-time for the union.

It is also possible that the "Pretoria Local" of the IWW and the propaganda conducted in that city by Dunbar and Glynn may also have had some impact on NURHAS policies, but the record is not sufficiently clear to make a firm judgement on the issue. The NURHAS never achieved its goal of a single industrial union, despite opening its membership to all races. A whole range of other unions continued to operate on the harbours and railways; [520] the union not only failed to "attract the bulk of Afrikaner labourers" on the railways,[521] but also tended to ignore workers of colour. On the Cape Town docks, for instance, it included skilled White and Coloured workers, but did not organise the unskilled workers, mainly Africans and

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[517] Gitsham and Trembath, 1926, *op cit*., pp. 164-5
[518] Gert Harmsen, 1995, "Nieuwenhuis, Ferdinand", *Biografisch Woordenboek van het Socialisme an de Arbeidersbeweging in Nederland*, International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam, no. 5, pp. 157-163; Rudolf de Jong, 1979, "Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis", *Woordenboek van Belgische en Nederlands Vrijdenkers*, Vrije Universiteit, Brussels; Nettlau, [1934] 1996, *op cit.*, pp. 232-235
[519] Biographical information from Mies Campfens, 1987, "Poutsma, Hessel", *Biografisch Woordenboek van het Socialisme en de Arbeidersbeweging in Nederland*, no. 2, International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam, pp. 119-122; Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., pp. 264-5 "Poutsma, Hessel Jacob", in Rosenthal, compiler, 1966, *op cit.*, pp. 297-8
[520] Gitsham and Trembath, 1926, *op cit*., pp. 56-61
[521] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., p. 519

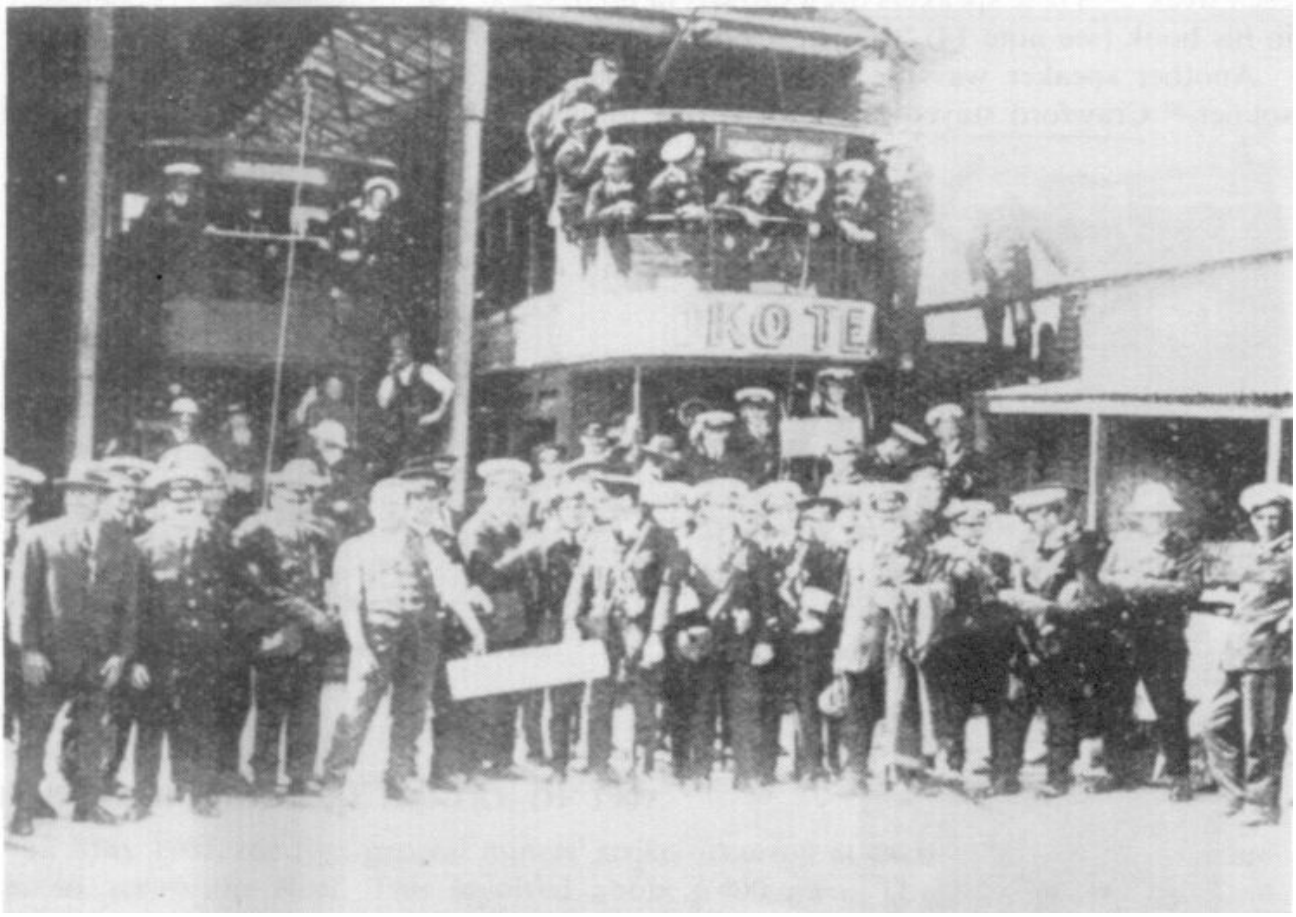

Figure ten: IWW tramwaymen pose in Johannesburg shortly before going on strike on Friday 12th May 1911

Source: Henry R. Pike, 1988, *A History of Communism in South Africa*, Christian Mission International, Germiston, second edition, p. 48

Coloureds – with the possible exception of a brief experiment with separate African and Coloured branches in Cape Town around 1918 and 1919.[522]

Crawford exaggerated when he claimed that membership of the IWW soon began to "exceed that of any other working class organisation in South Africa",[523] but the union's size, with over three hundred members, was fairly respectable in comparison to other unions at the time. The Transvaal Miners' Association had only 800 members in 1909, rising to 1,000 by 1913, the Amalgamated Society of Engineers had 1,351 members in 1910, and the South African Typographical Union had 1,240 members in 1912.[524]

A second conflict broke out on the tramways in May 1911 when the promised enquiry turned out to be a three-person commission composed of members of the Municipal Streetcar Committee: it focused solely

[522] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., p. 61 note 1
[523] See Crawford, August 1911, *op cit.* p. 82.
[524] Katz, 1976, *op cit.*, p. 176, 252

on the complaints against Peach,[525] and seemed to be designed to exonerate the unpopular inspector. Glynn and W.P. Glendon, another IWW militant from the tramways, and a member of the Municipal Industrial Union committee, organised a boycott of the enquiry's hearings at the City Hall on the grounds that it was not impartial. Glynn issued a notice to members of the union to refuse to give evidence before the commission.[526]

When the enquiry held its first meeting on April 25,[527] one employee arrived to give evidence, only to be assaulted by IWW pickets.[528] According to Crawford this "scab", this "loyal and submissive wage slave", had "set out for the place but by mistake arrived at the hospital or somewhere".[529] The enquiry exonerated Peach, and Glynn and Glendon were summoned before the Municipal Street Car Committee in May,[530] and dismissed with 48 hours' notice for their role in the January strike, and for alleged involvement in the assault on the witness.[531] The dismissal was, in fact, in violation of the Industrial Disputes Prevention Act, although it would hardly have made any sense for Glynn and Glendon to use this line of argument to defend themselves, given the IWW's proud defiance of the Act.

On the night of Thursday, May 11, "reckless speeches" were given at the tramway sheds.[532] A strike resolution was passed, and Glynn and H.D. Bernberg, then an official in the SA Labour Party, came out to a crowd that had gathered in front of the sheds. Glynn spoke as follows:[533]

> … the Municipality … had threatened the men with the Industrial Disputes Act. Well, he wanted to say there that night that the Industrial Workers of the World recognised no Industrial Disputes Act. They claimed the right to cease work when they wanted … they would have no arbitration. They wanted justice. He was not there to fight his own case but the cause of the working class. (Applause).

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[525] Letter to Acting Secretary for the Mines, 12 May 1911, Inspector of White Labour (R. Shanks), in "Johannesburg Tramway Employees Strike. Special Report on by Inspector of White Labour", MM331/11, National Archives, Pretoria
[526] Letter to Acting Secretary for the Mines, 12 May 1911, Inspector of White Labour (R. Shanks), in "Johannesburg Tramway Employees Strike. Special Report on by Inspector of White Labour", MM331/11, National Archives, Pretoria
[527] Unless specifically stated otherwise, the remainder of this section draws, in particular, on Crawford, August 1911, *op cit.* p. 82-3; Archibald Crawford, February 1912, "The Pick Handle Brigade: fun and fight on the Golden Rand", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XII, p. 494-5; and Katz' excellent account, Katz, 1976, *op cit.*, pp. 301-312 See also Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*; Philips, 1978, *op cit.*, p. 123-4; Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*; *Solidarity*, 24 June 1911, "South Africa IWW"; Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit.*, pp. 28-30
[528] Letter to Acting Secretary for the Mines, 12 May 1911, Inspector of White Labour (R. Shanks), in "Johannesburg Tramway Employees Strike. Special Report on by Inspector of White Labour", MM331/11, National Archives, Pretoria
[529] Crawford, August 1911, *op cit.* pp. 82-3
[530] Crawford, August 1911, *op cit.* p. 83
[531] Letter to Acting Secretary for the Mines, 12 May 1911, Inspector of White Labour (R. Shanks) and *The Transvaal Leader*, 12 May 1911, "Tramway Crisis", press clipping, both in "Johannesburg Tramway Employees Strike. Special Report on by Inspector of White Labour", MM331/11, National Archives, Pretoria
[532] Letter to Acting Secretary for the Mines, 12 May 1911, Inspector of White Labour (R. Shanks), in "Johannesburg Tramway Employees Strike. Special Report on by Inspector of White Labour", MM331/11, National Archives, Pretoria
[533] *Rand Daily Mail*, 12 May 1911, "Trams Today" tramway men on strike", press clipping in "Johannesburg Tramway Employees Strike. Special Report on by Inspector of White Labour", MM331/11, National Archives, Pretoria

> If they allowed men like Glendon and himself to go down without emphatic protest they would not be men. (Voices: 'We won't' and 'You're right') … There had been a certain amount of friction between the labour organisations of Johannesburg and the I.W.W. … [but] … they had no personal quarrels to fight out with the members of the Labour Party. If they were prepared to give their support in this matter then they would give the Labour Party support when they were in trouble. (Hear, hear.)

The crowd then proceeded to Market Square, growing to 500. Dunbar spoke next, saying that the IWW in America had filled jails to defend the right of free speech and that they should do likewise: "if he was afraid to go to goal for the tramway men", then he himself "was no use to his class".[534] John Campbell of the Socialist Labour Party spoke a little later, saying that "any little differences between the labour organisations were brushed on one side in times of trouble such as the present".

A second strike broke out early the next morning, Friday the 12th, at 5 a.m., centred on the demand that Glynn and Glendon be reinstated and that no January strikers be victimised.[535] This time the municipality was not caught off guard. Policemen surrounded the power station, patrolled the streets and protected the sixteen scabs who were hired by the Municipal Streetcar Committee. Glynn and Glendon were quickly arrested in terms of the Industrial Disputes Prevention Act.

There were dramatic developments during the day. In the afternoon, however, Mary Fitzgerald led a contingent of women carrying red banners that walked through the police lines and blocked the tracks, preventing the trams from coming out. By nightfall barricades were being erected in Market Square and mounted police had been brought in as reinforcements. Armed now with pick handles, the police were able to halt further attempts by the women to break through their lines.

On the second day of the strike, Saturday, the municipality issued a proclamation, signed by the Mayor and local head of police, which prohibited all public meetings of six or more people. This dated back to an 1894 proclamation of the Kruger government, Act Number 6 of 1894. This act was originally introduced by the Kruger government to prevent agitation amongst the *Uitlanders;*[536] but, like all legislation from old republics, remained in force unless specifically abolished.

Mounted police armed with pick handles supplied by the Town Engineer's Department were on hand to disperse demonstrators. Women, led by Fitzgerald, charged the police with wheelbarrows, and several pick handles were dropped. Mary Fitzgerald grabbed one, apparently after pricking a horse with her hairpin. She subsequently carried the pick handle to meetings, as something of a personal trademark, and she became widely known as "Pickhandle Mary", and an immensely popular figure.

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[534] *Rand Daily Mail*, 12 May 1911, "Trams Today" tramway men on strike", press clipping in "Johannesburg Tramway Employees Strike. Special Report on by Inspector of White Labour", MM331/11, National Archives, Pretoria

[535] *The Transvaal Leader*, 12 May 1911, "Tramway Crisis", press clipping in "Johannesburg Tramway Employees Strike. Special Report on by Inspector of White Labour", MM331/11, National Archives, Pretoria; also see W.H. Andrews, 6 August 1937, "Tram and Typo Strikers 1911", *The Guardian*, copy available in folder 8.1, W.H. Andrews Papers, Mayibuye Centre, University of the Western Cape

[536] Campbell, John and J. Raeburn Munro, 1913, *The Great Rand Strike: July, 1913*, published by the authors in Johannesburg, printed by E.H. Adlington and Co., p. 8-9

Then speakers, who mounted the platform erected in the Market Square, were arrested, one after the other, for holding an illegal gathering.[537] John Campbell, and Dunbar were arrested in this way, and among the ten arrested on May 11 and 12.[538] Glynn was released on bail, making a dramatic appearance on the platform – he was immediately rearrested, and additional charges were added to his docket.

The struggle at the tram sheds was, by now, the focus of attention in Johannesburg. In addition to the "unity of the revolutionary bodies" praised by the *Voice of Labour*,[539] the other unions and the SA Labour Party also rallied behind the strikers, and condemned the Industrial Disputes Act.[540] An attempt was made to hold a meeting on the Sunday in the Market Square in defiance of the proclamation. Mounted police charged the crowd, leading to injuries, and sections of the crowd responded with stones (and apples from the local fruit stalls). Yet more people had been arrested, including Andrews of the SA Labour Party and the Amalgamated Society of Engineers.

The second tramways strike was broken. Public sentiment turned against the strikers as the disruptions in transport continued, and by the discovery of dynamite on the tramway tracks. Two IWW members, William Whittaker and T. Morant were charged for placing the dynamite, and held in cells for convicted felons prior to being tried.[541] The strikers were given an ultimatum to return to work by Monday, with added inducements to those who returned earlier.

By Friday May 19, the tramways were again in service: seventy workers lost their jobs, and Glynn was sentenced to three months hard labour. His deepest convictions regarding the State were affirmed: "if Government ownership, as our political Socialists tell us, is a 'step in the right direction' God help the slaves when they take the wrong one".[542] The case against Whittaker and Morant continued for some months. The *Voice of Labour* and the IWW ran a support campaign,[543] and Mary Fitzgerald accused the SA Labour Party, with some justice, of abandoning the Whittaker-Morant affair out of political expediency.[544]

The case against Whittaker and Morant collapsed when it was revealed that the men had been framed, and that John L. Sherman, a government agent, had laid the dynamite. Whittaker successfully sued for damages, but Sherman was "rewarded by the government with a job on the railways" in Pretoria.[545] The IWW held meetings amongst the Pretoria railway workers, addressed by figures such as Anderson, Crawford, Dunbar, Fitzgerald, and Glynn, denouncing Sherman,[546] including one on the 25 November 1911 under the auspices of the NURHAS.[547]

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[537] Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., p. 30
[538] Appendix in "Johannesburg Tramway Employees Strike. Special Report on by Inspector of White Labour", MM331/11, National Archives, Pretoria
[539] *Solidarity*, 24 June 1911, "South Africa IWW"
[540] Katz, 1976, *op cit.*, p. 307
[541] *The Voice of Labour*, 12 January 1912, "Whittaker-Morant Case: a short history"
[542] *The Voice of Labour*, 24 November 1911, "Recognition", by Glynn
[543] See, *inter alia*, *The Voice of Labour*, 9 February 1912, "Whittaker and Morant Appeal Fund"; Mary Fitzgerald, 15 March 1912, "The Whittaker-Morant case: how the Labour Party helped (?), " *The Voice of Labour*
[544] Mary Fitzgerald, 15 March 1912, "The Whittaker-Morant case: how the Labour Party helped (?), " *The Voice of Labour*
[545] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 119
[546] Tom Glynn, 24 November 1911, "Recognition", *The Voice of Labour*; Andrew B. Dunbar, 24 November 1911, "IWW Propaganda Notes", *The Voice of Labour*; *The Voice of Labour*, 1 December 1911, "The 'Sherman' Agitation".

IWW meetings in the Market Square in Johannesburg for the remainder of 1911 appear, despite the defeat of the May 1911 strike, to have attracted considerable crowds.[548] There was further publicity for the IWW during the municipal elections in October 1911, and the parliamentary by-election held in the Georgetown constituency, Germiston, in January 1912. A "Pickhandle Brigade", comprising Dunbar, Glynn, Fitzgerald and others, including Morant,[549] armed with pick handles seized during the May strike, broke up the election meetings of candidates perceived to be involved in the breaking of the May 1911 strike.[550]

The tactic of the "Pickhandle Brigade" was to take over the platform and confront the speaker, often to the apparent delight of the audience. The SA Labour Party repudiated these acts, as did the De Leonists, who saw them as evidence of the IWW's bent for "physical force". Norman Anstey, the town councillor who had been the chairman of the Municipal Street Car Committee, and who was standing for re-election, was the first target.

The activities of the "Pickhandle Brigade" were spectacular, but contributed little to Crawford and Mary Fitzgerald's project of building a revolutionary Socialist Party, or Dunbar and Glynn's aim of One Big Union, and the results were mixed. The "Pickhandle Brigade" claimed some credit for the subsequent increase in SA Labour Party representation in both elections: the number of party members of the thirty-person Johannesburg municipal council rose from five to eleven, while Andrews won the Germiston by-election. Yet this sort of outcome can hardly be assumed to have been the aim of the members of the "Pickhandle Brigade". It was with mixed feelings that the *Voice of Labour* reported on these developments: "Heavens protect us! The Revolution is upon us and we are unprepared!"[551]

Why exactly members of the *Voice of Labour* network adopted the peculiar tactic of the "Pickhandle Brigade" remains unclear, but the decision was a mistake. There were far more pressing problems elsewhere. The Municipal Industrial Union fared badly in the aftermath of the May 1911 strike. Just as the confidence generated in January had led to a huge influx of members, the demoralisation created in May led to a rapid loss of support. The task of rebuilding the union should have been a priority, but was neglected.

The Municipal Industrial Union suffered a further blow when Glynn, apparently blacklisted, left South Africa towards the end of 1911. He went to Ireland, and then the United States, where he joined the IWW. In 1912, he arrived in Australia, worked on the trams in Sydney, became a leading figure in the local IWW, and played a central role in winning the IWW Clubs to the Chicago perspective. Glynn was editor of *Direct Action* when it was launched the following year, a leading figure in the IWW's campaign against the White

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A detailed expose of Sherman was also carried in *The Voice of Labour*, 1 December 1911, "The Story of John Lafayette Sherman: working class traitor and spy".

[547] *The Voice of Labour*, 1 December 1911, "The 'Sherman' Agitation"

[548] Andrew B. Dunbar, 16 June 1911, "Things You Should Know", *The Voice of Labour*; Andrew B. Dunbar, 15 September 1911, "Industrial Union Propaganda", *The Voice of Labour*

[549] T. Morant, 15 September 1911, "Hooliganism", *The Voice of Labour*

[550] Crawford, February 1912, *op cit.* provides a particularly interesting account of these events. See also, *inter alia*, the Andrew B. Dunbar, 27 October 1911, "Revolutionary Methods", *The Voice of Labour*,

[551] Archibald Crawford, 24 November 1911, "From the Watch Tower", *The Voice of Labour*,

Australia Policy, author of the IWW booklet *Industrial Efficiency and its Antidote*, and was one of the IWW members arrested in 1916 for treason.[552] Barker recalled Glynn's contribution:[553]

> He was the editor and he had a magnificent style of provocative writing. He had a great flow of English and could reduce things to their essentials. He was a man with a very logical mind. He could really hammer things through *Direct Action*.
>
> It became, in my opinion, one of the most formidable newspapers that have been published… I mean formidable compared to the general run of socialist papers at that time. There were one or two around, they were as different as chalk and cheese. Perhaps that is what made the authorities take more notice of us than they did of the Socialist Party.

The Municipal Industrial Union was reported to have collapsed by early 1912,[554] but the IWW remained active elsewhere. In April 1912 it was collecting money at the Market Square for Whittaker and Morant.[555] The Whittaker-Morant Fund was finally closed in June 1912.[556] In June 1912, a Durban IWW section was active,[557] which may have been established by elements in the local Social Democratic Party. A "comrade Webber", a fervent supporter of the IWW, who "roundly condemned political action",[558] was sent "down to Durban at the invitation of the Durban IWW".[559] A "very forceful and fluent" speaker, he specialised in "phrase-making, blood-curdling class war propaganda", and debated Boydell of the SA Labour Party at the Durban Town Gardens before a large crowd on the topic of "Syndicalism versus Socialism".[560]

4.12. In conclusion: the "Empire of Labour", the "One Big Union", and the character of the early left

This chapter has argued that the rise of anarchism and syndicalism in the late nineteenth century, and more particularly, during the "glorious period" of the 1890s to the 1920s, was also expressed in South Africa. Starting from coastal centres like Port Elizabeth and Cape Town, the movement spread to the Witwatersrand, where an organised syndicalist movement emerged around the same time as the Union of South Africa. The rise of capitalism and the modern State provided the context in which such a movement could emerge, and the integration of the country into international labour markets provided the conduits through anarchist and syndicalist ideas could flow into the growing local working class.

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[552] Burgmann, 1995, *op cit.*, 36, 115
[553] Barker, [1965] 1998, *op cit.,* chapter three
[554] *The Voice of Labour*, 9 February 1912, "IWW (S.A. Section): Annual General Meeting: New Officers Elected"
[555] *The Voice of Labour*, 5 January 1912, "Whittaker-Morant Appeal Fund"; 3 May 1912, "Whittaker-Morant Appeal Fund"
[556] *The Voice of Labour*, 14 June 1912, "Whittaker-Morant Appeal Fund"
[557] *The Voice of Labour*, 14 June 1912, "Heard and Said"
[558] Boydell, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit.*, p. xii
[559] *The Voice of Labour*, 14 June 1912, "Heard and Said"
[560] Boydell, n.d., *op cit.*, p. xii; *The Voice of Labour*, 14 June 1912, "Heard and Said"

Immigrant radicals like Henry Glasse, Harrison, Dunbar, Israelstam and Rabb played an absolutely pivotal role in promoting anarchism and syndicalism locally, and formed the backbone of the local radical circles that acted as nodes linking the local movement into the larger, transnational, networks of the global anarchist and syndicalist movement. Consequently, local developments were closely affected by developments abroad, such as the 1907 International Anarchist Conference, and the formation of the IWW (and it is striking how quickly and how faithfully, the 1908 IWW split was reproduced in Johannesburg). By this time, a whole range of anarchist and syndicalist approaches to organising had been played out in South Africa: the loose political group, in which anarchists and syndicalists worked alongside other radicals, was exemplified by the SDF, the Pretoria Socialist Society, and probably the Socialist Club; the strict syndicalism that denied the need for any sort of specific political organisation besides the union was exemplified by the IWW; the strand of the broad anarchist tradition that stressed the importance of a distinct and tightly structured political organisation was exemplified by the Socialist Labour Party.

Likewise, a range of different anarchist and syndicalist strategies emerged: insurrectionist "propaganda by the deed", revolutionary syndicalism, and purist educationalism (for Harrison, the IWW did not really promote revolution, as it did not really fight the battle of ideas).[561] By 1910, revolutionary syndicalism was, without doubt, the main strand of the broad anarchist tradition active in South Africa, and the formation of the IWW that year saw the first syndicalist union established in southern Africa. While political socialism remained influential amongst the radicals, anarchism and syndicalism were on the rise, and by 1910 were a force with which to reckon - even, perhaps the main influence on radical opinion.

The syndicalists, centred on the Witwatersrand were, at this stage primarily a movement of radical White immigrants, unlike the SDF in the Cape which had some influence in the Coloured working class, and mobilised across racial lines. However, what all sections of the local anarchist and syndicalist movement shared was a principled commitment to the formation of an *interracial* working class movement. Despite other differences within the movement, opposition to White Labourism was a shared and defining feature of the local radicals, one which distinguished them from socialists like Bain. Belief in the need for an interracial labour movement, coupled to opposition to segregation, set them apart from the mainstream labour movement in the country.

Crawford, for example, opposed the colour bar in the labour movement, and supported African workers' struggles, praising news of the planned (but abortive) "formation of a native miners union" in 1912 as a step towards an industrial unionism that would embrace the "*real* proletariat" on the mines. .[562] He advised the Transvaal Miners' Association to aid all such initiatives, and help form a united labour movement that could effectively confront the mine owners. He went so far as to describe the White underground miner as having become "a mere supervisor – *a parasite!*": "The black and yellow men were the real miners but the superior white men did not recognise anything human that was not white".[563] Under his editorship, the

[561] Wilfred H. Harrison, 21 June 1912, "What's Up With the Movement?", *The Voice of Labour*
[562] *The Voice of Labour*, 12 January 1912, "From the Watch Tower", reprinted in the American IWW paper *Industrial Worker*, 7 March 1912; also cited in Philips, 1978, *op cit.* p. 125
[563] Crawford, August 1911, *op cit.*, pp. 79-80, emphasis in the original

Voice of Labour carried favourable reports on strikes by African workers, and publicised the emerging passive resistance campaigns by local Indians.

For "Proletarian", Crawford's successor as editor of the *Voice of Labour*, it was inevitable that the African workers were starting to organise for "mutual protection".[564] Unlike the craft unionists, "the hitherto unorganised natives" had actually won "a couple of strikes", having (unlike the Whites) "the commonsense to practice working class solidarity". "Sooner or later they will revolt against wage slavery", and it was the duty of White workers to support their struggles: the "only logical thing for white slaves to do is to throw in their lot with the black wage slave in a common assault on the capitalist system". He (or she) made the argument for the common interests of all workers that would become a staple of local syndicalist propaganda in subsequent years: all workers had the same basic interests; the cheap African labour system was a curse for both Africans and Whites; "if the natives are crushed the whites will go down with them", the "stress of industrial competition" compelling the minority of white workers to "accept the same conditions of labour as their black brethren".[565]

Raising another key theme in subsequent local syndicalist discourse, "Proletarian" strongly opposed nationalism. Nationalists like Abdurrahman were "small capitalists" whose basic class interests led them to collaborate with the very same White capitalists that oppressed their people. Abdurrahman opposed the SDF in elections in District Six, preferring to secure himself a comfortable position; he also advised Coloured voters in other areas to support candidates from White political parties that promised the most benefits to Coloured capitalists. The grotesque result was that the African Political Organisation ended up aligning with the "Dutch farmers", the group "responsible for the notorious Masters and Servants Act" that was used against Coloured workers. While condemning the "grotesque" "attitude of superiority" of the "'aristocrats' of labour",[566] "Proletarian" advised workers of colour to organise along class lines for the One Big Union.

On the same note, "Proletarian" opposed the introduction of compulsory military service in South Africa in the form of a Defence Bill, applicable to whites only, arguing that workers should not take up arms against one another.[567] The real point of the "militarist" Bill was to suppress a "native rising", but a "native rising" would be a "wholly justified" response to "the cruel exploitation of South African natives by farmers, mining magnates and factory owners".[568] As such, such a rising should receive the "sympathy and support of every white wage-slave": "no white wage slave will be true to the cause of labour if he lifts a rifle against his black brother"; "if you must fight see that your rifles are aimed at the class which owns all property and robs all races".[569]

The IWW and the Socialist Labour Party in South Africa did not, as noted, succeed in organising workers of colour in South Africa. This was not the inevitable consequence of a radical movement that was

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[564] "Proletarian", 27 October 1911, "The Problem of Coloured Labour", *The Voice of Labour*
[565] "Proletarian", 27 October 1911, "The Problem of Coloured Labour", *The Voice of Labour*
[566] "Proletarian", 27 October 1911, "The Problem of Coloured Labour", *The Voice of Labour*
[567] "Our Special Representative", 1 December 1911, "Sundry Jottings from the Cape: a rebel's review"
[568] "Our Special Representative", 1 December 1911, "Sundry Jottings from the Cape: a rebel's review"
[569] The Defence Bill was passed as the South African Defence Force Act of 1912, and stipulated that Africans, Coloureds and Indians could be enrolled in the army as non-combatants, but that armed service was restricted to Whites, except in extreme circumstances: Musson, 1989, *op cit*., p. 15

marked by racial prejudice or that shared the assumptions of White Labourism, as several authors, including Katz[570] and Van Duin,[571] have suggested.[572] There is no real evidence for such claims, and the evidence marshalled in support has been questionable. While Katz claimed, for instance, that the IWW complained bitterly that African police assistants were used against strikers in the May 1911 tramway strike[573] – a point repeated by Van Duin, citing Katz,[574] and then by Van der Linden, citing Van Duin[575] – the article in which the complaint supposedly appeared did not, in fact, make an issue of the race of the police forces, but only of their actions.[576] One speaker at the May 1911 strike did make an issue of the use of Africans against Whites, but he was a member of the SA Labour Party, not the IWW or Socialist Labour Party.[577]

It was this radical interracial outlook that cut the local anarchists and syndicalists off from the mainstream of organised White labour, which was aligned to segregationist and colour bar policies, whether those of the SA Labour Party or the Afrikaner nationalists. Indeed, by 1910, the radicals tended to define their positions primarily by contrast with the positions of the SA Labour Party and the union leaders. If the mainstream stressed gradual change, the radicals stressed revolution; if it stressed the job colour bar and segregation, the radicals called for an interracial labour movement. A widening rift had opened up, and whereas once men like Harrison could have participated in the formation of the SA Labour Party, they now stressed that they were a separate group, men apart.

If the local anarchists and syndicalists remained true to their internationalist principles, contrary to the claims of the Simons, they did so at the cost of winning over significant sections of the White working class. A minority within a minority, they faced the challenge of expanding their influence: the logical move, a stronger orientation towards workers of colour, was suggested by their principles and analysis, but it was only the SDF that took active steps in this direction at this time, with the General Workers Union, the unemployed movement, and election campaigns in District Six. The failure of the IWW and the Socialist Labour Party may be partly ascribed to their weakness, and isolation, and the lack of a strategy to make contact with African, Coloured and Indian workers. This left their opposition to racial oppression rather abstract: opposing popular prejudice and official discrimination, they failed to take the crucial step of combining this *principled* opposition to racial oppression with active and specific efforts to *mobilise* African, Coloured, and Indian workers around their class and national concerns.[578] Nonetheless, the principled internationalism of the Witwatersrand militants, and the interracial activism of the SDF paved the way for the formation of an interracial syndicalist movement in the second half of the 1910s, discussed in subsequent chapters.

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[570] Katz, 1976, *op cit.*, p. 320
[571] Van Duin, 1990, *op cit.*, p. 649
[572] A similar line of argument may be found in Drew, editor, 1996a, *op cit.*, editor's comments p. 16
[573] Katz, 1976, *op cit.*, pp. 273, 320
[574] Van Duin, 1990, *op cit.*, p. 649
[575] Van der Linden, 1998, *op cit.*, pp. 14-15
[576] *The Voice of Labour*, 19 May 1911
[577] On the speaker, see *Rand Daily Mail*, 12 May 1911, "Trams Today: tramway men on strike", press clipping in "Johannesburg Tramway Employees Strike. Special Report on by Inspector of White Labour", MM331/11, National Archives, Pretoria
[578] van der Walt, 2004b, *op cit.*

It is possible to make some observations regarding the social composition of the emerging anarchist and syndicalist movement in the early period, at this stage. In Cape Town and on the Witwatersrand, it was primarily a movement of skilled White workers, and, moreover, one established by immigrants. Scottish and English immigrants played the main role, East European Jews were also important, but by no means central; local Afrikaners and poor Whites were almost wholly absent: Philip Roux, hardly a "typical" Afrikaner, was a rare exception. It is worth noting that the *Voice of Labour* was almost exclusively written in English, and the same was true of the articles and speeches of the local IWW and Socialist Labour Party. This limited the ability of the radicals to challenge the hold of Afrikaner nationalism, and is indicative of the importance of the British connection to the local left.

Influences from the Netherlands, where anarchism and syndicalism was thriving at this time, were also marginal to the emerging South African socialist movement. The Dutch anarchist Tjerk Luitjes, who had links to the Social Democratic Union, announced his intention to immigrate to South Africa in 1897, along with Johannes "Johan" Visscher, who was also influenced by anarchism.[579] Luitjies, however, remained in the Netherlands where he was involved in attempts to set up model communities and workers' co-operatives. Visscher did visit South Africa, returning to the Netherlands where he wrote a lengthy study of the causes of the Anglo-Boer in 1903.[580] His book blamed British imperialism, driven by capitalist interests and political considerations, for starting the war. The Anglo-Boer War was also the subject of an anarchist analysis by Nieuwenhuis in *De Vrije Socialist*.[581] Then, in 1912, the consul-general for the Netherlands informed the South African government that an anarchist named Johannes Nijkamp had left his country for Pretoria.[582] None of this had an impact on the local movement.

Dutch political socialism also played very little role. The Social Democratic Workers' Party had a short-lived section in Cape Town in the 1890s, and was critical of the racial prejudice of local Whites,[583] but does not seem to have survived into the twentieth century. While Poutsma had been a member of the Social

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[579] Jannes Houkes, 1986, "Luitjes, Tjerk", *Biografisch Woordenboek van het Socialisme en de Arbeidersbeweging in Nederland*, International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam, no. 1, p. 72-75

[580] The book was *De Ondergang van een Wereld: historisch-oeconomische studie over de oorzaken van den Anglo-Boer oorlog (1899-1902), met naschrift over de waarschijnlijke toekomst van Zuid-Afrika* ("The Changing World: a historical and economic study of the causes of the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1920), with an appendix on the likely future of South Africa", Wakker, Rotterdam. A copy can be found in the International Institute of Social History library holdings, catalogue no. N 1207/2. Also see Joop Morriën, 1986, "Visscher, Johannes", *Biografisch Woordenboek van het Socialisme en de Arbeidersbeweging in Nederland*, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, no. 1, pp. 139-140. I would like to thank Jannes Houkes for directing my attention to Visscher: personal communication, 19 April 2004.

[581] See Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis, 30 August 1899, "Hollandsche Huichelarij", *De Vrije Socialist*; Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis, 27 September 1899, "Engeland tegen Transvaal", *De Vrije Socialist*; Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis, 7 October 1899, "In Zake Paul Kruger", *De Vrije Socialist*; Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis, 25 October 1899, "In Zake Paul Kruger (II)", *De Vrije Socialist*; Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis, 11 November 1899, "President Kruger en de Dynamietconcessie", *De Vrije Socialist*; Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis, 15 November 1899, "Verloren Illusies", *De Vrije Socialist*; Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis, 20 December 1899, "Dit moet gij Doen", *De Vrije Socialist*. I would like to thank Kees Rodenburg, of the International Institute of Social History for his help in locating these items: letter from Kees Rodenburg, 3 October 2000, in my possession.

[582] "Consul General for the Netherlands, Pretoria: reports that a well-known anarchist named Johannes Nijkamp recently left Holland with the intention of proceeding to Pretoria", IRD 446/1912, vol.95, National Archives, Pretoria

[583] Personal communication, Piet Hoekman and Jannes Houkes of the International Institute of Social History, at the European Social Science History Conference, Humboldt University, Germany, 24 to 27 March 2004

Democratic Workers' Party, he does not seem to have tried to establish local groups on these lines in South Africa. Visscher, meanwhile, became critical of anarchism and syndicalism following the 1903 general strike,[584] moving to the Social Democratic Party.[585] The publication of excerpts from Cornelissen's paper, the *International Bulletin of the Syndicalist Movement*, in the *Voice of Labour* was one the few examples of a direct connection to the influential anarchist and syndicalist current in the Netherlands.

It was, above all, American and British influences that shaped the development of socialism in South Africa, including its anarchist and syndicalist forms, notwithstanding the cultural and historic links between South Africa and the Netherlands. In the first instance, there was relatively little working class immigration from the Netherlands to South Africa following the discovery of diamonds and gold. In 1896, the population of Johannesburg included 16,265 British people, 3,335 East European Jews, 2,262 Germans, 992 Australians, 754 Americans, and just 819 Netherlanders.[586] An important effect was that there were few direct linkages between Dutch radicalism and the South African working class. Second, continuing cultural linkages between the Netherlands and the Afrikaners tended to be mediated through the Afrikaner educated elite and ruling class. Dutch theology and social science, for example, had an important influence on the twentieth-century development of the Afrikaner churches and Afrikaner nationalism,[587] but the key Afrikaner nationalists actively opposed class politics as an alien ideology that threatened Afrikaner survival.[588] Finally, the striking absence of Afrikaners from the local socialist movement (partly to be explained by the strength of Afrikaner nationalism) also undermined connections with socialist currents in the Netherlands.

Jonathan Hyslop has pointed to the similarities between the White Labourism of the Australian Labour Party, and that of the SA Labour Party, suggesting that these sorts of views were widely held in the larger British working class diaspora, the "Imperial Working Class, linked by migration and cultural flows".[589] "Many of these men and women, imagined themselves as citizens of what might be called the Empire of Labour", which combined a "project of racial domination and class struggle", in "an imagination that was simultaneously British, proletarian, imperial, socialist and racist".[590] I would stress, though, that within the British working class diaspora, there were competing views: alongside the model of the "Empire of Labour", centred on White Labourism, existed a model of labour internationalism that was exemplified by the vision of the "One Big Union" across the lines of colour, country and nation, and that the anarchists and syndicalists in South Africa were part of this alternative current, just as mainstream (English) White labour was part of that of White Labourism; the "Empire of Labour" was not the same as the "imperial working class".

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[584] See Johan Visscher, 1903, *Sociaal-demokratie, Klassenstrijd, Algemeene Werkstaking*, Amsterdam, Bos. Several copies are kept in the International Institute of Social History library holdings, under catalogue no. N 1481/37, N 1202/16, and Bro N 1037/35

[585] Morriën, 1986, *op cit.*

[586] Visser, 2001a, *op cit*., p.2

[587] Hermann Giliomee, 1979, "The Growth of Afrikaner Identity", in Heribert Adam and Herman Giliomee, editors, *Ethnic Power Mobilized: can South Africa change?* Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut; T. Dunbar Moodie, 1975, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom: power, apartheid, and the Afrikaner civil religion*, University of California Press, Los Angeles

[588] Dan O'Meara, 1983, *Volkskapitalisme: class, capital and ideology in the development of Afrikaner nationalism, 1934-1948*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

[589] Hyslop, 2002, *op cit*., p. 3

[590] Hyslop, 2002, *op cit*., pp. 3-4

As a party, the Socialist Labour Party never built a large base in this period; as a union, the IWW never built a large and stable organisation, attracting even from amongst White workers a limited number of members. Ultimately, their real significance lay not in their size, nor their union activities, but in helping develop arguments for interracial labour unity and syndicalism in a country deeply divided by race. The veterans of both organisations would play a central role in the International Socialist League, formed in 1915 and the most important syndicalist group in South African history: before that development could take place, however, local syndicalism would undergo a crisis that would cripple it during the crucial years 1913 and 1914. This crisis is discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Strikes, rebellion, and war: From the IWW to the War on War League, 1912-1915

Just three years after the establishment of the Union of South Africa, class and national conflicts wracked the new country. Although the economic crisis of the post Anglo-Boer period had been replaced by steady economic growth, struggles between an increasingly White labour movement, on the one hand, and the mining capitalists and the new State apparatus escalated rapidly, with general strikes in 1913 and 1914. In May 1913 a violent strike by White workers surged west across the Witwatersrand from the New Kleinfontein Mine in Benoni, often developing outside of trade union control. In Johannesburg, riots and gun battles left strikers in control of large parts of the city, and perhaps twenty-five people were shot down by imperial troops. The strike ended with a mass funeral for the victims, attended by perhaps 70,000 people.[1]

The May 1913 general strike was followed by strikes by African mineworkers over three days, involving perhaps 9,000 men in total.[2] In October, sporadic Indian passive resistance campaigns took a new turn with a general strike amongst Natal Indians, who were concentrated on the coalfields, sugar farms and sugar mills, and the railways: centred on the £3 annual poll tax imposed on ex-indentured labourers, it quickly involved up to 5,000 people.[3] On 8 January 1914, the NURHAS organised a strike on the railways, and the Transvaal Federation of Trade Unions called a general strike in solidarity. While the strike was carefully organised, and spread beyond the Witwatersrand, it was quickly suppressed with martial law by Smuts, the Minister of Defence and Finance, and acting Minister of Justice.

The outbreak of the First World War in August, followed by the decision of the Union parliament to support the British war effort, saw further unrest. Local African and Indian nationalists halted their protests in a show of loyalty, but the SA Labour Party split over the war issue and radical Afrikaner nationalists led a large armed rebellion in parts of the Orange Free State and Transvaal. Hertzog had left Botha's Cabinet in early 1913, mainly over the issue of relations with the British Empire, and the declaration of war saw further complications. General Jacobus "Koos" de la Rey, who linked up with rebels in the South African Defence Force and the rural *commando* system – the traditional Afrikaner rural militia – during the 1914 Rebellion

[1] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 142
[2] Philip L. Bonner, 1979, "The 1920 Black Mineworkers' Strike: a preliminary account", in Bozzoli, editor, 1979, *op cit*., p. 274
[3] Swan, 1985*, op cit*., pp. 246-256; also see Shamim Marie, 1986, *Divide and Profit: Indian workers in Natal*, Worker Resistance and Culture Publications, Department of Industrial Sociology, Durban, pp. 29-31

mobilised 12,000 men, an army made up largely of rural poor Whites.[4] The Rebellion was defeated, but it signalled the profound hostility of many Afrikaners to the prospect of fighting for the empire that had conquered them so recently.

The main aim of this chapter is to analyse the evolution of anarchism and syndicalism against the backdrop of these events, and to take the story from the return of Crawford to South Africa in November 1911 to the formation of what would become South Africa's single most important syndicalist group, the International Socialist League, in September 1915. This requires an examination of a number of key issues: the decline of the early syndicalist groups associated with the *Voice of Labour* network, the role of syndicalism in the 1913 and 1914 general strikes by White workers, and the split in the SA Labour Party that gave rise to the War on War League, the body that became the International Socialist League.

It is argued that the *Voice of Labour* network, the local IWW and the Socialist Labour Party collapsed by the start of 1913, in part because of renewed efforts by Crawford to establish a United Socialist Party. This party was a failure whose formation led directly to the collapse of the local IWW and the disappearance of the Socialist Labour Party, whose members seem to have decided to try to reform the SA Labour Party. With the collapse of the United Socialist Party, the Social Democratic Federation became the single most important socialist group in South Africa until the formation of the International Socialist League in September 1915.

This meant, however, that there was no organised anarchist or syndicalist organisation, or newspaper, on the Witwatersrand when the 1913 general strike by White workers broke out. Nonetheless, the question of whether syndicalism played a role in that strike, and its successor in 1914, is an important one to consider. The literature has vacillated between two extreme positions on this question. Some – following claims by Smuts and others that a "Syndicalist Conspiracy"[5] directed the strikes on the Witwatersrand – have stressed the role of syndicalism, pointing to the use of militant methods like the general strike method, and to the prominent role played by Crawford and Mary Fitzgerald. However others, notably Elaine Katz,[6] have dismissed Smuts' claims, arguing that syndicalism had very little influence on a White working class characterised by craft unionism

This chapter suggests that the truth lies between these polar opposites, but it lies closer to Katz' interpretation. Syndicalist ideas – and ideas influenced by syndicalism – were evident amongst a layer of strikers and activists in this period.

First, a layer of the strikers certainly expressed syndicalist ideas, apparently independently of the earlier organised syndicalist movement on the Witwatersrand, meaning that it is important not to conflate the influence of syndicalism with the influence of *organised* syndicalist groups.

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[4] Sandra Swart, 2000, *op cit.*

[5] See Jan Smuts, 4 February and 5 February 1914, "Indemnity and Undesirables Special Deportation Bill: second reading", *Union of South Africa: House of Assembly, 1914*, Government Printers, Pretoria, columns 62-124. This speech was reprinted in 1914 as Jan Smuts, 1914, *The Syndicalist Conspiracy in South Africa: a scathing indictment*, Government Printers, Pretoria. A copy may be found in the Smuts Papers, University of Cape Town Libraries, folder D10.10

[6] Katz, 1976, *op cit.*, pp. 217-296.

Second, a number of other people who were not otherwise syndicalists were influenced by syndicalism at this time. For example, Bain suggested at one point that "it might be necessary for the strikers to take over the mines and work them themselves".[7] The case of Bain – like that of Crawford and Mary Fitzgerald, as discussed earlier – was not unique. At least some of the nine men deported in 1914 by Smuts for their role in the strike, including Crawford and Bain, were somewhat influenced by syndicalism at this time. Thirdly, there were also specific attempts by committed syndicalists like V.E. Boyd, John Campbell, Ferdinand Marais, J. Raeburn Munro and F. Murray to promote their ideas; even Harrison was jailed for inflammatory statements in 1914.

On the other hand, however, if it is possible to speak of a syndicalist current within the 1913 and 1914 general strikes by White workers – in that a number of people were influenced by syndicalism in varying degrees, and in that committed syndicalists also played a role – it is equally important to stress the limitations of that current. It was not co-ordinated or coherent, its activities were sporadic, and its impact was quite limited; while it was a noticeable factor, and an important part of the labour politics of the time, it was far from hegemonic, and certainly did not fit the profile of Smuts' "revolutionary band".

Crawford and Mary Fitzgerald played a prominent role in the 1913 and 1914 strikes by White workers, and the couple's emphasis on direct action probably showed that the pair was still influenced by syndicalism. However, many mainstream supporters of White Labourism and the SA Labour Party were equally willing to advocate direct action at this time (as were more radical advocates of White Labourism, like Bain). Crawford and Fitzgerald's support for confrontation converged, in other words, with a wide spectrum of White labour politics – most of which, as Katz suggested, was very far from syndicalism – at this time.

Calls for direct action in 1913 and 1914 were, then, by no means confined to those influenced in some degree by syndicalism, or to those firmly committed to syndicalism. There is no evidence that the small syndicalist current started or controlled the 1913 and 1914 strikes by White workers, nor can it be demonstrated that the 1913 Indian strike showed anarchist or syndicalist influences.

Overall, while anarchist and syndicalist influences continued to exist in 1913 and 1914, these years represented a low point, rather than a peak, for anarchism and syndicalism in South Africa. The *Voice of Labour* had ceased publication; the IWW had collapsed; the Socialist Labour Party had disappeared; the *Strike Herald* produced by Crawford in the 1913 Witwatersrand strike (for the Transvaal Federation of Trade Unions) stressed militancy but did not provide a platform for syndicalism in the same way as the old *Voice of Labour*, with its stress on ideology; the small syndicalist current was disorganised and played a limited role.

The ruling class obsession with the role of syndicalists – and a tendency to regard the key figures as immigrants – reveals more about the perceptions of capitalists, officials and politicians than it does about actual syndicalist strength: it is significant that it was syndicalism, rather than classical Marxism, that was regarded as a threat to social order. It is also interesting to note that the key syndicalists were thought to be immigrants, indicating that the powerful saw the transnational and permeable character of the local working class as linking it into the "glorious period" internationally.

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[7] *The Strike Herald*, 25 June 1913, "Mr. Madeley's Speech"

Nonetheless, it was the SA Labour Party that was the main beneficiary of the unrest of 1913 and 1914, not the radicals: it captured the Transvaal Provincial Council in early 1914 in the provincial elections, securing an absolute majority, an achievement that led many in the party to anticipate the possibility of forming a government by the 1920s.

More significant, perhaps, for the history of anarchism and syndicalism was the *legacy* of the 1913 and 1914 struggles of White labour. The events of 1913 and 1914 radicalised a layer of activists in the SA Labour Party, and these activists subsequently played an important role in the War on War League and the International Socialist League: they included Andrews, S.P. Bunting and Ivon Jones. The dramatic events of these years, by radicalising a section of the SA Labour Party, laid the basis for the *revival* of syndicalism in later years – and played a central role in the formation of the International Socialist League.

With the outbreak of the First World War, the SA Labour Party initially adopted a radical anti-war position at the urging of the new radicals, but quickly changed its position as support for the war swept English Whites. This about-turn failed to prevent a resounding defeat by the South African Party in the 1915 general elections, and then the 1917 provincial elections, and cost a great deal of the party's limited Afrikaans support. It also led directly to a split in the party, as the anti-war minority organised a War on War League that linked up with the SDF (and also attracted to its ranks many veterans of the old IWW and Socialist Labour Party) and that initially tried to change party policy, before seceding to form the International Socialist League. Ironically, while Andrews, S.P. Bunting and Ivon Jones moved sharply left, Crawford and Mary Fitzgerald did the reverse, becoming orthodox White Labourites from 1914 onwards.

5.1. The United Socialist Party and the question of syndicalism

Following his disappointing performance as a candidate for the Socialist Party in the 1910 national elections in South Africa, Crawford left South Africa for a thirteen-month tour of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United States and Germany. During the tour, he made contact with a wide range of radicals, including both libertarian and political socialists.

In the United States, he visited Socialist Party of America groups, met with the editors of the *Appeal to Reason*, and conferred with party leaders, including Debs. He also addressed locals of the Chicago IWW on topics such as "Industrial Development in South Africa", "The Failure of Palliative Legislation in New Zealand", and "How the Australian Labour Party Smothers Strikes",[8] and visited the headquarters of the Chicago IWW.[9] In California, he met with William C. Owen, the California-based editor of the English-language section of the Mexican anarchist journal *Regeneración*, founded by the brothers Ricardo Flores Magón and Jesús Magón.[10]

In Germany Crawford met Kautsky and August Bebel of the SDP.[11] One of the last stops on Crawford's tour was the socialist unity conference in Manchester, England, on 30 September and 1 October

[8] *Solidarity*, 10 June 1911, "South African Editor in the West"; also see Philips, October 1976, *op cit.*
[9] Visser, 1987, *op cit*., pp. 243-244
[10] William C. Owen, 1913, "We Must Tear Down the Fences Monopoly has Raised", in Poole, editor, 1977, *op cit.*
[11] Visser, 1987, *op cit*., pp. 243-244

1911 that brought together *Clarion* groups, sections of the Independent Labour Party, and the Social Democratic Party to form the British Socialist Party, headed by Hyndman.[12]

Attendance at the founding of the British Socialist Party was the single most important moment in Crawford's entire trip. It reinforced his belief in the need for a radical socialist party, and it confirmed his view that his efforts to form a South African Socialist Federation at the end of 1909 had been an important step in this direction. He retained his dislike for moderate Labour Parties, and continued to believe that the formation of a principled socialist party was absolutely essential for the progress of the South African working class.

If Crawford remained influenced by syndicalism and impressed by the IWW, he continued to think as a political socialist. His views on the IWW were similar to those of Debs' pro-IWW group in the Socialist Party of America: "a single union upon the economic field" and "a single party upon the political field".[13] From such a perspective, the IWW was simply "one great revolutionary economic organisation" that corresponded to the "one great revolutionary political party",[14] with the union mobilising its "members in class array against their exploiters on election day to vote their own class into power".[15]

Crawford returned to South Africa in November 1911, and immediately resumed editorial duties at the *Voice of Labour*. His first editorial, on 24 November 1911, called for "immediate action to be taken to organise a United South African Socialist Party": "What say you Comrades?"[16] The same editorial added that he would now focus his efforts on "organisational work", devoting less time to "these columns". The elaboration of a detailed "platform" for the proposed "United South African Socialist Party" was also, he stressed, of secondary importance: the key task was to unite the different groups into one body. The next editorial called for "a little discussion" on the proposal "in our columns",[17] which seems to have borne fruit, because Crawford was able to announce that a socialist unity conference was to take place in Easter 1912.[18]

There is little evidence for the view that Crawford returned to South Africa "more convinced than ever that the IWW represented the most practical means of ending wage-slavery".[19] He remained supportive of the IWW, although he did not entirely agree with its politics.

While Crawford stated that he would not use the helm of the *Voice of Labour* to promote his brand of socialism,[20] he quickly moved to challenge local syndicalists. Crawford distinguished between the "Industrial Union method" of "Proletarian" and others, and his approach, which was shared with (he claimed) Anderson, Davidson, "Puff" (the South African correspondent of the *Clarion* and occasional contributor to the

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[12] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, p. 151
[13] Eugene V. Debs, [June 1905] 1972, "Speech at the Founding Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World", in Jean Y. Tussey, editor, 1972, *Eugene V. Debs Speaks*, Pathfinder Press, New York, p. 118
[14] Eugene V. Debs, [December 1905], "Industrial Unionism", in Tussey, editor, *op cit*., pp. 134, 144
[15] Eugene V. Debs, [November 1902] 1972, "The Western Labour Movement", in Tussey, 1972, editor, *op cit*., pp. 85, 87
[16] *The Voice of Labour*, 24 November 1911, "Back Again"
[17] *The Voice of Labour*, 1 December 1911, "Socialist Party Notes"
[18] *The Voice of Labour*, 19 January 1912, "A S.A. Socialist Party"
[19] See Philips, 1978, *op cit.*, p. 124.
[20] *The Voice of Labour*, 24 November 1911, "Our Policy"

Voice of Labour), and Greene in Pietermaritzburg, all "capable exponents" of the "Socialist Party organisation" and approach.[21]

Crawford reprinted with approval articles from the overseas press endorsing electoral action,[22] and challenged "Proletarian" and others to dispute the view that a Socialist Party "can function for a revolutionary working class".[23] The anarchists and syndicalists responded unevenly. Harrison in Cape Town was, of course, quite happy to work in a politically mixed socialist group, and did not, therefore, have any serious objections to Crawford's proposed new party, nor did he make the question of elections an issue of principle: he despised the State, but saw elections as providing opportunities for propaganda. The members of the Socialist Labour Party also seem to have believed that the proposed new party could serve their purposes, and quickly entered into discussions with Crawford. "Proletarian" continued to advocate syndicalism and oppose parliamentary action in the *Voice of Labour*,[24] but did not directly respond to Crawford.

Dunbar and Morant of the IWW, by contrast, were openly hostile to the proposed formation of the "United South African Socialist Party". Dunbar, having experienced the sectarianism of the far left on the Witwatersrand, and committed to the politics of the Chicago IWW, was deeply convinced that political parties were a positive danger to a syndicalist movement.[25] "There is", he argued in July 1911, "but one course open to those of us who are labouring to get the IWW on a sound footing, and that is to denounce all political parties".[26]

Dunbar suggested that the IWW should "attack all persons who are put up as Parliamentary candidates", "point out the futility of political action",[27] and have "no interest with any political party".[28] Morant complained about speakers who used the IWW platform to "break into politics and propose who we should, and who we should not have in Parliament and on the Municipal Council" as opposed to "IWW principles only".[29] Speaking at the Market Square, he stated frankly that the "IWW must attack the Socialist Party".[30]

Crawford had, however, several supporters in the IWW, including Anderson and Davidson, who moved against Dunbar and Morant: a heated political battle ensued. In September 1911, Dunbar reported

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[21] *The Voice of Labour*, 24 November 1911, "Our Policy" I would like to thank Jonathan Hyslop for the information on "Puff"
[22] See *inter alia*, Archibald Crawford, 12 January 1912, "The Georgetown Seat", *The Voice of Labour*; Archibald Crawford, 26 January 1912, "From the Watch Tower", *The Voice of Labour*; Archibald Crawford, 9 February 1912, "From the Watch Tower", *The Voice of Labour*
[23] Archibald Crawford, 2 February 1912, "The Burning Question", *The Voice of Labour*; Archibald Crawford, 16 February 1912, "The IWW's Augean [sic] Stable", *The Voice of Labour*
[24] See, for example, ""Our Special Representative", 2 February 1912, "Notes from the Cape Province", *The Voice of Labour*; "Proletarian", 9 February 1912, "How Labour is Robbed", *The Voice of Labour*; "Proletarian", 12 April 1912, "The General Strike a Safe Weapon", *The Voice of Labour*
[25] Andrew B. Dunbar, 21 July 1911, "IWW Notes", *The Voice of Labour*; Andrew B. Dunbar, 29 September 1911, "IWW Notes", *The Voice of Labour*
[26] Andrew B. Dunbar, 21 July 1911, "IWW Notes", *The Voice of Labour*
[27] Andrew B. Dunbar, 19 January 1912, "IWW and Politics", *The Voice of Labour*
[28] Andrew B. Dunbar, 29 September 1911, "IWW Notes", *The Voice of Labour*
[29] T. Morant, 15 September 1911, "Hooliganism", *The Voice of Labour*
[30] Andrew B. Dunbar, 19 January 1912, "IWW and Politics", *The Voice of Labour*

the defeat of "a certain few who call themselves Socialists" in their "attempt some little time ago to take the IWW management out of our hands".[31] By early 1912, the union was close to splitting,[32] but in January 1912 the pro-socialist party faction managed to pass a resolution "[t]hat the IWW instruct its speakers not to attack the Socialist Party unless such action should be decided upon at a specially summoned meeting of the organisation".[33]

This helped silence their opponents, and was followed by a *coup* within the IWW at its annual general meeting on 7 February 1912. A new union committee, made up of Anderson, as general secretary, Mary Fitzgerald as president, and a Mr. Boyd, treasurer, was elected.[34] Dunbar was then expelled for his "intemperate attacks on certain members of the IWW",[35] but he had "sinned mainly by standing out against renewed attempts to consolidate socialist groups in the country in a single party".[36] The *Voice of Labour* was designated the newspaper of the IWW in February 1912,[37] and, given the fight within the IWW, it must be supposed that this meant Dunbar was barred from the paper's columns. Morant also seems to have left the IWW at this stage.

Crawford crowed about his victory in an important article in the *Voice of Labour*, rather absurdly describing Dunbar's expulsion as the completion of a literally Herculean task: cleaning "The IWW's Augean [*sic*] Stable".[38] In his view, "anti-political action" in the IWW "ranks was pregnant with evil", and the activities Dunbar, the "anti-political and anti-S.P. agitator", were "intolerable and unprecedented in the history of the movement in South Africa".

Crawford's discussion made it quite clear that while he was pro-IWW, he was not actually a syndicalist. The IWW was only "anti-political" in the sense that it left political issues to a political party. It did not have any "political attitude because 'politics' is not its business … it does not attack political parties or concern itself with political action". It was simply a fighting union open to all workers, which concentrated on "industrial" issues";[39] politics was the work of the socialist party. The IWW's role was simply to unite all workers in One Big Union for direct economic action: "The IWW wants all wage-earners to join the Union whether they be Freemasons, R.A.O.B.'s, Good Templars, Suffragettes, Theosophists, Vegetarians, Christians, Atheists, Rationalists or Buddhists", so long as they supported the *"methods"* of direct union action on "economic" issues.[40]

A socialist party was essential to conduct "political action", and its "absolute corollary", parliamentary action.[41] Although the time had not yet arrived in South Africa for the "revolutionary working class" to "take parliamentary action", all "thinking industrialists" knew this to be inevitable and unavoidable.

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[31] Andrew B. Dunbar, 15 September 1911, "Industrial Union Propaganda", *The Voice of Labour,*
[32] Alfred Myers, 23 February 1912, "IWW Notes", *The Voice of Labour*. Myers was briefly the acting general secretary during the struggle within the IWW
[33] *The Voice of Labour*, 19 January 1912, "IWW and Politics"
[34] *The Voice of Labour*, 9 February 1912, "IWW (S.A. Section): Annual General Meeting: new officers elected"
[35] *The Voice of Labour*, 16 February 1912, "IWW: Dunbar expelled".
[36] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, p. 150
[37] *The Voice of Labour*, 16 February 1912, "IWW: Dunbar expelled"
[38] Archibald Crawford, 16 February 1912, "The IWW's Augean [sic] Stable", *The Voice of Labour*
[39] Archibald Crawford, 12 January 1912, "Why the IWW is Non-political", *The Voice of Labour*
[40] Archibald Crawford, 12 January 1912, "Why the IWW is Non-political", *The Voice of Labour*, my emphasis.
[41] Archibald Crawford, 16 February 1912, "The IWW's Augean [sic] Stable", *The Voice of Labour*

Possibly the IWW itself would "enter the parliamentary sphere as a strategic move, in the final and crowning effort of working class emancipation".

5.2. Crawford, Debs and Haywood: the IWW and "politics"

The same argument was repeated again and again. While the "proper proportion" of "political" and "industrial" methods could vary "with time and place",[42] "the time will and must come when the revolutionary working class *must* take parliamentary action".[43] Parliamentary action was not only necessary to win reforms but to abolish capitalism.[44] He was strongly supported by Dora Montefiore, whom he had met in Australia, and who arrived in South Africa in 1912 after a tour of Australia. Montefiore worked on the *Voice of Labour*, got involved in the Pretoria Socialist Society, and wrote articles defending Crawford's position.[45] Her writings reveal less the views of a "notable missionary of syndicalism", "converted to … IWW politics",[46] than the "impossibilism" of Crawford.

As evidence for his claims, Crawford created a picture of the IWW in the United States that was far from accurate. According to Crawford, Debs supported the IWW while IWW leader Haywood served on the Socialist Party of America's national executive,[47] and the party played a central role in supporting the IWW: for example, it organised solidarity for strikers jailed at Aberdeen in the United States.[48] It was "absurd" and a product of "characteristic ignorance" to think the IWW could exist without such a party: "only a Socialist Party made an IWW possible, and one cannot be strong while the other is weak".[49] The IWW lambasted some politicians – but only "certain self-seekers and opportunists, and their sophistication of the real Socialist philosophy", for the union was in favour of revolutionary parliamentary action.[50]

This claim was not exactly self-evident given that the IWW in South Africa had emerged in the absence of a strong local socialist party, and Crawford's claims about the American IWW were equally dubious. The Socialist Party of America had certainly been involved in the founding of the IWW in 1905, and Debs had strongly supported the new union, but the relationship between the two was far from the neat division of labour suggested by Crawford. Debs was not really a syndicalist, even if he sympathised with the IWW, and he represented a section of the Socialist Party of America that supported the IWW on the grounds that there should be a single union on the "economic field" to complement the Socialist Party of America on

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[42] Archibald Crawford, 24 November 1911, "Our Policy", *The Voice of Labour*. Also see Crawford, January 1911, "Capital and Labour: a short catechism", *op cit.,* pp. 413-4
[43] Archibald Crawford, 16 February 1912, "The IWW's Augean [sic] Stable", *The Voice of Labour*, emphasis in original
[44] Archibald Crawford, 9 February 1912, "From the Watch Tower", *The Voice of Labour*
[45] For example, Dora B. Montefiore, 8 March 1912, "Clearing the Way: the case for a United Socialist Party in South Africa", *The Voice of Labour*
[46] Hyslop, 2004, *op cit*., pp. 192-193
[47] Archibald Crawford, 16 February 1912, "The IWW's Augean [sic] Stable", *The Voice of Labour*
[48] Archibald Crawford, 1 March 1912, "From the Watch Tower, *The Voice of Labour*
[49] Archibald Crawford, 16 February 1912, "The IWW's Augean [sic] Stable", *The Voice of Labour*
[50] Archibald Crawford, 16 February 1912, "The IWW's Augean [sic] Stable", *The Voice of Labour*


SOCIALIST CONFERENCE AT JOHANNESBURG IN 1912

The above group was photographed by "Zadik" for the "International Socialist Review." The names, reading from left to right, are:—Back row: W. McNeill, C. H. Knowler, W. H. Harrison, W. Skevington and T. R. M. White. Front row: M. Manson, Dora B. Montefiore, H. Norrie, Mary Fitzgerald and A. Crawford.

Figure eleven: The founding of the United Socialist Party, Johannesburg, 1912

Source: Wilfred H. Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *Memoirs of a Socialist in South Africa 1903–47*, Stewart Printing, Cape Town, with foreword by Tommy Boydell, p. 37

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the "political field".[51] It was a "revolutionary economic organisation", even the "embryonic structure of the cooperative commonwealth", but it was also the counterpart to "one great revolutionary political party" that would deal with politics and capture the State.[52] Whatever Debs' hopes, the IWW was never allied to the Socialist Party of America, and, following the 1908 split in the IWW, the union formally rejected any alliance with a political party.

It is true that Haywood and other key figures in the Chicago IWW were members of the Socialist Party of America. It is important to note, however, that they were part of the extreme left of a highly diverse party, and represented a syndicalist faction that was quite different to the pro-IWW group in the party centred on Debs, as well as a moderate majority that tended towards social democracy. The syndicalists in the party "rejected an accommodation with Capitalism, flouted bourgeois law, and spoke of a republic of, by, and for workers",[53] were disinterested in elections, and saw the party as a means to promote socialist ideas,

[51] Eugene V. Debs, [June 1905] 1972, "Speech at the Founding Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World", in Jean Y. Tussey, editor, 1972, *Eugene V. Debs Speaks*, Pathfinder Press, New York, p. 118
[52] Eugene V. Debs, [December 1905], 1972, "Industrial Unionism", in Tussey, editor, *op cit*., pp. 132, 134, 144
[53] Dubofsky, 1987, *op cit*., p. 57

rather than a vehicle to capture the State. After 1908, the Chicago IWW never hinted at any sort of revolutionary parliamentary action, Crawford's claims.[54]

Rather than try to develop an alliance with the IWW, the majority in the Socialist Party of America were increasingly anxious to distance the party from the IWW. Relations between the syndicalist Haywood group and other factions in the Socialist Party of America were generally poor, and deteriorated quickly, particularly when the Chicago IWW denounced elections and became a target of media and government persecution.

Emboldened by a series of electoral victories, the party majority secured a resolution in December 1911 binding party members to oppose militant forms of direct action like sabotage, and to support elections. This resolution – which was not very different to Crawford's own views – was aimed at the IWW, and forced a confrontation within the party. Debs stood aside in the subsequent battles (as was his tendency in party struggles) and his pro-IWW position was marginalised.[55] In February 1913 Haywood was recalled from his position in the party executive for violating the resolution, and a purge of the "turbulent element", the syndicalist faction, began in full force.[56] (It is not accurate, then, so suggest that Haywood represented a "reformist" group in the IWW and "turned to politics".)[57]

It is possible that Crawford had wilfully misunderstood the relationship between the IWW and the Socialist Party of America, or that he had projected his dogma regarding the appropriate roles of unions and parties onto the American situation. Alternatively Crawford might have been misled by some of the people that he met in his American tour, or his tendency to associate with more radical socialists and unionists had given him a skewed perspective on the situation.

Whatever the reasons, Crawford's claims soon placed him in an unenviable and embarrassing position: Vincent St. John, general secretary of the Chicago IWW and an anarchist, fired off a letter to the *Voice of Labour* disputing his account of the American situation.[58] The letter, published in the paper, stated that "we do not care a particle how the S.P. stands on any question", and insisted that the Socialist Party of America in Aberdeen had played "no active part" in the IWW struggle in that town, while the national leadership had "knifed" it in the party press.

5.3. The fall of the IWW, and the disappearance of the Socialist Labour Party

With the defeat of Dunbar in the IWW, however, the formation of the United Socialist Party was almost a foregone conclusion. The founding meeting was held on 7 April 1912, Easter Sunday, at a conference convened by the Socialist Party in Johannesburg. Also present were representatives of Greene's Socialist Party from Pietermaritzburg, the SDF, a group from the Premier Mine, the Pretoria Socialist Society,

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[54] Archibald Crawford, 16 February 1912, "The IWW's Augean [sic] Stable", *The Voice of Labour*
[55] James P. Cannon, [1955] 1972, "E.V. Debs: the socialist movement of his time – its meaning for today", in Tussey, editor, 1972, *op cit*., pp. 25-28, 30-31
[56] Dubofsky, 1987, *op cit*., pp. 59-60; Foner, 1965, *op cit.*, pp.391-414; also see *The Voice of Labour*, 21 June 1912, "The IWW and the Socialist Party: Vincent St. John's attitude"
[57] Contra. Katz, 1976, *op cit*., p. 267
[58] *The Voice of Labour*, 21 June 1912, "The IWW and the Socialist Party: Vincent St. John's attitude"

the Social Democratic Party in Durban, and "unattached comrades".[59] The draft constitution advocated "the class war", with membership open to all socialists without discrimination as to race, sex, colour or creed".[60]

Socialist Labour Party members, consisting of "White, Barr and Alexander" were also present. Reportedly impressed with the proceedings,[61] they submitted a lengthy resolution that essentially required the new party to adopt the Socialist Labour Party platform in its entirety, including an endorsement of the Detroit IWW alone.[62] Davidson and Mary Fitzgerald represented the IWW, but the organisation was evidently seen as the union wing of the new party, rather than part of the party itself, and the IWW did not therefore participate in the discussions. Dora Montefiore, the British socialist, friend of Crawford, and later a key figure in the British Socialist Party, was also present, having arrived in South after a tour of Australia.

A draft constitution had been circulated ahead of the meeting, where it was slightly amended.[63] Both versions made it clear that the new party recognised the existence of the class struggle, and was open to all "without discrimination as to race, sex, colour or creed". The constitution adopted at the conference identified the party with the Labour and Socialist International,[64] and made provision for delegates sent to international meetings of that body. The "Policy and Principles" in the final constitution were vague enough to avoid causing offence to any group:[65]

> New times require new methods therefore the Socialist Party lays down no particular method of waging the war upon the capitalist system. Localities have not all reached the same stage of industrial development hence each locality must determine its own method …
>
> If the act helps class consciousness and educate for Revolution [*sic*] it is constitutional. If not it is unconstitutional.

With the exception of the "Policy and Principles", the constitution was "modelled after those of the American S.P.",[66] while Montefiore stressed that the push for unity was in line with the recommendations of the Stuttgart and Copenhagen conferences of the Labour and Socialist International.[67] Significantly, it was

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[59] Dora B. Montefiore, 12 April 1912, "Conference Influences", *The Voice of Labour*; also see *The Voice of Labour*, 12 April 1912, "Easter Conference of the United Socialist Party of South Africa"; Archibald Crawford, July 1912, "Socialist Party Progress in South Africa", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XIII

[60] Drew, 2002, *op cit*., p. 30

[61] Dora B. Montefiore, 12 April 1912, "Conference Influences", *The Voice of Labour*

[62] Archibald Crawford, July 1912, "Socialist Party Progress in South Africa", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XIII, p. 50

[63] *The Voice of Labour*, 22 March 1912, "The S.P. Constitution"

[64] "The Socialist Party is a worldwide organisation of the revolutionary working class…": *The Voice of Labour*, 12 April 1912, "The United Socialist Party of South Africa: constitution as emended at the conference"

[65] *The Voice of Labour*, 22 March 1912, "The S.P. Constitution"; the "Policy and Principles" were also reproduced in full in Archibald Crawford, July 1912, "Socialist Party Progress in South Africa", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XIII, pp. 49-50

[66] *The Voice of Labour*, 22 March 1912, "The S.P. Constitution"; Archibald Crawford, July 1912, "Socialist Party Progress in South Africa", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XIII, p. 49

[67] Dora B. Montefiore, 12 April 1912, "Conference Influences *The Voice of Labour*

decided that the party should try to send a delegate to the forthcoming congress of the Labour and Socialist International.[68]

With the founding of the United Socialist Party, the SDF, the Social Democratic Party of Durban, the Pietermaritzburg group, the Pretoria Socialist Society, and the Socialist Party in Johannesburg were supposed to become locals of the United Socialist Party.[69] The IWW continued to exist, although it was clearly regarded as the party's union wing, a situation that presumably applied to the Durban IWW as well as the union in Johannesburg. The Socialist Labour Party decided to hold their own conference, to discuss whether to join: following a general membership meeting on May 12, the Socialist Labour Party also dissolved to join the new organisation.[70]

The United Socialist Party was publicly launched on May Day.[71] The national executive was situated in Johannesburg, and included Anderson as treasurer, Barr of the Socialist Labour Party as chair, and Crawford as national secretary.[72] The *Voice of Labour* became the United Socialist Party's official organ in April, and was renamed *The Voice of Labour: organ of the United Socialist Party of South Africa.* With the exception of the continued appearance of materials from the *International Bulletin of the Syndicalist Movement*, syndicalist articles – so prevalent in 1910 and 1911 – largely disappeared.

The new party was not a success. The difficulty of maintaining unity amongst a wide range of groups and individuals soon became apparent, but the party's vague "Policies and Principles" made it very difficult to resolve problems of this sort. In June 1912, Webber, a party member and supporter of the Chicago IWW approach, was sent to Durban to meet the Durban IWW.[73] Webber was also meant to help Norrie's campaign as United Socialist Party candidate against Boydell of the SA Labour Party in a parliamentary by-election in the multi-racial Greyville area.[74] Montefiore was also in Durban, where she "spared no money or effort to help Norrie win the seat": "She had a most aggressive personality and was a very forceful platform speaker".[75]

However, Webber soon clashed with Norrie over the question of craft unions, and drew most of the blame (in the *Voice of Labour*) for Norrie's dismal results.[76] Webber also publicly debated Boydell during his visit on the topic of "Syndicalism versus Socialism" at the Durban Town Gardens before a large crowd, where he voiced his opposition to "political action" and "blood-curdling class war propaganda".[77] This apparently

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[68] Archibald Crawford, July 1912, "Socialist Party Progress in South Africa", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XIII, p. 50
[69] *The Voice of Labour*, 10 May 1912, "U.S.P. Notes"; *The Voice of Labour*, 17 May 1912, "U.S.P. Notes"
[70] *The Voice of Labour*, 10 May 1912, "U.S.P. Notes"; *The Voice of Labour*, 31 May 1912, "U.S.P. Notes"
[71] *The Voice of Labour*, 12 April 1912, "Easter Conference of the United Socialist Party of South Africa"; 26 April 1912, "The United S.P."
[72] *The Voice of Labour*, 12 April 1912, "Easter Conference of the United Socialist Party of South Africa"
[73] *The Voice of Labour*, 14 June 1912, "Heard and Said"
[74] *The Voice of Labour*, 31 May 1912, "The Greyville Fight: Norrie carries the U.S.P. flag"; on the election, see also Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., pp. 170-171
[75] Boydell, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit.*, p. xi
[76] *The Voice of Labour*, 14 June 1912, "Heard and Said"; *The Voice of Labour*, 21 June 1912, "Comrade Webber's Attitude"; *The Voice of Labour*, 28 June 1912, "Greyville"
[77] Boydell, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit.*, p. xii

proved something of an embarrassment to Norrie's circle,[78] but there was very little that they could do about it, given the nature of the United Socialist Party. It was probably because of these sorts of problems that most party activities tended to steer clear of anything in the way of contentious strategic and theoretical points.

Articles in the *Voice of Labour* and public talks in Johannesburg and Pretoria became increasingly centred on abstract issues of principle and criticisms of the SA Labour Party for being insufficiently revolutionary. In Johannesburg, there were public meetings at the Vaudette Hall on alternate Sunday evenings to discuss the Defence Bill,[79] "What a Socialist Party stands for",[80] "Motherhood and the State",[81] "The Class War",[82] "Reforms – are they possible or desirable?"[83] and "Was Jesus a Socialist?"[84]

Other talks were given by guest speakers, and included topics such as silicosis on the mines by a Doctor Aymard,[85] the "Rights and Duties" of individuals over the ages by a Mr L.W. Ritch,[86] the Defence Act by an Advocate Brink,[87] "The Principles and Ideals of the South African Labour Party" by Wybergh of the South African Labour Party,[88] and "South African political history, past and present" by mining magnate and prominent employer Sir Percy Fitzpatrick.[89] L.W. Ritch was a left-wing lawyer, with some involvement in cases where he represented African workers,[90] and was later associated with the International Socialist League.

Practical activities also placed a great deal of emphasis on overseas causes, perhaps because these were issues that avoided disputes in the party. The United Socialist Party protested the imprisonment of Mann in Britain in March 1912 and covered the case in the *Voice of Labour*.[91] Bowman, Mann, and several other activists were arrested after the publication of the famous "Don't Shoot" manifesto (more properly titled the "Open Letter to British Soldiers") in the British *Syndicalist*.

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[78] Boydell, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit.*, p. xii
[79] *The Voice of Labour*, 12 April 1912, "Socialist Party: Sunday evening lectures"
[80] Archibald Crawford, 17 May 1912, "At the Vaudette: What a Socialist Party Stands for", *The Voice of Labour*,
[81] *The Voice of Labour*, 24 May 1912, "U.S.P. Notes". This talk by Dora B. Montefiore of the Party was not given at the Vaudette, but at the Masonic Hall under the auspices of the Women's Reform Club.
[82] *The Voice of Labour*, 31 May 1912, "U.S.P. Notes"
[83] *The Voice of Labour*, 31 May 1912, "U.S.P. Notes"
[84] *The Voice of Labour*, 21 June 1912, "United Socialist party: Sunday Evening Lectures"
[85] *The Voice of Labour*, 24 May 1912, " At the Vaudette: Dr. Aymard on Miners' Phthisis"
[86] *The Voice of Labour*, 21 June 1912, "At the Vaudette: Mr. Ritch on 'Rights and Duties'". Ritch repeated these themes in a subsequent talk on "Unrest: its cause and cure". See *The Voice of Labour*, 12 October 1912, "Johannesburg: at the Vaudette"
[87] *The Voice of Labour*, 19 July 1912, "At the Vaudette: Advocate Brink on the Defence Act"
[88] *The Voice of Labour*, 18 October 1912, "At the Vaudette"
[89] *The Voice of Labour*, 13 September 1912, "Heard and Said" and "Editorial Notes"
[90] A letter from the manager of the Robinson Gold Mining Company to the secretary of the Native Recruiting Corporation, dated 24 February 1920, stated: "I beg to advise you that I summarily dismissed a native yesterday, No. 203/793799, and today I have received a letter of demand from L.W. Ritch, for £7.3.0 (principle £6.10.0, demand 6/6 and collection 6/6) for wrongful dismissal". The letter is included in the Native Recruiting Corporation file, "Native Strike February 1920", TEBA archives, Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit/ University of Johannesburg. TEBA was formed as a merger of WNLA and the Native Recruiting Corporation.
[91] *The Voice of Labour*, 24 May 1912, "Tom Mann's Imprisonment"; *The Voice of Labour*, 12 July 1912, "Tom Mann Resolution: Asquith acknowledges".

A classic statement of syndicalist anti-militarism, the manifesto was written by a syndicalist stonemason, Fred Bower, first published in Jim Larkin's *Irish Worker* in July 1911,[92] but became widely, if incorrectly, identified with Mann after his arrest in 1912. It called on soldiers to defy orders and support strikers:[93]

> Men! Comrades! Brothers!
>
> You are in the Army. So are we. You, in the army of Destruction. We, in the Industrial, or army of Construction …
>
> You are workingmen's sons. When we go on Strike to better our lot, which is the lot of Your Fathers, Mothers, Brothers and Sisters, you are called upon by your officers to murder US. Don't do it! …
>
> Don't disgrace Your Parents, Your Class, by being the willing tools any longer of the MASTER CLASS … Help US to win back BRITAIN for the BRITISH and the WORLD for the WORKERS.

The defendants received six months in jail, which was later reduced to two. The United Socialist Party also organised a public meeting to protest the murder trial of Joseph J. Ettor and Arturo Giovannitti of the United States IWW, who had been framed for murder in an attempt to break an IWW-led textile workers strike at Lawrence, Massachusetts.[94]

The IWW, meanwhile, withered away. The union had lost key figures such as Dunbar, Glynn and Morant, and little effort was made to consolidate or expand its activities. Although it was stated in February 1912 that the Sunday meetings at the Market Square would continue,[95] the meetings soon fell away. No union work was undertaken, and the Whittaker-Morant campaign, which continued to mid-1912, seems to have been the only IWW activity.

There were other problems. Articles in the *Voice of Labour* complained of apathy by the membership and slow growth.[96] The paper also ran into serious financial problems by May 1912; the format was changed in an attempt to cut costs and improve circulation. There were numerous appeals for donations by members

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[92] Holton, 1976, *op cit.*, pp. 114-116; Tsuzuki, 1991, *op cit*., pp. 160-161
[93] Quoted in Tsuzuki, 1991, *op cit*., p. 160
[94] *The Voice of Labour*, 8 November 1912, "At the Vaudette: Ettor-Giovannitti Protest"; *The Voice of Labour*, 8 November 1912, "Editorial Notes: Ettor and Giovannitti". Also see *The Voice of Labour*, 1 November 1912, "Ettor and Giovannitti"
[95] Alfred Myers, 23 February 1912, "IWW Notes", *The Voice of Labour*.
[96] *The Voice of Labour*, 19 July 1912, "U.S.P. Notes"; *The Voice of Labour*, 16 August 1912, "Editorial Notes"; *The Voice of Labour*, 13 September 1912, "U.S.P. Notes"

and supporters, who were called upon to do "their duty to their own press".[97] Little support was forthcoming, and Crawford complained:[98]

> At times we think the Socialists of South Africa do not want a paper to represent their interests. Certainly they do not deserve one.

Concerns about the lack of support given to the paper were repeated throughout the year, because "comrades seem to have forgotten" about the existence of the Press Fund that helped sustain the paper.[99]

The unity of the United Socialist Party was also largely nominal. While the constituent organisations were described as "locals", in practice they guarded their autonomy jealously. According to Harrison, "Each local group in the coastal towns and in Pretoria continued to function as before".[100] By May 1912, the Durban "local", the Social Democratic Party, complaining of being "governed by 'circulars'" issued by the executive in Johannesburg.[101] The Pretoria Socialist Society, on the other hand, simply ignored the executive. The SDF seceded in May,[102] taking away what was perhaps the strongest "local" in the party. For many "locals", in short, the United Socialist Party had proved, at best, irrelevant, and, at worst, an annoyance.

By the end of 1912, the United Socialist Party was collapsing. The Socialist Labour Party used the United Socialist Party platform to promote its views, regardless of opposition. Philip Roux, for example, spoke on "The Socialist Republic: how to establish it",[103] and a J. Campbell discussed "Why Socialists Must Fight the Labour Party".[104] In late 1912, the Socialist Labour Party was beginning to withdraw, and Roux resigned in November because "the U.S.P. believes in political reform whereas the emancipation of the working class can only be accomplished through their organisation on the industrial field".[105]

Exasperated by the "miserable assistance" given the Press Fund, and doubting whether "the revolutionary Socialists of South Africa deserve a paper like the *Voice*", Crawford decided to put the matter to a final test. [106] For "the next six weeks we will give comrades a chance to indicate exactly what their final answer is". The answer was clearly negative, and the *Voice of Labour* closed in December 1912 after five years of continuous publication, citing "financial difficulties" and the "almost criminal apathy" of the working class.[107]

By early 1913, Crawford's project lay in ruins. The party had collapsed, as had the IWW, the *Voice of Labour* was gone, and the SA Labour Party was stronger than ever. The Pretoria Socialist Society, the SDF

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[97] Archibald Crawford, 24 May 1912, "The 'Voice'", *The Voice of Labour*; also see *The Voice of Labour*, 7 June 1912, "Our Changed Form"
[98] Archibald Crawford, 24 May 1912, "The 'Voice'", *The Voice of Labour* "
[99] *The Voice of Labour*, 13 September 1912, "Voice Press Fund, 1912"
[100] Harrison, n.d., *op cit.*, p. 36: Cf. also the comments in *The Voice of Labour*, 13 September 1912, "U.S.P. Notes"
[101] *The Voice of Labour*, 24 May 1912, "U.S.P. Notes"
[102] *The Voice of Labour*, 31 May 1912, "U.S.P. Notes"; 13 September 1912, "U.S.P. Notes"
[103] *The Voice of Labour*, 14 June 1912, "At the Vaudette: comrade Roux's paper"
[104] *The Voice of Labour*, 15 November 1912, "U.S.P. Notes". It is not clear whether this was Jock or James Campbell.
[105] *The Voice of Labour*, 8 November 1912, "U.S.P. Notes"
[106] *The Voice of Labour*, 15 November 1912, "Press Fund, 1912"
[107] Katz, 1976, *op cit.*; Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, p. 141.

and the Social Democratic Party in Durban continued to function as before, while the abstract propaganda of the *Voice of Labour* and the groups in Johannesburg failed to draw in new recruits. The United Socialist party never came close to providing a serious challenge to the SA Labour Party.

The De Leonists apparently subsequently infiltrated the SA Labour Party, organised as a tendency, "a small group of extremists", within that body.[108] The Social Democratic Party in Durban, the Socialist Party in Pietermaritzburg, and the Pretoria Socialist Society all continued to operate in the 1910s, but they were marginal to developments in the decade. The SDF, having briefly adhered to the United Socialist Party, broke away to continue its traditional activities in Cape Town. It, alone, of the successors of the United Socialist Party, played an important role, and was, from the collapse of the United Socialist Party to the formation of the International Socialist League in September 1915, the most important local socialist group.

In 1914, Philip Roux reappeared as secretary of SA Labour Party's Bezuidenhout Valley branch. Crawford and Mary Fitzgerald, on the other hand, were clearly disheartened by the situation, but made one last attempt to reconstitute a Socialist Party towards the end of the 1913 general strike. Sometime afterwards both moved into the heartland of mainstream White labour, and renounced their radical past.

5.4. The general strikes of 1913 and 1914, syndicalists, and the *Strike Herald*

The collapse of the United Socialist Party, the IWW and the *Voice of Labour* took place on the eve of "the greatest industrial struggle in South African history"[109] before the 1922 Rand Revolt. The general strike of 1913 began over relatively minor grievances.[110] On 1 May 1913, one Edward Hensley Bulman was appointed at the New Kleinfontein Mine at Benoni. His appointment was, according to Francis Chaplin, head of Consolidated Goldfields, specifically meant to "'cleanse the stable'" at the mine, regarded as a "hotbed of 'Labour'" and a stronghold of the Transvaal Miners' Association.[111]

Bulman's first act was to change the working hours of the underground mechanics: previously the men had worked eight-and-a-half hours daily, and five-and-a-half hours on Saturday, but Bulman decided to impose an eight hour shift on weekdays, as well as an eight hour shift on Saturday.[112] When the underground mechanics, members of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, refused to accept the new working hours, they were dismissed and replaced by five non-union men. Two surface mechanics, and David McKerrel, a socialist and Transvaal Miners' Association militant active in the SA Labour Party, then resigned in sympathy.

Negotiations with management proved fruitless, and the Transvaal Federation of Trade Unions became involved, setting up a ten-man Benoni strike committee. The Amalgamated Society of Engineers and

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[108] See Eddie Roux and Win Roux, 1970, *op cit.*, p. 8
[109] "Hobo", September 1913, "The Iron Heel in South Africa", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XIV, p. 141
[110] The subsequent discussion of the general strikes of 1913 and 1914 is, unless otherwise stated, drawn from Central News Agency, 1913, *Strike Album: Johannesburg, July, 1913*, Central News Agency, Johannesburg, from the strike collection, box 69, Trade Union Library and Education Centre, Cape Town; Cope, Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 130-16; Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., pp. 175-214; Hirson, with Williams, 1995, *op cit.,* pp. 118-23; Hyslop, 2004, *op cit*., pp. 199-228; Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit.*, p. 32; and, above all, the superlative account provided by Katz, 1976, *op cit.*, pp. 381-446
[111] Cited in Katz, 1976, *op cit.*, p. 382
[112] George H. Kendall, 25 June 1913, "The Story of the Strike", *The Strike Herald*

the Transvaal Miners' Association – the largest and most influential of the nine unions affiliated to the federation – played a central role in the strike committee. The Amalgamated Society of Engineers, formed in 1894, was one of the strongest unions in South Africa, obtained its own South African Council in 1906, and claimed 1,351 members in 1910.[113] The Transvaal Miners' Association had only 300 members before the 1907 general strike on the mines,[114] following which it grew rapidly, reaching 800 members by 1909 and 1,000 by 1913.[115]

Harry W. Haynes, a militant in the Transvaal Miners' Association who later joined the Social Democratic Party in Durban, chaired the Benoni strike committee. Other members included Bain, then working as an organiser for the Transvaal Federation of Trade Unions, Thomas Tole, the vice-president of the federation, David Kendall of the Transvaal Miners' Association,[116] who was a socialist with some links to Crawford, Waterston, the organising secretary of the South African Engine Drivers' and Firemen's Association and an SA Labour Party town councillor in Boksburg, and George W. Mason of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners.

The South African Engine Drivers' and Firemen's Association was not, in fact, an affiliate of the Transvaal Federation of Trade Unions, and had little history of engaging in struggles alongside other unions: its participation in the committee was widely regarded as an important moment in the cause of labour unity, and also meant that the strategically crucial workers who ran the hoist cages on the mines would join a strike.[117] In practice, its support for the strike was far from solid.[118]

Mason was born in Durham, England, to a family of coal miners; at some point in South Africa he became a "staunch syndicalist".[119] He trained as a carpenter, coming out to South Africa where he joined the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners. The union – which had an important SDF contingent in Cape Town, including Harrison – was one of the oldest in South Africa. It was formed in 1881 as a branch of a British union, a craft union for skilled woodworkers, was later renamed the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers, and only obtained its own governing council in 1926.[120] Mason worked on the gold mines, considered himself a socialist, joined the SA Labour Party, became chair of its Commissioner Street branch in downtown Johannesburg, and worked briefly as an organiser for the Transvaal Federation of Trade Unions.

At two mass meetings at the mine premises on Sunday, May 25, resolutions were passed n favour of a strike to demand the reinstatement of the dismissed workers, and a return to the old working hours. Ballots within each union confirmed the resolutions. By Monday afternoon, most White workers at New Kleinfontein were on strike. Daily mass meetings and pickets were organised on the days that followed, but,

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[113] Katz, 1976, *op cit.*, p. 176, 252; also see Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 22-3
[114] Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., pp. 40-41; Visser, 2001a, *op cit*., pp. 9-10; Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., pp. 4-5, 22-3
[115] Katz, 1976, *op cit.*, p. 176, 252
[116] Not to be confused with a George H. Kendall, an organiser for the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, who was also active in the 1913 struggles: see, for example, George H. Kendall, 25 June 1913, "The Story of the Strike", *The Strike Herald*
[117] James T. Bain, 25 June 1913, "Phases of the Strike", *The Strike Herald*
[118] See, for instance, *The Strike Herald*, 2 July 1913, "Monday's Outing"
[119] Biographical details are drawn from Gitsham and Trembath, 1926, *op cit*., p. 171; Katz, 1976, *op cit*., pp. 228, 265, 267, 387, 398; Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., p. 159
[120] Gitsham and Trembath, 1926, *op cit*., pp. 70-71

while the mine management was willing to make some concessions, it refused on principle to meet the Benoni strike committee.

Management was probably shocked by the unexpected solidarity of the workers in a dispute arising initially out of small changes in the shift system, [121] and increasingly concerned that entering into direct negotiations with union representatives – a rare occurrence indeed – would set a grave precedent for the mining industry, a view strongly supported by the Chamber of Mines. In this context, the focus of the strike increasingly shifted to a new issue, union recognition, and it is clear that the strike committee hoped the strike would secure recognition for the unions. Many strikers were far from radical, wishing to have a forum to raise grievances and reach agreements acceptable to both employees and management – but the hardline, and confrontational, position of management quickly raised tensions.

The refusal to meet union representatives was followed, in the second week of the strike at New Kleinfontein, by an announcement on Friday 6 June that the mine would be reopened on the coming Wednesday, with strike-breakers if necessary. On the Tuesday a secret ballot amongst the strikers showed that two-thirds favoured continuing the strike in a fight to the finish. On the Wednesday, the strikers stayed out, and pickets assaulted scabs and recruiters at New Kleinfontein. Attempts were also made to initiate boycotts against firms supplying the company owning New Kleinfontein.

A special meeting of the Transvaal Federation of Trades on June 15 resolved on a general strike across the Witwatersrand if the dispute remained unresolved, and efforts started to be made to spread the strike to other mines. The issue of recognition was clearly one that won widespread sympathy and solidarity amongst trade unionists.

At the same time, the influence of more moderate union leaders was on the wane, and leadership of the strike passed to more radical militant figures, and to the Benoni strike committee, which increasingly acted independently of the Transvaal Federation of Trade Unions. Crawford and Mary Fitzgerald – both popular speakers at strike meetings – began to play a central role – as did Mason and Waterston – and the Benoni strike committee started setting the pace of the movement.

On June 16, the Transvaal Federation of Trade Unions asked White workers at the nearby Van Ryn Estates Mine to strike in solidarity, but lost the strike ballot amongst the underground miners. Crawford, joined by Mason and Tole, now came to the fore. Suggesting that all who did not support the strike were scabs, Crawford asked all the "scabs" to raise their hands or leave the meeting: none did so, and it was therefore held that the decision to strike was unanimous.[122] Similar methods were used to induce a strike at the New Modderfield Gold Mine three days later,[123] and became a general pattern.[124]

Women, too, became prominent in the growing strike movement, although few were union members or industrial workers: "Woe to the man who dare vote to scab in their presence and their scornful

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[121] Campbell and Munro, 1913, *op cit.*, p. 7

[122] *The Strike Herald*, 21 June 1913, "How the Van Ryn Came Out"; also see Central news Agency, 1913, *op cit*., pp. 8, 10

[123] *The Strike Herald*, 21 June 1913, "Modderfontein's Answer!!"

[124] Campbell and Munro, 1913, *op cit.*, p. 9: "The decisive action of the Van Ryn and Modder B mines, coming our in sympathy with their fellows at Kleinfontein, swept all balloting to one side".

jeers at the policemen must make those gentlemen think".[125] An unnamed "woman with the Red Flag", for example, helped push the strike decision through at the Van Ryn Estates.[126]

Another important development, and an important shift from the situation in 1907, was the presence of Afrikaner miners and railwaymen, many not actually union members.[127] Strike leaders welcomed this incipient unity across one of the many divisions in the South African working class. Bain, for example, told a cheering rally at the Grand Theatre, a cinema in Benoni used as the strike headquarters: "This was a great struggle, and had done more to cement the friendship between Briton and Boer than all the efforts of their statesmen (Applause)".[128]

The State's initial response was similar to that employed during the May 1911 tramway strike in Johannesburg: extra police were drafted into Benoni to maintain order, five strike leaders were arrested on June 20 for violating the Industrial Disputes Act, police clashed with a crowd that marched on the jail, and Act 6 of 1894 was invoked to ban gatherings of more than six people. Attacks on scabs also led to numerous arrests for assault and for public violence. During the course of the strike, most of the key figures involved in the strike would be arrested several times. The State otherwise stayed out of attempts to resolve the dispute, while the employers refused to make concessions.

On the night of Friday June 20, the "good old Tram Strike days were recalled" when a crowd, "singing the 'Red Flag' and cheering the men who are incarcerated' clashed with mounted police in Benoni.[129] The next morning, several strike leaders appeared in court in Benoni, including Bain, J. Forrester Brown, David Kendall, Mason, Tole, Waterston, and D. Dingwall.[130] Brown was born in Australia, played an active role in the Transvaal Miners' Association, and served as general secretary of the South African Mine Workers' Union from 1916 to 1922.[131] They were greeted by "hearty demonstrations" and "cheered lustily".

Later that day perhaps 1,000 protestors were roaming the streets of Benoni, and the strike committee had become a formidable power in the town, its headquarters a rival to those of the municipality. The headquarters lowered the Union Jack and raised a red flag at the Grand Theatre, and red rosettes and flags became a common symbol amongst the crowds of the crowds of strikers and their families; at least one soldier was also spotted wearing a rosette in solidarity.[132]

The first edition of the *Strike Herald* appeared at this time: produced on behalf of the Transvaal Federation of Trade Unions, it was edited by Crawford, and printed at the Modern Press, coming out on Wednesdays and Saturdays as an alternative to the "Capitalist Press".[133] It was, from the start, the

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[125] *The Strike Herald*, 21 June 1913, "Modderfontein's Answer!!"; also see James T. Bain, 25 June 1913, "Strike Notes", *The Strike Herald*
[126] James T. Bain, 25 June 1913, "Phases of the Strike", *The Strike Herald*
[127] Campbell and Munro, 1913, *op cit.*, pp. 25-6
[128] *The Strike Herald*, 25 June 1913, "Strike Meetings"
[129] Mary Fitzgerald, 21 June 1913, "With the Mob at Benoni", *The Strike Herald*
[130] *The Strike Herald*, 21 June, 1913, "'Agitators' in Court"
[131] Gitsham and Trembath, 1926, *op cit.*, p. 159.
[132] *The Strike Herald*, 2 July 1913, "People Say"
[133] Archibald Crawford, 21 June 1913, "Foreword", *The Strike Herald*

mouthpiece of the militants. Within the SA Labour Party, a radical "committee of five" issued a "secret bulletin" that set out the strikers' case.[134]

The first *Strike Herald* reported that unions elsewhere in the country were coming out in support of the strike, reported with approval on clashes with police,[135] incidents in which a number of scabs – and Bulman himself – were "severely mauled"[136] or "wounded".[137] Such reports, describing violent attacks with an undoubted relish, would become regular features of the paper, as was the practice of printing a list of scabs (complete with addresses or places of work, where known).[138]

On Saturday June 28, a meeting of the Transvaal Federation of Trade Unions executive reaffirmed the decision to call a general strike, instructing affiliates to ballot their members by July 10 for a general strike on July 14. The Benoni strike committee circumvented this process, however, organising a mass meeting at the Market Square in Benoni on the Sunday afternoon. A strike committee circular, signed by Bain and issued on the 24th, had advised workers to "come armed" to prevent police disruption.[139] The meeting was claimed by strike leaders to have attracted between 7,000 and 8,000 workers, and speeches were delivered simultaneously from three separate platforms.[140] Police were jostled, and that night, another meeting, addressed by Brown, Haynes, Mason and others, supported a resolution by Waterston to start bringing out the workers at the nearby mines from the following morning.[141]

On the morning of Monday June 30, a procession of strikers went from mine to mine in nearby Brakpan, sweeping the White workers on the mines into action without holding ballots. A Strike Governing Board was established in place of the original Benoni strike committee. The executive of the Transvaal Miners' Association then declared a general strike of its members on the mines, while the Transvaal Federation of Trade Unions executive moved the date of the proposed general strike up to Friday July 4.

A specific appeal called "Africanders! Do not Scab!" was issued by the start of July, written by a "fellow-Africander", obviously with the events of the 1907 strike in mind: "Our common enemy this time is not the Zulu [!], but Capitalism, which is as ruthless as death, and spares neither man, woman or child".[142] On the other hand, the great majority of speeches given during the strike were in English, as was the *Strike Herald*: at least one Afrikaans reader wrote in suggesting that more effort be made to reach the "Dutch

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[134] See Eddie Roux, 29 May 1936, "S.P. Bunting", *Forward*, p. 5. This is available as a press clipping in the S.P. Bunting Papers, held in the Historical Papers, A 949, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand. The *Forward* was a leftwing weekly produced by Gabriel Weinstock, a one-time International Socialist League member who rejoined the South African Labour Party where he became a leading figure in its leftwing.
[135] Mary Fitzgerald, 21 June 1913, "With the Mob at Benoni", *The Strike Herald*
[136] *The Strike Herald*, 21 June 1913, "Scabs and their Patrons have a Warm Time"
[137] *The Strike Herald*, 21 June 1913, "The Waterston Case"
[138] James T. Bain, 21 June 1913, "Kleinfontein SCAB List", *The Strike Herald.* For later examples, see Mary Fitzgerald, 25 June 1913, "Lively Times", *The Strike Herald*; *The Strike Herald*, 25 June 1913, "Strike News: mob wins out: police give up prisoners"; *The Strike Herald*, 25 June 1913, "The Story of a Motor-Car"; *The Strike Herald*, 25 June 1913, "The Story of a 'Scab'"; *The Strike Herald*, 25 June 1913, "Handling the 'Scabs'"
[139] James T. Bain, [24 June 1913] 1961, "Appendix A: the 'Come Armed' circular", in Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit.*, p. 340
[140] See *The Strike Herald*, 2 July 1913, "Sunday's Monster Demonstration" and *The Strike Herald*, 2 July 1913, "Exciting Incidents"
[141] *The Strike Herald*, 2 July 1913, "Sunday Night at the Grand"
[142] *The Strike Herald*, 2 July, "Africanders! Do not Scab!"

fellow-workers".[143] The letter was itself translated into English for publication, and Crawford responded defensively: it should be possible to "publish in two languages" when "our Dutch fellows can produce a Dutch-speaking [*sic*] editor who is prepared to devote the time and make the sacrifices of the present English staff".

Members of the Strike Governing Board, effectively independent of the Transvaal Federation of Trade Unions, quickly claimed leadership of the general strike.[144] Even before the start of the official strike, independent efforts were being made to develop the spreading strike in a full general strike.[145] By July 2, 4,800 White workers had come out on the mines, and the strike wave was spreading to the West Rand as groups of activists, notably Mary Fitzgerald, went from mine to mine to call the workers out.[146]

On Friday July 4, 18,000 workers were on strike, as every Transvaal Federation of Trade Unions affiliate voted in favour of the general strike. The Transvaal Federation of Trade Unions received messages of support from the NURHAS, and railway workers at the railway workshops in Braamfontein, Johannesburg, and at Germiston, went on strike in defiance of the Railways and Harbours Service Act.

Trainloads of strikers and their families flocked into Johannesburg, gathering at the Market Square. The chief magistrate of Johannesburg then banned a mass meeting minutes before it was meant to begin, using Act 6 of 1894, and the crowd of perhaps 10,000 was dispersed by police and soldiers, many mounted, and armed with batons, pick handles or swords. [147]

The crowd broke up: marches were held, the trams were blocked, the men at the power station were brought out and the trains stopped. Mary Fitzgerald was reported as calling on the protestors to "be men, not to run away as they did on the Market-square that afternoon": "Get guns and ammunition and come along". [148] There were a number of violent clashes with police, and crowds burnt down the offices of the *Star* newspaper, widely seen as supportive of the mine owners, and a large part of the Park railway station, accidentally killing an African watchman, and also made an attack on the Corner House, the offices of Wernher, Beit and Eckstein.[149] The latter was halted by police fire, killing at least one person, a commercial traveller.[150]

A number of gun shops were looted during the evening, several strikers reportedly brandished guns at the police[151] or advocated their use, and there were several incidents of sniping and the exchange of fire between patrolling police and troops and the crowds,[152] which now also included a fair component of the

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[143] *The Strike Herald*, 31 July 1913, "Correspondence", letter from D. Simpson
[144] This is clear, for instance, from the speeches given on the eve of the general strike: *The Strike Herald*, 2 July 1913, "Sunday at the Savoy" and *The Strike Herald*, 2 July 1913, "Sunday Night at the Grand"
[145] For example, *The Strike Herald*, 2 July 1913, "Boksburg District"; *The Strike Herald*, 2 July 1913, "Marching to Victory"; *The Strike Herald*, 2 July 1913, "The General Strike"; *The Strike Herald*, 2 July 1913, "The Speeches"
[146] *The Strike Herald*, 2 July 1913, "West Rand: out at Krughersdorp [sic]"
[147] Striking photographs of the scene may be found in Central News Agency, 1913, *op cit.*, pp. 7, 9, 11
[148] *The Strike Herald*, 28 July 1913, "Trial of Mrs. Fitzgerald, A. Crawford and T.W. Ward"
[149] *The Strike Herald*, 28 July 1913, "Trial of Mrs. Fitzgerald, A. Crawford and T.W. Ward"; *The Strike Herald*, 31 July 1913, "The Disturbances Commission: incidents on the 4th"; *The Strike Herald*, 2 August 1913, "The Disturbances Commission: the shooting on the 4th"
[150] Campbell and Munro, 1913, *op cit*., p. 13; Central News Agency, 1913, *op cit*., p. 16
[151] *The Strike Herald*, 31 July 1913, "The Disturbances Commission: incidents on the 4th"
[152] Campbell and Munro, 1913, *op cit*., p. 13; Central News Agency, 1913, *op cit*., pp. 14, 16-18, 20

unemployed, Afrikaner poor Whites and even some "coloured men".[153] On Saturday, 1,000 power station workers across the Witwatersrand joined the action. By this stage, with the exception of a minimal work force on the mines to prevent flooding, and a small force of power station workers in Germiston and Johannesburg who supplied water and lights to the residential areas, the majority of the White workforce was on strike; even the shops in Johannesburg were closed. Violence continued as the crowd gathered around the exclusive Rand Club. It had been rumoured that several members had fired on crowds the previous night, and the situation was tense. Tragedy then occurred:[154]

> Outside the Rand Club, which symbolised the luxury and callousness of the capitalists, small crowds gathered. A number of the more stupid club members stood on the balcony and jeered at the people, snapping their fingers at them. The situation became ugly. A few stones were thrown, and an attack was made on the club entrance. The street was cleared by dragoons. The crowd raided a bread-cart and pelted the troopers with loaves.
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> After patrolling the streets for some time, the dragoons were ordered to dismount. They formed a square on the corner of Loveday and Commissioner Streets, and began to pour volleys into the crowd. Scores fell, killed or wounded. From the windows and roof of the Rand Club, a number of unscrupulous members joined in the firing and accounted for a number of casualties.
>
> The fury and dismay of the crowd knew no bounds. Only a few carried hip-pocket pistols, as was common on the Rand at the time, and they tried to fire back, ineffectually. But the great majority were peacefully inclined and unarmed, and many had nothing to do with the industrial struggle…
>
> As the volleys died down a rough dray was driven up. The dead lying stretched on the pavements were reverently laid on it. A red flag was draped over them, and a small procession moved off to the heart-rending strains of the people's song – The Red Flag.

In addition to the wounded, including a young boy selling the *Strike Herald*, up to twenty-five people, including bystanders (and, according to some accounts, a doctor tending the wounded), were killed,[155] "a Black Saturday indeed".[156] The shootings received worldwide publicity, including the IWW press,[157] and the fact that Imperial troops were used led to questions in the British parliament.[158]

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[153] Cited in Kennedy, 1984, *op cit.*, p. 85. Also see Katz, 1976, *op cit.*, p. 418

[154] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 138-9; also see *The Strike Herald*, 2 August 1913, "The Disturbances Commission: the shooting on the 4th"; Central News Agency, 1913, *op cit*., pp. 18-20

[155] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 141; also see John J. Ware, 2 August 1913, "Victims of the Shooting: record of women and children shot in Johannesburg during the strike", *The Strike Herald* and Central News Agency, 1913, *op cit*., p. 28 for incomplete lists of the dead and wounded.

By this stage, large parts of Johannesburg were under the effective control of the strikers. The situation was clear to Smuts:[159]

> … the police and imperial troops informed us that that the mob was beyond their control, and that if quiet was not immediately restored, anything might happen in Johannesburg that night: the town might be sacked, the mines permanently ruined. We were not in a position to think of our own feelings.

Smuts, accompanied by Prime Minister Botha, drove to the Carlton Hotel on Eloff Street through hostile crowds to meet the Strike Governing Board. The situation was tense: the ministers' military guards jostled some of the strikers, and Matthews later claimed that at least two strike leaders had guns at the ready when meeting Botha and Smuts.[160] Subsequently they also met two representatives of the Chamber of Mines, Chaplin and Sir George Farrar, and convinced them to compromise. The fact that the State had lost control of the situation proved decisive in convincing the magnates of the need to reach some sort of settlement.[161]

On Sunday July 6, Botha and Smuts signed an agreement with Bain, Andrew Watson of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners,[162] Matthews of the Transvaal Miners' Association, and James Hindman. Smuts later claimed that putting a signature to a document with Bain was the most difficult action in his life.[163] The agreement reinstated all strikers, made the government liable for the compensation of strike-breakers and the dependants of men killed or maimed in the violence, and committed the government to investigate any instances of victimisation and to ensure that strikers prosecuted under the Industrial Disputes Act were sympathetically handled.[164] A commission of enquiry was also to be established to investigate White workers' grievances.

If the strikers could see themselves, against the backdrop of the drama of the 1913 Dublin Lockout, as at "the forefront of a global labour upheaval",[165] however, they had, in fact, been outmanoeuvred at the eleventh hour. Smuts had skilfully snatched victory from the jaws of defeat. The issues of union recognition and working hours were not resolved, and there was no guarantee that the State would, in fact, hold the commission of enquiry – or, if it did, that any good would come of it. The Chamber of Mines was also not a signatory to the agreement, although its members agreed to reinstate strikers. Crawford and Mary Fitzgerald immediately criticised the agreement, and organised mass meetings that resolved to continue the strike, but nothing came of these decisions, perhaps because their support was increasingly concentrated amongst the

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[156] Campbell and Munro, 1913, *op cit*., p. 15
[157] For example, the American IWW paper, *Industrial Solidarity*, 1 November 1913, "The Rand Slaughter"
[158] *The Strike Herald*, 2 August 1913, "Use of Troops"; *The Strike Herald*, 2 August 1913, "British Labour Party and the Imperial Troops"
[159] Sarah Gertrude Millin, 1936, *General Smuts*, Faber and Faber, London, p. 282
[160] Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., pp. 36-7
[161] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 139
[162] Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., pp. 296-7
[163] Smuts, 1914, *op cit*., p. 11; also see Boydell, n.d., *op cit*., p.74; Millin, 1936, *op cit.,* p. 282
[164] The full agreement is reproduced in Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit.*, p. 37
[165] Hyslop, 2004, *op cit*., p. 225

non-unionised workers.[166] Crawford and Mary Fitzgerald were arrested later in the week alongside one Thomas A. Ward, and charged with public violence in connection with the riots in Johannesburg,[167] although the prosecution was not ultimately successful.

A mass funeral on Monday for Saturday's victims was attended by perhaps 70,000 people.[168] Cards circulated around this time, marked on one side "In Disgraceful Memory of the BRITISH DRAGOONS AND POLICE in their Terrible Encounter with a few Unarmed Miners, Women and Children", included a poem on the reverse:[169]

> Arouse ye workmen of Africa howl down the Government bear,
> Who with its loyal military crept forth from its lair.
> Who nervous with excitement, afraid to meet its foe,
> Crept into poor old Jo'burg, their valour for to show.
> Attacked a crowd of working men, whose crime was but free speech,
> And won a glorious victory which made all the natives reach.
> But we'll show them in South Africa our rights we mean to have,
> The Flag that is so dear to us has but one colour … Red.

Crawford, Mary Fitzgerald and others appeared on a cart covered with red flag and the legend "In memory of our martyrs who were foully murdered in cold blood by the capitalist class".[170] It was signed "From the Socialist Party", indicating that Crawford had recently reconstituted his group; that the party was absent from earlier events indicates that this had only taken place towards the end of the general strike. It came somewhat late, for the general strike effectively ended that same day.

The strike inspired a wave of labour activity amongst both Africans and Whites. Directly after the 1913 general strike, there was a wave of strikes by African mineworkers,[171] involving an estimated 9,000 people over three days.[172] These were at least partially inspired by the activities of White labour. Already in June the Native Recruiting Corporation had worried about the "effect" of the "lawless state of affairs" in Benoni on the Africans, who, it claimed, had made moves to form a South African Native Labour Association.[173]

There is no record of this body, but an article later that year in *Ilanga Lase Natal* ("Sun of Natal") – edited by Josiah Gumede, the secretary of the Natal Native Congress – suggesting that Africans emulate the

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[166] Campbell and Munro, 1913, *op cit*., p. 17; Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 140-142; Hyslop, 2004, *op cit*., pp. 222-224; Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, pp. 158-9; Thomas, 1963, *op cit*., p. 44
[167] *The Strike Herald*, 28 July 1913, "Trial of Mrs. Fitzgerald, A. Crawford and T.W. Ward"
[168] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 142
[169] Card in folder 1.2, W.H. Andrews Papers, Mayibuye Centre, University of the Western Cape
[170] *The Strike Herald*, 28 July 1913, "Trial of Mrs. Fitzgerald, A. Crawford and T.W. Ward". This cart seems to be the subject of the photo, bottom right in the Central News Agency, 1913, *op cit*., p. 27
[171] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 142-3; Katz, 1976, *op cit.*, p. 425
[172] Bonner, 1979, *op cit*., p. 274
[173] Harold Villiers, 20 June 1913, letter to director of the Government Native Labour Bureau, in "Strike on New Kleinfontein, Status of Native Labourers", Government Native Labour Bureau, GNLB 109 1238/13, National Archives, Pretoria

Indian passive resisters and strike[174] was believed by officials to have been influenced by events on the Witwatersrand. The Natal Native Congress was the provincial section of the South African Native Congress; Gumede was a typical Congress moderate, and it is perhaps telling that he took so unusually militant a position in 1913.

The State acted quickly against the African strikers. At New Kleinfontein, Africans were forced back to work by "bayonet and rifle-butt".[175] There were violent clashes at the Village Main Reef Mine between police and Africans on July 8 where mounted police encountered "several hundreds of natives armed with stones, bottles, clubs, hand axes, bars of iron and mining tools".[176] The police were victorious and the strikers were defeated.

Meanwhile, the NURHAS grew rapidly, rising to 6,000 in the week after the 1913 general strike,[177] and possibly reaching 9,000 members by the start of 1914, out of around 50,000 railway workers.[178] During 1913, the NURHAS members were involved in several protest strikes at the State railway workshops in Durban and Pretoria,[179] actions that violated the ban on strikes in the State sector. The growth of the NURHAS made it nearly as large as the whole Transvaal Federation of Trade Unions, which meant that the labour movement nearly doubled in size in this period. The two union bodies also formed an alliance in 1913, and worked on a list of demands, sometimes known as the long list of demands, sometimes known as the "Workers' Charter", to be presented to the State.[180] A delegation from the Transvaal Federation of Trade Unions presented the Workers' Charter to Botha and Smuts in Pretoria on July 22. Its demands included the repeal of Act Number 6 of 1894 and the Industrial Disputes Prevention Act, reforms in working conditions and wages for White workers, official recognition of the NURHAS and the removal of restrictions on the political and union affiliations of railway workers, and "the prohibition of all imported contract labour".[181]

While the demands of the Transvaal Federation of Trade Unions were implicitly (often explicitly) restricted to White labour, the job colour and segregation were noticeable by their absence in the Charter.

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[174] Translated excerpt from *Ilanga Lase Natal* from the 13th June 1913, "A War of Strike", in "Strike on New Kleinfontein, Status of Native Labourers", Government Native Labour Bureau, GNLB 109 1238/13, National Archives, Pretoria

[175] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 142-3

[176] Statement by Police Sergeant M. Lynch, 12 July 1913, in "Strike on New Kleinfontein, Status of Native Labourers", Government Native Labour Bureau, GNLB 109 1238/13, National Archives, Pretoria

[177] Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., pp. 221

[178] Figures are from V.E. Boyd, May 1913, "Courting Trouble in South Africa: state-ownership is state-capitalism", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XIII, p. 799. Poutsma claimed the NURHAS had reached 15,000 members in November 1913 – see Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., p. 277; this figure was also cited in Ferdinand Marais, April 1914, "Labour's Battle in South Africa: South African railway nationalisation and the labour movement", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XIV, p. 584 – but this was almost certainly an exaggeration.

[179] Ferdinand Marais, April 1914, "Labour's Battle in South Africa: South African railway nationalisation and the labour movement", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XIV p. 584

[180] Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., pp. 221-224

[181] *The Strike Herald*, 28 July 1913, "Labour's Demands: cold reception by the government": this article includes the full set of demands, which may also be found in Campbell and Munro, 1913, *op cit*., pp. 27-32, and, in incomplete form, in Katz, 1976, *op cit*., pp. 487-493 as part of appendix C

The delegation had to be contented with a promise that an enquiry would be held,[182] and vague plans to call a second general strike at the end of the month were placed on indefinite hold. [183] The *Strike Herald* blamed the decision on the influence of Poutsma of the NURHAS, and on SA Labour Party and union moderates like Creswell and Sampson.[184] The mine owners, for their part, made it clear that they were unwilling to make many concessions.[185]

The start of 1914 saw a new upsurge in class struggles. There was a great deal of criticism directed at the government for its handling of the 1913 general strike.[186] Further, nothing concrete had come of the judicial commission established in the wake of the general strike, and both parties were unsatisfied by the outcome of the Carlton agreement, as Boydell recalled:[187]

> On the part of the Government there was a feeing of soreness and humiliation at having been compelled at the point of a working-class pistol to negotiate a face-saving agreement amounting to capitulation. Never again, they vowed, must the Government find itself in that position.
>
> On the part of the strikers and workers generally there was a feeling first of jubilation and then of frustration. In spite of having brought the Government to its knees, the workers began to think that they had gained little or nothing out of the settlement. It is true that there had been no victimisation of strikers. It is also true that the Government had promised to consider any grievances submitted. But what guarantee had the men that the Government would redress any of the grievances? Generally speaking, the men felt, to use a comman [*sic*] parlance, that they had been 'sold a pup'. Never again must they allow themselves to be let down so badly.
>
> So the Carlton agreement became an armed truce.

There was, in other words, a great deal of unfinished business left over from 1913.

The lead was, however, taken by NURHAS, which remained outside the Transvaal Federation of Trade Unions. A curt letter was sent to Botha on 3 January 1914, demanding an end to the planned retrenchments of around 1,000 men, announced in December 1913:[188]

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[182] The government's response is available in *The Strike Herald*, 28 July 1913, "Government's Reply", and also in Katz, 1976, *op cit*., pp. 493-496 as part of appendix C; on these developments, see also Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., pp. 220-238, 251-254, which also includes the government's response on pp. 232-238
[183] Katz, 1976, *op cit.*, p. 466; *The Strike Herald*, 28 July 1913, "Federation Declare a General Strike"; *The Strike Herald*, 31 July 1913, "Strike Committee: Manifesto No. 1"; Thomas, 1963, *op cit*., p. 45
[184] *The Strike Herald*, 2 August 1913, "Surrender or Strategy?"
[185] *The Strike Herald*, 26 July 1913, "Further Concessions? Statement by the mine-owners"; this is also included in Katz, 1976, *op cit*., pp. 497-504 as part of appendix C
[186] See Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., pp. 215-254
[187] Boydell, n.d., *op cit*., p. 74
[188] Cited in Boydell, n.d., *op cit*., p. 76

> Sir,
>
> I am directed to forward the following resolution for favour of your immediate attention, viz.: Resolved unanimously that the Executive Council of the Amalgamated Society of Railway and Harbour Servants in Council assembled requests that the retrenchment now being carried out be stopped and that those already retrenched be reinstated. Further, the Executive Council considers retrenchment at this time uncalled for. And in view of the immediate serious situation they will be obliged to receive the reply of the Prime Minister without delay.
>
> H.J. Poutsma.

Branches of the NURHAS were notified at the same time that they should prepare to strike if the signal was given. This happened five days later, with a strike on the railways on Thursday January 8 that spread throughout the country in defiance of the law. Despite annoyance at the NURHAS' lack of consultation with other unions, and a distrust of Poutsma amongst others,[189] the Transvaal Federation of Trade Unions then called a general strike for Wednesday, January 14.[190]

This time around, the union leaders were far more cautious. Rather than develop spontaneously outside official channels, the strike was carefully planned. It was specifically extended outside the Witwatersrand into Bloemfontein, Cape Town and Durban. Bain issued a January 15 "Message to the Workers" in which workers were urged to "Stand Firm! Withhold your Labour! Avoid Violence and the Strike is won!"[191] He continued to favour militant action, even advocating organising strikers on a militia basis, an idea shared by Mason.[192]

For his part, Smuts was prepared for a showdown and determined not to repeat the humiliation of the previous July. On Saturday, January 10, he issued a mobilisation order that put 70,000 South African Defence Force troops on the alert across the country, which was, as he noted, a larger force than the armies of the Orange Free State and Transvaal on the eve of the Anglo-Boer War. The rural *commandos* were also mobilised, although few men seem to have known for what purpose. Trade union legend had it that many

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[189] Cope alleged that Poutsma was something of an *agent provocateur* for the government, a view that seems to have been held by Andrews: Cope, [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 148-161

[190] For detailed accounts of the strike see Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 148-160; Katz, 1976, *op cit.*, pp. 469-471; Ferdinand Marais, April 1914, "Labour's Battle in South Africa: South African railway nationalisation and the labour movement", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XIV; Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit.*, pp. 47-54. Grobler's account is also particularly useful for the attention paid to the NURHAS: Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., pp. 255-200

[191] Typed copy of "Message to the Workers", issued by James T. Bain for the Federation Strike Committee from the Trades Hall at 11 a.m. on the 15 January 1914, in the Simons Papers, Manuscript and Archives section, African Studies Centre, University of Cape Town, section 4.3.4.

[192] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit*., p. 241; Norman Herd, 1966, *1922: The Revolt on the Rand*, Blue Crane, Johannesburg, p. 24

did not know the name of the man they were to fight, but "thought it was General Strike. But General Smuts would tell them when they got there".[193]

On Tuesday, January 13, martial law was declared in all the large towns, and hundreds of trade unionists and SA Labour Party members were arrested. A field gun was trained on the headquarters of the Federation, the Trades Hall at the corner of Smal and Commissioner Streets in Johannesburg, and almost the entire Federation strike committee was arrested.[194] An attempt to start a second *Strike Herald* in Pretoria was blocked when the printing press was confiscated, and the editor, printers and publishers jailed.[195]

Despite the repression, the strike lasted for a week. A new Transvaal Federation of Trade Unions executive was constituted on Friday, January 16, supplemented by seven sub-committees, all based in Johannesburg. In a "Manifesto to the Workers of S. Africa", it claimed the strike was still solid in Bloemfontein, Benoni, Cape Town, Durban, Pretoria, and on the West Rand, and strongly supported in the Germiston and the central Witwatersrand mines.[196] It also reported that police had "looted" food supplies arranged for the poorer railway workers in Pretoria, that the Pretoria strike committee had been raided and that the Federation's printer was under arrest. The statement urged the workers to "Continue to fight boys, Trade Unionists all over the world are watching you and hoping", and, again, stressed peaceful protest: "Withhold your Labour! Refrain from Violence and we have them beat!"

A second manifesto, issued the following day, reported ongoing support: the workers were running the Alberton power station; women were protesting the arrests in Benoni; the railwaymen in Germiston and Pretoria were still out.[197] There was also another hopeful sign, with a mutiny in the *commandos*, with 37 members arrested for refusing to serve. The leaflet demanded "no discussion of terms, no negotiations, until our liberties have been restored to us and our leaders released". It also reported that 74 men had been arrested at Premier Mine alone, and that workers were being held on the property at the Glencairn and Knights Deep mines, neither permitted to leave, nor to meet others.[198] On Monday, January 19, Federation "Manifesto no. 3", replying to a press campaign that claimed the strike was ending, reported that a range of unions, including those in the engineering, building, and boilermaking trades, had overwhelmingly reiterated their support.[199]

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[193] Boydell, n.d., *op cit*., p. 79

[194] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 153; also see Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit.*, p. 51. The Trades Hall was initially based on a small plot on Rissik street in Johannesburg; in the 1920s, it seems to have moved again, this time to Kerk Street in Johannesburg in the mid-1920s: see Cope, [? 1943] n.d., *op cit*., pp. 111-112 and Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., p. 297

[195] Ferdinand Marais, April 1914, "Labour's Battle in South Africa: South African railway nationalisation and the labour movement", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XIV, pp. 584-5

[196] Copy of "Manifesto to Workers of S. Africa", issued by the Federation of Trade Unions, new executive committee, Johannesburg, 16 January 1914, Simons Papers, Manuscript and Archives section, African Studies Centre, University of Cape Town, section 4.3.4.

[197] Typed copy of "Manifesto no. 2, "issued by the Federation of Trade Unions, acting executive committee, Johannesburg, 17 January 1914. Simons Papers, Manuscript and Archives section, African Studies Centre, University of Cape Town, section 4.3.4.

[198] Typed copy of "Manifesto no. 2", *op cit.*

[199] Copy of "Manifesto no. 3: Workers of S.A., "issued by the Federation of Trade Unions, new executive committee, Johannesburg, 19 January 1914. Simons Papers, Manuscript and Archives section, African Studies Centre, University of Cape Town, section 4.3.4.

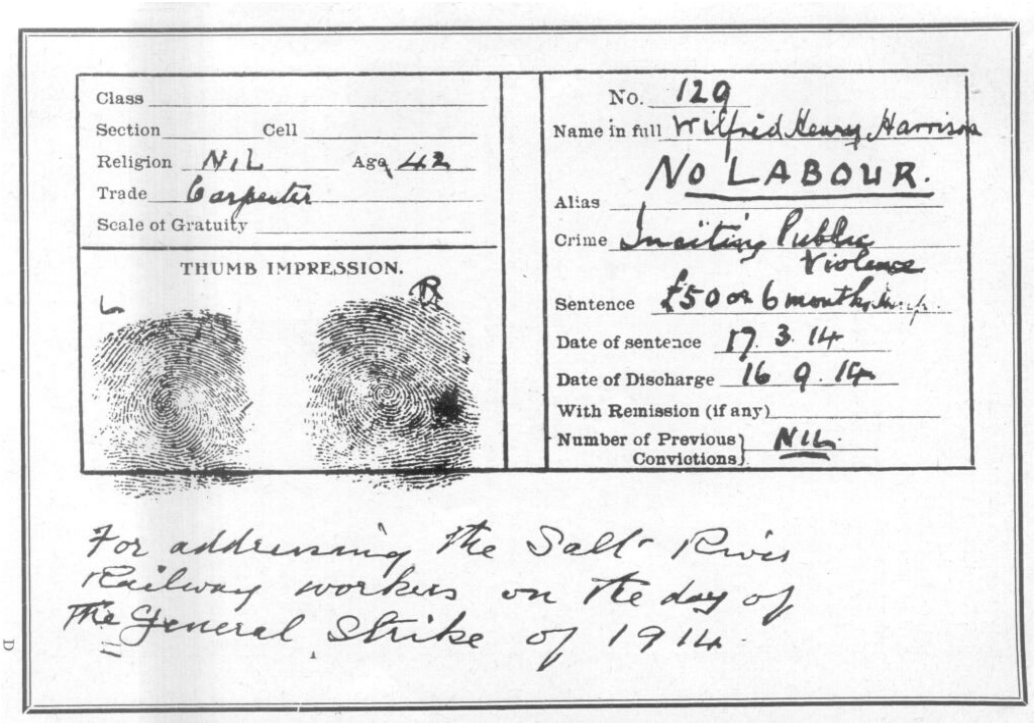
Class
Section Cell
Religion Nil Age 43
Trade Carpenter
Scale of Gratuity
THUMB IMPRESSION.
No. 129
Name in full Wilfrid Henry Harrison
NO LABOUR.
Alias
Crime Inciting Public Violence
Sentence £50 or 6 months
Date of sentence 17. 3. 14
Date of Discharge 16 9. 14
With Remission (if any)
Number of Previous Convictions Nil
For addressing the Salt River Railway workers on the day of the General Strike of 1914.

Figure twelve: Harrison's prison card from his arrest during the 1914 general strike

Source: Wilfred H. Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *Memoirs of a Socialist in South Africa 1903–47*, Stewart Printing, Cape Town, with foreword by Tommy Boydell, p. 29

However, the tide was flowing against the strikers. A meeting by the South African Mine Workers' Union, the reconstituted Transvaal Miners' Association, was banned.[200] Hundreds of people languished in jail. Harrison was arrested in Cape Town for incitement to public violence for suggesting to a meeting of 400 railwaymen at the Salt River government railway workshops, that the lines should be sabotaged.[201] This suggestion, obviously at odds with his professed belief in the need to focus on propaganda,[202] won him a six months' prison sentence, with the option of a £50 fine, which was paid – against his wishes – by supporters.[203] On January 28, Smuts deported nine strike leaders in secret on the *Umgeni* out of Durban without a trial: besides Poutsma of the NURHAS, most of the remaining figures had also been prominent in the 1913 strike, like Bain, Crawford, Mason, McKerrel, W.H. Morgan, Waterston and Watson. The remaining man was Livingston, who had not played much of a role in 1913. Erasmus, previously of the SDF and now a

[200] Tom Matthews, letter entitled "Fellow worker of the T.M.A., issued for South African Mine Workers Union, Strykfontein, 20 January 1914. Simons Papers, Manuscript and Archives section, African Studies Centre, University of Cape Town, section 4.3.4.
[201] Harrison, n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 40-43
[202] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d *op cit.*, p. 9
[203] Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit.*, pp. 56-7

Johannesburg journalist, exposed the deportation to the press,[204] while Creswell chartered a boat in a futile but dramatic attempt to intercept the *Umgeni*.

The strike movement was effectively broken. Following the deportations, Smuts introduced a special "Indemnity and Undesirables Special Deportation Bill" to retrospectively legalise his actions. This was strongly opposed by a section of the house, centred on the SA Labour Party, but was carried by ninety-five votes to eleven.[205]

Smuts also introduced a draconian "Peace Preservation Bill" which was subsequently withdrawn and eventually superseded by the Riotous Assemblies and Criminal Law Amendment Act, which was meant to replace the older Industrial Disputes Act with a countrywide industrial relations framework for White workers: it penalised attempts to force people to join unions, banned violent picketing, banned strikes in the State sector that disrupted essential services, gave magistrates wide powers to ban public meetings that could disrupt the peace, and allowed police to arrest speakers for "incitement", as well as members of the audience; in the last resort, they could also fire upon crowds.[206] The Riotous Assemblies Act, liberally applied to unions, socialists and nationalists of colour for much of the following century, "indirectly restricted the use of the strike weapon".[207]

Labour and left wing groups in Britain enthusiastically received the 1914 deportees.[208] They became the "British labour movement's heroes of the hour", and, as Hyslop recounts,[209]

> The largest British socialist demonstration of the pre-World War One era was held in their support. They were feted by MPs, left-wing journalists and intellectuals, and travelled the length and breadth of England and Scotland, speaking at public meetings where packed audiences cheered their militant speeches. In the early months of 1914, the now-forgotten episode of the South African deportations jostled the Ulster Crisis for space on the front pages of English and Scottish newspapers.

A court action was also brought against the owners of the *Umgeni*, Bullard, King and Co. of London, for unlawful imprisonment.

The enormous rally held on 1 March in Hyde Park, London, with a seven-mile column, and perhaps half-a-million present, making it one of the largest rallies in the history of British labour. While White Labourism arguably influenced many present,[210] it would be incorrect to see this rally as a festival of White Labourism. Some speakers were certainly informed by racial prejudice, but the speakers were no more

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[204] Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., pp. 53-4
[205] Millin, 1936, *op cit.*, p. 288
[206] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, pp 171
[207] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., p. 40
[208] William Gallacher, who was later the chair of the Clyde Workers Committee- a radical shop-stewards movement in Scotland, influenced by De Leonism, describes a rally in their support in his autobiography. See William Gallacher, [1936] 1978, *Revolt on the Clyde*. Lawrence and Wishart. London. Fourth edition. pp.15-6.
[209] Hyslop, 2004, *op cit*., p. 2
[210] As noted by Jon Hyslop, 1999, *op cit*., pp. 398, 404, 414, 416-418

homogenous than the British socialists, the British working class itself, or the larger White working class in the Empire; many activists and workers supported the 1914 deportees out of an internationalist spirit of working class solidarity.[211] The deportation even helped inspire a poem by Haywood, which was later reprinted in the American IWW's *Industrial Worker*:[212]

> You, O men of Africa, Greetings!
> Greetings to you who are on the high seas.
> You who have been exiled.
> You who are on strike.
> You who are fighting only as noble men can fight.
> You who are ready to sacrifice your lives for the cause you love.
> You who have been beaten.
> You who have been imprisoned.
> You who are separated from your loved ones.
> You who grieve for your comrades who have been murdered …

After several other verses to struggles in "Ireland and the Empire", Europe, the Orient, and the Americas, the poem concluded on an internationalist note:

> You, all Men and Women and Children of Labour,
> Greet each the other.
> You who are white, black, brown, red or yellow of skin …
> You can stop and start every wheel.
> You must rise in revolt against an inhuman master's control.
> You must strip the rich of all power save the strength to work.
> You must feel that an injury to the least is an injury to all of your class …
>
> You must organise as you work together.
> Think, Organise, Act Together.
> Industrial Freedom will come to all.

(As an aside, it is probably trivial but really quite interesting to discover that Haywood's mother came from Bloemfontein, the daughter of a British colonial officer stationed in South Africa.[213] Her parents left South

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[211] Hyslop's survey of the responses of the British socialist press examines only part of that press, excluding, *inter alia*, anarchist, radical Marxist, and syndicalist publications, creating a bias in his characterisation of British labour and the left. See Hyslop, 1999, *op cit*., 416-418

[212] William D. Haywood, 3 March 1917, "A Message", *Industrial Worker*. The poem was reportedly sold to the *Metropolitan Magazine* in 1914, but never printed.

[213] See Dubofsky, 1987, *op cit*., pp. 10-11

Africa in 1849 with the intention of joining the contemporary gold rush, but settled in Salt Lake City to found a boarding house.)

At the Hyde Park rally, following numerous speeches, it was announced that "our reply to Botha" was to send Tom Mann "to South Africa to carry on the fight" as "Ambassador of the Rank and File of Great Britain and Ireland".[214] And Mann made it clear that he would tell South African workers "those he represented knew neither race nor colour, class nor creed, but were all one in the bonds of brotherhood".[215]

5.5. The "Syndicalist Conspiracy" and the evidence

There is a well-established tradition of attributing the 1913 and 1914 general strikes by Whites to the influence of anarchists and syndicalists. This perception was widespread in the circles of capitalists and politicians, and was probably the result of several factors.

The general strikes were unprecedented in South Africa, both as the first general strikes across industries and for the militant character of the events: 1913 was a violent and bloody affair, while 1914 saw the strike movement spread into the State sector via the NURHAS in defiance of the law. Given the international rise of syndicalism, and the role of anarchists and syndicalists in numerous general strikes and waves of labour unrest at this time across the world, it was undoubtedly tempting to see a sinister syndicalist current at work. This was a testament to the extent to which syndicalism, rather than Marxism, was seen as a serious social problem.

Sir Abe Bailey, a South African-born mining magnate who served in parliament from 1910 to 1924 as a Unionist Party member for Krugersdorp – a party based amongst English-speaking Whites, and originally set up as a counterweight to the (initially Afrikaner nationalist) South African Party – attributed the strike to a "number of anarchists in the sub-continent", "Anarchy masquerading as Labour", "social snakes" and "vermin".[216] The *Cape Times* somewhat absurdly blamed Andrews, then an orthodox member of the SA Labour Party, for "stirring up political strife and propagating the doctrine of anarchic syndicalism".[217] The editor of the *Pretoria News* wrote: "People who hoist the red flag must be prepared for the machine gun which is the logical reply to a proclamation of anarchy".[218]

John X. Merriman, a former Prime Minister of the Cape – and at the time an independent member of the Union parliament – spoke of a "small knot of dangerous agitators" who had worked with "the object, deliberately planned, to bring about what is known as a 'General Strike', which is the great weapon of those people who profess the doctrines of 'Syndicalism'".[219] He worried about the effects of the "ravings of the

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[214] Quoted in Tzusuki, 1991, *op cit.,* p. 169
[215] Quoted Tsuzuki, 1991, *op cit*., p. 169
[216] As quoted in Cope, [? 1943] n.d., *op cit*., p. 158; also quoted in Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit.,* p. 53
[217] Cited in Cope, [? 1943] n.d., *op cit*., p. 145
[218] The editor, *Pretoria News*, "Open Letter to the Authorities", reproduced in *The Strike Herald*, 25 June 1913, "Who are the Inciters"
[219] Merriman, 1913, *op cit.*, p. 5

syndicalists",[220] and remarked: "of all the countries in the whole world it is the strangest thing that in South Africa Syndicalism should gain its first victory".[221]

Moving the Indemnity Bill, Smuts suggested the events of the 1913 and 1914 were the result of a "Syndicalist Conspiracy" to unleash the general strike, which "Syndicalists and anarchists all over the world" saw "as their last great weapon".[222] South Africa was, "so far as I am aware", the first country to experience such events of "world-wide importance". The deportees of 1914 were the "revolutionary band which had started and had directed the whole of that disastrous movement in South Africa".[223] He had "never come across" a "more desperate character" than Bain, while Poutsma was described as having "graduated in the school of anarchy".

Such views were not restricted to members of the ruling class. Boydell of the SA Labour Party also suggested a link with syndicalism:[224]

> Perhaps at that particular period nothing would have satisfied the working-class psychology except a trial of strength with the Government. Rather a state of mind than a specific grievance. Throughout the world about this time – 1913 – the industrial volcano was always erupting or threatening, with syndicalism and disorders prominent.

Besides underlining the extent to which the powerful regarded syndicalism – rather than classical Marxism, barely mentioned before the late 1910s – as a serious source of subversion, the views of capitalists, officials and politicians also reveal that immigrants were regarded as the main source of syndicalism. Thus, Smuts' attempt to deal with the "Syndicalist Conspiracy" involved the deportation to Britain of the men he believed to comprise the "revolutionary band", removing the radical immigrants that linked local developments to the "Syndicalists and anarchists all over the world".

The permeable and transnational character of the local working class was, then, regarded as linking local labour politics to the "glorious period" more generally. Further, both Merriman and Smuts believed that syndicalist ideas could quickly spread from immigrants to local Afrikaners, Africans and Coloureds. In a letter to Smuts in 1913, Merriman argued that the real danger of the "ravings of the syndicalists" was that "they are appealing, not I fear without success, both to the poorer Dutch and to the Natives".[225] Perhaps he had in mind police reports that estimated that the July 1913 riots involved crowds of "fifty percent … young Dutch" from the slums, plus a "few strikers … and all sorts … of criminals, foreigners, Greeks, Italians, and all sorts of coloured men, and regular conglomeration of everything pretty well".[226]

In justifying the 1914 deportations, Smuts stated that some members of the "revolutionary band" had even appealed to Africans to join the strike, leading to cheers and, Smuts thought, the subsequent

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[220] Quoted in Kennedy, 1984, *op cit.*, p. 88
[221] Quoted in Katz, 1976, *op cit.* p. 217.
[222] Smuts, 4 February and 5 February 1914, *op cit*., columns 63, 92-94
[223] Smuts, 4 February and 5 February 1914, *op cit.*, column 63, 92-94
[224] Boydell, n.d., *op cit*., p. 68
[225] Cited in Kennedy, 1984, *op cit.*, p. 88.
[226] Cited in Kennedy, 1984, *op cit.*, p. 85. Also see Katz, 1976, *op cit.*, p. 418.

strikes by Africans.[227] If White workers were not controlled with an "iron hand", and if White agitators were allowed to "tamper with natives", there would be "native outbreaks" that would destroy South Africa.[228] (The *Pretoria News agreed:* the danger of "natives" "joining in" a general strike justified answering the raising of the "the red flag" with "the machine gun".)[229]

The notion that syndicalism was a key factor in the events was commonly held for many years, and the link between syndicalism and immigration has been repeatedly made. Such views appeared in official publications on South African history: "Tension between Capital and Labour came to a head" due to "trade unionism and its underlying currents of imported 'syndicalism', as the Botha government called it".[230] Official mine histories repeated the story: overseas socialist and trade union ideas played an important role, many union leaders were "disciples" of Tom Mann, and Smuts' actions struck a "crushing blow at what he called 'syndicalism'".[231] A similar account can still be found in coffee table books: "radical leaders from abroad inspired them with ideas of a syndicalist revolution, and *The Red Flag* was sung everywhere".[232]

The notion of the "Syndicalist Conspiracy" was, however, strongly criticised by Katz in her classic study of early White labour in South Africa.[233] Katz specifically rejected the idea that a "Syndicalist Conspiracy" with a definite syndicalist aim led the 1913 and 1914 general strikes by White workers, and also criticised the notion that syndicalist ideas were common amongst White workers before, during, or after the strikes. She pointed to the prevalence of craft unionism (which was widely rejected by syndicalists like the IWW or Mann), the close link between the unions and an SA Labour Party that was both moderate and segregationist, the prevalence of the White Labourist tradition, and the absence of any revolutionary aims on the part the unions or the SA Labour Party. Consequently, it was quite wrong to group the South African events with the syndicalist unrest that was taking place internationally at the time.

The evidence suggests that the truth lies somewhat between the extreme positions represented by Smuts, on the one side, and Katz, on the other, but that it lies closest to Katz. The politics of the great majority of organised White workers was either that of White Labourism or Afrikaner nationalism, and most people who called themselves socialists accepted both segregation and a social democratic approach. The aims of the SA Labour Party were a "White South Africa", not an Industrial Republic. No South African trade union between 1912 (when the local IWW collapsed) and 1916 (when the Building Workers' Industrial Union was formed, discussed in Section 6.5) adopted a syndicalist platform.

Nor did the 1914 deportees approximate Merriman's "small knot of dangerous agitators" or Smuts' "revolutionary band". The deportees ran the gamut from moderate labour leaders to militant opponents of capitalism, and they were certainly not bound together by a common syndicalism. With the exception of

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[227] Smuts, 4 February and 5February 1914, *op cit.*, columns 67 and 124
[228] Smuts, 4 February and 5 February 1914, *op cit.*, column 124
[229] The editor, *Pretoria News*, "Open Letter to the Authorities", reproduced in *The Strike Herald*, 25 June 1913, "Who are the Inciters"
[230] W.J. de Kock, 1971, *History of South Africa*, Department of Information, Government Printer, Pretoria, p. 27
[231] Cartwright, 1962, *The Gold Miners*, Purnell and Sons, Cape Town, Johannesburg, pp. 157-170
[232] Peter Joyce, editor, 1981, *South Africa's Yesterdays*, Readers Digest Association South Africa, Cape Town, p. 273
[233] Katz, 1976, *op cit.*, pp. 217-296

Crawford and Livingstone, all were active members of the SA Labour Party.[234] Poutsma joined the party in July 1913, and there is certainly no evidence to support Smuts' view that Poutsma of the NURHAS had graduated from the "school of anarchy", and was a "lieutenant" of Nieuwenhuis.[235] He was, in fact, one of the most moderate of the deportees. He had known Nieuwenhuis when he was a member of the Social Democratic Union in the Netherlands, but he was affiliated with the Social Democratic Workers' Party, initially an orthodox Marxist party, rather than the anarchists around Nieuwenhuis. (By 1909, the party was becoming mainly social democratic, leading to a split called the Social Democratic Party on a classical Marxist platform: this party later formed the core of the Communist Party of the Netherlands.)

Following his deportation abroad, Poutsma toured Europe and renewed his contacts with the Social Democratic Workers' Party, addressing its 1914 congress as a champion of "international social democracy".[236] By this stage the party had largely evolved into a party of parliamentary socialism, and it seems that Poutsma himself was closest to the Party's rightwing. Crawford and Fitzgerald viewed him as a moderate union bureaucrat cut out of the same cloth as Andrews, Creswell and Sampson.[237]

Mason, Morgan and Watson were all prominent in Johannesburg branches of the SA Labour Party, and McKerrel stood as a party candidate in the 1913 Johannesburg municipal elections.[238] However, their views were quite diverse. Morgan – as well as Livingston, the non-party man – do not seem to have held socialist views.[239]

On the other hand, if Bain, Mason, McKerrel, Waterston and Watson were members of the SA Labour Party, they were all socialists of a sort, which put them to the left of the majority of White workers (not to mention the party leadership centred on Creswell and Sampson).[240] Part of a small socialist current in the unions and the party, they held a variety of views.

Bain, as noted previously, advocated a mixture of romantic socialism and White Labourism. Waterston was a well-known orator:[241]

> The men, even though many of them had no intention of joining a union, would crowd a meeting in the hope that Bob Waterston would 'get going'. When Bob got 'worked up', as he frequently did, nobody was quite certain what he might say next. He remained 'good old Bob' to the end of his days.

A strong defender of the job colour bar, he was a state socialist, who called for the nationalisation of the mines during the 1913 general strike.[242]

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[234] Katz, 1976, *op cit.*, p. 228
[235] Smuts, 4 February and 5 February 1914, *op cit.*, column 101
[236] Campfens, 1987, *op cit*., p. 122
[237] *The Strike Herald*, 2 August 1913, "Surrender or Strategy?"
[238] Katz, 1976, *op cit*., pp. 228, 265, 267, 382
[239] Katz, 1976, *op cit*., pp. 228, 412
[240] Katz, 1976, *op cit*., pp. 228, 264-5, 267, 382, 385
[241] Cartwright, 1962, *op cit*., p., 164
[242] *The Strike Herald*, 2 July 1913, "Sunday Night at the Grand"

The views of Mason, McKerrel and Watson are less clear. Mason's close co-operation with Crawford and Mary Fitzgerald in 1913 suggests he was, at the time, fairly close to their position, and may have been linked to the ephemeral Socialist Party. Crawford and Mary Fitzgerald were both charged with public violence and incitement in 1913 (Mary Fitzgerald was accused of advocating looting),[243] and Mason's statements echoed theirs: he called on strikers to attack scabs, to "pay no rent – in fact, pay for nothing (Loud applause)",[244] and force the government to change working hours on the mines through direct action.[245] The possibility of a close association with Crawford and Mary Fitzgerald is given further support from Mason's break with White Labourism in 1913: sometime after the 1913 general strike he concluded that "the interests of the white worker were bound up with those of the native".[246]

Both Bain and Crawford indicate the difficulty of analysing the politics of the socialist deportees. Their views were often eclectic: for example, Bain mixed Ruskin and racialism in a fairly unique brew, while Crawford, basically a political socialist, "impossibilism", was tinged with IWW ideas. If one could adopt syndicalism without explicitly identifying as an anarchist or a syndicalist, one could also be influenced by syndicalism without, in fact, being a through-going syndicalist. Views also changed over time: Mason, chairman of an SA Labour Party branch, came to argue that Africans should be unionised.[247]

The complexity of views, and the fiery atmosphere of 1913, made for some interesting situations. In justifying the 1914 deportations, Smuts identified a most unlikely pair as the prime movers in "tampering with natives": Waterston, a White Labourite, and Mason, who started to increasingly question those ideals.[248] Waterston had appealed to a crowd of African workers, watching a White miners' rally in Benoni, to "*Tchella lo baas wena funa meningi mali and picanniny sebenza*" (*fanakalo* for "Tell the bosses you want more money and less work".).[249] This was "applauded ... lustily", and the police quickly moved in to disperse the Africans. And Mason, on a separate occasion, had called on African workers to join the strike and demand more pay, to which "they responded", he claimed, "almost to a man" with approval (but did not actually strike at the time).[250]

These apparently similar actions hid a world of difference. Waterston's action was probably more in line with those of a section of White miners who "went to the compounds and urged the African workers to strike for more pay" but accompanied these appeals "with threats that the Africans would be dynamited if they worked with scabs".[251] Mason, on the other hand, was moving towards a genuine support of interracial labour solidarity. In the long term, too, the two would make very different political choices. By 1919, Waterston had moved up from town councillor to SA Labour Party Member of Parliament. Mason, by

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[243] *The Strike Herald*, 26 July 1913, "Trial of Mrs. Fitzgerald, A. Crawford and T.W. Ward"; *The Strike Herald*, 26 July 1913, "Court Cases"
[244] *The Strike Herald*, 2 July 1913, "Sunday Night at the Grand"
[245] *The Strike Herald*, 2 July 1913, "Monday's Meeting"
[246] *The International*, 7 April 1916, "Call to the Native Workers", report on speech by Mason
[247] *The International*, 7 April 1916, "Call to the Native Workers", report on speech by Mason
[248] Hirson, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 134
[249] See Hirson 1995, *op cit.*, p. 130; Smuts, 4 and 5 February 1914, *op cit.*, column 67
[250] *The International*, 7 April 1916, "Call to the Native Workers", report on talk by George Mason. See also Katz, 1976, *op cit.*, p. 425
[251] According to Cope, [? 1943] n.d., *op cit*., pp. 134-5



Figure thirteen: The general strike for emancipation, as seen by the *Strike Herald*

Source: *The Strike Herald*, 26 July 1913

contrast, had helped found the International Socialist League in 1915, and became a thoroughgoing syndicalist.

One important point that follows is that the 1914 deportees were poor candidates for Smuts' sinister "revolutionary band". Their views were very diverse, not least amongst the socialists in their number. The socialists who advocated direct action, like Bain, Crawford, Mary Fitzgerald, Mason and Waterston, did so from a wide range of views. Crawford and Mary Fitzgerald's interest in direct action may have been a reflection of the fact that both were somewhat influenced by syndicalism, and looked back with nostalgia to the "good old Tram Strike days",[252] whereas Bain's long-standing radicalism derived from somewhat different sources. As the cases of Waterston and Mason showed, even appeals to African workers to go on strike did not necessarily demonstrate the existence of common views. Haynes, who held radical views and

[252] Mary Fitzgerald, 21 June 1913, "With the Mob at Benoni", *The Strike Herald*

chaired the Benoni strike committee, for instance, never joined the attacks on scabs. Not everyone who advocated direct action was a radical or a revolutionary: many ordinary supporters of White Labourism and the SA Labour Party were drawn into the militant actions.

Crawford and Fitzgerald's support for confrontation converged with a wide spectrum of White labour politics at this time. Calls for direct action in 1913 and 1914 were not confined to syndicalists, while, at a more general level, it is important to bear in mind that the use of direct action and general strikes has never been unique to syndicalists. Even the SA Labour Party organ, the *Worker*, could write on July 3:[253]

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

There is, then, no support for the notion that syndicalists organised and controlled the 1913 and 1914 general strikes by White workers. Most of White labour, including the key figures in the unions and the SA Labour Party were far from syndicalist; the 1914 deportees were not an organised "Syndicalist Conspiracy"; organised syndicalist groups like the IWW and Socialist labour Party were nowhere to be seen; the *Voice of Labour* no longer existed as a platform for syndicalism, or as the heart of a network that included strong syndicalist currents; the Cape SDF, which had anarchist and syndicalist currents, was far away from the centre of the storm on the Witwatersrand.

5.6. The importance of the syndicalist current in 1913 and 1914

It does not, however, follow that syndicalism played no role in the 1913 and 1914 White workers' general strikes. There was a definite, if fairly small, syndicalist current in these strikes: if it was not a very coherent current, nor an organised one, it was still quite noticeable and a definite part of the labour scene. Syndicalism was at a low point in the years 1913 and 1914, with the collapse of organised groups and an effective press on the Witwatersrand, but the small syndicalist current of the time suggests continuities between the earlier, organised, syndicalist movement and the new era of syndicalism that opened up with the International Socialist League.

One indication of the syndicalist current was that a section of strikers were influenced by syndicalism. The possibility that Crawford and Mary Fitzgerald's stress on direct action was influenced by syndicalism has been suggested above. More direct syndicalist influences can, however, also be found in the *Strike Herald*. Nominally under the control of the Transvaal Federation of Trade Unions, the paper was closely associated with people like Bain, Crawford, Mary Fitzgerald, Mason and Waterston. It was not, in

[253] Cartwright, 1962, *op cit*., p., 166

other words, necessarily representative of the outlook of the majority of strikers, the unions or the SA Labour Party.

While the *Strike Herald* lacked the explicit socialist analysis, debate and propaganda characteristic of the *Voice of Labour*, it was strongly anti-capitalist in its general approach. Besides angry denunciations of employers and the State, it also reprinted materials from the international radical press, including the anarchist and syndicalist press, and had a number of articles and cartoons that suggested syndicalist influences.

A version of the *Red Flag*, described in the paper as the "national anthem of Benoni", was printed.[254] The "Don't Shoot" manifesto (incorrectly attributed to Mann) was carried,[255] and the paper hoped that "the day" would come when police and soldiers, "working men in uniform" would "refuse to hire themselves out to be assassins to a parasitic class".[256] The campaign against scabs was bolstered by the following searing definition of the scab, commonly attributed to the radical American writer Jack London:[257]

> After God had finished the rattlesnake, the toad, and the vampire, He had some awful 'substance' left with which He made a scab. A scab is a two-legged animal with a corkscrew soul, a water-sogged brain, a combination backbone of jelly and glue … No man has a right to scab as long as there is a pool of water deep enough to drown his body in, or a rope long enough to hang his carcase with.

London had links to the IWW (and the left-wing of the Socialist Party of America) but his views were eclectic, even sometimes racially prejudiced. On the other hand, London publicly supported the 1910-1911 anarchist uprising in Baja California, which was largely a movement of *mestizos* and Indian peasants[258] aided by American anarchists and syndicalists, and he often idolised Mexican revolutionaries.[259]

Poetry by Covington Hall, the key figure in the Chicago IWW's interracial Brotherhood of Timber Workers,[260] and a frequent contributor to the *International Socialist Review*,[261] was also printed:[262]

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[254] *The Strike Herald*, 21 June 1913, "People Say:-"; *The Strike Herald*, 21 June 1913, "The Red Flag"
[255] "Tom Mann", 2 July 1913, "Don't Shoot: address to soldiers", *The Strike Herald*
[256] *The Strike Herald*, 21 June 1913, "Inciting to Riot"
[257] *The Strike Herald*, 21 June 1913, "The Scab- a Definition"
[258] In a message to Ricardo Flores Magón, for example, he wrote: "We socialists, anarchists, hoboes, chicken-thieves, outlaws and undesirable citizens of the United States are with you heart and soul in your effort to overthrow slavery and autocracy in Mexico". Quoted in Marshall, 1994, *op cit*., p. 511
[259] For example, his short story, "The Mexican", praises the activities of the fictional Felipe Rivera, a Mexican boxer and revolutionary, and his sacrifices for the Mexican struggle and the revolutionary *junta* of the Mexican Liberal Party in the face of poverty and prejudice: Jack London, [1913], 1998, in Christopher Bigsby, editor, *Jack London: The Call of the Wild and Other Stories*, Phoenix Paperbacks, Orion Publishing, London
[260] Hall's own history of the union, also touching upon waterfront struggles in New Orleans, is available: David R. Roediger, editor, 1999, *Labour Struggles in the Deep South and Other Writings*, Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, Chicago. Roediger, however, provides a very problematic discussion of the history of the Brotherhood of Timber Workers is provided by Roediger, 1994, *op cit*., pp. 127-180: as discussed earlier, his analysis of the union contradicts his broader political argument for the "abolition of whiteness", although it is clearly designed to buttress that argument. A brief accounts of the efforts of the Brotherhood of Timber Workers may be found in Foner, 1974, *op cit*., pp. 112-119 and in Spero and Harris, 1931, *op cit.*, chapter XV. More substantial histories of the Brotherhood of Timber Workers are provided by James F. Fickle, 1981, "Race, Class and radicalism: the Wobblies in the southern lumber industry,

> Say what ye will, without ruth,
> The strike drives home the little truth;
> The strike tears off the mask of things,
> To mass and class the issue brings …
> Say what ye will, all else above,
> The strike is war for bread and love;
> For raiment, shelter, freedom, all
> The human race can justice call.

Hall, a talented poet,[263] was also involved in the early Marine Transport Workers' Industrial Union, the IWW's integrated international union for sailors and dockworkers. (The Marine Transport Workers' Industrial Union, and its links to syndicalism in South Africa, is discussed in Section 7.6.)

An article on the need to demand free speech was based on a piece from Kropotkin's *Freedom.*[264] A cartoon attacked "The Capitalist Press",[265] while parables from the overseas labour press expounded on the evils of labour disunity[266] and wage slavery.[267] Another cartoon, headed "The Phthisis Revolt", showing Labour represented as a miner, starting to rise and shake the earth, appeared in an issue where Mary Fitzgerald implored the strikers to emulate the direct action of the Suffragettes in order to stop living as "wage-slaves".[268] One issue included articles by both Kropotkin and Ruskin.[269]

Yet another cartoon showed the general strike as "the New Vision" of labour, and accompanied a discussion of future strike tactics, and a defence of industrial sabotage by labour,[270] a common theme in the international IWW press – and an issue central to Socialist Party of America's break with the IWW. Crawford

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1900-1916", in Joseph R. Conlin, editor, *At the Point of production: the local history of the I.W.W.*, Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut, London; Foner, 1965, *op cit*., pp. 233-257; James R. Green, 1973, "The Brotherhood of Timber Workers 1910-1913: a radical response to the industrial capitalism in the southern U.S.A", *Past and Present*, no. 60. I would like to thank Sal Salerno for supplying me a copy of Fickle's paper.

[261] See, *inter alia*, Covington Hall, April 1909, "In the Holy Name of Trade", a poem in *International Socialist Review*, vol.IX: Covington Hall, July 1912, "Revolt of the Southern Timber Workers", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XIII; Covington Hall, October 1912, "'Negroes against Whites,'" *International Socialist Review*, vol.XIII; Covington Hall, December 1912, "The Victory of the Lumberjacks", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XIII; Covington Hall, May 1913, "With the Southern Timber Workers", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XIII; Covington Hall, April 1914, "Us, the Hoboes", a poem in *International Socialist Review*, vol.XIV; Covington Hall, November 1915, "'Progressive Temple,'" *International Socialist Review*, vol.XVI

[262] Covington Hall, 21 June 1913, "The Strike", *The Strike Herald*

[263] See David Roediger, editor, 1985, *Dreams and Dynamite: selected poems of Covington Hall*, Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, Chicago

[264] *The Strike Herald*, 2 July 1913, "Law and Disorder"

[265] *The Strike Herald*, 25 June 1913, "Gen. Smuts 'On the Job'"; *The Strike Herald*, 25 June 1913, "Strikers in Court"; James T. Bain, 25 June 1913, "Kleinfontein SCAB list", *The Strike Herald*; *The Strike Herald*, 25 June 1913, "Strike News: Brakpan vindicates itself: coldfooted sympathy censured"

[266] *The Strike Herald*, 2 August 1913, "An Excellent Plan"

[267] *The Strike Herald*, 2 August 1913, "Looking for a Job"; *The Strike Herald*, 2 August 1913, "Get off our Backs"

[268] *The Strike Herald*, 21 June 1913, "Successful Meeting"

[269] Peter Kropotkin, 31 July 1913, "Servants of the Ideal", *The Strike Herald*; John Ruskin, 31 July 1913 "Little Classics", *The Strike Herald*

[270] *The Strike Herald*, 26 July 1913, "Editorial Notes"; also see *The Strike Herald*, 26 July 1913, "Sabotage"

also editorialised on the need for a limited general strike to end the dispute and test the strength of the unions,[271] and clearly had hopes of a second general strike in 1913.[272] The last issued had an angry editorial, probably by Crawford, condemning the cancellation of the proposed second general strike (and the closure of the *Strike Herald* by the unions).[273]

Syndicalist influences in the *Strike Herald* should not be overstated. For example, much of the paper was taken up with reports on the Transvaal Federation of Trade Unions' deputation to Pretoria in 1913,[274] and the early hearings of the 1913 judicial commission.[275] A large amount of copy involved reports on ongoing government investigations into worker grievances,[276] and the court cases rising out the 1913 strike.[277]

Several issues, indeed, read more like the *Worker.* One focused on a call by Creswell for an early general election, and another reported at length on the planned candidature of Jimmy Clark and A.F. "Alf" Crisp in municipal by-elections in Johannesburg.[278] Crisp, born in London in 1873 was a skilled metalworker, came to South Africa in 1894, and became secretary of the Johannesburg branch of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, and vice-president of the SA Labour Party.[279] Other articles referred to "getting control of political power" to "circumvent" the capitalists,[280] and an editorial, probably by Crawford, specifically called for the nationalisation of the gold mines.[281]

There were, however, other examples of syndicalist influence at this time in the SA Labour Party and the unions. The West Rand organiser of the Transvaal Miners' Association, W.J. Carbis, for example, claimed in September 1913 that the "Trades Hall" was "the government".[282] Many party leaders complained of a wave of "syndicalist talk", campaigned against syndicalism in the *Worker*, and elsewhere,[283] and increasingly argued that strikes were obsolete: only elections could make a real difference.[284] The "syndicalist talk" that developed in sections of the working class seems to have done so quite independently of the older organised syndicalist movement, indicating that it would be a mistake to conflate the influence of syndicalism with the influence of *organised* syndicalist groups. Overall, I agree here with Hyslop, who suggested that syndicalism "had considerable currency in labour circles" at the time.[285]

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[271] Archibald Crawford, 25 June 1913, "Editorial Notes", *The Strike Herald*
[272] *The Strike Herald*, 2 August 1913, "Surrender or Strategy?"
[273] *The Strike Herald*, 2 August 1913, "Surrender or Strategy?"
[274] *The Strike Herald*, 26 July 1913, "Labour's Demands: cold reception by the government"; *The Strike Herald*, 26 July 1913, "Government's Reply"
[275] *The Strike Herald*, 26 July 1913, "The Judicial Commission: second and third sittings"
[276] *The Strike Herald*, 31 July 1913, "The Disturbances Commission: incidents on the 4th"
[277] *The Strike Herald*, 31 July 1913, "Court Cases"
[278] *The Strike Herald*, 26 July 1913, "Creswell at Benoni"; *The Strike Herald*, 26 July 1913, "Industrialists Enter Politics"
[279] Gitsham and Trembath, 1926, *op cit.*, p. 166
[280] *The Strike Herald*, 2 July 1913, "The Wage Slave"
[281] *The Strike Herald*, 31 July 1913, "The Coming Lock-Out"
[282] Katz, 1976, *op cit.*, pp. 466-7
[283] Katz, 1976, *op cit.*, pp. 466-7; also see Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., pp. 166-7
[284] Ferdinand Marais, June 1914, "The Value of the Strike", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XIV, p. 739
[285] Hyslop, 2004, *op cit*., p. 200

There were also, at the time, syndicalist influences on people who were not actually syndicalists. The cases of Crawford and Mary Fitzgerald have already been noted, but Bain and Waterston provide two more. Bain (undoubtedly the man responsible for inserting the Ruskin piece in the *Strike Herald*) wrote an article in that paper that echoed the "Don't Shoot" manifesto, calling policemen not to fire upon strikers, "men of your own class".[286] He seems have believed that "the day of wagedom was drawing to an end" at last, and that a "new era" would start.[287] Perhaps Bain was encouraged by two incidents covered in the *Strike Herald*: a case in which police had been forced by a large crowd to release two arrested men, [288] the refusal of a policeman to fire upon strikers.[289] The 1914 mutiny in the *commandos* would also have provided inspiration.

Further, introducing Walter Madeley, a SA Labour Party member of parliament, at a meeting in July 1913, Bain also stated: "it might be necessary for the strikers to take over the mines and work them themselves".[290] (Madeley saw matters somewhat differently, and assumed that Bain meant nationalisation; his speech was directed at winning votes for his party.)[291] There are certainly good grounds for Hyslop's view that Bain came to believe (at the time at least) that "a general strike would be more than an industrial conflict; it would be a moment in which he and his fellow workers could transcend the world of everyday life and move towards the future".[292]

Then, in January 1914, Waterston, of all people, reportedly stated that organised workers should "have a general strike, and have a revolution".[293] Likewise, Ivon Jones, the general-secretary of the SA Labour Party, distributed copies of the "Don't Shoot!" manifesto to the troops surrounding the Trades Hall on 13 January 1914, although his views at the time remained within the camp of White Labourism.

Besides the "syndicalist talk" that developed in sections of the working class quite independently of the older organised syndicalist movement, and the influence of syndicalism on people who were not, otherwise, syndicalists, there were also deliberate efforts by committed syndicalists to promote their views. These efforts were sporadic, rather than systematic, and their impact on the working class is not altogether clear. In the aftermath of the July 1913 general strike, John Campbell, formerly of the Socialist Labour Party, and Munro published a pamphlet called *The Great Rand Strike: July, 1913*. As a local publication from the De Leonist position at this time, it was something of a rarity: the apparent dissolution of the Socialist Labour Party into the SA Labour Party does not seem to have been accompanied by much in the way of written propaganda.

Campbell and Munro's declared aim was to draw "lessons" of "service to the proletariat".[294] The strike was characterised as "a result of the machinations of the capitalist class" – clearly contemporary

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[286] James T. Bain, 25 June 1913, "Strike Notes", *The Strike Herald*
[287] James T. Bain, "Our Strike Organ: foreword by the strike secretary", *The Strike Herald*
[288] *The Strike Herald*, 25 June 1913, "Strike News: mob wins out: police give up prisoners"
[289] James T. Bain, 25 June 1913, "Strike Notes", *The Strike Herald*
[290] *The Strike Herald*, 25 June 1913, "Mr. Madeley's Speech"
[291] *The Strike Herald*, 25 June 1913, "Mr. Madeley's Speech"
[292] Hyslop, 2004, *op cit*., p. 184
[293] Smuts, 4 February and 5 February 1914, *op cit.*, column 101
[294] Campbell and Munro, 1913, *op cit.*, p. 3

syndicalists did not agree with Smuts' "Syndicalist Conspiracy" theory – which had sacrificed the lives and freedoms of African and White workers in "callous indifference" to the "profit-producing wage slaves".[295] The "magnificent solidarity" of the workers ("probably… unequalled in the history of the world's industrialism") and the use of the general strike, the "most supreme weapon at their command", was impressive, and held out as an example for the future.[296]

Reading the pamphlet, and comparing it to materials in the *Strike Herald* and examples of the "syndicalist talk" in the unions and the SA Labour Party makes it clear that the syndicalist current in 1913 and 1914 was not a coherent one. Rather than advocate attacks on scabs, confrontation, or sabotage, Campbell and Munro argued that police repression (which violated the rights of "British citizens") had generated the 1913 clashes.[297] The rioting that took place was blamed mainly on the "non-striking criminal element", and a "few maddened strikers".[298] It could not compare to the murderous activities of the State on "Black Saturday", which was partly due to the fact that the police were not "properly trained to manage crowds".[299]

The "lessons" drawn for the "service to the proletariat" were important, but presented in a moderate tone. The SA Labour Party should "include and tolerate revolutionary elements capable of constitutional action", and the unions should "develop a form of industrial organisation partaking of the essentials of industrial unionism" and a "more perfect knowledge of theoretical Socialism".[300] Efforts must be made to draw in the Afrikaners, as well as clerical and professional wage earners. The pamphlet argued that "One result of the strike is a more intelligent view of the native, and the raising of him into a freer and more complete proletarian status, and the abandonment of a white labour policy, at least in its more aggressive attitude".[301]

The *International Socialist Review* also carried a number of pieces by syndicalists from South Africa. The use of the *International Socialist Review* as a platform might seem curious at first sight, but it should be borne in mind that it was circulated locally amongst socialists, and that there was no regular local socialist paper after the closure of the *Voice of Labour*.

One such writer called himself the "Hobo", a name that immediately signalled a Chicago IWW affiliation (a "hobo", taken to mean a rebellious and itinerant worker, was a popular IWW symbol). He had been present at the Market Square mass meeting on Friday, 4 July 1913, and wrote optimistically in 1913 of Benoni as a "hotbed of revolutionary thought" from which a "tide of industrial democracy" had risen to sweep aside the craft unions".[302] An F. Murray of Cape Town (probably a SDF member, and definitely a former contributor to the *Voice of Labour*) wrote an analysis of the 1913 strike that argued "the most important lesson of the strike is that workers of every colour and of all trades must sink their racial and

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[295] Campbell and Munro, 1913, *op cit.*, pp. 3-7
[296] Campbell and Munro, 1913, *op cit.*, pp. 9-13
[297] Campbell and Munro, 1913, *op cit.*, pp. 9-13
[298] Campbell and Munro, 1913, *op cit.*, pp. 12-8
[299] Campbell and Munro, 1913, *op cit.*, pp. 6, 10, 12-19
[300] Campbell and Munro, 1913, *op cit.*, pp. 24-5
[301] Campbell and Munro, 1913, *op cit*., p. 22, 24-6
[302] "Hobo", September 1913, *op cit*., p. 141

sectional differences in order to combine in one all embracing union ready to take revolutionary action when the time comes".[303]

Boyd – probably the Mr. Boyd elected to the local IWW following the expulsion of Dunbar – wrote that the fact that the State owned the South African railways simply showed that nationalisation was State-capitalism:[304]

> … let us hope, the labour parties of the world will sink into the oblivion from which they should never have emerged, taking with them their pet scheme to state ownership, or, as an alternative, come out with us and declare for the real thing – Social ownership.
>
> Oh, for a Bill Haywood to help us out; to show the workers of South Africa wherein lies the road to emancipation. We want no 'leaders'. We want *teachers.*

Marais (probably "Proletarian" from the *Voice of Labour*, as suggested in section 4.9.) also wrote a series of articles in the *International Socialist Review* at this time. The first article, which appeared in April 1914, sharply criticised political socialism with an outburst of italicised texts:[305]

> *The moral to be drawn is that the sooner we stop advocating state ownership and get down to real business the better it will be for the working class … No, we the workers do not want nationalisation. What we want is the whole earth, and the only way to get it is to TAKE it – WITHOUT "compensation" to the present possessors and oppressors.*

A subsequent article, "The Value of the Strike", suggested: "the strike is the one thing – and the only thing – which can educate the workers, which can force capitalism to reveal its true class character".[306] "Politics, it seems to me, is merely the machinery" whereby the "pretence" that the classes have common interests "is kept up", with both the SA Labour Party and the Afrikaner nationalists playing a central role in confusing the workers, who might otherwise "seize and run industries for their own benefit, whenever they feel inclined to do so".[307] A third article by Marais, "Workers Arise and Seize the Earth!", concluded with the claim that:[308]

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[303] F. Murray, October 1913, "Capitalist Development and Industrial Revolt in Africa", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XIV, p. 209
[304] V.E. Boyd, May, 1913, "Courting Trouble in South Africa: state-ownership is state-capitalism", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XIII, p. 800, emphasis in the original
[305] Ferdinand Marais, April 1913, "Labour's Battle in South Africa: South African railway nationalisation and the labour movement", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XIV, p. 588, emphasis in the original
[306] Ferdinand Marais, June 1914, "The Value of the Strike", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XIV, p. 739
[307] Ferdinand Marais, June 1914, "The Value of the Strike", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XIV, pp. 739-740
[308] Ferdinand Marais, October 1914, "Workers Arise and Seize the Earth!", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XV, p. 219, emphasis in the original

> You workers do not want reform. You want *Revolution.* You must join together in one great union of workers, male and female, young and old, so that you may prevent organised scabbing. You must *seize* the land and the factories and starve out the robbers and their hired liars and murderers. You must make them taste their own gruel ….
>
> No quarter to the robber class! Get together, ye downtrodden and seize and enjoy the earth!

Finally, the role of Mann should also be noted. Mann came to South Africa after the suppression of the 1914 general strike in order to assist the unions. He arrived in Cape Town on March 24, took the train to Johannesburg where he was met by an estimated 10,000 people at the Park Station, and made every effort to promote syndicalism. He told the crowd at the Park Station that "I am a revolutionary … My mission is to overthrow the whole capitalist system generally". [309] On other occasions, he stated: "I am a revolutionary out and out, a syndicalist if you like; a reaction against the spineless intellectualism of MacDonald and Co.",[310] the leaders of the British Labour Party. He also returned to the theme of interracial labour unity – "every worker is as good as the other" – and warned against reliance on the ballot, also suggesting that workers needed to organise against the "coming war".[311] Mann remained in South Africa until the end of July, while the nine deportees returned to South Africa in September, enjoying an enormous status in labour movements internationally.

From the above discussion, two points stand out. First, there was certainly a syndicalist current in the 1913 and 1914 general strikes by White workers in South Africa, in that a number of people were influenced by syndicalism in varying degrees, and in that committed syndicalists also played a role in the labour struggles. It also important to note that Harrison was jailed for inflammatory statements made in the 1914 strike: again, he was basically a "pure one", but could be swept up in the moment

Second, the syndicalist current of 1913 and 1914 was not co-ordinated or coherent, its activities were sporadic, and its impact was quite limited: the strike movement was certainly not started or controlled by a "Syndicalist Conspiracy". There was no organised anarchist or syndicalist organisation or press on the Witwatersrand during the 1913 and 1914 general strikes, and the syndicalist current was far from a leading force in the working class. Indeed, the labour turbulence of 1913 and 1914 saw local anarchist and syndicalist influence at a low point, and the SDF, isolated from the Witwatersrand storm centre, was unable to provide an organised anarchist or syndicalist intervention.

5.7. The new radicals, the broad anarchist tradition, and the First World War

Overall, it was not syndicalism, but the mainstream labour movement and the SA Labour Party that reaped the immediate benefits of the general strikes of 1913 and 1914. Union membership increased

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[309] Quoted Tsuzuki, 1991, *op cit*., p. 170
[310] Quoted in Cope, [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 159
[311] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 159-160; Mann 1923, *op cit.*, pp. 238, 321-2. He did not come to "conduct a campaign for the Labour Party", as Eddie Roux asserts. See Eddie Roux and Win Roux, 1970, *op cit.*, p. 8.

quickly, relations between the unions and the SA Labour Party were strengthened – and, while the party was never formally involved in the strike movement – it masterfully capitalised on the popular mood to increase its influence. The growth of the unions and the party was remarkable given the broader context of repression and harassment: "The government had demonstrated its determination to rule through force if necessary, and members of the Labour Party were blacklisted by the Chamber of Mines and the major firms on the Witwatersrand".[312]

In 1913, the SA Labour Party's membership grew quickly, new branches were established, and Creswell and Andrews were sent on a national tour that achieved what the *Worker* described as an "almost phenomenal success".[313] By April 1914, the party was claiming to have established a foothold amongst Afrikaners in the rural Orange Free State and Transvaal, with branches in small towns such as Rustenburg, Ficksburg and Senekal.[314]

That year Creswell called for early general elections, albeit unsuccessfully, but the party secured a seventh parliamentary seat in a by-election.[315] More importantly, it managed to capture the Transvaal Provincial Council.[316] In 1910, the party had won five seats on the council, rising to nine in 1912: in March 1914, its representation shot up to twenty-three.[317] It was widely believed that the SA Labour Party could secure 35 seats in the 1915 general elections.[318]

There was another remarkable development at this time. Following his return to South Africa, Crawford broke with his previous radicalism, entering the mainstream White unions as a dynamic, but decidedly moderate, figure. In Harrison's view, Crawford "may have concluded that he was wasting his time in attempting to establish a Socialist movement in Johannesburg amongst so many conservative and self-interested workers", and thus "resolved to get in touch with those who could put him in more responsible positions" and adopt "reformist tactics".[319]

Crawford rejoined the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, and his prestige and talents soon saw him elected secretary of the South African Industrial Federation, formed in 1914 as successor to the Transvaal Federation of Trade Unions. He introduced a constitution that inverted the IWW *Preambles* of 1905 and 1908 – the "employer and employed have much in common"[320] – and died young in 1924 after a brief illness.[321]

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[312] Baruch Hirson, 1995a, *Revolutions in My Life*, Johannesburg, Witwatersrand University Press, p. 13
[313] Quoted in Thomas, 1963, *op cit*., p. 46; also see Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., pp. 248-251
[314] Thomas, 1963, *op cit*., pp. 51-2
[315] Thomas, 1963, *op cit*., pp. 22, 36, 40, 50-3
[316] Thomas, 1963, *op cit*., pp. 22, 36, 40, 50-3; their activities in the council are discussed in Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., pp. 301-323
[317] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 158-9; Katz, 1976, *op cit.*, p. 470; Eddie Roux, [1944], 1993, *op cit.,* p. 67; Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, pp. 171-2; David Ticktin, 1969, "The War Issue and the Collapse of the South African Labour Party", *South African Historical Journal*, no. 1, pp. 59-60.
[318] Thomas, 1963, *op cit*., pp. 53-4
[319] Harrison, n.d., *op cit.*, p.48
[320] Quoted in Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 222
[321] Harrison, n.d., *op cit*., pp. 45-6

Mary Fitzgerald divorced her husband, married Crawford and followed the same route to the right.[322] In 1915, she was elected to the Johannesburg City Council, becoming the first woman deputy mayor in South Africa, and she reappeared in 1921 as a member of the "Women's Industrial League" which aimed to replace Coloured waitresses with Whites.[323] Poutsma made an even more remarkable shift, joining the Afrikaner nationalists in 1915, before joining Smuts' South African Party, becoming its secretary.

At the very same time, however, that some radicals were moving right, another remarkable event was happening: a fair number of orthodox trade unionists and SA Labour Party members were moving sharply leftwards, radicalised by the dramatic events of the general strikes. A number of other important figures in the SA Labour Party followed Mason's shift to a radical and interracial position at this time. Brown of the South African Mine Workers' Union moved to the left, advocating interracial labour unionism. Colin Wade, born in England, and a dentist by trade, was another recruit: jailed during the 1914 general strike, he was an SA Labour Party councillor in Germiston, a member of the victorious Labour slate on the Transvaal Provincial Council in 1914 to 1917, and a founder member of the CPSA, dying in 1921.[324] He claimed to be "influenced by the socialist teachings of Morris, Blatchford, Hyndman and Shaw", and was jailed twice in the 1913 to 1914 upheaval, once for insulting "a hyena by comparing it to the South African ministry".[325]

A rather unlikely recruit for the cause of an interracial class politics was Andrews of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. Cope's claims that Andrews was a "'revolutionary unionist' … in favour of greatly enlarging the scope of existing union organisation" as far back as 1910, and shared the outlook of Mann, with whom he struck up a friendship,[326] are not accurate. Before the events of 1913, Andrews was a typical White Labourite. In 1907, for example, he stated: "I think the native should be kept as much as possible to himself, and allowed to develop as he is capable in his own sphere, and this, in my opinion, is chiefly agriculture, and that he should develop in locations or reserves".[327]

In 1911, at a union meeting in Johannesburg to "protest against the encroachment of coloured labour in the skilled trades in South Africa", Andrews argued: "The Government was guilty of a crime not only against the white people, but against the 'nigger' himself in forcing him to go to the mines and work for the benefit of the capitalist class". [328] As late as December 1913, he was still defending the racial policies of the SA Labour Party. His general approach was, moreover, that of a reformer: Cope admits that, before 1913, Andrews "shared a sanguine view with other Labour leaders that the working class in all countries would before long march to power on the smooth, broad road marked out by the ballot box".[329]

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[322] "Mary Fitzgerald", 1987, in C.J. Beyers and J.L. Basson, editors, 1987, *Dictionary of South African Biography*, Human Sciences Research Council, Pretoria, vol.V, pp. 265-6
[323] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, p. 269
[324] Gitsham and Trembath, 1926, *op cit*., p. 160
[325] Ticktin, 1969, *op cit.*, p. 65
[326] Cope, n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 108-111; also see Katz, 1976, *op cit.*, pp. 244, 264-6, 272
[327] Andrews in 1907, as quoted in van Duin, 1990, *op cit*., p. 647
[328] See Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit*., pp. 124, 127
[329] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 77-8.

Andrews did not play a prominent role in the 1913 general strike, confining himself to his work as a member of parliament. In 1914, however, he was the principal Germiston organiser for the general strike,[330] and moved sharply to the left.[331] In the parliamentary debates around the Indemnity Bill, he not only condemned the suppression of the general strike, but also went on to condemn the government for suppressing African strikers:[332]

> If the employers were going to engage coloured men and natives, did the House consider that these men had not the right to organise and combine? If they were going to make wage-workers of the natives, if they insisted on thrusting the natives into the industrial market, they would have to face the organisation of the native and coloured men …
>
> The coloured man and the native had a perfect right in the matter, however horrified members might be, they had as much right to organise and get the full result of their labour as the white man.

By the middle of the year, he told the SA Labour Party that he wanted to "abolish" the class system, and "enable the whole country to be one nationally and economically": in response to a question, he stated that "The Black man is included".[333]

Another recruit was S.P. Bunting, who was born in London in 1873 to an establishment background.[334] His great-grandfather, Jabez Bunting, was a leader of the Methodist movement in the early nineteenth century, and his father was knighted in the Queen's birthday honours in 1908. Bunting attended the University of Oxford, where he won the Chancellor's Prize for classical languages in 1897, before coming out with the British forces as an officer in the Anglo-Boer War. Afterwards he established a law practice in Johannesburg and a joined several exclusive clubs, including the Rand Club.

Tall and awkward, morally courageous, S.P. Bunting never "faltered or flinched" from his convictions, throwing himself wholeheartedly into the causes his conscience dictated.[335] His political trajectory from 1907 to 1915 showed a consistent move towards the left and the class struggle. In 1907 or 1908, S.P. Bunting became convinced of the need for a White Labour policy, mainly from the perspective of a supporter of British imperialism. He then moved towards the SA Labour Party, because of its White Labour policy, but became increasingly interested in the broader labour movement: he was Creswell's election agent

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[330] Copy of "Manifesto no. 3: Workers of S.A.", issued by the Federation of Trades, new executive committee, Johannesburg, 19 January 1914. Simons Papers, Manuscript and Archives section, African Studies Centre, University of Cape Town, section 4.3.4.
[331] Hirson, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 134
[332] W.H. Andrews, contribution to debate on "Indemnity and Undesirables Special Deportation Bill", *Union of South Africa: House of Assembly, 1914*. Government Printers. Pretoria. Column 588.
[333] Cope, [? 1943] n.d., *op cit*., pp. 168-9
[334] The main source of biographical material is Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit.* Also see Brian Bunting, 1993, *op cit.*; Brian Bunting, 1996a, *op cit*; Arthur H. Bunting, 1993, *op cit*.; Colin Bundy, November/ December 1993, "Bunting and Basner", *Southern African Review of Books*; Hirson, 1989c, *op cit*.; Eddie Roux, 29 May 1936, *op cit*.
[335] Sachs, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 127-130

in 1910,[336] an unsuccessful Labour candidate that same year, a legal adviser for the party, and part of the group that produced the *Worker*. He was probably "more of a liberal than a socialist" at the time.[337]

S.P. Bunting veered sharply leftwards in the 1913 general strike, which he regarded as the "first act of South Africa's working class revolution, whose end is not yet".[338] He became increasingly convinced of the need for a radical break with capitalism, and was among the SA Labour Party's Transvaal Provincial Council members elected the next year. By 1914, he was describing himself as an "International Socialist".[339]

Also radicalised by the events of 1913 and 1914 was Ivon Jones, the general-secretary of the SA Labour Party. Born at Aberystwyth in Wales in 1883, he was perpetually plagued by the tuberculosis that eventually placed him in an early grave.[340] Ivon Jones came to South Africa in November 1910, after a stay in New Zealand, believing the climate could aid his health. Initially a strict Unitarian, he worked as a clerk for the Victoria Falls and Transvaal Power Company that supplied power to the mines, joined the SA Labour Party in 1911, and moved towards socialism while continuing to adhere to non-conformist Christianity. Ivon Jones was radicalised by the general strikes of 1913 and 1914.[341] He regarded the events of 1913 and 1914 strikes as pivotal events:[342]

> It was in the 1913 strike that it first occurred to some of the most militant white workers that the native workers were also a factor in labour movement. And from that time there has been a growing minority of the white workers who realise that the emancipation of the white can only be achieved by solidarity with the native, and who laugh derisively at the superficial socialism which ignores the native masses.

The new radical layer within the SA Labour Party played an important part in the leadership positions of the party, and also convinced the party to apply to for membership of the Labour and Socialist International in 1913. Its emergence would also have important consequences when the First World War broke out in August 1914.

On 1 August 1914, the Austrian empire declared war on Serbia. The allies of each side quickly became involved, and on August 4 Britain declared war on Germany. The First World War, a war on a scale unprecedented, struck the labour socialist movements internationally like a thunderbolt.

The great majority of parliamentary socialists quickly lined up with their governments' war efforts, and the classical Marxists were generally no different. The Labour and Socialist International collapsed as its main parties defied the organisation's anti-war resolutions of 1907 and 1913, and sided with their respective governments. One result was that the SA Labour Party's request for affiliation was never resolved, although

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[336] Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., p. 442
[337] Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit.*, p. 64
[338] Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit.*, p. 66
[339] Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit.*, p. 72
[340] This account is based largely on Hirson's definitive biography of Jones. See Hirson, 1995, *op cit.* Also see Cope, n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 204-5
[341] Hirson, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 134
[342] Ivon Jones, [9 June 1921] 1988a, *op cit*., p. 120



Figure fourteen: George Mason, radicalised by the events of 1913 and 1914

Source: John Campbell and J. Raeburn Munro, 1913, *The Great Rand Strike: July, 1913*, published by the authors in Johannesburg, printed by E.H. Adlington and Co.



Figure fifteen: J. Forrester Brown, moved towards syndicalism after 1913

Source: John Campbell and J. Raeburn Munro, 1913, *The Great Rand Strike: July, 1913*, published by the authors in Johannesburg, printed by E.H. Adlington and Co.

it is most unlikely that the German SDP and other leading parties would have accepted a party committed to White Labourism into the international.

The single most important defection from the Labour and Socialist International's anti-war commitments was the German SDP, which had always set the pace for the other Marxist groups. With the exceptions of Karl Liebknecht and Rühle, the SDP's parliamentary representatives voted war credits to the German government. Georgi Plekhanov, the founder of Russian Marxism, likewise came out in support of the war effort, as did the Mensheviks.

Opposition to the war by the British Socialist Party and Independent Labour Party, both affiliated to the Labour and Socialist International, faded quickly. Hyndman led the pro-war group in the British Socialist Party. Blatchford, who had supported the British government during the Anglo-Boer War, and who remained involved in the *Clarion*, also supported the British war effort; he later supported the Conservative Party. Despite internal dissent, the two parties lined up with the British Labour Party, with Ramsey MacDonald of the Labour Party stating: "Whatever our view may be on the origin of the war, we must go through with it".[343]

Over time, growing opposition to the war, galvanised by rising international working class unrest and the news of the Russian Revolution in 1917, saw a revival of the influence of anti-militarist political socialism. In the crucial period that followed the outbreak of war, however, only the Bolsheviks, and the majority of Bulgarian and Serbian parties, out of the entire classical Marxist movement, and out of the vast edifice of the Labour and Socialist International, opposed the war.

This has often been misunderstood as representing a general crisis of socialism, a situation in which nationalism took "precedence over socialism",[344] "socialist protests against the war" were "submerged by the tidal wave of nationalism",[345] and "socialist leaders were either cowed or carried away by the wave of jingoism".[346]

Such claims only hold true if socialism is reduced to political socialism, because the great majority of groups and individuals with the broad anarchist tradition opposed the war from the start.[347] There were several important exceptions. The French CGT earned itself a place in history as the only syndicalist union to support the national war effort. Despite a distinguished anti-militarist tradition, including mass demonstrations in 1913 and 1914, the CGT leadership buckled when the German unions failed to respond to requests for joint protests, and declared its support for the national war effort on 3 August 1914.[348] Kropotkin also came out in support of the Allied war effort, rallying a small anarchist grouping that included

[343] Morton and Tate, 1979, *op cit.,* pp. 255-259: the quote is from p. 256
[344] Mackenzie, 1966, *op cit*., p. 130
[345] Tsuzuki, 1991, *op cit*., p. 177
[346] Morton and Tate, 1979, *op cit*., p. 255
[347] An overview of these developments within the broader context of an ongoing anarchist and syndicalist anti-militarist tradition may be found in Schmidt and van der Walt, forthcoming in 2007, *op cit.*
[348] Barbara Mitchell, 1990, "French Syndicalism: an experiment in practical anarchism", in van der Linden and Thorpe, editors, 1990, *op cit*., pp. 36-37

Cornilessen and Guillaume to the view that a victory for German militarism would establish a new absolutism across Western Europe.[349]

Overall, however, the broad anarchist tradition provides a striking contrast to political socialism at this time. In Italy, a section of the USI leadership supported the war, but was promptly expelled. In Germany, the syndicalist Free Association of German Trade Unions, later reorganised as the Free Workers' Union of Germany (FAUD), suffered ongoing repression for its anti-war position, and its printing presses were impounded for the duration of the war. In the Netherlands, where Nieuwenhuis had helped form the International Anti-Militarist Association in 1904, anti-militarism was the central theme in local anarchism and syndicalism. Spanish anarchists hosted an international any-militarist congress in 1915, while a large anti-war campaign by the Brazilian movement built up to an International Peace Congress in Rio de Janeiro.

In Britain, the "immediate reaction" of the "vast majority" of anarchists was "to reject the war and immediate steps were taken to propagandise against it".[350] Even *Freedom* rejected Kropotkin's pro-war position, and the great man was marginalised within the anarchist movement, despite the enormous reverence in which he was previously held; the same fate awaited Cornilessen, whose "very considerable" influence quickly "dwindled away to nothing".[351] *Freedom* was raided, its press seized, and its editor, Tom Keell, jailed: later issues were printed with the help of the anti-war wing of the Independent Labour Party, as commercial presses refused to print the paper.[352]

The war severely disrupted the British syndicalist movement, leading to the end of the working class unrest and the collapse of the Industrial Syndicalist Education League, but no "prominent militant … actively supported the war":[353] even Mann, who privately hoped for a German defeat, "never wavered" in his "fundamental opposition to the war".[354]

The IWW was heavily persecuted in Australia, Canada and the United States for its anti-war position. The United States IWW declared:[355]

> With the European war for conquest and exploitation raging and destroying the lives, class consciousness, and unity of the workers, and the ever growing agitation for military preparedness clouding the main issues, and delaying the realisation of our ultimate aim with patriotic, and, therefore, capitalistic aspirations, we openly declare ourselves determined opponents of all nationalistic sectionalism or patriotism, and the militarism preached and supported by our one enemy, the Capitalist Class.

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[349] Miller, 1970, *op cit*., pp. 32-3
[350] Quail, 1978, *op cit*., p. 287
[351] Thus Woodcock comments, "The break with the anarchists was probably the most unhappy event of Kropotkin's life": Woodcock, 1975, *op cit*., p. 203; also see Quail, 1978, *op cit*., pp. 287-290. On Cornelissen's fall, see Woodcock, 1975, *op cit*., p. 413
[352] Quail, 1978, *op cit*., pp. 291-293
[353] Holton, 1976, *op cit*., p. 200
[354] Tsuzuki, 1991, *op cit*., p. 178
[355] Quoted in *International Socialist Review*, April 1917, "The Deadly Parallel", vol.XVII, p. 618

> We condemn all wars, and, for the prevention of such, we proclaim the anti-militarist propaganda in time of peace, thus promoting class solidarity among the workers of the entire world, and, in time of war, the general strike in all industries.

The press caricatured the IWW as "Imperial Wilhelm's Warriors", and supported the campaign that saw thirty-five American states pass "criminal syndicalism" laws after 1914.[356] These were used against anarchists and other socialists, including the IWW and the left wing of the Socialist Party of America. In September 1917, federal forces raided IWW offices across the country, seizing five tons of records and arrested scores of officials. In 1918, mass trials saw the courts convicting one hundred and one IWW officials of more than 10,000 crimes.[357]

By 1920 up to two thousand American IWW members were in jail. The *International Socialist Review* ceased publication at this time, as did numerous other radical papers. State repression was matched by vigilante actions that had always plagued the union: in August 1917, Frank Little, an IWW organiser active amongst the miners was lynched; in November 1919, Wesley Everest, an IWW lumberjack, was murdered and mutilated; groups like the American Legion, the Ku Klux Klan and small-town Citizens' Leagues stormed IWW offices and assaulted union members.

The IWW in Australia had been kept under close surveillance from 1915 onwards, and in 1916 the organisation was repeatedly raided, its literature confiscated.[358] In September 1916, thirty men were detained, several van loads of materials were confiscated, including membership lists which were duly forwarded to military intelligence and employers, and, on the eve of a referendum on conscription, a number of activists, including Glynn, formerly of Johannesburg, and Peter Larkin, brother of Ireland's Jim Larkin, were jailed for treason. The local press claimed that the IWW was controlled by Germany, and made much of fact that fifty IWW members were German. In 1917, further arrests took place, and an Unlawful Associations Act that year effectively banned the IWW.

In Canada, the IWW was harassed under the British North America Act, which helped close the organisation down by 1915, when its three remaining branches were dissolved.[359] Again, the charge of German links was invoked: the arrest of two IWW members in August 1915 was accompanied by press references to their supposed possession of "German literature" and "messages in German". Both the Chicago IWW and the De Leonist body, the Workers' International Industrial Union, were banned in Canada in 1918 by a federal order-in-council: membership carried a mandatory five-year prison term.[360] (Some variety was

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[356] Melvyn Dubofksy, 1990, "The Rise and Fall of Revolutionary Syndicalism in the United States", in van der Linden and Thorpe, 1990, *op cit.* p. 215
[357] Dubofsky, 1990, *op cit.*, p. 215
[358] Burgmann, 1995, *op cit.*, pp. 204-228; *The International*, 11 October 1918, "Dirty Work Down Under"
[359] Gary Jewell, 1975, *The History of the IWW in* Canada, IWW, Chicago. I would like to thank Jon Bekken of the *Industrial Worker* for supplying me with this article.
[360] *The International*, 4 January 1918, "The Class Struggle Declared Criminal"; *The International*, 4 January 1919, "Freedom in Canada"

later introduced in Chile, where the local IWW was accused in 1920 of being funded by "Peruvian gold",[361] Germany presumably having lost its role as sponsor of international subversion.)

There is, in short, no basis for Lenin's subsequent claim[362] that the broad anarchist tradition had, no less than the classical Marxists of the Labour and Socialist International, capitulated to their respective States and ruling classes on the war issue. The great majority of anarchists and syndicalists were close to Lenin's view that all wars between States were conflicts between ruling classes, and Lenin's view that wars between States should be transformed into revolutionary civil wars had a lengthy pedigree in the anarchist tradition, going back to Bakunin.

In South Africa, the war issue played out along the country's many faultlines, once parliament declared its support for Britain on 8 September 1914. This meant, initially, that South African troops would be dispatched to the German territory of South West Africa. The African, Coloured and Indian nationalists aligned themselves with the war effort, out of loyalty to the British Empire and in hope of political rewards after the war. The South African Native National Congress halted its campaign against the 1913 Land Act and worked with the Native Affairs Department to recruit 25,000 African labourers to support the South African war effort.[363] The Indian nationalists quickly decided that the "consideration of grievances had given way to the performance of duty to the Empire", raising a corps of 700 stretcher-bearers.[364]

Amongst English-speaking Whites, pro-war sentiment rose sharply, and was expressed dramatically by anti-German riots following the sinking of the British liner, the *Lusitania*, on 7 May 1915. Crowds gathered on the Johannesburg streets, shouting "To hell with Kaiser Bill! Burn the German shops!" which was followed by a night of arson and looting.[365] Two hundred firms on the Witwatersrand, associated with Germans, were attacked.[366] School teachers in Johannesburg harangued students with the need for patriotism, beating children considered "pro-German", while the press raised the call to "Organise the home front" and raise money for the British war effort.[367] Riots also broke out in Durban and Kimberley.[368]

By contrast very few Afrikaners were willing to support the military campaigns of the hated British Empire. The National Party, formed in January 1914 by Hertzog, favoured a republic independent of the Empire, and fought in parliament against the proposal to commit South Africa to the British war effort.

More hardline nationalists hoped to resolve the issue by unconstitutional means. De la Rey, a general in the Anglo-Boer War, who had also played an important role in leading the *commandos* against the 1914 strikers, called a mass meeting at Treurfontein in the Transvaal that resolved to re-establish the old republic. Through the *commando* system, and in conjunction with rebels in the new South African Defence

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[361] De Shazo and Halstead, 1974, *op cit.,* p. 11

[362] Lenin made great play of the capitulation of the French CGT and Kropotkin, of the "conversion of the Kropotkin, of Grave, Cornilessen and other 'stars' of anarchism into social-chauvinists or 'anarcho-trenchists,' as Ghe, one of the few anarchists who have still preserved a sense of honour and a conscience, has put it": Lenin, [1917b] 1975b, *op cit*., pp. 309-310.

[363] Simons 1983, *op cit.*, p. 176-7

[364] Ashwin Desai, Vishnu Padayachee, Krish Reddy and Goolam Vahed, 2002, *Blacks in Whites: a century of cricket struggles in KwaZulu-Natal*, University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, pp. 48-9

[365] Sachs, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 65-66

[366] Ticktin, 1969, *op cit.*, pp. 69-70

[367] Sachs, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 64-7

[368] Roberts, 1976, *op cit*., pp. 362-4

Force, he rallied a force of almost 12,000 men in the south-western Transvaal, the north-eastern Orange Free State, and Kenhardt in the north-western Cape.

Led by commercial farmers, civil servants, and builders, the Rebellion army drew its mass base from rural poor Whites, mainly marginal farmers and *bywoners*, who were being relentlessly forced into the labour market.[369] Spiralling poverty, arid land, drought, and plagues created desperation, and deep resentment of the Botha government, big capital and African competition created a mass base that hoped for salvation through a restored Transvaal. These hopes were fed by the visions of Nicolas van Rensburg, a *Siener* (prophet), whose visions and pronouncements could be read as justifying rebellion, and influenced men like De la Rey: "En wie het [Jesus] doodgemaak? Die *owerhede".* ("And who killed Jesus? The *authorities".*)[370]

The Rebellion hoped to link up with German forces, and organise a *coup detat* for September 16, but suffered a blow when De la Rey was killed at a roadblock. It smouldered on into the middle of November, and also spread into South West Africa – rebels seized Nakob, a small village on the South African side of the border, and a group of 500 men went over to the Germans – but was suppressed by government forces.

Within the local labour and socialist movements, opinion was also deeply divided, with radicals generally opposing the war and the mainstream of White labour supporting the government's position. The Social Democratic Party in Durban issued a statement opposing the war, but later moved to a pro-war position in line with that of Hyndman in Britain.[371] The Socialist Party in Pietermaritzburg followed a similar route. Both parties were, however, very small and of little consequence to the events of this period.

The Cape SDF, always a mixed group, split on the war issue.[372] Initially, "to keep our ranks intact and allow individual opinions", the SDF "decided by resolution" to "declare itself neutral on the war issue".[373] This resolution allowed the anti-war members of the organisation, such as Harrison, to speak out against the war: given the fact that the radicals tended to set the SDF agenda, the organisation was soon, therefore, identified with an anti-war position, to the dissatisfaction of the pro-war minority.

In September 1914, the war issue came to a head in the SDF. Harrison successfully moved a resolution "That the Federation is opposed to all wars organised on Capitalist lines, and that we consider the present war the outcome of the Capitalist machinations in which all belligerent nations are equally responsible",[374] "took over the reins of office", and the pro-war group, including Bolton of the stonemason's union, and J.H. Howard[375] resigned.[376]

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[369] Swart, 2000, *op cit*., pp. 161, 165, 169-171, 173-5
[370] Quoted in Swart, 2000, *op cit*., p. 169, emphasis in the original
[371] The Social Democratic Party's statement is mentioned in Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, p. 179
[372] Harrison, n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 50-61
[373] Harrison, n.d., *op cit*., p. 51
[374] Harrison, n.d., *op cit*., p. 52. Harrison's autobiography gives the date of the meeting as "September 6th, 1916" but this appears to be an error, as his discussion of the SDF's subsequent anti-war activities refers mainly to events in 1914 and 1915. See Harrison, n.d., *op cit*., pp. 52-62
[375] Ticktin suggested that "during most of its existence" J.H. Howard was the SDF's "main guiding spirit": Ticktin, 1973, *op cit.*, p. 327. There is no evidence to support this claim.
[376] Harrison, *op cit*., pp. 50-52

The SDF announced its new "War on War" position soon afterwards. Highly controversial public meetings, held in Adderley Street, grew to enormous proportions, packing the Dock Road from the Flat Iron Building to the Carlton Hotel.[377] Many in the crowd were hostile, threats were made, and Harrison received several anonymous threats on his life.[378] As an ex-soldier and an Englishman, Harrison had some legitimacy with the crowds that the Jews, for instance, lacked, but even so, it was necessary to station two "burly" bodyguards at the speaker's platform. Harrison also took care to announce that he was a crack shot and a good boxer: "though an admitted pacifist in the matters of organised physical force to settle national disputes, I was quite prepared to use all I knew in self-defence if I was at any time attacked".[379]

In late 1914 Harrison was arrested for distributing a leaflet entitled "*WAR!*"[380]

> Picture the 'hero' glorified and awarded the Victoria or Iron Cross in the melee that brought him his fame. The reports of the pistol, the clash of the sword, the dying moans of those whom he has slain, and over whom he stands a maddened and excited victor bespattered in human blood. The heads of mothers' sons and children's fathers lie at his feet and their blood and brains besmear the ground, while in a dark garret to-day these mothers and children with bitter tears mourn their loss that has been his fame.
>
> These and other gruesome deeds are demanded of you who respond to the ironical call of 'your country needs you!' Truly it does! In your country there is always unemployment, high rents, and dear goods, there is always bad housing and disease, there is squalor and filth in home and factory, there is poverty and starvation. So YOUR country needs you! … Yes! YOUR country needs YOU. Are you prepared to fight for your country and help to bring wealth, happiness and peace with ALL people?

He was sentenced to six months' imprisonment with the option of a £50 fine, but after public protests, the fine was reduced to 50 shillings and Harrison was released after two days in Roeland Street Gaol.[381]

The war issue also opened up conflicts within the SA Labour Party. The radicalised layer, prominent in the central structures, was initially able to commit the party to a militant anti-war position, along the lines of the resolutions adopted by the Labour and Socialist International in 1913. At a special meeting of the SA Labour Party's administrative council on August 2, a statement was issued condemning the conflict as one that could "only benefit the International Armament Manufacturer's Ring, and other enemies of the working

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[377] Harrison, *op cit*., p. 54
[378] Harrison, *op cit*., pp. 53-55
[379] Harrison, *op cit*., p. 54
[380] W. Harrison, 1914, "WAR!", issued by War on War League in Cape Town, Simons Papers, Manuscript and Archives section, African Studies Centre, University of Cape Town, Fragile papers section. The leaflet is also reproduced in Harrison, n.d., *op cit*., pp. 59-60
[381] Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., p. 57

class".[382] It went on appeal "to the workers of the world to organise and refrain from participating in an unjust war".

A majority of the predominantly English-speaking membership was swept up in the tide of pro-war feeling and aimed to declare its loyalty to the British cause.[383] The *Worker* began to campaign openly in favour of the war in defiance of the policy laid down by the administrative council. On 6 August 1914, for example, it carried an article stating that "the man who, when his country is at war, refuses to do his duty is a scab and deserves the contempt of all".[384]

Six of the eight SA Labour Party members of parliament offered to enlist in the armed forces, although only two were eventually accepted, and voted for the declaration of war on Germany.[385] Branch after branch declared themselves in favour of the war, with the Cape Town, Johannesburg and Krugersdorp branches offering to form "Labour Battalions" for the government; in August, the Benoni "Battalion" declared itself 2,000 strong and "prepared to go anywhere". The South African Industrial Federation initially opposed the war, but reversed its position on October 3 by an almost unanimous vote.[386]

The anti-war radicals responded by forming a "War on War League (South Africa)" at the start of September 1914.[387] This was an anti-militarist group that required its members to "pledge themselves to oppose this or any other war at all times and at all costs",[388] focused on campaigning against the war in the White labour movement, and was largely based on the Witwatersrand. It used leaflets, a four-page weekly, the *War on War Gazette* that appeared from 19 September 1914, edited by S.P. Bunting, as well as public meetings and debates to promote its views.

The War on War League is often assumed to be simply a faction within the SA Labour Party: however, it described itself as an independent body, and its membership included people who did not even belong to the party.[389] Many members were drawn from within the SA Labour Party's new radical layer: besides S.P. Bunting and Ivon Jones, they included four other members of the Transvaal Provincial Council – Brown, J.A. Clark, Crisp, and Wade – the party treasurer, Gabriel Weinstock, the treasurer, and local organisers – including Mason. Andrews was sympathetic to the organisation, and supported its activities, but never actually joined.

The War on War League also attracted support from veterans of the IWW and Socialist Labour Party, a point often ignored. The De Leonists working inside the SA Labour Party, such as Philip Roux[390] and John Campbell, soon joined. Dunbar, always a "bitter critic" of the SA Labour Party, joined the party in 1915

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[382] Hirson, 1995, *op cit.*, p 138; Lerumo, 1971, *op cit.*, p. 32; Ticktin, 1969, *op cit.*, p. 63.
[383] See Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., pp. 324-328
[384] Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit.*, p. 70
[385] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, pp. 179-180; Ticktin, 1969, *op cit.*, p. 64
[386] Ticktin, 1969, *op cit.*, p. 64
[387] See Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., pp. 328-335
[388] *The War on War Gazette*, 3 October 1914
[389] War on War League, 15 March 1915, *Keeping the Red Flag Flying: an address to the SA Labour Party*, p. 5, copy available on microfilm of *War on War Gazette*, Johannesburg Public Library; Ticktin, 1969, *op cit.*, p. 65
[390] See Ticktin, 1969, *op cit.*, p. 63. Also see Eddie Roux and Win Roux, 1970, *op cit.*, p. 8

in order to "help the anti-militarist section".[391] Writing in the *War on War Gazette*, he still described himself as an "Industrial Unionist, a Revolutionist and a Rebel against the system of capitalist pinching".[392]

Roux was the new organisation's secretary, S.P. Bunting also served as treasurer, Wade was chair,[393] while Dunbar was praised as "one of our cleverest and most earnest speakers".[394] The SDF also publicly associated itself with the War on War League, and distributed its materials, while Harrison's "*WAR!*" was also published by the War on War League.

The Communist school has tended to present the politics of the War on War League as "Marxist in approach", and in "search of the clear springs of Marxist socialism".[395] This is part of a broader attempt to associate the War on War League with the anti-war Marxist minorities abroad, to suggest, therefore, some sort of early connection to Bolshevism.

These arguments are misleading. Besides the anti-war principle, the War on War League did not have a clear platform, or a monolithic perspective. While its propaganda went far beyond simple anti-war sentiment or pacifism to develop a critique of capitalism and the militarism of the modern State, it drew on perspectives ranging from radical Christianity to classical Marxism and anarchism.

Openly critical of groups like the SDP and the Labour Party in Britain, the *War on War Gazette* reprinted writings by the minority of political socialists critical of the war. However, anti-war statements by figures such as Debs, Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg appeared alongside Kropotkin's 1913 pamphlet *Wars and Capitalism*,[396] articles from the anarchist papers *Freedom* of London and *Tierra y Libertad* of Barcelona, and the writings of De Leon. A letter from Tolstoy to a South African "friend", perhaps Gandhi, was also printed under the heading "Tolstoy and 'Anarchy'".[397]

The War on War League consistently argued that the First World War was generated by capitalism, and that the war was fundamentally against the interests of the working class,[398] but such arguments – a staple of the radical left, in both its libertarian and political forms – were influenced as much by De Leon and Kropotkin as Liebknecht.

When John Campbell debated the claim "That the present war has been brought about by the ruling classes" at the Tivoli Theatre on President Street in Johannesburg in October 1914, and argued that the conflict was "a capitalists' war for markets to take surplus produce and for Dominions to supply raw material and cheap labour",[399] it is hardly to be supposed that Lenin, then an almost entirely unknown figure in South African circles, was the mainspring of his anti-war position. When Philip Roux made similar arguments, also

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[391] *The International,* 26 November 1915, "Snapshots: A.B. Dunbar"; also see Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., p. 330
[392] Andrew B. Dunbar, 14 November 1914, "Getting Some Light", *The War on War Gazette*
[393] *The War on War Gazette*, 31 October 1914; also see Ticktin, 1969, *op cit.*, p. 63
[394] *The War on War Gazette*, 21 November 1914, "The Time to Strike"
[395] Cope, n.d., *op cit.*, p. 166; Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit.*, p. 46
[396] This first appeared as a series of articles in *Freedom*, from May to August 1913, and was printed as a separate pamphlet that year by the Freedom Press: see Graham Purchase, 1996, *Evolution and Revolution: an introduction to the life and thought of Peter Kropotkin*, Jura Media, Petersham, Australia, p. 167; Quail, 1978, *op cit*., p. 287
[397] *The War on War Gazette*, 10 October 1914, "Tolstoy and 'Anarchy'
[398] *The War on War Gazette,* 26 September 1914; *The War on War Gazette,* 3 October 1914, "The War Traders"
[399] The leaflet advertising the debate can be found in the Simons Papers, Manuscript and Archives section, African Studies Centre, University of Cape Town, fragile papers section. A report on the debate appears in *The War on War Gazette*, 3 October 1914", The League in Battle"

accusing the armaments industry of fomenting the war to boost its revenues,[400] it is equally unlikely that his inspiration derived from Liebknecht or Luxemburg, rather than De Leon.

Dunbar, for his part, drew his inspiration from the Chicago IWW, while Ivon Jones was no Marxist, arguing, "The war has brought out the revelation that the high postulations of Tolstoy, rightly understood, are the only effective foundation for the Labour movement".[401]

Workers, argued S.P. Bunting, were the chief victims of the war, but the only force that could "destroy the Iron Heel that crushes the world with its ever increasing weight of militarism and death".[402] This was a reference to another influence, Jack London's 1907 immensely popular novel of war and revolution, *The Iron Heel*. In this story, a ruthless "Oligarchy" of gigantic capitalist trusts, supported by conservative trade unions, crushes a working class uprising, but is finally defeated by armed rebellion.[403] In the fictional world, moreover, the outbreak of war between the United States and Germany in 1913 is halted by general strike in the two countries, escalating into revolution in Germany. S.P. Bunting concluded:[404]

> It is only the common people of all countries, combined and organised, that can do the big thing for good in the world, especially the prevention of wars by which they gain nothing and lose everything. It is to the 'rank and file' that we look to strengthen the hands of the War on War League, South Africa.

The War on War League was, in short, an eclectic body, influenced by a wide range of ideas. This made its developing line of argument even more remarkable in retrospect. Rather than get drawn into the war fever of the time, the organisation generally refused to treat any of the belligerent States as more guilty than the others.

The *War on War Gazette* took issue with claims that the Allied side (eventually comprising Britain, France, Italy, Japan and Russia) were fighting for democracy against the militarism and autocracy of the Central Powers (Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, Germany and Turkey). The Allied governments were themselves guilty of murderous labour repression, anti-Semitic policies and dictatorship in Russia, and "a slave trade in Africa".[405] Russian despotism was, the League suggested, "already fashionable in the United States, South Africa, Canada and Australia": "perhaps the rulers of the Western nations [are] finding that 'freedom' and 'democracy' are not payable propositions and are threatening to get out of hand".[406]

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[400] Philip R. Roux, 3 October 1914", The Cause of War", *The War on War Gazette* Philip R. Roux, 3 October 1914, "Why You Should Join the League", *The War on War Gazette*

[401] Cited in Hirson 1995, *op cit.*, p. 138

[402] *The War on War Gazette*, 24 October 1914, "Our Policy"

[403] See J. London, [1907] 1976, *The Iron Heel*, Journeyman Press, London and West Nyack. *The Iron Heel* was immensely popular amongst United States IWW members and other radicals: see Foner, 1965, *op cit.*, p.151. The main character in the book, the archetypical self-educated working class revolutionary, "Ernest Everhardt", was based on Haywood: see Dubofsky, 1987, *op cit*., pp. 63 -4

[404] *The War on War Gazette*, 26 September 1914, "War: what for?"

[405] *The War on War Gazette*, 3 October 1914", The League in Battle"; *The War on War Gazette*, 3 October 1914, "What 'We' Are Fighting For"

[406] *The War on War Gazette*, 3 October 1914, "What 'We' Are Fighting For". Also see *The War on War Gazette*, 24 October 1914, Our Policy"; *The War on War Gazette*, 21 November 1914, "Sunday's Tivoli Meeting"

Had not the South African government, part of the British Empire, suppressed the strikes of 1907, 1913 and 1914 and shot down Africans and Indians demanding their rights?[407] In addition, commented the *War on War Gazette,* the war was "enthroning the worst in human nature; ... sowing hatred between man and man; entrenching capitalism as it was never entrenched before".[408]

From the beginning, the War on War League worked in difficult circumstances. As was the case in Cape Town, speakers on the Witwatersrand faced hostility from patriotic crowds. A "large section" of the crowd at a meeting in Germiston in September 1914, for example, refused "to sing the 'Red Flag'" or give the speaker "a quiet hearing".[409]

Matters were made worse by government repression. In November 1914, Dunbar was sentenced to £100 or 12 months' hard labour for "inciting the Rand to rebellion".[410] He had, the *War on War Gazette* explained, called on workers not to surrender their right to strike during the war. That month the censor also suppressed the *War on War Gazette*,[411] after a bare three months of publication. The War on War League now had to rely on pamphlets such as the March 1915 *Keeping the Red Flag Flying: an address to the SA Labour Party*,[412] and public talks to promote its message. The police kept records of these talks, although they suspected that the "trouble likely to arise at such meetings" was more likely to "be directed by the audience against the speakers".[413] S.P. Bunting, John Campbell, Dunbar and P.R. Roux were all prominent. Campbell stated that:[414]

> There are two nations only! Those who do all the work, receive no plums but all the kicks; and those who do no work, receive all the plums and give the kicks.
>
> You must disarm of the Capitalist of his blunderbuss for ever [*sic*] at your heads, the blunderbuss of hunger, which is now sending some of you to the front to be shot at and to shoot men whom you have never seen in your lives and with whom you have no quarrel.
>
> What do you get for your patriotism? Why the muzzle end of a musket!

Within the SA Labour Party, too, the War on War League faced increasing difficulties, becoming the focus of British patriotic reaction. In September 1914, an attempt to censure the anti-war elements in the

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[407] *The War on War Gazette*, 3 October 1914", The League in Battle"; *The War on War Gazette*, 17 October 1914, "The Government and the Working class"
[408] *The War on War Gazette*, 3 October 1914, "What 'We' Are Fighting For"
[409] *The War on War Gazette*, 3 October 1914", The League in Battle"
[410] *The War on War Gazette*, 21 November 1914, "The Time to Strike"
[411] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, p. 180
[412] War on War League, 15 March 1915, *op cit.*
[413] J.H. Douglas, Deputy Commissioner of Police, letter of 14 October 1914 to the Secretary, South African Police, in South African Police file, "Socialist Meetings in Johannesburg", SAP 15, CONF6/245/14/15, National Archives, Pretoria
[414] Report by H. Turle, sergeant, on speech by Campbell at Market Square, Johannesburg, Sunday 18 October 1914, in South African Police file, "Socialist Meetings in Johannesburg", SAP 15, CONF6/245/14/15, National Archives, Pretoria

administrative council was narrowly defeated, as was a campaign to summon an early Party conference on war policy.[415] The final issue of the *War on War Gazette* reported that an appeal was circulating within branch structures to "dissociate the Party from the War on War League in the minds of the general public" and "remove all persons of War on War tendencies from the Executive of the Party". [416] This "grand Heresy-Hunt" was, the paper suggested, designed to avoid "further irreparable loss of support" amongst the pro-war "public" ahead of the general elections of 1915.[417]

The War on War League managed to secure a majority at the December 1914 SA Labour Party congress, but this was probably due more to control of the party machinery, and to the absence of key pro-war figures such as Creswell, who had enlisted in the army. While the War on War league claimed to have the support of most "thoughtful men" and "sincere socialists" in the South African Labour Party,[418] it was well aware that the "advanced wing" of the party was a minority of the overall membership, whose "duty" was, therefore, to "to peg away until they have converted the rest, whether it takes weeks or generations".[419] The organisation therefore moved carefully: its support at the 1914 conference was not used to pass a clear anti-war resolution, but rather to put in place a "neutrality position" that allowed each party member to follow "his own reason and conscience" on the war issue – an approach that avoided the possibility of an open split.[420]

By March 1915, the War on War League was being rapidly pushed back. In January 1915, a "vigilance committee" was reportedly established to combat the War on War League.[421] In March 1915 the organisation issued a statement accusing the "militarist section" of the party of resorting to "underground intrigue, to wire pulling, to conspiracy, to bad blood ... against the League or its members", and calling on the two factions to "agree ... to differ".[422] The subsequent anti-German riots strengthened the pro-war forces in the South African Labour Party,[423] and the anti-war section lost ground even within the administrative council: a resolution, introduced by Wade, condemning the riots as the work of rival businessmen, was defeated.

In June 1915, Creswell returned from South Africa's successful campaign in South West Africa as an army major, and issued a "See-It-Through" Manifesto on June 30 that called for full support of the Imperial war effort. [424] The War on War League responded with *The Labour Party's Duty in the War,* a document signed by 20 prominent party members, including Andrews, Brown, S.P. Bunting, Ivon Jones, Mason and Wade.[425] The document called for adherence to the "Socialist ideal" of the party, and for international working class solidarity. "War", it argued, "is the great Niagara over which thunders the accumulated

[415] Ticktin, 1969, *op cit.*, pp. 65-6
[416] *The War on War Gazette*, 28 November 1914, "More 'Labour Unrest'"
[417] The *War on War Gazette*, 28 November 1914, "More 'Labour Unrest'"
[418] The *War on War Gazette*, 28 November 1914, "More 'Labour Unrest'"
[419] War on War League, 15 March 15 1915, *op cit.,* pp. 5-6
[420] Johns, 1995, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 41; Ticktin, 1969, *op cit.*, p. 66
[421] Ticktin, 1969, *op cit.*, p. 67
[422] War on War League, 15 March 1915, *op cit.,* pp. 6-7
[423] Ticktin, 1969, *op cit.*, pp. 69-70
[424] Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 42
[425] War on War League, June 1915, *The Labour Party's Duty in the War*, copy available on microfilm of *War on War Gazette*, Johannesburg Public Library

brutalities and deceits of the competitive system". The party should "accept no responsibility for the war or for its prosecution" but instead co-operate with the international labour movement to restore peace on the basis of a policy of no annexations, democratic control of foreign policy, armaments reduction, and the formation of an "International Council" to mediate future disputes.

Matters came to a head at a turbulent special conference of the SA Labour Party called for August 22-3, 1915.[426] Andrews was removed from the chair, and replaced by J.A. Clark, who was also then removed. Creswell put forward a "See-It-Through" resolution for the Bezuidenhout Valley branch, while Wade proposed an anti-war resolution. The matter was put to the vote and the pro-war position carried by 82 to 26 votes.

There was a second important item of business: a resolution was put forward that the party should not focus only on the White working class, but all "working" Whites, including small businessmen, professionals, and farmers.[427] The War on War group responded that a pro-war position would make it impossible to win a hearing amongst Afrikaner farmers and workers, and Andrews introduced a counter proposal: [428]

> The working class of this country are the Native people and if this is really a Labour Party and not a middle-class party as it appears to be rapidly becoming, we must admit the Native.

This, too, was soundly (and unsurprisingly) defeated.

5.8. From the War on War League to the International Socialist League

Following the resounding defeat of the War on War league, representing the new radicals in the SA Labour Party in combination with the syndicalist veterans of the *Voice of Labour* network, sixteen prominent party members walked out of the conference "singing the Red Flag".[429] They included Ivon Jones, secretary, Weinstock, treasurer, J.A. Clark, vice-chair, and Andrews, chair.

The dissidents did not, however, immediately resign: they regrouped, instead, as the "International League of the South African Labour Party" on 10 September 1915, with a new journal, the *International*. While the membership showed that the new organisation was largely drawn from the War on War League, its stated aims showed that its concerns were far broader than the war issue: to "propagate the principles of International Socialism and anti-militarism, and to promote and strengthen International Socialist unity and activity" and to "conserve the Socialist principles contained in the Constitution of the South African Labour

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[426] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 172-3; Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, pp. 44-5
[427] Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 46
[428] Brian Bunting, 1996a, editorial notes, *op cit.*, p. 111; Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 172; Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, pp. 164-5.
[429] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 173

Party".[430] A working committee was set up with Andrews as chair, J.A. Clark and Crisp as vice-chairs, Weinstock as treasurer and Ivon Jones as secretary.

By the end of September 1915, however, the *International* noted, an "impossible situation arose".[431] The "anxiety of one section" of the SA Labour Party "to protest its loyalty to the Empire by constant public disassociation from the Internationals", and "the impatience of the Internationals at the growing flag waving propensities of the majority" led to such "antagonism within the Party" that "the link broke". On September 22, the International Socialist League held its first general meeting, and voted to "sever all connection" with the SA Labour Party, and reconstitute itself as an independent International Socialist League.[432] (Bain, it is interesting to note, joined the new organisation, but only briefly.)[433] The new administrative council of the SA Labour Party responded with a resolution at the beginning of October expelling all persons who had joined the International Socialist League without first resigning from the SA Labour Party.[434]

The provisional constitution adopted at the end of September 1915 by the International Socialist League deleted all references to the SA Labour Party but remained vague: "to propagate the principles of International Socialism and anti-militarism, and to maintain and strengthen International working class organisation".[435] The early issues of the *International* were equally eclectic, and drew on a range of currents within the American and British socialist movements. Reprints from the *Socialist* were run alongside pieces from the *Labour Leader*, published by the anti-war wing of the Independent Labour Party; Marxist texts stood alongside anarchist writings; a book service was established selling Kropotkin's *Wars and Capitalism*, Tolstoy's *Patriotism and Christianity*, *Is Britain Blameless?* by Fenner Brockway of the Independent Labour Party, and *Anti-Patriotism* by the syndicalist Gustav Hervé,[436] published by the Socialist Labour Party in New York.[437]

The actions of the pro-war group in the SA Labour Party were partly informed by patriotic zeal, and partly with an eye on the October 1915 general elections. As matters turned out, the party fell far short of the anticipated 35 seats: out of 44 candidates, only four were elected; the *Worker* ceased publication; and, in 1917, the party lost control of the Transvaal Provincial Council.[438] It was a "khaki election", and was fought between the National Party and the South African Party, and it was the National Party that grew, gaining 27 seats to the South African Party's 54.[439] The South African Party allied with the pro-British

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[430] *The International*, 10 September 1915, "The International League of the S.A.L.P." It was not at this stage a political party, as Ticktin suggests, but still a faction within the S.A.L.P.
[431] *The International*, 1 October 1915, "The Parting of the Ways"
[432] *The International*, 24 September 1915, "Report on First General Meeting"
[433] Hyslop, 2004, *op cit*., p. 272
[434] Ticktin, 1969, *op cit.*, pp. 71-2
[435] Cited in *The International*, 1 October 1915, "International Socialist League"
[436] Gustave Hervé, [1905] 1907, *Antipatriotism: address of Gustave Hervé at the close of his trial for anti-militarist activity, before the jury of La Seine, December, 1905*, New York Labour News Company, New York, translated by Solon De Leon. Solon De Leon was the son of Daniel De Leon. Hervé did, in fact, become pro-war in 1914, a fact not mentioned in the *International.*
[437] *The International*, 5 November 1915, "League Literature"
[438] Thomas, 1963, *op cit*., pp. 53-4, 58-59, 82; also see Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., pp. 335-336
[439] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., p. 184

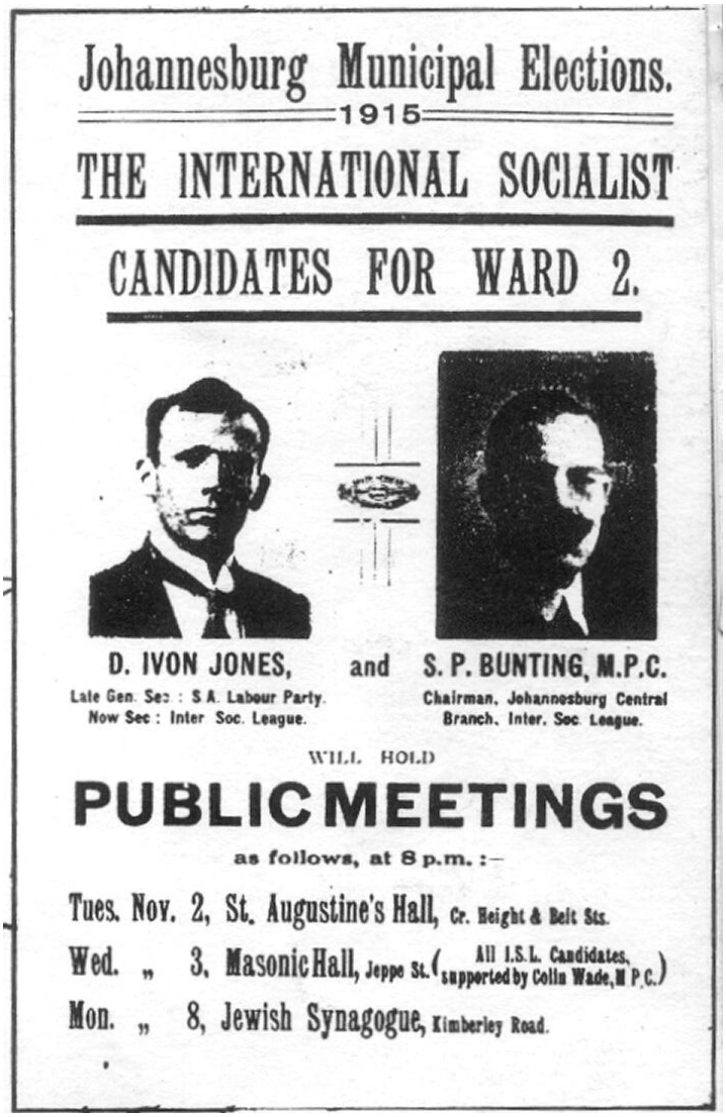

Figure sixteen: An International Socialist League election poster from 1915, featuring David Ivon Jones and S.P. Bunting

Source: *Searchlight South Africa*, 1988, volume 1, number 1

Unionist Party which had 39 seats, and so remained the government. As might have been obvious from the outset, the SA Labour Party could not compete in a patriotic contest.

The pro-war stance also, and quite predictably, alienated the Afrikaner workers and the poor. From 1913 onwards, new branches had been formed in the countryside, and the party was making some headway with a platform of uniting the small farmer with the White worker.[440] The SA Labour Party's decision to support the Imperial war effort cut short these developments: the many new branches amongst Afrikaners disappeared overnight, and rural poor Whites swung towards De lay Rey and the Rebellion. An offer by the SA Labour Party to mediate between the Rebellion and the government, and a short-lived interest by the

[440] Swart, 2000, *op cit*., pp. 162, 174

War on War League in linking up with Hertzog,[441] both came to nought: the historic gap between the SA Labour Party and the radical left, on the one hand, and the Afrikaner working class and poor Whites, on the other, remained in place.

The International Socialist League ran two candidates, Andrews and J.A. Clark, against the SA Labour Party, but they polled only 140 votes in total,[442] as opposed to the SA Labour Party's 24,444 votes.[443] The anti-war position was extremely unpopular amongst English-speaking Whites, and the candidates were heckled at meetings. However, Afrikaner support was also not forthcoming, partly because of the strength of the Afrikaner nationalists, and partly because of the International Socialist League's emerging views on the racial question. The candidates' manifestos proclaimed the solidarity of all workers, regardless of race: as David Ticktin noted, "a more unattractive programme for the all-white Transvaal electorate is difficult to imagine".[444]

The International Socialist League also put forward five candidates for the Transvaal municipal elections in November, this time on a mild platform emphasising social services and the removal of "undue business influence" on local government.[445] Wade was, in fact, successful at Germiston, and J.A. Clark won a seat in Johannesburg, but it is significant that the candidates had avoided any mention of the war issue or racial politics. Another candidate, J.S. van Lingen – apparently an Afrikaner, quite remarkable for the period – also ran in a by-election, but received just 138 votes, the lowest poll; he later secured a seat on the Germiston municipality in 1916 for the International League,[446] but subsequently became a leading figure in the SA Labour Party.[447] (It should be borne in mind that several International Socialist League members had inherited SA Labour Party seats on the Transvaal Provincial Council, and kept these until mid-1917, when they were universally unsuccessful in the elections.)[448]

Despite these limited successes, the new International Socialist League was always somewhat sceptical about elections, seeing them mainly as opportunities for socialist propaganda. Ivon Jones, writing in the first issue of the *International*, suggested that "running candidates for public bodies will be only one of our methods, and not perhaps the most important one" and that the League should develop "a corresponding interest in industrial organisation with a view to giving it an International outlook".[449]

Soon afterwards Bunting slated the "touching faith" in parliament as the "supposed Palladium of liberty", arguing that a "Labour Government or a Socialist State" would "act like any other government or Party except that everybody sports a red tie and calls himself a 'Labourman', whereat the ruling class smiles

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[441] Swart, 2000, *op cit*., pp. 174 and p. 174 note 85
[442] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 176; Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 56; *The International*, 22 October 1915
[443] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., p. 184
[444] Ticktin, 1969, *op cit.*, p. 72
[445] See *The International*, 29 October 1915, "League Election Manifestos"
[446] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., p. 190. Lingen seems to have rejoined in the SA Labour Party, and is reported to have advocated the deletion of the party's socialist clause at its 1923 conference: see Isaac Vermont, 24 February 1923, "Rand News", *The Workers' Dreadnought*
[447] See, for example, *The International*, 19 November 1920, "Native Education"
[448] Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit*., pp. 80-81
[449] David Ivon Jones, 1 October 1915, "The Parting of the Ways", *The International*

with … 'wide tolerance'".[450] With a god made from the State, Bunting writes, "'My Country' … became something above class and Party". The notion of "'a Socialist State'" was a paradox, one of many "tin-pot objectives" that could not "bring the workers of the world appreciably nearer the loss of their chains". What was needed was a new socialist internationalism, united by the "positive common Cause" that "cuts the Governments right out, and looks to the organised workers themselves to call the tune". [451] Such positions may help explain why the activities of the three International Socialist League councillors were almost never mentioned in the *International*, and easily forgotten entirely.

5.9. In conclusion: a new era for syndicalism

"Here we plant the flag of the New International in South Africa", commented Ivon Jones in an editorial in the first issue of the *International*.[452] The split with the SA Labour Party over the war issue was, a subsequent article noted, "merely an index of fundamental disagreement over the whole field of Labour tactics and working class philosophy": "we know the weakness of the SALP [SA Labour Party] position on several issues on which our outlook has to be reviewed".[453] These included the "Coloured and Native questions, Industrial Unionism, Taxation of Site Values etc."[454] The distinctive features of the "New International", and its "Labour tactics and working class philosophy", would only be clearly defined at the start of 1916, when the International Socialist League held its first annual congress. The International Socialist League quickly became the largest and most influential radical socialist group in South Africa.

Even before that time, however, some of the broad outlines were becoming visible. Firstly, working class *internationalism* was central: against nationalism and militarism, a "vista of interminable despair with bayonets and cross bones stacked on either side", the organisation championed "the vaster constellation of International working class unity": the "only way of advance for Labour".[455] In the South African context, such internationalism could only mean the solidarity of workers, *regardless of race*. As Andrews argued in his October 1915 election manifesto: "I maintain … that it is the imperative duty of the white workers to recognise their identity of interest with the native workers as against the common masters".[456]

Secondly, a section of the new organisation was clearly moving towards a libertarian socialist, indeed, a *syndicalist* position. S.P. Bunting, for example, denounced the "touching faith" in parliament as the "supposed Palladium of liberty" in the third issue of the *International.*[457] It had to be asked, he insisted, "whether 'a Socialist State' was not a paradox" and "whether such tin-pot objectives could ever bring the workers of the world appreciably nearer the loss of their chains". His own answer was forthright: a "Labour Government or a Socialist State … will act like any other government or Party except that everybody sports a red tie and calls himself a 'Labourman', whereat the ruling class smiles with … 'wide tolerance'".

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[450] S.P. Bunting, 24 September 1915, "A World to Win", *The International*
[451] S.P. Bunting, 24 September 1915, "A World to Win", *The International*
[452] David Ivon Jones, 10 September 1915, "The New International", *The International*
[453] *The International,* 19 November 1915, "Fight the Good Fight"
[454] *The International*, 12 November 1915, "Towards One Socialist Party"
[455] David Ivon Jones, 10 September 1915, "The New International", *The International*
[456] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 176; Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 56; *The International*, 22 October 1915
[457] S.P. Bunting, 24 September 1915, "A World to Win", *The International*

One result of this analysis was a profoundly ambiguous response to the collapse of the Labour and Socialist International. On the one hand, there was certainly talk of reviving the Labour and Socialist International, and Ivon Jones sent an official letter to the "British Section, International Socialist Bureau" proposing a "New International Organisation to replace the old one which must be admitted to have failed".[458] S.P. Bunting suggested a "better one cannot help arising on its ruins … uniting the Socialist, anti-war, International minority parties of the world into one great majority party".[459]

On the other hand, however, there was a clear discomfort with the record of the Labour and Socialist International. When S.P. Bunting spoke of a "better" International, he was criticising the methods of the old International. Mainly consisting of congresses every three or four years – "what's the good of that anyhow?" – it tolerated nationalism and exalted the State.[460] This had opened the destructive floodgates of nationalism: "'My Country' … became something above class and Party". To say the current war "took Socialists by surprise was therefore hypocrisy". What was needed, S.P. Bunting stressed, was a new approach, united by a "positive common Cause" that "cuts the Governments right out, and looks to the organised workers themselves to call the tune".[461]

Many members of the International Socialist League had a ready-made solution: these were the men drawn from the syndicalist movement of the early 1910s, who soon found a most receptive audience for their ideas. They included Anderson, John Campbell, Dunbar, Gibson, Israelstam, Rabb, Philip Roux and Tyler, while Jock Campbell also joined, but retired from political activity in early 1916.[462] These veterans would play a central role in winning the new organisation over to a syndicalist position: as Section 6.1. shows, the De Leonist variant of syndicalism quickly became the core of the International Socialist League's politics. The "syndicalist talk" of 1913 and 1914, and the international prestige of organisations like the IWW was also played a role. Syndicalism provided a model for radicals who rejected the SA Labour Party, and saw the approach represented by the German SDP and the Labour and Socialist International collapse before their eyes. Syndicalism, growing everywhere, seemed unbowed by the outbreak of war, its principles untarnished, and the prestige of bodies like the IWW was only reinforced by the inglorious collapse of the centre of political socialism.

What conclusions can be drawn about the development of anarchism and syndicalism in South Africa in the early 1910s? First, the broad anarchist tradition, having grown rapidly in 1910 and 1911, underwent a crisis in 1912, and by 1913 there was no organised syndicalist movement. Second, however, a syndicalist current continued to exist in 1913 and 1914, although it was not co-ordinated or coherent. Third, the 1913 and 1914 general strikes laid the basis for a new era for local syndicalism by radicalising a new layer of activists, leading directly to the formation of the International Socialist League in 1915. The drama of the 1913 and 1914 events helped give birth to the most important single syndicalist organisation in South African history.

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[458] David Ivon Jones, 17 September 1915, "The League's Message to Europe: a world party", *The International*
[459] S.P. Bunting, 24 September 1915, "A World to Win", *The International*
[460] S.P. Bunting, 24 September 1915, "A World to Win", *The International*
[461] S.P. Bunting, 24 September 1915, "A World to Win", *The International*
[462] See *The International*, 14 January 1916, "Welcome to Delegates"

Chapter 6

From war to revolution: Race, syndicalism and the International Socialist League, 1915-1919

Founded in September 1915, the International Socialist League developed into what was arguably the single most important syndicalist organisation in South African history.[1] Emerging from the War on War League, and based amongst veterans of the old IWW and Socialist Labour Party, as well as rebels from the SA Labour Party, the organisation would become the most significant revolutionary socialist group in South Africa in the 1910s.

It was the largest group, with the greatest geographical spread, and its activities were the most sustained, running for six years, including a weekly paper throughout that period. Its membership was probably not much over 400 at any one time, [2] but its influence was far greater than numbers suggest. It has also attracted far more attention in historical accounts than any other group in the early socialist movement in South Africa – far more than groups such as the Industrial Socialist League, the IWW, the Social Democratic Federation (SDF), or the Socialist Labour Party – in part because of its subsequent central role in the formation of the CPSA.

The stronghold of the International Socialist League was the Witwatersrand region, with branches in Benoni, Germiston, Krugersdorp and Johannesburg, but groups were also established in Durban, Kimberley and Pretoria. A section was not formed in Cape Town, but there were close ties with the SDF, which acted as the local distributors of the new organisation's weekly paper, issued from September, and entitled *The International: the organ of the International Socialist League (S.A).* Ties were also formed with the Pretoria Socialist Society, which was a fairly moribund organisation by this time, and the Social Democratic Party in Durban. Relations with the Social Democratic Party were, however, short-lived, and open rivalry developed with the local International Socialist League branch.

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[1] A substantial part of this chapter, and sections of the next one, have been published in van der Walt, 1999, *op cit*. and Lucien van der Walt, 2001c, "Revolutionärer Syndikalismus, Rasse und Klasse in Südafrika: die "International Socialist League" und die "Industrial Workers of Africa" 1915 bis 1920", *Archiv für die Geschichte des Widerstandes und der Arbeit*, no. 16

[2] Precise figures are hard to come by. The International Socialist League's January 1919 congress was, according to one source, attended by 39 delegates representing "less than a dozen branches", indicating that the total membership could not have been "more than a few hundreds". See Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit.*, p. 82. In 1921, the International Socialist League estimated that its membership never exceeded four hundred: see Ivon Jones, [29 March 1921] 1981, *op cit.*, p. 56

Until 1917, the membership of the International Socialist League was mainly based amongst skilled White workers and trade unionists, mainly British, with Scots playing an especially prominent role. S.P. Bunting was unusual in his upper class background and lack of experience in the trade union movement: Andrews and Dunbar were rather more typical examples of International Socialist League militants. From 1917 onwards, as a subsequent chapter will show, Jewish immigrants would come to play an important role, particularly through a "Yiddish-Speaking Branch" formed in August that year. Another important shift from 1917 onwards would be the recruitment of a number of African, Coloured and Indian militants in Durban, Johannesburg and Kimberley. Unlike the earlier IWW and Socialist Labour Party, whose opposition to racial discrimination and prejudice tended to be somewhat abstract, the International Socialist League took a crucial step: combining this *principled* opposition to racial oppression with active and specific efforts to *mobilise* African, Coloured, and Indian workers around their class and national concerns.

The fundamental outlook of the International Socialist League was syndicalism, and, more specifically, De Leonism. The International Socialist League was not a Marxist organisation, contrary to the claim commonly made in the works of the Communist school, and rather uncritically accepted in many popular and scholarly accounts. A related view – that syndicalists were present in the organisation, but were a minority opposed by the Marxist leadership – is incorrect, and follows from a misunderstanding of the organisational character of the International Socialist League. The organisation differed from earlier groups like the SDF in that it had a clear political and theoretical platform; its weekly paper, the *International*, differed from the *Voice of Labour* and the *Strike Herald* in being restricted to the promotion of the official policies of the organisation. Judged by its agreed platform and the content of its literature and propaganda – the *International*, various leaflets and manifestos, public meetings – the policy of the organisation was a consistently syndicalist one. Activities, too, centred on the project of creating a revolutionary union movement that would seize the means of production and abolish the State.

Like other syndicalists in the De Leonist tradition, the International Socialist League admired Marx and even referred to itself as "Marxist" on occasion. However, its politics, like those of De Leon, were derived from Bakunin and anarchism, rather than classical Marxism. The organisation's political affinities lay not with the "Marxist left wing of the European socialist movement",[3] if this is taken to mean either the traditions of the German SDP or the Bolsheviks, but the international IWW and the Workers' International Industrial Union.

This has enormous implications for an understanding of the history of the left in South Africa. Studies that examine the International Socialist League as a Marxist organisation start from a mistaken premise. Arguments that assume a neat continuity between the International Socialist League and the later CPSA fail to note that the International Socialist League's role in forming that Bolshevik organisation represented a profound, albeit incomplete, *rupture* in its political outlook. The International Socialist League's popular impact in the late 1910s was not a chapter in the history of Marxism in South Africa, but a component of the broader "glorious period" of anarchism and syndicalism internationally.

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[3] Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, pp. 52, 80

One the main achievements of the International Socialist League was its rigorous analysis of South African economic and social life, including a systematic examination of the role of racial discrimination and prejudice in reproducing local capitalism. Racial prejudice divided the working class, while racial discrimination was functional to capitalist accumulation: "cheap, helpless and unorganised" African labour ensured "employers generally and particularly industrial employers, that most coveted plum of modern Imperialism, plentiful cheap labour".[4] A statement by the Management Committee, published in the International on the eve of the January 1918 annual conference, stated:[5]

> What makes native labour so cheap and exploitable in South Africa? Laws and regulations which, on the pretence of protecting society from barbarism, degrade the native workers to the level of serfs and herded cattle for the express uses of Capital. These are:
>
> The Passport system.
> The Compound System.
> The Native Indenture system.
> The special penal laws which make it a crime for a native to absent himself from work.
> The denial of civil liberty and political rights.
>
> All those things, which place the native workers on a lower social plane than the white workers, are weapons in the hands of the employing class to be used against all the workers, white and black.
>
> These tyrant laws must be swept away. For these degrading conditions of native labour are the abyss into which masses of the white workers are continually being hurled by Capitalist competition.

Much of this analysis was elaborated in the *International*: unlike earlier left-wing papers, such as the *Voice of Labour*, an open platform, or the *Strike Herald*, the *International* presented only the official views of the International Socialist League; it was controlled by the International Socialist League's executive, the "Management Committee", and its broad approach was set by the organisation's annual conferences, held in January, which set out clear policies.[6]

The economic and social analysis was built on arguments from the old *Voice of Labour* network. Like the anarchists and syndicalists of the *Voice of Labour* period, the International Socialist League argued that White Labourism was futile: it was based on unacceptable prejudices, divided the working class, and could not even fulfil its own claims to protect White labour. This critique reinforced the *International's* broader

[4] *The International*, 18 February 1916, "Workers of the World Unite"
[5] *The International*, 7 December 1917, "International Socialism and the Native: no labour movement without the black proletariat"
[6] On this point, see Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, pp. 87-8

arguments for an interracial, and revolutionary, union movement – arguments that were largely the same as those that had appeared in the propaganda of the earlier South African anarchists and syndicalists.

However, the International Socialist League was an advance on earlier anarchists and syndicalists in important ways. The Socialist Labour Party and IWW had denounced racial discrimination and prejudice, and advocated an interracial labour movement, but had made little headway in breaking racial barriers. The Socialist Labour Party had confined itself to abstract propaganda, directed at Whites, while the IWW's union activities were focused on White transport workers in Johannesburg, Pretoria and possibly Durban. The International Socialist League, by contrast, made campaigning against racial discrimination a central part of its approach to developing the One Big Union, and took active steps to directly influence and organise Africans, Coloureds and Indians.

In short, the International Socialist League combined a principled opposition to racial discrimination and prejudice, which it shared with its predecessors, with a policy of active and direct *struggle* against racial oppression.[7] At the heart of this approach was the view that revolutionary trade unions could play a central role in taking direct action against the laws that made the cheap African labour system possible. This was based on the belief that trade unionism could not and should not be confined to immediate questions of wages and working conditions, but should form the basis of an entirely new and libertarian society. The outlook of the International Socialist League that emerges cannot be reconciled with the claims of the Communist school that the organisation had, at best, an abstract internationalism in terms of which "the national oppression of the majority of people in our country was not really very worthy of consideration",[8] or, at worst, supported elements of White Labourism such as segregation and colour bars.[9]

6.1. Towards syndicalism: the International Socialist League to January 1916

The first few months of the International Socialist League reveal an organisation without a clear analysis and strategy. Opposition to the First World War would continue throughout that conflict. In June 1917, for example, an International Socialist League manifesto argued that the "very conditions of existence" of "the whole ruling class of the earth, including South Africa" inevitably led to "universal conflict".[10] "Its competition for economic predominance on the most gigantic scale, its race for control of world markets to absorb the ever increasing over-production and for sources of raw material and cheap labour, wherewith to produce yet more, coupled with its continual degradation of the great mass of humanity … MUST necessarily and always produce world-conflict". Rather than accept "Imperialistic claptrap", workers must refuse to take sides in the conflict, and stay true to the international struggle of the working class.

Beyond a radical anti-war perspective, which linked the war to capitalism and promoted working class internationalism, there were no shared perspectives. The provisional constitution adopted at the end of September 1915 deleted references to the SA Labour Party, but remained vague enough to accommodate a

[7] I develop this argument in van der Walt, 2004b, *op cit.*
[8] Cronin, 1991, *op cit.*, p.12
[9] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, pp. 191-2
[10] *The International*, 1 June 1917, "The League Undaunted: Manifesto for the Elections"

variety of views: "to propagate the principles of International Socialism and anti-militarism, and to maintain and strengthen International working class organisation".[11] The new organisation frankly admitted that it lacked a clearly defined programme, and clear positions on a wide range of issues.[12]

The early *International* reprinted a range of articles from overseas socialist papers, and here, too, political uncertainty was evident. The political uncertainty of the early International Socialist League was partly a reflection of the nature of the War on War League. This had united activists on a radical anti-war platform, but otherwise lacked a coherent outlook or larger goals beyond opposing the war. The situation was also due to the diverse backgrounds of the founder members. Some were former members of the SA Labour Party, radicalised by the events of 1913 and 1914, and disillusioned by their party's support for the war. While men such as Andrews, S.P. Bunting, Ivon Jones, Mason and Colin Wade had "questioned old ideas and moved left",[13] they lacked a coherent view of the way ahead. Others were drawn from the syndicalist movement of the early 1910s: John Campbell, Dunbar, Gibson, Israelstam, Rabb and Tyler.

The move from a focus on the struggle against the war, largely centred on battles inside the SA Labour Party, to an independent organisation with a broad socialist platform, reflected the view that far more than the war issue was at stake. According to the *International*, "since definitely severing with the SALP [SA Labour Party], the League's object is not to conserve the principles contained in that party's constitution".[14] The process of clarifying perspectives took time, but revealed the growing influence of the syndicalist veterans. Ivon Jones, for example, wrote in the *International* that "running candidates for public bodies will be only one of our methods".[15] Elections would not necessarily be "the most important" either: the International Socialist League should develop "a corresponding interest in industrial organisation with a view to giving it an International outlook".[16]

The first conference of the International Socialist League was scheduled for January 1916, and set as the meeting that would "definitely fix basic principles and a name".[17] When the actual conference was held in Johannesburg on 9 January 1916, the conference endorsed the following resolution, moved by the Management Committee as "the significant implication of our anti-war stand":[18]

> That we encourage the organisation of the workers on industrial or class lines, irrespective of race, colour or creed, as the most effective means of providing the necessary force for the emancipation of the workers …

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[11] Cited in *The International*, 1 October 1915, "International Socialist League"
[12] *The International*, 12 November 1915, "Towards One Socialist Party"
[13] Hirson, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 134
[14] *The International*, 12 November 1915, "Towards One Socialist Party"
[15] David Ivon Jones, 1 October 1915, "The Parting of the Ways", *The International*
[16] David Ivon Jones, 1 October 1915, "The Parting of the Ways", *The International*
[17] *The International*, 12 November 1915, "Towards One Socialist Party"
[18] See *The International*, 7 January 1916, "League Conference"; *The International*, 14 January 1916, "The First Conference of the League"

The syndicalist approach was now official policy. The political uncertainty of late 1915 was replaced by a constant reiteration of the need for revolutionary industrial organisation. At the 1917 annual conference, the basic aims of the organisation, defined in 1915 as "International Socialism and anti-militarism" and "International working class organisation", were amended: "To propagate the principles of International Socialism, *Industrial Unionism* and Anti-Militarism, and to maintain and strengthen International Working class organisation".[19]

It seems certain that the veterans of the organised syndicalist movement of 1910 to 1912 were decisive in winning the new organisation over to a syndicalist position. The "syndicalist talk" of 1913 and 1914, and the international prestige of organisations like the IWW also played a role. As important was the fact that syndicalism, rising internationally and apparently unbowed by the outbreak of war, its principles untarnished, provided a model of militants disillusioned with the SA Labour Party, and profoundly impressed by the collapse, before their very eyes, of the approach represented by the German SDP and the Labour and Socialist International. The prestige of bodies like the IWW was only reinforced by the inglorious collapse of the erstwhile heart of political socialism.

6.2. "The most effective means": the International Socialist League and revolutionary trade unionism

The first issue of the *International* after the 1916 Conference explained the International Socialist League's position as follows:[20]

> Parliament is after all only a house. Its function is to regulate and adjust the Capitalist system, and to legislate the necessary violence for its preservation. But whichever power controls industry can dispense with parliament in extremity and remain unscathed.

The *International* then turned to the question of the control of industry: "If an industry is not to be dominated by a paternal bureaucracy how shall it be administered if not democratically by the workers themselves". And if so, "does it not follow that [workers'] organisation should be along the lines of their particular industry"? What was required, argued an article a few weeks later, was a "new and definite" socialism based on "immediate action" which recognised "capitalism, yea and the capitalist State" as "unmitigated evils" to be "swept away here and now".[21]

The content of the "new" socialism was "the control of industry by organised labour": the "imperative need of the hour for South African labour is the union of all workers along the lines of industry; not only as a force behind their political demands, but as the embryo of that Socialist Commonwealth which ... must take the place of the present barbaric order".[22] In contrast to the "disease" of "Civilisation", which

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[19] *The International*, 19 January 1917, "The Second Annual Conference", my emphasis
[20] *The International,* 21 January 1916, "The Most Effective Means"
[21] *The International*, 11 February 1916, "The Break up of Capitalism"
[22] *The International*, 11 February 1916, "The Break up of Capitalism"; cf. *The International*, 24 March 1916, "Branch Notes"

began with the "crack of the slave drivers' whip" and private property, the socialist system will have "no room for government, as only slaves require to be kept in subjection; no room for laws, as no restriction will be required in a society of social equals; no soldiers or policemen, who are only required to enforce class made rules".[23] Instead, power would be vested in the Industrial Unions.

It was at this time that the Easter Rising took place in Dublin, Ireland. While the syndicalist Connolly played a central role in the Rising, it was not a syndicalist revolt. It was essentially a military uprising by Irish nationalists and socialists who hoped to use Britain's preoccupation with the war to try to establish an Irish republican government. The Irish Republican Brotherhood provided the main force of insurgents, and led the action, but around 150 members of the Irish Citizen's Army, commanded by Connolly, also played an important role. The Irish Citizen's Army was, it will be recalled, a workers' militia formed in the 1913 Dublin Lockout. The Easter Rising was crushed, more than 2,000 people were injured, and Connolly executed, but events had been set in motion that would lead to the Irish War of Independence of 1919-1921 and the creation of an independent Irish State.

Despite the participation of Connolly and members of the Irish Citizen's Army, the Easter Rising cannot be regarded as a syndicalist revolt. It aimed at a republican State, rather than the industrial democracy championed by Connolly in earlier years. The Irish Transport and General Workers Union was in a state of collapse following its defeat in 1913, and played no role. The Rising was essentially in the militarist tradition of radical Irish nationalism. Connolly had submerged his syndicalism for a chance to strike at Britain, and it is difficult to see much in the way of a De Leonist perspective in his final great struggle.

Like many other socialist groups around the world, the International Socialist League was profoundly stirred by events in Ireland. However, it was very critical of the military nature of the Easter Rising, and used the occasion to defend its syndicalist outlook, and elaborate the view that revolutionary unions should act as the primary means to wage *all* the struggles of the working class, whether these were struggles around wages, around political rights, or around war. The "bitter lesson" to be learnt by Irish labour in its fight for freedom, argued the *International*, was that "barricades are the relics of the revolts of half a century ago":[24]

> If an effective working–class revolt depends on the purchase of adequate armaments, then the working class can resign itself to slavery. If an effective working class revolt depends on securing mere parliamentary representation, it can with equal resignation say good-bye to emancipation ... Both activities betray the workers, and lead them eventually in despair to death on the barricades.
>
> The workers' only weapon are [*sic*] their labour ... All ... activities should have this one design, how to give the workers greater control of industry ... With greater and greater insistence comes from sad tragedies like that enacted in Dublin, the need for men to forego

[23] J.M. Gibson, 1 June 1917, "The Disease of Civilisation", *The Internationa*l; *The International*, 1 June 1917, "League Notes"; *The International*, 14 June 1918, "Civilisation"
[24] *The International*, 5 May 1916, "What's Wrong With Ireland"; cf. also 4 August 1916, "Chopping off Heads".

> the cushion and slipper of parliamentary ease, and recognise the Industrial Union as the root of all the activities of Labour, whether political, social or otherwise.
>
> The key to social regeneration ... to the new Socialist Commonwealth ... is to be found in the organisation of a class conscious proletariat within the Industrial Union.

This is a particularly important article in that it expresses several central elements of the International Socialist League's general approach. Most immediately, there is the absolute centrality given to the creation of a revolutionary trade union movement, to the "organisation of a class conscious proletariat within the Industrial Union". Underlying this was a fundamental syndicalist rejection of any neat distinction between battles on an "economic field", relegated to unions, and action on the "political field", reserved for a political party. Here, the One Big Union played a central role in both "economic" and "political" actions, as opposed to the classical Marxist privileging of the "political" struggle to capture State power; the De Leonist conception inverted this approach, making the revolutionary union primary, and the party a secondary and auxiliary organisation.

It was through a revolutionary union movement that the working class could wield real power: in a military struggle, in a revolt on the barricades, the working class will be outgunned by the professional armies of the modern State; there is little strength in "mere parliamentary representation", and the representatives are easily seduced by the "cushion and slipper of parliamentary ease".

The revolutionary "Industrial Union", by contrast, mobilised workers at the point of production and starving capitalism of its lifeblood, the exploitation of labour: it is here that labour has real might, and is able to feel and show its central role as the exploited class upon which capitalism is founded. It is also clear that the International Socialist League generally deprecated violence, and regarded revolutionary unionism and the "lockout of the capitalist class" as a peaceful means of changing society, a civilized approach that rejected "physical force".[25]

It is important to stress that the International Socialist League did not envisage the workers' struggles and militant unionism in terms of narrow sectional struggles confined to immediate bread-and-butter concerns: rather, revolutionary unions were viewed as the main weapon in the fight against *all* the issues, "political, social or otherwise", which affected the working class.[26] This confirms the broader point that syndicalism was by no means "economism".

Like contemporary British syndicalists,[27] the International Socialist League tended to distrust State welfare reforms and control of the economy. Worried that the State might try to incorporate workers and

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[25] The International Socialist League provided a useful overview of its own statements on the matter in *The International*, 16 August 1918, "Incitement to Violence"

[26] This confirms Holton's general critique of the charge of "economism" often levelled at revolutionary syndicalism: R.J. Holton, 1980, *op cit.*; Cf. Rocker, [1938] 1989, pp. 63-5: "just as the worker cannot remain indifferent to the economic conditions of his life in existing society, so he cannot remain indifferent to the political structure of his country ... he needs political rights and liberties, and he must fight for these himself in every situation where they are denied him, and must defend them with all his strength when the attempt is made to wrest them from him".

[27] See Holton, 1980, *op cit.*

trade unions,[28] the *International* commented: "It is significant that the cry of 'Syndicalism' has taken the place ... all over the Industrialised World, of 'Socialism' to stampede the mass of law abiding citizens today".[29] This had happened because "State Socialism is now being strongly advocated by the *Capitalist Class*".[30] State sponsored welfare reforms were a means of pacificying and controlling workers: proposed pension schemes on the railways and mines, for example, were seen as methods of "knee haltering" the workers, which had been devised in the "Dung Market" of parliament to make workers loyal to the companies.[31]

State ownership of industry was criticised as a "fantastic scheme" that could at best lead to "State Serfdom", a "servile State" run by "officials in uniforms and brass buttons": the "transformation into State ownership will not do away with the capitalistic nature of production and distribution" but rather "the more it becomes the national capitalist, the more citizens does it exploit, and the workers remain wage slaves without any control over their conditions of Labour".[32] Given that the State was an "engine of class tyranny", it was necessary that "the workers organise in their industries outside of the machine, and … overawe the political machine … with the greater power … of industrial solidarity".[33] As for "State Socialism", it was simply "State Capitalism imposed from above".

Consequently, "Socialism in the true sense" was "industrial democracy, a socialism from below up. Men must be citizens in industry to be free".[34] Socialism was a creative act by a self-organised and conscious working class, a radically democratic rupture with the existing situation, and one that ended capitalist exploitation while avoiding the pitfalls of domination from above by an expanded State bureaucracy.

6.3. "The marvellous influence of De Leon's 'philosophy'"

The International Socialist League was primarily influenced by De Leonism: an eloquent testament to the influence of the former Socialist Labour Party members in its ranks, and an index of the extent to which the former members of the SA Labour Party left had moved beyond political socialism.

The "S.L.P. men" were particularly prominent at the January 1916 conference and in their "favourite element" in the discussion of revolutionary unionism.[35] Clearly the fight within the SA Labour Party over the war issue had strengthened their views on the character of reformist parties and craft unions, and provided them with an audience for their ideas, while the International Socialist League held out great promise for

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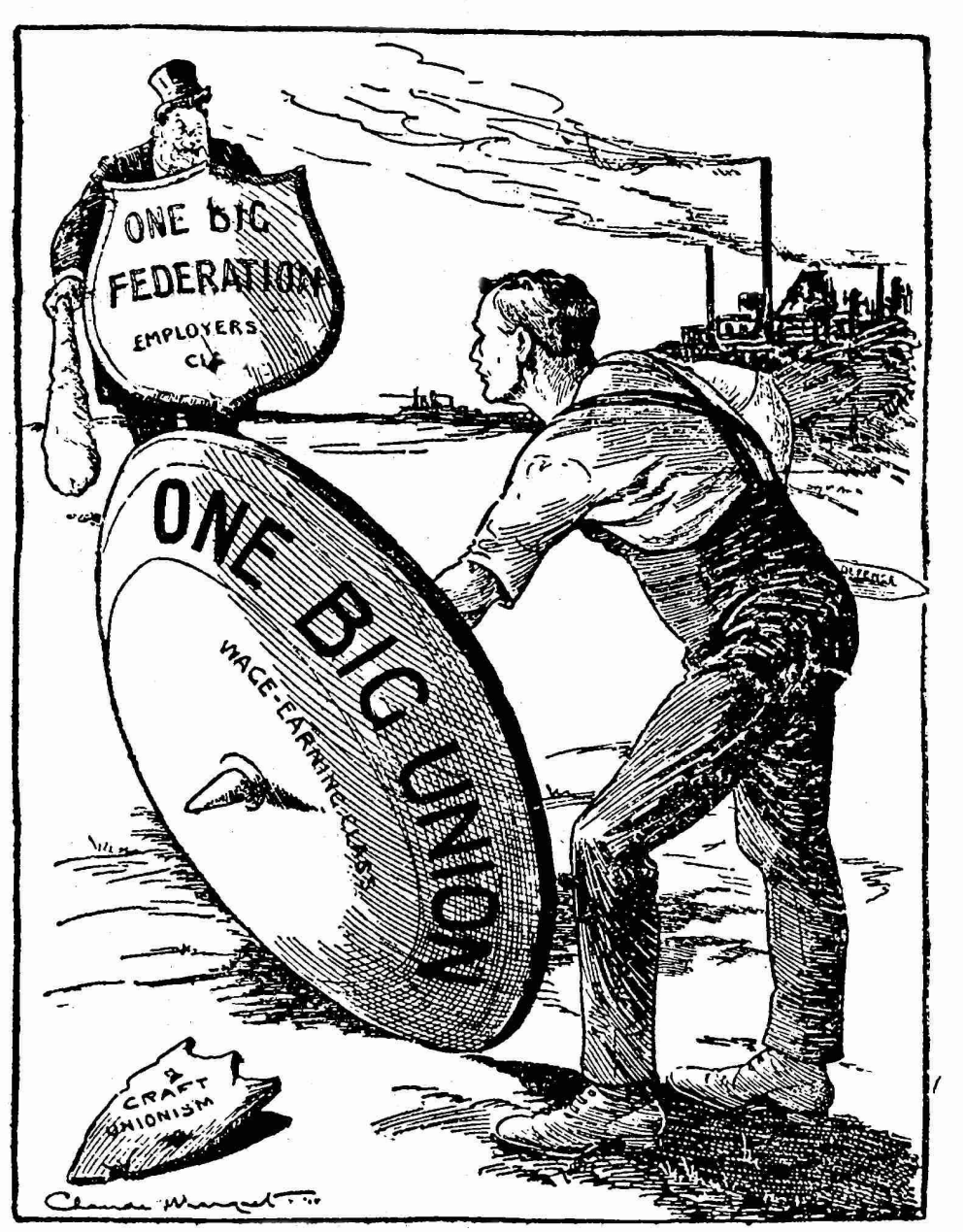
[28] *Contra* Ntsebeza, 1988, *op cit.*, p. 32
[29] *The International,* 2 February 1917, "Thoughts on Sabotage and State Socialism"
[30] *ibid*., emphasis in the original
[31] *The International*, 25 February 1916, "Mineworkers and Political Action"; 24 March 1916, "Scab Manufacture"; cf. also 2 March 1917, "The Mineworkers to be Made a Scab Union". C.f. Holton, 1980, *op cit.* on syndicalist theories of the State. The phrase "Dung Market" comes from the libertarian socialist William Morris's 1890 socialist utopia, *News from Nowhere*. See G.D.H. Cole, editor, 1984, *William Morris: Prose, Verse, Lectures and Essays,* Nonesuch Press, London, Centenary edition. I would like to thank Allison Drew for this information.
[32] *The International*, 8 December 1916, "State Socialism"; *The International*, 3 November 1916, "'State Socialism' in Practice"; 27 April 1917, "Revolt or Revolution?"; 16 June 1916, "State Mines, State Serfdom"; also see 21 July 1916, "Branch Notes"; 17 November 1916, "Branch Notes"; 16 August 1918, "Our Objective".
[33] *The International*, 21 September 1917, "The Uses of the Labour Politician"
[34] *The International*, 3 November 1916, "'State Socialism' in Practice"
[35] *The International,* 14 January 1916, "The First Conference of the League"



THE EMPLOYER (as Labour grips the new shield): "Heaven help me! The rascal's getting wise, and taking a leaf out o' my book!"

Figure seventeen: One Big Union: Cartoon from the *International* under heading "South African Labour Must Unify Its Forces". "The Employer (as Labour grips the new shield): 'Heaven help me! The rascal's getting wise, and taking a leaf out o' my book!'"

Source: *The International*, 6 February 1920

reconstituting the Socialist Labour Party. The Benoni branch, a De Leonist stronghold, even moved that the International Socialist League "adopt the constitution of the Socialist Labour Party of America": this was ruled out of order, but the Management Committee was instructed to "make enquiries" into the matter.[36]

As a result, Ivon Jones wrote to Detroit in May 1916, requesting copies of their publications and platform, and commenting that "I should pay one tribute to the marvellous influence that has been exercised by De Leon's workers and SLP [Socialist Labour Party] 'philosophy' generally here during the last year or so".[37] In a subsequent letter he requested copies of the Socialist Labour Party's catalogue of publications, as well as printing matrixes for the existing publications, with a view to printing local editions.[38] From late 1915 the International Socialist League book service was heavily focused on materials from the Socialist Labour Party, including De Leon's *The Burning Question of Trade Unionism* and the *Preamble of the IWW.*

While contact with the American organisation was important, the International Socialist League's main relations within the international De Leonist milieu were with the Socialist Labour Party in Britain. The greater attention paid the Scottish group was probably partly due to the fact that it was rather more active than its American counterpart, which had suffered a serious blow with the death of De Leon in 1914. Although the Socialist Labour Party in Britain was fairly sectarian,[39] it was far less so than the American group, and played a role in the mainstream labour movement. Its stronghold was the Clydeside, and the *Socialist* began to be published from Glasgow. The links to the unions also rendered it attractive to the International Socialist League, while the Scottish origins of many "S.L.P. men" in the International Socialist League also played a key role in orientating the organisation towards the British group.

From 1916, the International Socialist League became the local agent for the British party's the *Socialist.*[40] In 1917, the International Socialist League discontinued orders for the *Forward*, a Glasgow paper, in order to expand its purchase of the De Leonist*Socialist*. Ivon Jones explained why in a letter:[41]

> The I.S.L. recommends that the 'Socialist' be taken in place of the 'Forward', and is increasing its order for the 'Socialist' by next mail.
>
> The 'Socialist' is getting exceedingly popular among our members, and no words can adequately express our appreciation of the help which your illuminating articles give us to clear away the mists of middle-class mystification.

Increasing official efforts were, however, made by the War Office to prevent the export of the *Socialist*.[42]

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[36] *The International,* 14 January 1916, "The First Conference of the League"
[37] Cited in Hirson, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 157.
[38] Hirson, 1993b, *op cit.*
[39] For example, the "hare-brained faker who rejoices in the sarcastic name Tom Mann": *The Socialist*, March 1912, "The Conning Tower"
[40] *The International*, 7 January 1916, "The 'Socialist'"
[41] Quoted in *The Socialist*, May 1917, "'The Socialist's' Barometer"
[42] *The Socialist*, May 1917, "'The Socialist's' Barometer"

The platform of the Socialist Labour Party in Britain was characterised by De Leon's idiosyncratic syndicalism:[43]

1. The Socialist Labour Party is a political organisation seeking the unity of the British working class on the political field, and the conquest of public power by that class, with the single object of abolishing capitalist control of the means of production.

2. The Socialist Labour Party declares its belief in Industrial Unionism, as opposed to Trades Unionism, and urges the Wage-Workers of the country to embrace Industrial Unionism; because (1) Industrial Unionism proclaims the class struggle and organises the working class on the economic field to conduct that struggle; (2) Industrial Unionism gives the working class power over the industries of the nation, and so provides the only conceivable force with which the working class may back up the ballot they cast for the overthrow of capitalism; (3) Industrial Unionism, by its departmental organisation, provides the skeleton structure of that parliament of Socialism wherein the government of men – the politics of class rule – gives place to the peaceful administration of industry.

It supported the 1905 IWW *Preamble*, and formed an Industrial Workers of Great Britain,[44] an equivalent to the Workers' International Industrial Union in America. Revolutionary unionism was, the party argued, the form of "working-class combination which will bring about an end to the suffering of the toiling millions" for it aimed to "to seize, and to hold as their own collective property, all the means of production".[45] It was a civilised means of settling disputes, preferable to the "physical force" of the Chicago IWW:[46] like De Leon, the British party vociferously denied any links to anarchism, ironically enough, given the anarchist origins of its syndicalist approach. It opposed State ownership, which it described as a form of capitalism,[47] had "no use for the political State except to destroy its power",[48] and strongly opposed nationalism.[49]

The International Socialist League's approach to elections matched that of De Leon very closely. The 1916 conference defined elections as a tactic for "demonstration and education",[50] a view that was regularly

[43] *The Socialist*, January 1910, "Platform of the Socialist Labour Party"
[44] See, for example, *The Socialist*, August 1912, "Industrial Unionism: Industrial Workers of Great Britain" and "Preamble of the Industrial Workers of the World Union"
[45] *The Socialist*, October 1910, "Industrial Unionism: the new force in the British labour movement"; also see P.U. Law, April 1916, "The S.L.P. Leads the Way", *The Socialist*; T.B., June 1917, "What means This Discontent?", *The Socialist*
[46] *The Socialist*, January 1912, "The S.L.P. on Sabotage"; *The Socialist*, April 1912, "Down with Sabotage and other Forms of Physical Force"
[47] *The Socialist*, January 1910, "A New Socialist Party"; *The Socialist*, June 1912, "Fundamental Pars"
[48] *The Socialist*, February 1912, "Who are the Logicians? Reform versus revolutionary action"; also see P.U. Law, April 1916, "The S.L.P. leads the way", *The Socialist*; *The Socialist*, 22 May 1919, "The Parliamentary Fraud"
[49] H. Carpenter, April 1916, "Nationalism and Internationalism", *The Socialist*
[50] *The International*, 7 January 1916, "League Conference"; also see Cope [? 1943] n.d., p. 178

reaffirmed.[51] In addition to propaganda purposes, the International Socialist League envisaged that "political action" could be used to adjourn the "class State".[52] The weapons of the working class, argued S.P. Bunting, were "industrial and political action", the latter deftly summarised as[53]

> (a) propaganda through Press, platform, election campaigns, leaflet, pamphlet and bookdistribution, classes, study groups, etc., in economics, history, etc., and
>
> (b) the attempt to gain political control of Parliament with a view to supplanting Parliament and substituting the administration of production by the producers, suitably organised not on a mere territorial basis, but rather by industries. Such political action obviously requires the support of industrial or economic organisation to exercise the necessary pressure on the possessing class, and in the fullness of time to take over possession from it.

Electoral candidates for the International Socialist League would not produce a "big genealogical tree of two-penny reforms", but run on a platform that would raise "the demand for the complete destruction of the Capitalist system by the industrial combinations of the workers".[54] Election platforms could help the "marshalling of the various sections of the proletariat side by side" by pointing their common goals while challenging the "chief barriers to efficient working class solidarity", such as the "denial of equal civil liberty to the natives" and the system of cheap and unfree African labour.[55] In all cases, argued the *International*, "political action" was only the "foliage" of the "Industrial tree".[56] After all, "government by the State is only necessary because there is an exploited class in society".[57]

By March 1921, Ivon Jones could look back and comment that the International Socialist League had been "captured by the De Leonites".[58] It is against this backdrop that references to Marx and Engels in the *International* need to be understood. There is no doubt that there were many favourable references to Marx, although readers were referred to De Leon's works for "the more fluent and practical applications of Socialism".[59] These facts should not be misunderstood.

It is incorrect of writers in both the Communist school and the academic community to use every mention of Marx in the *International* to claim that the International Socialist League was some sort of classical Marxist organisation. It is important to note the ideological context and political function of these references, and the manner in which Marx and Engels were invoked in support of syndicalist ideas.

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[51] *The International*, 10 March 1916, "The Resurging International in All Lands"; 4 August 1916, "Politics and Labour Leaders"; 11 August 1916, "Politics and Labour Leaders II"; 20 October 1916, "Municipal Politics and the Revolution"
[52] J.M. Gibson, 30 September 1918, "The Strike", *The International*
[53] S.P. Bunting, 6 September 1918, "Socialism and Violence", *The International*
[54] *The International*, "Facing North by South"
[55] *The International*, 16 June 1916, "Socialism and the Middle Class"
[56] *The International*, 16 June 1916, "Socialism and the Middle Class"
[57] *The International*, 18 August 1916
[58] Ivon Jones, 1921, "Communism in South Africa", *op cit.* p.55
[59] For example, *The International*, 21 January 1916 (book list).

Like De Leon, not to mention the Socialist Labour Party in Britain,[60] the International Socialist League invoked Marx and Engels in *support* of syndicalist positions; the views of the two men were substantially misconstrued in order to lend their authority to an approach that neither would have supported. For instance, readers who wished to understand Marx's statement that "every class struggle is a political struggle" were advised to read Socialist Labour Party material: "The full significance of that declaration is only grasped by a study of De Leon's pamphlets".[61] Marx's arguments for the need to conquer State power were presented as an endorsement of De Leon's strategy.[62] Engels' view that the State "withers away" or "dies out" after an intermediate dictatorship of the proletariat was presented as support for De Leon's view that the State would be abolished with the "general lockout of the capitalist class".[63] Like De Leon, the International Socialist League denied any links to anarchism,[64] yet both were part of the broad anarchist tradition.

It is also true that the International Socialist League exchanged papers with a range of overseas radicals, including the radical anti-war minorities that arose within the ruins of the Labour and Socialist international, and occasionally printed articles from papers such as the German *Vorwärts,* paper of the anti-war German Marxists, and the *Appeal to Reason*, associated with Debs. This has often been presented as evidence that the International Socialist League was part of the classical Marxist movement and identified with its left wing, centred on the Bolsheviks.[65]

This type of argument is misleading and based on a very selective use of the evidence: on the one hand, contacts with groups linked to the former Labour and Socialist International in no sense demonstrates a common political project; on the other, the *International* maintained contact with, and carried a great many articles, from *syndicalist* organisations abroad, and clearly identified itself with the De Leonists. The International Socialist League was in contact with Tom Mann and the British paper *Solidarity*, regularly reported on the IWW and the Workers' International Industrial Union in Australia, Canada and the United States, and used the activities of the De Leonists in Scotland as a reference point.[66]

It is true that articles from *Vorwärts* and the *Appeal to Reason* were printed, but it would be a mistake to read the politics of the International Socialist League from these articles. Pieces from *Solidarity* and the *Socialist* were rather more common, and the general line of argument closely followed the *Socialist*.

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[60] For example, *The Socialist*, March 1911, "The Lesson from the Commune for the Modern Proletariat", suggested that Marx's analysis of the failure of the Paris Commune of 1871 "clearly recognised" the "necessity for the Industrial Union". Likewise, *The Socialist*, February 1917, "Socialism versus Socialism" drew a distinction between "Marxian" socialism and "State Socialism"

[61] *The International*, 22 February 1918, "The Two IWWs"

[62] *The International*, 14 December 1918, "The Russian Revolution Explained"

[63] See *inter alia*, *The International*, 21 April 1916; 10 August 1917; 14 December 1918, "The Russian Revolution Explained"

[64] For example, David Ivon Jones, 17 September 1920, "How the Petty Bourgeois Love the Proletariat!", *The International*

[65] For examples of this type of argument see Cronin, 1991, *op cit.*; Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*; Hirson, 1995, *op cit.*; Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, pp. 50-4; Lerumo, *op cit.*; Cronin, [? 1991], *op cit.*; Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*

[66] For example, *The International*, 11 January 1918, "A Message from Tom Mann"

The Socialist Labour Party in Britain, in turn, carried articles from the *International* in the *Socialist*,[67] praising the "brilliant and uncompromising organ of revolutionary Socialism in South Africa".[68]

6.4. "Scabbing on Judas": the critique of White Labourism and the case for an interracial One Big Union

By early 1916, then, the war issue had become just one component of the broader revolutionary class politics of the International Socialist League. The organisation had evolved from a concern with war to a concern with social revolution, and it saw in the One Big Union the means to fight all struggles, "political, social or otherwise", of the working class and lay the basis for "industrial democracy, a socialism from below up".

Given the organisational character of the International Socialist League, which was based on a shared political and theoretical platform, a platform reflected in its literature and propaganda, it must be concluded that the organisation was syndicalist in outlook. Syndicalism was not a minority current within a politically mixed organisation, nor was it a dissident faction within a Marxist party: syndicalism was the official policy of the organisation, and its key figures, ranging from Andrews, to S.P. Bunting, to Dunbar, to Gibson, to Israelstam, to Ivon Jones, to Tinker to Tyler were *all* syndicalists. I simply cannot agree with Hyslop's view that S.P. Bunting was a "Marxist", or his suggestion that S.P. Bunting and Ivon Jones "sought the Holy Grail of a marxism that would answer" the social question", "devotees of the emerging cult of 'Leninism'".[69]

Given this backdrop, it is not surprising that the International Socialist League, like its syndicalist predecessors in South Africa, was highly critical of the existing South African unions. The White unions were castigated as bureaucratic, and as divisive of the working class, in that they were usually organised around particular crafts or occupations, generally excluded all unskilled workers, and practised racial discrimination. Even the Cape unions, which admitted some Coloured artisans, were fundamentally sectional bodies that failed to accommodate the aspirations of most workers.

Like the IWW and the Socialist Labour Party internationally, the International Socialist League argued that craft unions divided the forces of the working class, and allowed small sections to be bought off by capital and turned against the mass of workers.[70] Craft unionism was also singularly inappropriate in an age characterised by the "combination of capital" into giant corporations and trusts, and the formation of powerful employers' associations.[71] Craft unions had "no earthly hope" of opposing such associations: "One big union is the only form of organisation powerful enough to oppose the united organisation of the capitalist class, a class conscious union of workers to oppose the class conscious association of employers".

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[67] For example, *The Socialist*, April 1916, "The Wreckers"
[68] *The Socialist*, September 1918, "Andrew's [sic] Hits Out"
[69] Hyslop, 2004, *op cit*., pp. 274-275, 277; the spelling of Marxism is Hyslop's.
[70] See also *The International*, 15 September 1916, "Liberty Sold for 6/3d"; *The International*, 22 September 1916, "Liberty: Price 6/3"; *The International*, 2 March 1917, "The Mineworkers to be Made a Scab Union"; 25 May 1917, "Is the White Miner a Miner?"
[71] *The International*, 9 August 1918, "Craft Unions Obsolete"

The *International* not only condemned the craft unions' "complete oblivion to the suffering of the lower paid unemployed white workers, mainly women" but also lambasted their "intolerant" attitude "towards the native wage slave": "slaves to a higher oligarchy, the white workers of South Africa themselves batten on a lower slave class, the native races".[72] The result was a labour movement corrupted by racism and unable to honour the "basic principle of workers' solidarity".[73]

Two paths lay ahead for the skilled white workers. The first was the path of co-optation, "sticking to their own little trade union parlours ... becoming a kind of association of compound managers, an oligarchy of Trade Unionists, working bailiffs for capitalism for the better hoodwinking of the mass".[74] The outcome would be the survival of capitalism and the State through the treachery of the waged artisans, who would then form a "closed guild of favoured White workers to police it over the bottom dog, the great mass of the unskilled", both black and white.[75]

The International Socialist League saw many signs that the path of co-optation was being followed, particularly in the emergence of a range of forms of class collaboration during the First World War. In 1913 and 1914, the prospect of class collaboration might have seemed remote, but following the outbreak of war there were a number of important developments. The ruling class deliberately "humoured" the white workers, Ivon Jones argued, "as a protection against the native masses, and as a means of keeping white and black workers apart".[76]

A number of employers established relatively permanent forums designed to resolve disputes through negotiation, and prevent industrial conflict; in other cases, employers conceded union demands for higher wages and better job security in return for unions agreeing to no-strike clauses During the war, conciliation boards and joint "Boards of Reference" were established in several industries, providing forums where employers and union leaders could resolve disputes without recourse to lock-outs or strike action.[77]

In some cases, these bodies were established by the State in terms of the arbitration provisions of the Industrial Disputes Prevention Act: in 1917, for instance, a board was set up to prevent a planned strike in the Cape Town bakeries, which deferred questions of working hours and annual paid leave to the end of the war.[78] In other cases, the structures were an innovative response by employers frustrated by the country's rudimentary labour industrial relations legislation, and who preferred to manage, rather than confront, the unions. These initiatives were strongly supported by moderate union leaders like Crawford, who soon spent most of his time as a paid union negotiator. The use of these forums to peacefully resolve

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[72] *The International*, 3 December 1915, "The Wrath to Come"
[73] *The International*, 3 December 1915, "The Wrath to Come"
[74] Dilution did come to the Witwatersrand in subsequent years, and a large number of one-time artisans moved into supervisory roles. See E. Webster, 1983, *Cast in a Racial Mould: labour process and trade unions in the foundries*, Ravan Press, Braamfontein
[75] *The International*, 16 February 1917, "'The Poor Whites' and a Page From History"; 2 March 1917, "The Mineworkers to be Made a Scab Union"
[76] Ivon Jones, [9 June 1921] 1988a, *op cit*., pp. 120-121
[77] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 185; see also Gitsham and Trembath, 1926, *op cit.*, pp. 43-4.
[78] Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., p. 60

disputes continued after the war with the formation of the National Industrial Council in the printing and newspaper industry.[79]

In other cases, binding deals were reached that included no-strike clauses. The most important deal took place in the mining industry from 1915 onwards. A crucial factor was the exodus of skilled White workers to the war effort, which increased the bargaining power of the waged artisans who remained behind,[80] as well as the influx of semi-skilled Afrikaners recruited at the time to work underground.

In 1915 the Chamber of Mines extended *de facto* recognition to the South African Industrial Federation. After a series of strikes at the Meyer and Carlton, Van Ryn and Randfontein mines, an agreement was reached: in return for a forty-eight hours working week, a minimum wage after six months underground, and a *status quo* clause provision that fixed the ratio of White to African workers on the mines – an important consideration given the temptation to substitute African for White labour during the war – the Chamber of Mines insisted upon strong central control of the South African Mine Workers' Union, and a ban on local strike action.[81] This Status Quo Agreement came into effect in 1918, and later became the central issue in the 1922 Rand Revolt.

That same year, the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, the Boilermakers' Society and the Ironmoulders' Union signed an agreement with the Transvaal Chamber of Mines, which raised wages and limited working hours.[82] The Engine Drivers' and Firemen's Association and the Mechanics' Union also signed no-strike pledges with the mine owners in return for wage increases and, eventually, conciliation boards.[83] From 1918, the South African Industrial Federation was able to negotiate with the Collieries' Committee of the Chamber of Mines.[84]

The International Socialist League was highly critical of these developments. By agreeing to halt strikes, and by placing the ordinary membership under the control of the officials, the unions were crippling the power of the working class and preventing the formation of a militant and self-organised working class. By making binding deals for the exclusive short-term gain of small sections of the workforce, the unions were reinforcing sectional divisions within the working class, undermining united working class action and class consciousness, and preventing the emergence of One Big Union.

Noting the increasingly close relationship between the Chamber of Mines and the South African Mine Workers' Union, the *International* accused the union of aiming to become a "Scab Union of suborned well-fed slaves, the like of which has not yet been seen in South Africa".[85] It opposed the union's acceptance of wage deals that linked wages to length of service and family size: these divided workers and rewarded

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[79] Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit.*, pp. 84-5.
[80] Johnstone, 1976, *op cit*., pp. 104-106
[81] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 187
[82] Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., pp. 60-63
[83] The Engine Drivers' and Firemen's' Association got a board in 1916, and the Mechanics' Union one in 1917: see Johnstone, 1976, *op cit*., p. 98 table 5
[84] Alexander, 2004, *op cit*., p. 126
[85] *The International*, 2 March 1917, "The Mineworkers to be Made a Scab Union"; also see *The International* 2 June 1916, "Mineworkers, Unite!"; also see *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 20 April 1918, "From South Africa"

loyalty to the company.[86] The Engine Drivers' and Firemen's Association, which had a bad reputation for continuing work during strikes by other unions, was guilty of yet "more craft scabbery": "no class conscious Engine Driver should barter away the working class for an extra one and eight pence".[87] The Mechanics' Union was accused of "scabbing on Judas" for making a similar deal: Judas at least "demanded thirty pieces as his price", while the union would accept a shilling to betray not just the working class but also the socialist future that the proletariat, alone, could create.[88]

As was the case with the War on War League, the dark shadow of Jack London's 1907 *The Iron Heel* hangs heavily on the imagination of the International Socialist League: as in his novel of revolution and counterrevolution, it seemed that conservative unions were happy to collaborate with the ruling Oligarchy against the revolutionary working class.[89] In London's novel, however, the treachery of these unions is unable to halt the basic class struggle under capitalism: a war with Germany is halted by a general strike, and the struggle culminates, eventually, in social revolution.

In the thinking of the International Socialist League, there was a similar belief that revolution was still possible, despite "craft scabbery". It is clear that the organisation believed that any sectional gains secured by "scabbing on Judas" would be, at best, transitory. Capitalism by its very nature could not make any meaningful long-term concessions to the working class, and the development of capitalism would *facilitate* the removal of divisions between workers: "The vanity of the craft unionists", argued the *International*, "blinds them to the process which was levelling all, skilled and unskilled, before the great lord of machinery".[90] Unskilled White, and more particularly, African labour would take over the tasks of the craftsman as dilution took place.

The basic logic of capital accumulation and exploitation also meant that capitalists would replace "well-fed slaves" with cheap and unfree African labour, making the gains of "craft scabbery" vanish. The job colour bar was incapable of preventing either dilution, or the downward pressure on White wages, and the African worker was a permanent part of the workforce. "Make no mistake", wrote the *International*, "your puny breakwater – the colour bar" cannot hold back the "big coloured Industrial Army coming in on the tide of their evolution ... demanding that place in the sun to which every single human on this earth is rightfully entitled".[91] At the same time, the pressures of industry were removing ethnic divisions between African workers: "capitalism was killing that more effectively than anything else".[92]

These arguments reveal two important features of International Socialist League thinking. Firstly, there is a definite focus on the worker in modern industry. The peasantry does not play a role, nor do

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[86] *The Call*, 8 November 1917, "South African Mineowners Encourage Family Life!"
[87] *The International*, 4 August 1916, "More Craft Scabbery"
[88] *The International*, 22 September 1916, "League Notes"
[89] London, [1907] 1976, *op cit.*
[90] *The International*, 3 March 1916, "The War After the War"; see also *The International*, 18 February 1916, "Workers of the World Unite" (S.P. Bunting)
[91] *The International*, 16 February 1917, "'The Poor Whites' and a Page From History"; also *The International*, 23 February 1917, "Race Prejudice"
[92] *The International*, 7 April 1916, "Call to the Native Workers"; see also *The International*, 26 May 1916, "The Last of the Baralongs"



Figure eighteen: The revolutionary strike defeats capitalism in "The Best Strike of All"

Source: *The International*, 2 April 1920

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traditional African societies. It is the *modern working class* that matters, and, more particularly, the urban industrial worker. There was little real interest in organising waged workers on the farms, although this is described as important. Thus,[93]

> Neither in non-resistance nor in resort to violence is the way of emancipation. But in that higher resistance made possible by the growth of capitalist industry, the resistance of the Industrial Union.

Secondly, there is a distinct, but incomplete, tendency towards a teleological theory of history. Like the classical Marxists, the International Socialist League placed a great deal of emphasis on the onward march of capitalism and the "great lord of machinery" providing the necessary basis for a revolutionary working class.

[93] *The International*, 26 May 1916, "Violence and the Labour Movement"

However, this tendency towards a deterministic outlook was qualified by the view that there was nothing inevitable about working class unity in One Big Union. The "higher resistance" of the "Industrial Union" was "made possible" by "the growth of capitalist industry", but the "Industrial Union" would only emerge through a fierce struggle within the working class movement.

Proletarian unity was a *necessity*; it was not the *necessary* product of the development of the forces of production: it had to be fostered by revolutionary political *ideas*.[94] In the South African case, this meant a relentless struggle against craft unionism and the fallacies of White Labourism, not to mention, as discussed below, both African and Afrikaner nationalism. This view is consistent with the broader syndicalist notion that political education and the organisation of revolutionary unions are two sides of a single process of actually *constituting* the working class as a revolutionary agent.[95] Syndicalists do not claim that workers will be become organised simply due to capitalist industrialisation, and "*a fortiori,* suddenly become revolutionary".[96]

It is against this background that the International Socialist League identified a second path for skilled White workers: the path of One Big Union and revolution. This meant "giving up their craft and colour vanity and throwing in their lot with their fellow workers" in the struggle for the "control and administration of industry by the workers". The alternative to racially exclusionary craft unionism was all-inclusive industrial unionism: here the waged artisan would be placed "side by side with the poor white labourer, and ... the native, in organisation".[97]

The revolutionary One Big Union would fight for equal wages and equal rights for all workers. From an early point, the International Socialist League argued that internationalist principles must be applied across the colour line. In the fourth issue of the *International*, Ivon Jones insisted:[98]

> … an internationalism which does not concede the fullest rights which the native working class is capable of claiming will be a sham … If the League deal resolutely in consonance with Socialist principles with the native question, it will succeed in shaking South African capitalism to its foundations. Then and not till then will we be able to talk about the South African Proletariat in our international relations. Not until we free the native can we hope to free the white.

Racial oppression was condemned in principle as unjust – the *International*, for example, condemned race riots in the United States as "atrocities", and reprinted the powerful protest poetry of the

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[94] *The International*, 3 March 1916, "The War after the War"
[95] The union is "the elementary school of Socialism in general" in which the worker "becomes aware of his strength", gaining a "definite direction" for "social activities", and "through direct and unceasing warfare with the supporters of the present system" developing "the ethical concepts without which any social transformation is impossible: vital solidarity with their fellows in destiny and moral responsibility for their own action": Rocker, [1938] 1989, *op cit.*, pp. 52-3
[96] C*ontra* Ntsebeza, 1988, *op cit.*, p. 32
[97] *The International*, 3 March 1916, "The War After the War"
[98] *The International*, 1 October 1995, "The Parting of the Ways"

American black radical Claude McKay with approval[99] – and as incompatible with the creation of a revolutionary, class struggle position. What was required was a "new movement" which would overcome the "bounds of Craft and race and sex": "founded on the rock of the meanest proletarian who toils for a master" the new movement must be "as wide as humanity" and "recognise no bounds of craft, no exclusions of colour".[100] According to Andrews:

> All segregation schemes are doomed to failure. We must either lift the Native up to the White standard, or sink down to his.[101]
>
> The prohibition of the employment of non-white labour was impossible. The only practical as well as just proposal is that of the International South African Socialist League – equal pay for equal work.[102]

Given that ideas such as the "White standard" and "equal pay for equal work" were sometimes used by the SA Labour Party to defend its position, it is vital to stress that Andrews and the International Socialist League were arguing for an equal *standard of living*, the *removal* of job colour bars, and an *interracial* labour movement. It was, Andrews stressed, necessary to end the "illusion of all white master communities, including Athenian democracies, that they represent the whole of the people, and that the mass of serfs or slaves beneath them are politically non-existent", which possessed "the white working-class movement".[103]

According to Gibson, in his influential weekly theoretical article, African workers must be part of the labour movement: [104]

> Industrial Unionism is the only solution to the problem [of cheap labour], organised on the broad lines of no colour bar ... the interests of the working class, irrespective of colour, are identical and irreconcilably opposed to the capitalist class ... The worker must organise to unite *all wage earners* to combat capital ...
>
> The only hope for both races is to be united in an industrial organisation. They may then look at the future with confidence, pressing forward unitedly step by step towards the goal, the emancipation of labour from capital.
>
> To you the worker, no matter what your race or colour, belongs the future. You are the only class to take control of the disruption of society as presently formed. Yours is the historic

[99] For example, *The International*, 20 September 1918, "The Age of Atrocity"
[100] *The International*, 3 December 1915, "The Wrath to Come"
[101] Cited in Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 181 C.f. also J.M. Gibson 23 February 1916, "Race Prejudice", *The International*
[102] *The Call*, 11 April 1918, "Demonstration for W.H. Andrews"
[103] William H. Andrews, 28 December 1917, "The Working Class Problem in South Africa", *The Call*
[104] J.M. Gibson, 23 February 1916, "Race Prejudice", *The International*

> mission to inaugurate the Co-operative Commonwealth, abolishing all class distinction, all class rule.

6.5. National liberation, scientific racism and the One Big Union

The view that all members of the working class had the same basic interests, "identical" regardless of race, the belief that racial discrimination and prejudice had negative effects on the whole working class, and the view that "the Industrial Union" was "the root of all the activities of Labour, whether political, social or otherwise", led the International Socialist League to conclude that the struggle for the One Big Union and the revolution required a labour movement that was both interracial in *composition*, and *actively* opposed to racial discrimination and prejudice in *practice*. A "Petition of Native Rights", drafted by S.P. Bunting, was presented to the first annual conference of the International Socialist League in January 1916, and passed by an "overwhelming majority": [105]

> That the League affirm that the emancipation of the working class requires the abolition of all forms of native indenture, compound and passport systems; and the lifting of the native worker to the political and industrial status of the white.

Equal rights for all would undermine divisions between workers, and help create a homogeneous working class with a common "political and industrial status".

The first resolution contained, however, an important rider – "meanwhile endeavouring to prevent the increase (in numbers) of the Native wage workers, and to assist the existing Native wage workers to free themselves from the wage system". This harked back to some of the ideas in the SA Labour Party, but was never seriously considered, and quietly dropped, leaving no lasting mark. Two years later, the Management Committee issued a statement on the eve of the 1918 conference:[106]

> All those things, which place the native workers on a lower social plane than the white workers, are weapons in the hands of the employing class to be used against all the workers, white and black.
>
> These tyrant laws must be swept away.

It was only through a struggle for equality and justice that the One Big Union could be constructed, could triumph. Industrial Unions were the means whereby the "tyrant laws" would be defeated. In "The Pass Laws: organise for their abolition", the *International* argued that the pass laws were an instrument "splendid

[105] *The International*, 14 January 1916, "The First Conference of the League"
[106] *The International*, *7 December 1917*, "International Socialism and the Native: no labour movement without the black proletariat"

for 'profits', because they make the native labourer cheap and easy to handle".[107] The pass laws "degrade the native below the level of the wage earner", and created, thereby, conflict between African and White workers. Industrial unions were, however, the means to overcome these conflicts and abolish discriminatory legislation:

> Once organised, these workers can bust-up any tyrannical law. Unorganised, these laws are iron bands. Organise industrially, they become worth no more than the paper rags they are written on.

This stress on industrial organisation and direct action as the means to expand popular rights was common in syndicalist circles, and an approach radically incompatible with "economism". Rudolph Rocker's classic statement, *Anarcho-syndicalism*, for instance, argued that the "peoples owe all the political rights and privileges ... not to the good will of their governments, but to their own strength": "*What is important is not that governments have decided to concede certain rights to the people, but the reason why they have had to do this".*[108]

The rapid adoption of a radical position on the racial question in South Africa may not have seemed a most likely outcome for the new organisation, given the SA Labour Party background of many key members, including Andrews, S.P. Bunting and Ivon Jones. Several factors help account for the situation. There was clearly a growing conviction that the struggle of the working class required interracial unity. Many of the SA Labour Party rebels had already begun to move towards a radical position on racial issues in the wake of the 1913 general strike, and well before the break with the SA Labour Party.

In 1914, for example, Andrews had defended, in parliament, the right of African and Coloured workers to organise industrially, and had moved that the SA Labour Party open its membership to all races at the August 1915 party conference.[109] Mason was famous for having tried to mobilise Africans to join the 1913 general strike at New Kleinfontein, Benoni. Speaking in March 1916 at a public meeting on "Trade Unions and the Native Question", with an audience including Africans – "representatives", the *International* reported, "of an awakening million who may not be ignored in the capitalist scheme, far less in the Socialist one" – he argued that 1913 had shown that "the interests of the white worker were bound up with those of the native".[110]

The defeat of the January 1914 general strike by State repression had only confirmed Mason's views: "Had they had with them an organised native working class ... not all the troops in creation could have beaten them". [111] White socialists should "get in touch with intelligent native workmen" and help build

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[107] *The International*, 19 October 1917, "The Pass Laws: organise for their abolition"
[108] Rocker, [1938] 1989, *op cit.* p. 64, emphasis in the original
[109] W.H. Andrews, contribution to debate on "Indemnity and Undesirables Special Deportation Bill", *op cit.*, column 588; Brian Bunting, editor, 1996a, editorial notes, *op cit.*, p. 111; Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 172172; Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, pp. 164-5.
[110] *The International*, 7 April 1916, "Call to the Native Workers"
[111] *The International*, 7 April 1916, "Call to the Native Workers"

up strong unions for African workers, and raise funds for organising.[112] Mason stated: "he was prepared to do his utmost to organise the natives, though he were deported again", and argued that coercion of Africans should be rendered unworkable, "repealed by the strength of Trade Unionism". African self-organisation was essential: time should not be wasted "arguing against the prejudice of the white worker", whose "reason left them when it came a question of colour". Instead of waiting for the favour of white workers, African workers must "train and organise themselves so that they could compel respect".

Mason returned to these issues in a talk in June, and "startled his listeners" by stating that the success of the 1913 strike was due to the support of the African workers at the New Kleinfontein Mine.[113] Brown gave a talk on similar lines for the International Socialist League: "Just as they cannot keep back the waves of the ocean can the white worker never keep down the native".[114] He said that "they" (Industrial Unionists) had to "fight against" the "prejudice against the native": "The greatest difficulty was not with the natives but to get the white workers to co-operate with the native". He went on to argue for increased pay for both Africans and Whites on the mines, equal pay for equal work, and the inclusion of the Africans in the South African Mine Workers' Union.

The war issue – which foregrounded the question of internationalism – combined with the influence of the syndicalist veterans, reinforced the new approach. Writing in the fourth issue of the *International*, Ivon Jones drew the link between the anti-war position and the anti-racist position:[115]

> … an internationalism which does not concede the fullest rights which the native working class is capable of claiming will be a sham. One of the justifications for our withdrawal from the Labour Party is that it gives us untrammelled freedom to deal, regardless of political fortunes, with the great and fascinating problem of the Native.
>
> If the League deal resolutely in consonance with Socialist principles with the native question, it will succeed in shaking South African capitalism to its foundations. Then and not till then will we be able to talk about the South African Proletariat in our international relations. Not until we free the native can we hope to free the white ...

Writing in the *International*, S.P. Bunting noted that "many of us are only just discovering that socialism to be effective, must be international", and the first general meeting of the International Socialist League in September 1915 called for a "radical re-investigation" of "antiquated" positions on "coloured workers".[116]

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[112] *The International*, 7 April 1916, "Call to the Native Workers"
[113] *The International*, 16 June 1916, "Branch Notes"; for report on another talk by Mason, *The International*, 30 March 1917, "League Notes"
[114] *The International*, 16 February 1917, "The Class War on the Rand: Forrester Brown declares the Native a fellow-worker". Also, see statements quoted in Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 187.
[115] *The International*, 1 October 1995, "The Parting of the Ways"
[116] *The International*, 24 September 1915, "A World to Win"; *The International*, 24 September 1915, "Report on First General Meeting"

Some inspiration was also drawn from the activities of African and Coloured workers. A report on a speech by Dunbar in September 1915 noted "the little knot of native and coloured men" that always attended meetings, and the *International* commented: "we shall never be on bedrock until we can command the attention of the dark-skinned proletariat of South Africa".[117] A strike by 3,000 African mineworkers at the Van Ryn Mine in January 1916 provided more hope: the strikers "did well for their race, but better for their class".[118] By the start of 1918, the *International* commented:[119]

> … the outlook of the League has become more and more clarified in the direction of our responsibility towards the native worker, and the solidarity of labour irrespective of colour has eclipsed the War-on-War principle in importance. It has become the revolutionary touchstone, the magic word from which all reformist goblins flee, and the key to the capitalist fortress as well.

However, the new approach was not adopted without a fight within the organisation, because not everyone who came from the SA Labour Party had made as radical a break with past traditions as, for instance, Andrews, S.P. Bunting or Ivon Jones. Prior to the January 1916 annual conference, the management Committee issued a statement intended to guide the debates at the gathering.[120] While arguing against drawing up excessively "detailed planks of a party platform in the old style", it called for the working class to be "organised for the purpose of capturing industry", and the "abolition of the indentured and compound system, and the gradual but systematic abolition of the Pass".[121]

Nonetheless, S.P. Bunting's "Petition of Native Rights" led to an "extremely keen" discussion that was quite revealing. Colin Wade referred to "biological evidence" of racial inequality, although the record shows no support from other delegates for his claims.[122] A qualification was also added to the "Petition of native Rights", which had some echoes of the SA Labour Party: there should be efforts "assisting the existing native wage earners to free themselves from the wage system", and "preventing the increase of the native wage earners".

This was never explained, never applied, never again mentioned in the *International*, and flatly contradicted by the analysis of capitalist development developed by the International Socialist League. Its significance lay, like Wade's "biological evidence", in showing a crucial fact: there *were* some conflicts in the *early* International Socialist League on the racial question, *but* these were short-lived *and* led to the overwhelming victory of the interracial position.

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[117] *The International*, 1 October 1915, "Branch Notes"
[118] *The International*, 7 January 1916, "The Van Ryn Strike"
[119] *The International*, 4 January 1918
[120] *The International*, 3 December 1915, "The Wrath to Come"
[121] Forman of the Communist Party claims "we can infer" from the argument against a detailed part platform an acute reluctance to "come out with a clear statement on the issue of the colour bar". Given the radical and anti-racist content of the statement as a whole, such an inference is illogical and unjustified. Forman's comment appears less an inference than an insinuation. See Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit.*, p. 52.
[122] *The International*, 14 January 1916, "The First Conference of the League"

In March 1917, Wade contested a by-election for the International Socialist League, where he "quietly rescinded" his earlier position, calling for interracial workers unity: "willy nilly, the native workers are here to stay".[123] By this time, the organisation had developed a thorough critique of quasi-scientific theories of inherent racial inequality. Like syndicalists elsewhere, for who "the human species" was "one and indivisible",[124] racial inequality a myth, and racial nationalism a reactionary doctrine,[125] the International Socialist League criticised theories of natural inequality, the "stale nonsense purveyed in the Labour Movement".[126]

In early 1916, Gibson's theoretical column insisted: "White workers must descend from the pedestal of race prejudice, must cease to have an inflated idea of their own value as a superior race".[127] Soon afterwards, John Campbell insisted that there was no "hard and fast" inequality between the races in an address of "that encyclopaedic order which leaves little more to be said on the question".[128] In his March 1916 talk, Mason, who worked on the mines, noted that the Africans were largely illiterate, but this was neither due to biology nor was it an insurmountable obstacle to organisation: "the founders of the British Trade Union Movement were men who could not read and write". The African worker had "marvellous possibilities": an efficient worker, his mind was also "clear of the prejudices that from childhood cloud the mind of the White". The worker who is "efficient for any arm of capitalist industry is doubly efficient for Labour organisation".

In March 1917, the *International* ran a series of articles which systematically critiqued biological theories of racial inequality as "pure poppycock": "Recent work in the study of the brain has disproven such 'biology'", wrote S.G. Rich. "Let us not *invent* biological facts to excuse our remissness in reaching the natives".[129] Against "vulgar beliefs regarding the native", the *International* approvingly cited scientific findings which confirmed the view that "all the fundamental phenomena and capabilities of man are rooted in ... humanity which is Black, White and Brown".[130] The policy of "segregation is a policy of capitalism, not of the labour movement", and led to disastrous disunity between workers when applied to trade unions.[131] Further, the notion that segregation protected Africans was facile, as segregation was a policy of repression that facilitated exploitation.

It was not, argued a writer in the *International* – most likely Ivon Jones – "biology" which made it difficult to organise the African workers.[132] In line with the International Socialist League's stress on the industrial and urban worker, and its tendency towards a teleological theory of history, the writer suggested that the "great obstacle to organising the native proletariat in this country is that it is not yet quite

[123] Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit.*, p. 58
[124] *The Socialist*, September 1918, "The Crucible"
[125] Rudolph Rocker, [1937] 1978, *Nationalism and Culture*, Michael E. Coughlin, Minnesota, pp. 298-339
[126] *The International*, 7 April 1916, "Call to the Native Workers"
[127] *The International*, 23 February 1916, "Race Prejudice" (article by J.M. Gibson)
[128] *The International*, 14 April 1916, "Branch Notes"
[129] Quote from *The International*, 16 March 1917, "Notes on Natives no. 1", emphasis in the original; 23 March 1917, "Notes on Natives no. 2"; also see 2 June 1916, S. G. Rich, "Anti-Segregation"
[130] *The International*, 9 February 1917, "The Great Unskilled"
[131] *The International*, 2 June 1916, "Anti-Segregation"
[132] *The International*, 2 November 1917, "What Keeps Back the Native Worker? Biology or economics?" (article by "D")

proletarian", being migrant and still linked to the land. The "lingering psychology of the land peasant … prevents the growth of that sense of solidarity with all his fellow wage-slaves which must rapidly result from the whole time occupation of the native workers in industry". This obstacle, when compounded by "all manner of penal laws brought in to keep under his nascent working class solidarity", was serious, but would be overcome in time.

Given such a perspective, the standards of the International Socialist League were very strict. In the June 1916, a number of largely White craft unions amalgamated to form the Building Workers' Industrial Union. Its declared objects were clearly influenced by syndicalism: to organise all workers in the industry into one union, and to cultivate "sufficient knowledge and power to enable the Union ultimately to control effectively the Building Industry in the interests of the Workers".[133] Tyler, the De Leonist, was secretary of its provisional committee,[134] then a top official, and, finally, secretary- general and organiser from 1921 onwards.[135] Mason switched over to the new union from the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners as soon as it was formed.[136]

However, the *International*, "at the risk of being thought hypercritics", asked if the new union admitted the "coloured fellow workers". "A generous declaration of solidarity will all workers is the only true test" of an industrial union.[137] The new union did not, as matters turned out, come close to fulfilling the latter hope. In Cape Town and Port Elizabeth, the Building Workers' Industrial Union admitted Coloureds, a well-established component of the skilled construction trades, raising the demands for higher wages for Coloured as well as White workers during a strike in Port Elizabeth early in 1919, but did not include Africans, while in the Transvaal its members reportedly barred skilled Coloured workers from construction sites.[138] Whatever the formal policy of the Building Workers' Industrial Union, the traditional pattern of unionism in the industry remained in practice: a limited multi-racialism in the Cape, and a hard colour bar in the Transvaal.

In 1918, Andrews again raised the need to organise all Coloured and African workers into the Building Workers' Industrial Union in an address hosted by that organisation, apparently with "considerable appreciation" from the audience.[139] This had little effect, and it is clear that Tyler remained an isolated radical in a conservative union. Tyler stuck to his socialist principles until his death in 1943.[140]

6.6. The syndicalist critique of African and Afrikaner nationalism

The commitment to the emancipation of the subject races in South Africa was coupled to a clear rejection of *nationalist* ideas. As an organisation that believed in the common interests of all workers across the boundaries of nationality and race, the class divisions *within* every nationality and race, and the need for

[133] Quoted in Gitsham and Trembath, 1926, *op cit*., p. 71
[134] C.B. Tyler, 14 July 1916, "Union of all Building Workers", *The International*
[135] Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., p. 191
[136] Gitsham and Trembath, 1926, *op cit*., p. 171
[137] *The International,* 9 June 1916, "Trade Unions Reforming"
[138] *The International*, 31 January 1919; Peltola, 1995, *op cit*., p. 88; Jack and Ray Simons, [1969], 1983, *op cit.*, p. 228
[139] *The International*, 11 October 1918, "Industrial Unionism"
[140] Biographical details are drawn from Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., p. 191

direct action and class struggle, the International Socialist League was critical of the many nationalist currents within South Africa. Nationalism was the ideology of sections of the ruling class who clamoured for a better place at the capitalist table, hindered class consciousness and unity, and failed to overcome the country's deep and dangerous ethnic and racial fractures.

The South African Native National Congress was described in the *International* as "the tame wing of the National Council of native attorneys and parsons",[141] which represented the "native property owner".[142] The Congress leaders were the "cuff and collar men".[143] Like the treacherous leaders of the White trade unions and the SA Labour Party, they misled the working class: "Labour fakirs of Black South Africa, Black bellwethers for the capitalist class", their interests were "completely alien to the great mass of the Native proletariat".

The International Socialist League denied that any common interests existed between African workers and the African elites. The African nationalists raised very real grievances, but lacked a political and strategic perspective that was truly capable of challenging either the cheap African labour system, or capitalism. The economic and social emancipation of the African workers could only be won through class struggle,[144] and their allies were *other* workers, such as "the white workers who fight capitalism of every colour",[145] rather than the African elite.

The African elite were appalled at the prospect of working class organisation, yet only such organisation could emancipate the African worker: "Many holy men, perhaps the editor of the 'Abantu-Batho' among them, will hold up horrified hands at the thought of the natives organising".[146] They were "black Crawfords", who failed to identify capitalism as a problem, precisely because they had a vested class interest in the existing system, hoping only to remove racial obstacles to their own advancement.[147]

The South African Native National Congress was praised for raising African concerns, but its nationalist politics and "cuff and collar" leaders must be condemned for failing to recognise capitalism as the source of the oppression faced by the "native races", and "failing to give attention to the one weapon the ruling class fear– the organisation of the native workers".[148] Thus, the *International* argued: "We would also warn our native fellow workers against the enemies of their own colour".[149]

The International Socialist League was noticeably more critical of the Afrikaner nationalism advocated by Hertzog's National Party. This party raised valid questions about British imperialism, the scars of the Anglo-Boer War, and the huge numbers of Afrikaner poor Whites. However, its programme was fundamentally reactionary, anti-working class and racialist. It was, the *International* declared, hypocritical for the party to speak of "freedom and justice and language rights" when the "petty nationalists" who led the

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[141] *The International*, 19 October 1917, "The Pass Laws: organise for their abolition"
[142] *The International*, 19 October 1917, "'Beware of Labour Cranks'"
[143] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 212-3
[144] *The International*, 19 October 1917, "The Pass Laws: organise for their abolition"
[145] *The International*, 19 October 1917, "'Beware of Labour Cranks'"
[146] *The International*, 19 October 1917, "The Pass Laws: organise for their abolition"
[147] *The International*, 14 June 1918, "Black Crawfords"
[148] *The International*, 5 April 1918
[149] *The International*, 19 October 1917, "'Beware of Labour Cranks'"

movement "mean only freedom for their little clique to exploit the labour of the native worker".[150] Underneath this "hypocritical cant" hid a programme of preventing the Chamber of Mines taking too many African workers from Afrikaner capitalist farmers.

While the Afrikaner nationalists raised a valid claim for self-determination, and a legitimate set of grievances against the British Empire, their programme had no intention of extending the right to self-determination to other peoples:[151]

> Here comes the weakness of the Nationalist position, however. The non-Dutch population, mostly urban and industrial, is not convinced that its point of view receive adequate consideration at the hands of the Dutch [i.e. Afrikaner] Nationalists, and the wishes of the great mass of the population – native, coloured, and Indian – are entirely ignored. The Republic, in short, dreamed of by the Nationalists is rather on the line of the [ancient] Greek Republic's than, say, of Switzerland.
>
> The most bitter opponents of any improvement in the status, industrial or political, of the non-white inhabitants, are the followers of General Hertzog. For that reason the International Socialists … although in sympathy with many of the aspirations of the Nationalists, prefer to take no part in the separation agitation at the present time.

While International Socialist League recognised the poverty of many Afrikaners, and paid a great deal of attention to the "poor White" problem, "we differ from the Nationalists both as to the cause and the cure".[152] The cause of the growing proletarianisation of the Afrikaner population was the development of capitalist production, "not the influence of British Imperialism in particular". Further, "the process of squeezing out or migration from country to towns was actually in full operation even under the regime of the old republics".

It was therefore futile to try solving the problem by weakening the imperial connection, when the problem was the class system and capitalism. The *International* called on Afrikaner workers and *bywoners* to join the interracial socialist movement.[153] "The Nationalist … remedy for capitalism is to cut away the British portion of the cancer", but even if all British property was expropriated, and a gigantic rural settlement scheme for poor Afrikaners set in place, the situation in the long run would not be "in any way different from the one which prevails at the present".[154] Instead of putting their faith in such "palliatives", the "Africander proletariat" was urged to join other workers in the struggle for revolution: "Let the propertyless proletariat, the victim of the capitalising of his hereditary industries, and the small farmer whose children are to be future victims, organise now with us … for a radical cure".

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[150] *The International*, 18 January 1918, "'Presbyter is only Priest writ Large!'"
[151] William H. Andrews, 16 March 1918, "The South African Nationalist Movement", *The Workers' Dreadnought*
[152] *The International*, 19 April 1918, "'Poor Whites'"
[153] *The International*, 3 October 1920, "To the Bijwoners and Afrikaner Workers"
[154] *The International*, 19 April 1918, "'Poor Whites'"

However, there was a serious problem. The *International* was published in English, and had no articles in Afrikaans or Dutch, nor did the organisation have many contacts with Afrikaner workers. In 1918, it was decided to translate materials into Dutch, but by 1921, it seems that only two pamphlets – one on the Russian Revolution, and a version of the *Communist Manifesto* (presumably the De Leonist edition) – had been issued.[155]

6.7. Red, black and White: the question of medium-term strategy

The International Socialist League's commitment to interracial unionism raised, of course, the question of where to begin and where to focus activities – questions that were never satisfactorily resolved by the International Socialist League. The organisation clearly stated the principle that,[156]

> Socialism can only be brought about by *all the workers* coming together on the industrial field to take the machinery of production into their own hands and working it for the good of all … the man who talks about a Socialism which excludes nine-tenths of the workers is not being honest with himself.

The International Socialist League's leaflets, newspapers or conferences also regularly repeated the argument that "organisation of the workers on industrial or class lines, irrespective of race, colour or creed", was the most effective means of providing the necessary force for the emancipation of the workers", without really explaining *how* the interracial One Big Union was to be created. The International Socialist League lacked a medium-term syndicalist strategy, a clear and consistent programme of action, which could foster unity in action around clear activities and targets, that is, a medium-term strategy to underpin the longer-term drive for One Big Union. The result was that activities were somewhat sporadic, and failed to foster coordinated activities around clear medium-term activities and goals.

The absence of a medium-term strategy – of a clear and consistent programme of action, which could foster unity in action around clear activities and targets –has not, however, stopped a number of writers from suggesting that the organisation was deeply divided into two rival schools of thought: those who favoured a focus on White labour, and those who favoured Africans. This line of argument often takes the extreme form of the "S.P. Bunting/Ivon Jones myth": the notion that the majority of members of the International Socialist League were either racially prejudiced, or deeply disinterested, in workers of colour, constituting an "unwilling mass of white followers", represented by Andrews, which had to be "dragged" behind the two "enthusiastic nigrophiles".[157] Sometimes Dunbar is also identified as representing a group

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[155] Johns, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 102-3
[156] *The International*, 16 June 1916, "Inviting Jim Sixpence to Tea"
[157] Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit*., p. 84

that "distinguished themselves … by ignoring the problems of black workers",[158] a view that can be traced to the Simons.[159]

The evidence does not bear out either approach. In the first place, there is no basis for the claim that the majority of members were an "unwilling mass" that was "dragged" behind "nigrophiles". This claim, which appears to originate in the writings of Roux, is a serious caricature of the organisation, and one that, moreover, makes little sense in its own terms.

Given that policy was set at conferences, and that the *International* represented the official views of the organisation, it is disingenuous to suggest that either S.P. Bunting or Ivon Jones acted contrary to the views of the "mass" of members. It would have been a simple matter to bring the two men to order, particularly if their views were unpopular. However, both S.P. Bunting and Ivon Jones were regularly returned to the Management Committee, and both served as editors of the *International* without complaint from either the rest of the Committee or the broader membership.

The view that the two actually "dragged" an "unwilling mass" behind them is made even more improbable by the claim that the "unwilling mass" was headed by Andrews: it is hard to imagine that the charismatic and iron-willed veteran militant would have "tolerated" a policy with which he disagreed, not to mention inconceivable that he could have been defeated in an open confrontation by S.P. Bunting or Ivon Jones.[160] In any case, the view that Andrews was hostile to, or uninterested in, workers of colour is baseless. Not only, as noted above, was he a key figure in articulating the organisation's policy of interracial unity, but he would also, as the next chapter demonstrates, play an active role in supporting African workers.

It should also be noted that the "S.P. Bunting/Ivon Jones myth" does a disservice to the views of both men, reducing their complexity to a narrow "nigrophilism" that neither man actually accepted. Rather than champion a narrow focus on Africans, for example, Ivon Jones was on record as arguing that the *White* workers were the "politically articulate" strata that would act as an "engine of revolution" in South Africa, draw the African, Coloured and Indian workers into action, just as the "small industrial proletariat" of Russia helped drive the "big mass" of the people into revolution.[161]

At the same time, however, Ivon Jones' views simply do not fit the neat White focus/African focus suggested by the literature. Without the co-operation of all workers "*within twenty-four hours"*, he added in the same article, "the revolution fails", for the "native workers are ultimately the true revolutionists, with

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[158] Sheridan W. Johns, 1976, "The Birth of the Communist Party of South Africa", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol.9, no. 3, p. 376

[159] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., 193

[160] Cf. Johns, for whom the "activist position of Bunting and Jones with regard to non-white workers continued to be countered by Andrews", who "merely tolerated" their approach: Johns, 1995, *op cit.,* pp. 100-102, 101. No explanation is provided regarding why Andrews would have been unable to effectively "counter" the two men, nor why Andrews would have needed to "tolerate" their activities, nor why the *International* would have been permitted to promote a policy unacceptable to the membership.

[161] David Ivon Jones, 11 April 1919, "The White Worker's 'Burden'", *The International*; also reproduced in full in Hirson, 1988a, *op cit.*, pp. 112-4. Also cf. David Ivon Jones, 4 June 1919, "Bolshevism East and West", *The International*

potentialities undeveloped, and that the clarity of the class struggle here is really due to their mass psychology". [162]

Likewise, it is incorrect to present S.P. Bunting as exclusively interested in Africans. In a statement on the question of the relative role of the White workers, and workers of colour, in a South African revolution, he insisted that the African and Coloured workers had a "definite part to play", and suggested that their solidarity, "communal spirit" and "freedom from the property instinct" was of great importance.[163] However, he did not dismiss the White working class in the struggle against "the trammels of wage slavery", a struggle that transcended race.

Bearing in mind the organisational character of the International Socialist League, and examining the facts, the "S.P. Bunting/Ivon Jones myth" must be rejected as a misrepresentation of the organisation. This is not to undermine the considerable achievements of either S.P. Bunting or Ivon Jones: the point is, rather, that the views of both may be regarded as broadly representative of the views of the *majority* of members, while their activities must be considered in context, as activities deigned to fulfil the *aims* of the International Socialist League.

The point is that there is no basis for the claim that the organisation was divided into discrete factions divided over the question of which group of workers to target. Contrary to the "S.P. Bunting/ Ivon Jones myth", the organisation never actually chose to focus on either African or on White workers. For Andrews, the aim of the International Socialist League was to "organise *all* workers by industry, irrespective of race or colour, and demands that all political disabilities shall be removed from all workers".[164] For Ivon Jones, "the working class is interdependent … the false idea of Unity which sneers at either section of the proletariat … is anti-proletarian in the below zero direction". [165] Even the "white political field", that is, elections, were both a means of influencing White workers and a "fine opportunity of forcing the issue" of "solidarity with the native workers'… with immunity from the police. And an echo of this propaganda reaches the native workers as well…"[166] For S.P. Bunting, the struggle against "the trammels of wage slavery" was inherently one that transcended racial divisions.[167]

It should, then, be clear why I have spoken of the "S.P. Bunting/ Ivon Jones myth": the two men's views were broadly representative of the general views, the *great majority*, of International Socialist League members; contrary to Eddie Roux's notion of an "inner-party struggle" between those who did not want "recognition of the black worker" and the two "enthusiastic nigrophiles",[168] a view that is replicated throughout the Communist school literature, the International Socialist League explicitly refused to focus on any single racial group, defining its target as the working class *as a whole*; finally, Andrews, S.P. Bunting

[162] David Ivon Jones, 11 April 1919, "The White Worker's 'Burden'", *The International*
[163] S.P. Bunting, 10 December 1920", The ISL and the Coloured and Native Worker", *The International*
[164] William H. Andrews, 14 February 1918, "White and Black Labour in South Africa", *The Call*; also see William H. Andrews, 16 February 1918, "South African Socialism and the War"
[165] David Ivon Jones, 11 April 1919, "The White Worker's 'Burden'", *The International*
[166] Ivon Jones, [9 June 1921] 1988a, *op cit*., pp. 119-122.
[167] S.P. Bunting, 10 December 1920", The ISL and the Coloured and Native Worker", *The International*
[168] Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit*., pp. 74-75, 84

and Ivon Jones all involved themselves with the struggles of both White workers and workers of colour. These issues are also touched on in Section 3.7.

This strict internationalism was an impressive achievement: in a society as deeply divided by nationality and race; the temptations of nationalism and racial hatred were always present, and always a threat to class politics. At the same time, it is also clear that the International Socialist League simply lacked a clear programme of action, clear targets, and a policy of fostering unity in action. In effect, different members of the organisation were free to carry out policy as they saw fit, which meant that hard choices were not made regarding the use of limited resources in money, people and time. While a refusal to focus on "either section of the proletariat" was commendable, it easily became a problem in such a situation, because it lent itself to a vague policy of trying to recruit every worker, everywhere, and all the time. The longer-term vision of One Big Union shaped their activities, but, in the medium-term, energies were often dissipated and real breakthroughs – such as the formation of the Industrial Workers of Africa and other syndicalist unions amongst workers of colour, discussed in the next two chapters – were not always consolidated.

6.8. "The Russian form of Industrial Union": the International Socialist League, the Russian Revolution, and syndicalism

There were definite similarities between the anti-war positions of the International Socialist League and Lenin, but given that Lenin was by no means the only socialist to oppose the First World War, such parallels in no way establish that the organisation was necessarily aligned with Leninist or left-wing classical Marxist politics.

In March 1917, a popular uprising in Russia overthrew the authoritarian government of Tsar Nicolas II, a regime that was an international byword for repression and terror. The unstable parliamentary system that emerged was soon overtaken by events, as innumerable *soviets* (independent councils of delegates), factory committees (which sometimes took over workplaces) and Red Guards (a popular militia) emerged. In October (November in the Russian calendar), the Petrograd Soviet was controlled by the Bolsheviks, and overthrew the Provisional Government, declaring the "dictatorship of the proletariat".

The International Socialist League, like anarchists and syndicalists across the world, initially greeted the developments in Russia with "exultation".[169] South African workers were advised to look towards the "dramatic and inspiring rapidity of the revolution"[170] and the "bold and inspiring lead of the Russian Workers".[171] The 1918 International Socialist League congress stated that it "rejoices beyond measure at the triumph of the Russian Revolutionary proletariat under the banner of the Bolshevik wing of the Social Democratic Party, and pledges on behalf of the advanced proletariat of South Africa its growing support to stand by the Russian workmen against the Capitalist Governments of the whole world, that of South Africa

[169] *The International*, 7 December 1917, "Long Live the Commissaries of the People"
[170] *The International*, 8 June 1917, "The Star in the East"
[171] *The League Undaunted: Election Manifesto* (June 1917)



Figure nineteen: W.H. "Bill" Andrews, the International Socialist League's leading White trade unionist

Source: Ernest Gitsham and James F. Trembath, 1926, *A First Account of Labour Organisation in South Africa.* E.P. and Commercial Printing. Durban, p. 161

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included".[172] The congress also resolved that the International Socialist League would make contact with the Bolsheviks.

The International Socialist League's enthusiastic support for the Russian Revolution of 1917 did not follow from a belief that the Revolution was a seizure of State power by a political party of the working class, but rather from an interpretation of events of 1917 as a *syndicalist* revolution in action. The "Council of Workmen", that is the *soviets*, was, according to the *International*, simply "the Russian form of the Industrial Union".[173] Lenin and Trotsky were not the heads of a State but "only the delegates of the Russian Federation of Labour, otherwise the Council of Workmen, or the Soviet".[174]

The Bolsheviks were, likewise, interpreted as a political party on the lines advocated by De Leon: a shield and a supplement for the real revolutionary force of industrial organisation, not as a vanguard Party set to make a revolution from above. "The Socialists do not want to be responsible for the Political State, especially at a time when that State has piled up overwhelming world wide disasters, until they are in a position to destroy that Political State in step with the world wide movement of the working class".[175] Knowing that they could never "triumph by the ballot alone", the workers had organised the industrial bodies

[172] *The International*, 11 January 1918, "Our Annual Gathering"
[173] *The International*, 18 May 1917, "Russian Workmen Vindicate Marx"
[174] *The International*, 1 March 1918, "The Call of the Bolsheviks – League Manifesto"
[175] *The International*, 3 August 1917, "The Russian Drama"

which could undertake (in capitals) the "LOCKOUT OF THE CAPITALIST CLASS" and supplant the State: "the Council of Workmen has great regard for the State, hugs it like a bear; kills it with kindness, leaves it without a single function, except to endorse the decrees of the Commissaries of the People".[176]

There was "no State Socialism in Russia":[177] the State "having died out through disuse, the Council of Workmen, or the Executive Board of the Industrial Workers" becomes "the directing authority" based on (the *International* quoted De Leon) "industries … regardless of former political boundaries … the constituencies of that new central authority".[178] The overthrow of the Provisional Government in October 1917 was simply a vindication of De Leon's strategy:[179]

> Marx said that the Capitalist system contains the germ of its own destruction ... that the State must be captured, not for proletarian use, but to be destroyed ... Engels said that the "the government of men will be replaced by the administration of things".
>
> Further they did not go. But De Leon added: Yes, the Industrial Organisation of the Workers is the embryo that will burst the shell of capitalism and become the directing authority for the administration of things in the Commonwealth of Labour.
>
> *The Word becomes Flesh in the Council of Workmen*. The Council of Workmen is the dictatorship of the proletariat.

From the above, several points should be clear. First, in line with the De Leonist approach, the International Socialist League revered the memory of Marx,[180] while presenting Marx as a De Leonist syndicalist. Secondly, the International Socialist League interpreted the "dictatorship of the proletariat" as the self-management of industry by the working class through its unions: "The Council of Workmen is the dictatorship of the proletariat".

At no point at this stage did the International Socialist League shows signs of understanding the "dictatorship of the proletariat" in the correct, classical Marxist, sense of a transitional State headed by a vanguard Party for the purpose of introducing socialism. On the contrary, the "dictatorship of the proletariat" was, according to the *International*, simply Industrial Unionism in power. It being "no longer possible to obtain freedom under the most advanced form of political democracy", what was required was "Industrial democracy".[181] The Provisional Government was therefore demolished by the Council of Workmen, and the

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[176] *The International*, 14 December 1917, "The Russian Revolution Explained"
[177] *The International*, 5 April 1918, "Notes of the Bolshevik Movement"
[178] *The International*, 14 December1917, "The Russian Revolution Explained"
[179] *The International*, 30 November 1917, "The Word becomes Flesh", emphasis in the original
[180] See, for example, *The International*, 2 November 1917, "What Keeps Back the Native Worker?"; *The International*, 3 May 1918, "The Life of Marx"; *The International*, 3 May 1918, "The Work of Marx"; *The International*, 10 May 1918, "The Great Criminal"; *The International*, 12 April 1918, "'Federation' Labour Day and International May Day"
[181] *The International*, 1 February 1918, "The Decline and Fall of Political Democracy"

"industrial solidarity of Labour" became the "only constituency and the only Parliament for bringing emancipation".

The immediate impact of the Russian Revolution on International Socialist League politics was, then, to *reaffirm* the organisation's syndicalist beliefs, seemingly vindicated by the course of the Russian Revolution. Thus, the claim by Cope that from the time of the Russian Revolution, the "entire outlook" of the International Socialist League became "ever more deeply coloured by … the teachings of Lenin"[182] is not convincing. While Roux was undoubtedly correct when he noted that "the Bolshevik revolution in Russia" was "welcomed by the South African socialist as tangible proof of the ultimate triumph of their faith",[183] it must be stressed that the "faith" so vindicated was, in fact, syndicalism.

There was nothing unusual in the International Socialist League's response to the Russian Revolution. Anarchists and syndicalists across the world saw the revolution as a vindication of their own beliefs, and "rushed to declare solidarity with it".[184] Armando Borghi of the USI in Italy, for example, recalled the revolution became "our polar star": [185]

> We exalted in its victories, we trembled at its risks ...
>
> We made a symbol and an altar of its name, its dead, its living and its heroes.

The Socialist Labour Party in Britain spoke of "Industrial Socialists or Communists" interchangeably, described the Russian Revolution as the record of the first victory of an exploited class in history,[186] and presented it as an example of the De Leonist strategy.[187] De Leonist papers even claimed that Lenin himself regarded De Leon as a precursor of the *soviet* system,[188] a line of argument that also appeared in other publications at the time.[189]

Other activists also saw the Revolution as a vindication of syndicalism. Max Eastman, writing in the *International Socialist Review*, spoke of "Syndicalist-Socialist Russia", which proved the correctness of "Marx and Engels and the philosophers of Syndicalism": "A Parliament of proletarian deputies … – a body like an American Federation of Labour Convention with a majority of I.W.W.'s – is in essential control of Russian affairs".[190]

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[182] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.,* p. 194
[183] Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit.*, p. 81; also cf. Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 81
[184] Thorpe, 1989, *op cit.*, p. 93
[185] Cited in Thorpe, 1989, *op cit.*, p. 93.
[186] *The Socialist*, September 1918, "The Crucible"
[187] Spartacus, 12 December 1918, "A Soviet Republic for Britain!", *The Socialist*
[188] D. Raper, 12 June 1919, "Short Lengths", *The Socialist*
[189] For example, Margaret P. Watt. 15 June 1918, "Marx: De Leon: Lenin", *The Workers' Dreadnought*
[190] Max Eastman, August 1917, "Syndicalist-Socialist Russia", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XVIII, pp. 77-78

The term "dictatorship of the proletariat" brandished by the Bolsheviks caused a few concerns among anarchists and syndicalists, but many were content to interpret the term to mean, literally, the rule of the working class. Eusebio Cardo of the Spanish CNT, for instance, declared in 1919:[191]

> We justify the dictatorship, we admire the dictatorship, we long that the dictatorship come, and we long for it, and we cherish it because the very ones who now oppose it, justify it stretches out to keep infamy and injustice enthroned. Conversely, if it has to be employed to establish the reign of justice in a definitive form in the world, we sing of it, we desire it; for that, we admire and we love the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The view that the Russian Revolution was more anarchist or syndicalist than classical Marxist was also widely shared by many mainstream journalists at the time. Morgan Price Philips, special correspondent in Russia for the *Manchester Guardian*, for example, argued that the "inner character of the Bolshevik movement" was "based on the theory of anarchy and syndicalism preached during the last century by Bakunin": "It is not Socialism at all but Syndicalism".[192] His reports were one of several such eyewitness accounts reprinted by the syndicalist press.[193]

Another was Arthur Ransome's *Six Weeks in Russia*, which claimed that Lenin expressed amazement at "how far and how early De Leon had pursued the same train of thought as the Russians", and detected De Leonist phrases in the Bolshevik programme.[194] This legend, which was baseless, was widely accepted by De Leonists, who used it to buttress their own views.[195] Other writers had a similar impression: an article in the American *Hearst's Magazine*, for instance, stated that the "Bolshevic-Maximalists are Syndicalists" – just before muddying the waters by describing their programme as State ownership.[196]

From the scanty information available – reports from the radical and the mainstream press, and the Bolsheviks' careful presentation of developments in Russia as radically democratic – the Russian Revolution seemed to conform to the most deeply held ideals of the syndicalists.[197] It was carried out from below, was based on self-management, and the dictatorship of the proletariat seemed to mean merely the rule of *soviets* and trade unions themselves.[198] Given the broader backdrop of the "glorious period" of anarchism and syndicalism, the ignoble collapse of the Labour and Socialist international and the demonstrable

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[191] Thorpe, 1989, *op cit.*, p. 112
[192] Morgan Price Philips, [5 December 1917] 1997, "The Russian Class Struggle: Bolshevik syndicalism leading", in Tiana Rose, editor, *Dispatches from the Revolution: Russia 1916-1918: Morgan Price Philips*, Pluto Press, London, p. 105
[193] For example, the Socialist Labour Party press in Glasgow produced a special edition of his writings in 1919: M. Philips Price, *War and Revolution in Asiatic Russia*: *The Socialist*, 22 May 1919, book service section
[194] Quoted in D. Raper, 12 June 1919, "Short Lengths", *The Socialist.* The Socialist Labour Party press in Glasgow also produced an edition of this work.
[195] See Holton, 1976, *op cit.*, pp. 210-212
[196] Charles Edward Russell, November/ December 1917, "New Russia in the Making", *Hearst's Magazine*, reprinted in *International Socialist Review*, vol.XVIII, p. 310
[197] Thorpe, 1989, *op cit.*, p. 93
[198] Thorpe, 1989, *op cit.*, pp. 106-108

moderation of most of its key parties, and the ongoing strength of anarchism and syndicalism, such mistakes are easily understood.

6.9. The character of the Bolshevik regime: a case of mistaken identity

The International Socialist League's interpretation of the Russian Revolution was hardly an example of "unerring accuracy",[199] notwithstanding the claims made by writers in the Communist school. Like other syndicalists, the organisation's understanding of developments in Russia from 1917 to 1921 was flawed, and its assessment of the role of the Bolsheviks was quite mistaken.

While Lenin and the Bolsheviks, like most anarchists and syndicalists, opposed the First World War, there was little in common between their perspectives. Lenin's conception of the vanguard Party was fundamentally authoritarian: not only was the Party internally hierarchical, based on a "stable organisation of leaders", but it, alone, claimed to represent revolutionary consciousness, based on the supposedly scientific status of classical Marxism.[200]

The "theory of socialism" develops "altogether independently" of the working class by the intelligentsia, and is introduced into it from "without" by the Party.[201] All rival views were, by definition, anti-proletarian and counter-revolutionary: the Mensheviks were "lackeys of the bourgeoisie", while "anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism" were "*bourgeois* trends … irreconcilably opposed … to socialism, proletarian dictatorship and communism".[202] This conception may be traced back to Marx's and Engel's claim that the Party would "always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole", for it, alone, understood the "line of march" on the historical stage.[203]

Such a claim – by no means unique to classical Marxism – assumed a particular significance when coupled to a second component of the classical Marxism: the revolutionary State, a "dictatorship of the proletariat" that would "centralise all instruments of production" and manage the transition to socialism.[204] The vanguard Party's claim to be the exclusive bearer of proletarian consciousness, and an exclusive knowledge of the "line of march", led straight to the claim that the Party, alone, would direct the "dictatorship of the proletariat", a "centralised organisation of force, of violence", of "undivided power": "By educating the workers' party, Marxism educates the vanguard of the proletariat, capable of assuming power and *leading the whole people* to socialism, of directing and organising the new system, of being the teacher, the guide, the leader of all the working and exploited people".[205]

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[199] See "Notes by Brian Bunting, " in Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit.*, p. 186; Brian Bunting, 1981,editor, *op cit.*, p. 27; Cronin, 1991, *op cit.*; and South African Communist Party, 1991, *op cit.*

[200] V.I. Lenin, [1902] 1975a, "What is to be Done? Burning questions of our movement", in V.I. Lenin, 1975, *Selected Works in Three Volumes*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, revised edition, vol.1, pp. 151-2, 178, 182, 187-9,197-202, 207. This volume is referred to as Lenin, 1975a, *op cit*., to distinguish it from the other volumes in the series.

[201] Lenin, [1902] 1975a, *op cit*., pp. 114, 120-2, 152-3

[202] V.I. Lenin, [1918] 1975b, *op cit*., pp. 591, 599, emphasis in original

[203] Marx and Engels [1848], *op cit.*, pp. 39-54

[204] Marx and Engels, [1848], *op cit.*, p. 54

[205] V.I. Lenin, [1917b] 1975b, "'The State and Revolution: the Marxist theory of the State and the tasks of the proletariat in the revolution, in Lenin, 1975b, *op cit.*, p. 255, emphasis in original

It was a small step from this claim to the notion that all critics of the Party were objectively counterrevolutionaries, to be crushed by the dictatorship in the interests of the revolution. A new State, the Soviet Union, was constructed by merging the remnants of the Tsarist State with the *soviets*.[206] Political debate in the *soviets* was suppressed, and the *soviets* were subordinated to the new Cabinet, the "Council of People's Commissars" (the "Sovnarkom"). The State took control of the economy and the military. In 1919, individual managers controlled only 10,8 percent of enterprises, but by 1920, this figure had risen to 82 percent, with the managers appointed by government ministries.[207] The Red Guards were restructured along conventional military lines, with the election of officers abolished in early 1918.[208]

Political repression, starting with the liberal Kadets and the Right Social Revolutionaries in November 1917 was followed by the suppression of the anarchists in April 1918 in the main cities and the suppression of "left-communist" factions within the Party. The outbreak of Civil War saw the Red Army waging counter-insurgency campaigns against the peasantry, while the "Extraordinary Committee to Fight Counter-Revolution" (the *Cheka*) was established to "watch the press, saboteurs, strikers, and the Socialist-Revolutionaries of the Right"[209] under the direct control of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party.[210] The Party defended a one-party dictatorship, and the principle that the Party was "entitled to assert its dictatorship even if that dictatorship temporarily clashed with the passing moods of the workers democracy".[211]

If there were syndicalist elements in the Russian Revolution, they were at odds with the Bolshevik approach. Against this background, the illusions of the International Socialist League are painfully obvious. The "Russian form of the Industrial Union"[212] was not in control; rather than "having died out through disuse",[213] the State had been rebuilt; it was not the "Council of Workmen, or the Executive Board of the Industrial Workers" that was "the directing authority",[214] but the Party.

The International Socialist League identified with Bolshevism, but gave it a meaning of its own choosing that had little to do with actual Bolshevism. It presented Bolshevism as a confirmation of its existing views, without really understanding the character of the actually existing "dictatorship of the proletariat". Although the International Socialist League continued to repudiate "State Socialism" as "State

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[206] In late 1918, on average, less than 10 percent of the senior officials of key ministries such as finance were even members of the Bolshevik Party: Martin McCauley, 1994, "Lenin's Government: 1917-1922 (Sovnarkom)", in Shukman, editor, 1994, *op cit*., p. 166; also see Leggett, 1994, *op cit*., p. 183

[207] S.A. Smith, 1994, "The Demise of Workers' Control in Industry", in Shukman, editor, 1994, *op cit*., p. 29

[208] An estimated 48,409 officers from the Tsarist army were drafted in as commanders from the middle of the year: John Erikson, 1994, "The Red Army", in Shukman, editor, 1994, *op cit*., p. 187

[209] Cited in Daniels, R V, editor, 1985, *A Documentary History of Communism*, Tauris and Co., London, vol.1, p.90. By 1921, the *Cheka* had 260,000 members, making it nearly 20 times bigger than the secret police of the old Tsarist government, the *Okhrana*, which had 15,000 members: Leggett, 1994, *op cit*., pp. 182, 185

[210] By 1919, the *Cheka's* role was functions were clearly defined by the Party's central committee: "the Chekas were funded, exist and work solely as the direct organs of the Party, under its direction and supervision". Quoted in Leggett, 1994, *op cit*., p. 183

[211] Quoted in Alec Nove, 1990, *op cit.*, p. 181

[212] *The International*, 18 May 1917, "Russian Workmen Vindicate Marx"

[213] *The International*, 14 December1917, "The Russian Revolution Explained"

[214] *The International*, 14 December1917, "The Russian Revolution Explained"

Capitalism imposed from above",[215] it failed to consider that this thesis might have some applicability to Bolshevik Russia.

The International Socialist League's tendency to cast Marx as a syndicalist may have contributed to this outcome, and there is no sign that it was aware of Bakunin's view that Marx's "dictatorship of the proletariat" would quickly develop into a dictatorship over the proletariat, "a new state" where the popular classes would "awake to find themselves again the pawns and victims of the new power clusters",[216] and where "the State will then become the only banker, capitalist, organiser, and director of all national labour, and the distributor of its products".[217]

6.10. On trial in Natal: the "Bolsheviks are Coming" incident

An International Socialist League manifesto issued in early 1919 in Durban and Pietermaritzburg in Natal in English, Zulu and Sesotho, and entitled "The Bolsheviks are Coming", described the road ahead as the struggle for the "free commonwealth of labour … an actual fact in Russia today".[218] The authors were Ivon Jones – who had resigned his posts in the International Socialist League in order to stay at the Health Institute, a sanatorium in Longmarket Street, Pietermaritzburg, for his tuberculosis – and Greene, the veteran Pietermaritzburg socialist.[219]

The leaflet is a revealing look at what the International Socialist League understood by "Bolshevism" at the time. It argued that the "Great War of Nations" had now been replaced by the "Class War", with the Bolsheviks leading the struggle for the "rule of the working class". The International Socialist League's interpretation of Bolshevism as syndicalism in action was again starkly evident:

> Get ready for the World-Wide Republic of Labour.
>
> The way to get ready is to combine in the workshops. Combine as workers, regardless of colour. Remember that an injury to one is an injury to all, be he black or white. While the black worker is oppressed, the white worker cannot be free.
>
> Before Labour can emancipate itself, black workers as well as white must combine in one organisation of Labour, irrespective of craft, colour or creed.
>
> This is Bolshevism: The Solidarity of Labour.

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[215] *The International*, 21 September 1917, "The Uses of the Labour Politician"
[216] Bakunin, [1872a], 1971, *op cit*., p. 281
[217] Bakunin, [1870b], 1971, *op cit*., p. 217
[218] Reprinted in *The International*, 25 April 1919, "The Bolsheviks are Coming"; it is also included in Brian Bunting, 1981, editor, *op cit*., pp. 38-40
[219] Hirson, 1988a, *op cit*., p. 114; Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit*., p. 86

That the leaflet was subsequently reprinted in the *International* between a portrait of Lenin and Trotsky underlines the International Socialist League's failure to understand Bolshevism, rather than demonstrates its "Bolshevik" tendencies.

The manifesto was popular amongst certain Africans, and a scuffle broke out between a demobilised soldier and an African distributing the leaflet in Pietermaritzburg. Ivon Jones was arrested in March 1919 along with Greene, the veteran socialist from Pietermaritzburg, for distributing the leaflet.[220] The charges included "incitement" under the Riotous Assemblies Act, and failure to submit the leaflet to the wartime Censor: officials were specifically worried about the effects on the "native mind" and racial order, the leaflet being blamed for disturbances in Durban and Natal.[221]

In the subsequent trial, the prosecution brought in a range of witnesses to support its case. They included J.S. Marwick, manager of the Durban Municipal Native Affairs Department, conservative Natal Native Congress leaders, employers, officials and policemen.[222] Gumede of the Natal Native Congress and editor of *Ilanga Lase Natal*, for example, testified that British imperial rule was preferable to Bolshevism, while another African witness stated the leaflet would return the country to the bloody days of Shaka, founder of the Zulu kingdom.

While Greene submitted a copy of the *Communist Manifesto* as his statement to the court,[223] Ivon Jones again demonstrated an insistence on viewing the Russian Revolution as a vindication of syndicalism in his statements to the court. There is no basis at all for the Simons' assertion that his statements provided a "summarised … *Communist Manifesto*".[224] On the contrary, he described the objectives of the International Socialist League in the usual syndicalist terms:[225]

> … to establish the Socialist Commonwealth and the methods were organisation and education by Press and platform, especially with regard to native workers; participation in the elections of public bodies, and the promotion of the establishment of revolutionary industrial organisations by workers to form the skeleton of the Social Commonwealth …
>
> He defined Bolshevism as the 'Solidarity of labour', and to enlarge on that he would specify Socialism, the form of Government contemplated by the Socialist movement, otherwise industrial as distinguished from political democracy …
>
> In the *International* as well as in the leaflets he appealed to black as well as white, and published "The Bolsheviks are Coming" in a native language …

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[220] For details of the arrests and the trial, see David Ivon Jones, 18 April 1919, "Reflections on Remand", *The International*; *The International*, 25 April 1919; *The International*, 2 May 1919, "The 'White Mind' in Natal"
[221] Hemson, 1979, *op cit*., pp. 178-181
[222] Hemson, 1979, *op cit*., pp. 178-181
[223] *The International*, 1 October 1920, "Lo! The Poor Unemployed"
[224] Simons, 1984, *op cit*., p. 217
[225] Quoted in Hirson, 1988a, *op cit.*, pp. 117-119

> The working class was the only class fit to take control of the country, and he included all classes of workers, irrespective of colour … When the natives were capable of ruling, they would rule, and he and his friends were doing their utmost to develop that capacity for ruling ...
>
> If a man could be a Lenin in South Africa, he did not care whether he was black or white …

The magistrate was not impressed, describing the leaflet as "libellous, treasonable, and indeed diabolical", and adding that the "idea that a South African Lenin might conceivably be a Bantu suggested lunacy".[226] The accused were sentenced to a £75 pound fine and four months in jail, plus a further £10 fine or one month in jail, but the sentence was overturned on appeal in the Supreme Court and the prisoners were discharged. Divisions in official circles on how best to respond to African unrest[227] probably played a role in the revocation of the sentence. Nonetheless, Greene and his wife were fired from their jobs, and Ivon Jones was evicted from the sanatorium.[228] He was briefly employed in Mozambique, but contracted malaria. Nonetheless, he wrote an interesting report on the *O Emancipador* group, a radical circle connected to the main Mozambican union, the Port and Railway Employees Association,[229] and was probably the man responsible for arranging for the *International* to be sold in Lourenço Marques by a local newsagent.[230] The International Socialist League was critical of the Mozambican union's failure to recruit workers of colour, or take their concerns seriously,[231] although it also condemned the ongoing repression of Mozambican strikes.[232] (There does seem to have been a small anarchist and syndicalist current in that city, but that is a story for another study).[233]

6.11. In conclusion: rethinking the International Socialist League

The fundamental conclusion that must be drawn from the foregoing discussion is that the politics and history of the International Socialist League in South Africa has been fundamentally misrepresented. This is quite clear when the basic political outlook of the organisation, and its positions on the racial question, are noted.

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[226] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, p. 217
[227] Hemson, 1979, *op cit*., pp. 178-181
[228] Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit*., p. 86
[229] David Ivon Jones, 10 September 1920, "Friends across the Border", *The International*
[230] Distribution in Lourenço Marques is noted in *The International*, 10 September 1920, "Where 'The International' can be Obtained"
[231] *The International*, 10 September 1920, "The Congo and Delagoa Strikes: the 'white labour' fallacy revived"
[232] *The International*, 17 September 1920, "Troops: what for?"
[233] There are some tantalising glimpses in Capela, 1981, *op cit.*; Freire, 2001, *op cit*.,; and Jean Penvenne, 1996, "João Dos Santos Albasini (1876-1922): the contradictions of politics and identity in colonial Mozambique", *Journal of African History*, vol.37

Academic studies, conservative anti-Communist polemics,[234] Pan-Africanist accounts,[235] Trotskyist discussions,[236] and the works of the Communist school, all share the view that the International Socialist League was a classical Marxist organisation similar to the Bolshevik Party. It was, supposedly, the "first Marxist orientated political organisation in the history of the South African labour movement":[237] "rigidly" Marxist, [238] launched and led by "revolutionary Marxists",[239] occupied with "following the teachings of Karl Marx"[240] and "applying Marxism to South Africa"[241] as "tireless propagandists" – for Marxism.[242]

The image of the International Socialist League as a Marxist body approximating the Bolsheviks is often linked to a tendency to treat the history of the organisation as an early chapter in the history of the CPSA. This is particularly evident in works associated with writers linked to the CPSA and SACP. The March 1944 issue of the *Party Organiser*, an organ of the Cape CPSA, for example, claimed: "The Communist Party of South Africa was really founded in 1915 under the name of 'The International Socialist League' as a result of a split in the Labour Party on the question of the War".[243] Another Party account has it that the real "birthday" of the CPSA was the anniversary of the formation of the International Socialist League.[244]

For writers in the Communist school tradition, the International Socialist League was the "Communist nucleus" of "true socialists"[245] that founded the CPSA. Its views on the war were "closely approaching the stand of Lenin", it predicted the formation of the Comintern, and developed a correct interpretation of the events of the Russian Revolution that began in 1917.[246] Eddie Roux, speaking of 1920-

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[234] For example, Henry R. Pike, 1988, *A History of Communism in South Africa*, Christian Mission International, South Africa, revised edition; Nataniel Weyl, 1970, *Traitor's End: the rise and fall of the communist movement in Southern Africa*, Tafelberg-Uitgewers, Cape Town, Johannesburg

[235] George Padmore, 1956, *Pan-Africanism or Communism: the coming struggle for Africa.* Dennis Dobson. London. pp. 347-8.

[236] Norm Dixon, 12 February 1997, "The Transformation of South Africa's Communists [Book Review]", *Green Left Weekly*; Angela Hammond, May 1997, "South Africa's First Revolutionary Paper: *The International*", *Socialist Worker*, Johannesburg.

[237]Mantzaris, 1988, *op cit*., p. 161

[238] Peter Walshe, 1970, *The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa: the African National Congress 1912-1952.* C. Hurst Company, London, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, p. 95; also c.f. Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, pp. 51-2

[239] Cronin, [? 1991] n.d., *op cit*., p. 6; Cronin, 1991, *op cit*. p. 9

[240] Govan Mbeki, 1992, *The Struggle For Liberation in South Africa.* David Philips, Cape Town, Johannesburg, Mayibuye Books, University of the Western Cape, Bellville, p. 27

[241] Ntsebeza, 1988, *op cit.,* p. 30

[242] See Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983,*op cit.*; Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*; Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit.* p. 134. Also see Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit.* All of these accounts identify "Marxism" with classical Marxism.

[243] Cape District Committee, March 1944, "Editorial", *Party Organiser: organ of the Cape District Communist Party of South Africa,* "23rd Birthday Special", p. 1. A copy may be found in the Simons Papers, Manuscript and Archives section, African Studies Centre, University of Cape Town

[244] See also "Introduction by Dr Yusuf Dadoo, National Chairman of the South African Communist Party"", in Brian Bunting, editor, 1981, *op cit.* p. xv

[245] "Introduction by Dr Yusuf Dadoo, National Chairman of the South African Communist Party", in Brian Bunting, editor, 1981, *op cit.*

[246] This is emphasised by Brian Bunting editor, 1981, *op cit.*; Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*; Cronin, 1991, *op cit.*; Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit.*; Lerumo, 1971, *op cit.*; Cronin, [? 1991], *op cit.*; Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.* The quote is from Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 205.

1921, claimed: "The International Socialist League at that time was about to change its name to the Communist Party of South Africa and affiliate to the Communist International".[247]

It is difficult not to see the heavy hand of the teleological outlook of the Communist school at work: the vision of socialism in South Africa as the "progressive evolution of a correct socialism",[248] in which the Marxist promise of the International Socialist League is fulfilled in the onward and upward march of the CPSA and SACP. Yet very similar arguments, and the same conflation of the International Socialist League and the CPSA, appear in other accounts. Johns speaks of "Marxism-Leninism in a Multi-Racial Environment: the International Socialist League and the South African Communist Party, 1914-32", which presents the International Socialist League as the first years of local Marxism-Leninism.[249] Lalu attributes the International Socialist League's "humanism" to its "Marxism", and cites as evidence that the CPSA had a "consistent belief in the pending cataclysmic collapse of capitalism in … Europe" in an article in the *International* – in 1917.[250] Even Hyslop speaks of the "proto-Leninists of the International Socialist League".[251]

There is little to support the claim that the International Socialist League was a Marxist group, nor the suggestion that the CPSA was the logical outcome of the politics of its "direct predecessor". As this chapter has demonstrated, the basic outlook of the International Socialist League was that of syndicalism, which derives form anarchism, not classical Marxism. Its references to Marx were characteristic of its acceptance of a De Leonist variant of syndicalism, rather than evidence of a classical Marxist outlook, while it's anti-war, pro-Bolshevik position was one widely shared with anarchists, anarcho-syndicalists and other revolutionary syndicalists around the world at the time.

In short, the International Socialist League must be seen as part of the "glorious period" of anarchism and syndicalism, rather than an outpost of classical Marxism. It should be noted that several accounts do, indeed, mention some syndicalist aspects of the organisation, but – and this point is crucial – only in a manner that is compatible with the broader view of the organisation as Marxist and proto-Bolshevik. Such views are both inaccurate and inconsistent.

It is, therefore, important to examine the International Socialist League on its own terms, rather than from the perspective of the later history of the CPSA. The established practice of viewing the organisation as Marxist, of claiming convergences with Bolshevism, and of seeing its significance mainly as a "direct forerunner"[252] and "main foundation"[253] of the CPSA, has seriously weakened scholarship on socialist history in South Africa.

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[247] Eddie Roux and Win Roux, 1970, *op cit.*, p. 19. Eddie Roux makes an identical statement elsewhere: Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit.*, pp. 134-5. Oddly enough, Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit.*, p. 90 is subtler on this issue. See also Brian Bunting, 1996b, *op cit*.: this introduction treats the International Socialist League and Communist Party of South Africa as interchangeable.
[248] Dirlik, 1991, *op cit.,* p. 8
[249] See Johns, 1995, *op cit.*
[250] Lalu, n.d., *op cit*., pp. 3, 3 note 5, 8; cf. Lalu, 1993, *op cit*., p. 2
[251] Jon Hyslop, 2002b, *op cit*., p. 21
[252] Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit.*
[253] Lerumo [Harmel] 1971, *op cit.*, 34



Figure twenty: T. William "T.W." Thibedi, the International Socialist League's first African recruit, a sign of changing times for local syndicalism

Source: Henry R. Pike, 1988, *A History of Communism in South Africa*, Christian Mission International, Germiston, second edition, p. 154

Not only has the basic outlook of the International Socialist League been misrepresented, but the data has also been misunderstood. In several cases, syndicalism has been presented as a *minority* current within the International Socialist League *opposed* to the Marxist leadership and majority: the Simons spoke of a "syndicalist faction", Forman suggests the existence of a syndicalist grouping, Cope referred to a clash between "syndicalist ideas of direct action and opposition to politics" and the leadership, Harmel spoke of "pacifist, anarchist, syndicalist" currents within the International Socialist League opposed to the "dominant trend", which was "revolutionary Marxist", while Cronin made a similar claim, also insisting that the leaders were revolutionary Marxists.[254]

This line of argument is fundamentally flawed, as it misrepresents the *official* position of the organisation, which was *syndicalist*, not to mention the outlook of key figures, including Andrews, S.P. Bunting and Ivon Jones, who embraced the official position. To set up an opposition between a "syndicalist faction" and a "dominant trend" that was "revolutionary Marxist" can only lead to serious and inconsistent misunderstandings of both syndicalism and classical Marxism.

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[254] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit*., p. 206; Forman, [1959] 1992, op *cit.*, p. 74; Harmel, 1971, *op cit.*, p. 39; Cronin, [? 1991] n.d., 1991, *op cit.*, p. 6; Simons, *op cit.*, p. 215, also see 245;

Such was the case for both the Simons and Harmel. The Simons admitted that the International Socialist League did, indeed, advocate a revolutionary general strike and One Big Union, yet continued to insist that the organisation was in the classical Marxist tradition.[255] This is a serious contradiction, and one that was shared by Harmel. While claiming that the "dominant trend" was "revolutionary Marxist", he also stated that this was a "distorted version of Marxism", derived from De Leon, that denounced "all types of parliamentary political activity" and held that "the formation of 'one big Industrial Union' and the subsequent calling of a general strike was the panacea for the winning of workers' power and the overthrow of capitalism".[256] Clearly, such an outlook was no mere "distortion" of "revolutionary Marxism", but evidence of a syndicalist outlook at odds with classical Marxism.

Such problems are not, however, confined to local scholarship. The persistent misrepresentation of the International Socialist League as a Marxist group may be seen as an example of a larger problem facing the recovery of anarchist and syndicalist history: a broader "historical amnesia"[257] in the wake of the rise of Bolshevism[258] and "the historians' cult of success".[259] Like the literature on radical traditions in other regions, where Marx appears as the unquestioned leader of the majority in the First International,[260] where the Mexican anarchists are recast as Marxists,[261] where the Australian IWW becomes a Marxist, rather than a syndicalist, group, where James Connolly becomes the founder of Irish Marxism, and Shin Ch'aeho a Korean nationalist,[262] the International Socialist League has been reduced to a Marxist group and the CPSA-in-embryo. The rediscovery of its history may, then, be seen as part of a larger rediscovery of libertarian socialist history.

The second area in which the existing literature has misrepresented the International Socialist League has been on the question of race. At best, the organisation has been accused of ignoring racial oppression in South Africa, advocating an abstract internationalism that, in practice, ignored Africans; at worst, it has even been accused of accepting elements of the tradition of White Labourism. It is the Communist school that played the key role in formulating these claims, although they have since been very widely accepted.

The first line of criticism may be found in Eddie Roux's claim that the majority of members were an "unwilling mass" uninterested in the problems facing workers of colour,[263] and in Brian Bunting's statement that the "even a majority" of that body did not really see African, Coloured, and Indian workers as playing an independent role in changing South Africa.[264] Most were more interested in converting "more white workers" than in "pioneer socialist work amongst the black workers". For Harmel there were "errors of analysis and emphasis", "arising out of the limitations of their origin and outlook", including a tendency to

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[255] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, pp. 191, 196, 199, 205, 209, 215, 245
[256] Harmel, p. 39.
[257] Allen, 1999, *op cit*., pp. 263-4
[258] Hobsbawm, 1993, *op cit.*, pp. 72-3
[259] Joll, 1964, *op cit.,* pp. 11-12
[260] Capouya and Tompkins, 1975a, *op cit*., p. xii; Schechter, 1994, *op cit*., p. 63
[261] Hart, 1978,*op cit.,* pp. 16, 185, 210
[262] Allen, 1999, *op cit*., pp. 263-4
[263] Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit*., p. 84
[264] Brian Bunting, 1975, *op cit.*, pp. 18-19

ignore the "revolutionary significance" of a struggle for equal rights for Africans,[265] while Cronin claimed that it saw "the national oppression of the majority of people in our country was not really very worthy of consideration".[266]

The Simons exemplified the second line of criticism, with the claim that the International Socialist League supported segregation and colour bars. According to their account, the organisation adopted a "modified version of the Labour party's segregation policy", opposed interracial marriages, advocated "healthy social segregation", ignored racial oppression, and its arguments pointed to "the white labour policy of sheltered employment".[267] It should be noted that the Simons' claims do not refer only to the early years of the organisation, but clearly include the period up to 1920.[268]

The main flaws in these criticisms of the International Socialist League have already been indicated: the organisation opposed racial discrimination and prejudice, rejected theories of inherent racial inequality, paid a great deal of attention to the specific disabilities imposed upon Africans, which were explained as the means of extending capitalist domination and exploitation, favoured an interracial One Big Union, and saw industrial organisation as the means whereby both legal equality and social revolution could be attained.

The Simons' analysis, which sees the views of the International Socialist League as merely a "modified version of the Labour party's segregation policy", is a serious caricature – a flaw that has not, however, prevented their text, along with that of Roux, from serving as the main source of information on the politics of the organisation in numerous other works. Legassick bases his analysis and scathing critique of the pre-CPSA left entirely on Roux and the Simons.[269] Ntsebeza used Roux and the Simons as the main sources on the International Socialist League,[270] while Mason relied on Roux and the Simons in presenting the organisation as accommodating White prejudice.[271] Walshe's history of the South African Native National Congress reiterated the "S.P. Bunting/Ivon Jones myth".[272] Drew has repeated these claims, stating that the organisation favoured "separate paths of development",[273] and stating, on two occasions, that pre-1928 organisations ignored racial oppression:[274]

> … the Native Republic thesis was, historically, a significant advance in South African Communist thinking. For the first time Communists put South Africa's great social problems, the national and democratic questions, at the top of their political programme …

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[265] Harmel, 1971, *op cit*., p. 42
[266] Cronin, 1991, *op cit.*, p.12
[267] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, pp. 192-196, 211-212
[268] For example, Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., pp. 212-215
[269] Legassick, 1973, *op cit.*, p.3
[270] Ntsebeza, 1988, *op cit*.
[271] Mason, 1971, *op cit.,* pp. 8-18
[272] Walshe, 1970, *op cit*., pp. 95-6, 169
[273] Drew, editor, 1996a, *op cit.*, p. 16.
[274] Drew, 1991a, *op cit.*, p. 165. Cf. Drew, editor, 1996a, *op cit*, p. 22: "… the Native Republic represented a significant advance in South African *socialist* thinking. For the first time *socialists* put South Africa's pressing social problems, the national, democratic and land questions, at the top of their political programme…"; also see p. 16

Likewise, Lalu accepts the "S.P. Bunting/Ivon Jones myth", and the view that the 1928 Native Republic thesis was the first time that racial oppression was seriously considered.[275] Roth, while highly critical of Roux and the Simons in other respects, accepts the claim that racial oppression only received serious attention by local socialists in the latter 1920s.[276] Caldwell's study uses Roux, the Simons and Harmel as sources for the claim that "the voices of Ivon Jones and Bunting in the cause of black workers were virtually alone in both the columns of the *International*, and in the ISL".[277] Musson's biography of Gomas maintains a similar position.[278]

How, then, did the Communist school justify claims that International Socialist League ignored racial oppression or supported White supremacy? Here, we need to look at methodological issues. While Roux's views were biased by a basic desire to inflate the role his mentor and hero, S.P. Bunting, and by inadequate research, the same cannot be said of the Simons. The Simons' account can only be described as based on serious distortions of the data through the use of unrepresentative material to draw misleading general conclusions and the highly questionable use of quotations, coupled with an argument that is quite illogical. This is an issue I examine in some depth in Chapter 3, but it is worth briefly recapitulating here.

The Simons' case that the International Socialist League favoured segregation is based on a highly selective and misleading use of the *International*. The overwhelming stress on interracial solidarity and unity is ignored, and the emphasis placed on two unrepresentative articles from the early *International* that were mildly sympathetic to segregation.[279] Neither can justly be considered representative examples of the organisation's outlook, for the arguments they advanced were rejected again and again in the *International*. An angry letter to the *International* in June 1916 complained about its calls to "fraternise with the coloured man": the editor printed the letter as a "curio for the next generation... just the kind of vulgar appeals [*sic*] made against the abolition of slavery in America", and stated "the man who talks about a Socialism which excludes nine-tenths of the workers is not being honest with himself".[280] It is absurd to claim that the International Socialist League actually favoured segregation. A policy of segregation was never part of the organisation's platform, and was described as both unrealistic and as a violation of the interests and rights of the working class. "Even if he *could*, the native should not be segregated. Even if he *should*, the native could not be segregated", argued the *International* in June 1916.[281]

The Simons' selective use of the *International* was matched by a questionable use of quotations. The quotation (cited in Section 6.5.) calling for "the fullest rights" for the African working class and a

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[275] Lalu, n.d., *op cit*.; Lalu, 1993, *op cit*.
[276] Roth, 2000, *op cit*., pp. 2-5-6; see also Roth's lengthy paraphrase of Eddie Roux on pp. 192-195
[277] Marc A. Caldwell, 1996, "Struggle in Discourse: the International's discourse against racism in the labour movement in South Africa, 1915-1919", MA thesis, Department of Journalism and Media Studies, Rhodes University, p. 101, also see pp. 104-7, 124
[278] Musson, 1989, *op cit.*, p. 35, 40 note 30
[279] *The International*, 17 March 1916, "Segregation Segregated"; *The International*, 19 May 1917, "The Segregational Socialist"
[280] *The International*, 16 June 1916, "Inviting Jim Sixpence to Tea"; cf. *The International*, 15 November 1918, "A Socialist Africa"
[281] *The International*, 9 June 1916

solution to the "problem of the native" that would "shake South African capitalism to its foundations",[282] became, in the Simons' hands, damning evidence that the International Socialist League saw the African worker as "a problem, and not a comrade at this stage".[283] A paraphrase (in the same article) of Marx's famous epigram on race in the United States[284]– "not until we free the native can we hope to free the white was further grist to the Simons' mill: "the possibility that the African would free himself did not then occur to them", the "them" being "missionary socialists" concerned "primarily to save the White proletariat from itself".[285]

Mason's call to organise African workers suffered a similar fate appears, not as the statement of a man expressing official policy, but the isolated views of an iconoclast chastising his comrades accepted the "stale nonsense purveyed in the movement about the African's mental capacity"![286] In fact, he had the *unions* in mind: the original report stated that Mason was speaking of "stale nonsense purveyed in the *Labour* Movement".[287] In a number of instances, the Simons did even attempt to substantiate their claims, citing non-existent positions in favour of the job colour bar and a White Labour policy.[288]

No such positions were ever taken. The organisation affirmed the permanent role of Africans in the industrial workforce, and its syndicalist strategy explicitly saw Africans as an integral part of the One Big Union and the self-managed post-capitalist Industrial Republic. Rather than advocate separate paths of development, the *International* called for *closer* unity between African, Coloured, Indian and white workers in pursuit of a common goal of emancipation.

The Simons' allegation that the International Socialist League opposed mixed marriages because of the "immaturity of the blacks"[289] has no factual basis; the same is true of the unlikely claim that the organisation opposed strikes[290] will be passed over without comment. Indeed, the Simons' own account continually contradicts their charges: the reader may be forgiven for being surprised to learn – a mere three pages after being bluntly informed that the organisation supported the job colour bar and White Labourism – that also "condemned the colour bar", called for "one big union of all workers, irrespective of race", argued that "Africans would complete the process of wresting control of the productive system from the ruling class", and welcomed the ''rumblings of a spontaneous, indigenous class conscious industrial

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[282] *The International*, 1 October 1915, "The Parting of the Ways"
[283] Simons and Simons 1983, *op cit.*, p.192
[284] Marx wrote: "In the United States, every independent workers' movement was paralysed as long as slavery disfigured part of the republic. Labour in a white skin cannot emancipate itself where it is branded in a black skin". See Karl Marx, [1867] 1976, *Capital: a critique of political economy*, Penguin, p. 414.
[285] Simons and Simons 1983: 192
[286] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., p. 194. Walker and Weinbren suggest that the meeting was attended
[287] *The International*, 7 April 1916, "Call to the Native Workers", emphasis added. Walker and Weinbren also state that a number of Whites present – allegedly members of the International Socialist League – moved away from the seats adjacent to those occupied by the Africans present. The alleged incident was not reported at the time in *International* or elsewhere, and the veracity of the story may be doubted. Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., p. 321
[288] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, pp. 192, 212
[289] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, p. 194
[290] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, p. 211

movement".[291] Given this unacceptable approach, it is a serious problem that the Simons' account remains so uncritically accepted.

The International Socialist League condemned racial discrimination and prejudice, and favoured an interracial, and revolutionary, labour movement. It promoted working class identity and working class unity in a society wracked by national and racial divisions, while rejecting nationalism: "the solidarity of Labour fails the moment it is divided on colour, race ... or creed". [292] If anything, the International Socialist League romanticised African cultures. Like Glasse, who saw among the Africans "such brotherly love, such human feelings, such help for one another that are quite unknown between 'civilised' people",[293] Mason argued that African workers were generous and "communal by instinct".[294] For Campbell, Africans were an indomitable people: in the past, he argued, "the Abantu had trekked southward ... through Central Africa in order to avoid the tyranny of the ancient empires". Today, "centuries of oppression, insult, and capitalist degradation had failed to enslave him".

The "how" of the Communist school case has been discussed. The next issue is *why* – in the face of all the evidence – did its writers insist that the International Socialist League believed "the national oppression of the majority of people in our country was not really very worthy of consideration"? After all, it might be supposed that the CPSA and SACP might have sought to *downplay* any flaws in the politics of the International Socialist League, an organisation viewed as the main foundation of the Party, if only to strengthen Party claims to legitimacy: the stress on the supposed Marxism of the International Socialist League might be seen as an example of such an approach. Yet this did not happen.

The answer has a great deal to do with the history of the CPSA and SACP. Particularly important in this regard was the adoption of the Native Republic thesis imposed on the CPSA from 1928, an approach that neatly divided struggles for equal rights from struggles against capitalism, by creating two distinct stages: the "Native Republic" with "equality" for "national minorities", and the future struggle for a "Workers' and Peasants' Republic". At the heart of this strategy was the view that the two stages could be neatly distinguished, and the belief that the struggle for the "Native Republic" was a *national* struggle involving a cross-class movement.

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[291] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, p. 195-6. By contrast, the Simons never fail to excuse the most glaringly problematic positions adopted by nationalists in this period. For example, the African National Congress's (African National Congress) immediate support for the racist British Empire's war effort, which included a halt to a campaign against the segregationist 1913 Land Act and active co-operation with the Native Affairs Department to raise 25,000 African labourers to support the South African war effort in German South West is explained away as human nature: Africans and Coloureds who professed loyalty were probably motivated by the usual sentiments and reasons of a people at war ... a sense of duty, a spirit of adventure"- and, even more oddly, as a form of resistance to racism- "the prospect of gaining a job and ... social esteem ...an easing of the black man's burden" (pp. 176-7). It is also worth noting the subtle slide from "African National Congress" to "Africans" in the above account- a semantic shift that establishes the African National Congress as the *natural* representatives of black people: Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, p. 176-7).

[292] S.P. Bunting, quoted in Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit.*, p. 54.

[293] [Henry Glasse], November-December 1905, *op cit.*

[294] A similar argument is made in Samuel Mbah and I.E. Igariwey's 1997 *African Anarchism: the History of a Movement* .See Sharp Press. Tucson. Arizona. Mbah and Igariwey, who are associated with the contemporary Nigerian anarcho-syndicalist movement, discuss a number of classless and self-governing communal pre-colonial African societies as "anarchistic precedents in Africa" (pp. 27-38). However, in contrast to "African socialists'" generalisations, they also point out the existence of African empires and class societies.

This led the CPSA to incorporate nationalist views in place of class politics. While the CPSA tended to claim leadership of both stages during the New Line period, the Party came to regard the African, Coloured and Indian nationalists as the key force in the first stage of the struggle in later years. The view, characteristic of the International Socialist League, that socialists should build an interracial working class movement capable of *challenging* the nationalists in the struggle against racial discrimination and prejudice was replaced by a commitment to strengthening the nationalists.

A central feature of the two-stage approach was the conflation of *national liberation* with *nationalism*, a very *particular* kind of response to racial oppression. That is, *only* nationalism was viewed as capable of securing national liberation; conversely, class politics was, by definition, unable to deal with national oppression in South Africa. Thus, the Simons can claim that "the class struggle … merged with the national liberation struggle" only when the ANC and CPSA became allies.[295]

Such a claim can *only* be defended if *all* socialist positions prior to the adoption of the Native Republic thesis were fundamentally flawed. To have admitted, for instance, that the International Socialist League had developed a comprehensive, class struggle strategy to combat both capitalist exploitation and racial oppression – one that merged the two "stages" of struggle, the antithesis of "economism" – could have serious doubt upon the need to adopt the two-stage approach in the first place. This would have raised questions, in turn, about the whole teleological narrative of Party history, weakening the very foundations of the claim to perpetual advance towards the "correct socialism" for national liberation.

It was, in short, the belief that the Native Republic thesis was necessary and progressive that underpinned the charge that the International Socialist League ignored, or collaborated in, racial oppression. It is also against this backdrop that the Simons' tendency to excuse every element of African and Coloured nationalist practice, from support for the First World War to sending deputations to Britain, may also be understood: nationalists are the basic force for national liberation, not socialists, not even those linked to the CPSA.

While this chapter has examined the analysis and ideology of the International Socialist League, the next chapter examines its activities. These were wide ranging, and included the formation of a number of syndicalist unions amongst African, Coloured and Indian workers, closer contact with African and Coloured nationalists, and work within the mainstream trade unions to remove the colour bar. In the context of a huge upsurge in working class unrest, "the policy of the International Socialist League … was established firmly as one of solidarity with Africans as fellow workers in common struggle",[296] and the organisation, originally based largely amongst British skilled workers, began to develop both an interracial membership and a larger syndicalist movement.

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[295] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, pp. 10, 578, 609
[296] Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit.*, p. 56

Chapter 7

Across the racial divide: The International Socialist League, the Industrial Workers of Africa, and the Durban Indian Workers' Industrial Union, 1916-1919

The previous chapter examined the emergence and ideology of the International Socialist League, arguably the most important single syndicalist organisation in South African history. This chapter takes the story forward, concentrating on the activities of the organisation on the Witwatersrand and in Natal, and, specifically, its role in labour activism in the period from 1916 to 1919. This was the period when the organisation first put its programme of interracial and revolutionary unionism to the test.

The period during and immediately after First World War was marked by one of the largest strike waves in South African history. Of the 199 strikes recorded in the Union of South Africa *Yearbooks* for the period 1906 to 1920, a full 168 took place between 1916 and 1920.[1] There were 205 strikes from 1916 to 1922, involving 175,664 workers.[2] Trade unionism also grew rapidly: according to some sources, there were perhaps 9,178 trade unionists in South Africa in 1914, but 40,000 in 1917, and over 135,000 in 1920; [3] according to others, there were 10,538 trade union members in 1915, but 135,140 members in 1920.[4]

The labour unrest of the time was shaped by both international and local factors. Internationally, there was widespread class struggle and colonial unrest, with the "eight years that shook the world" lasting from 1916 to 1923.[5] The central event was the Russian Revolution of 1917, but it was only the most dramatic event in a revolutionary period that started with the Easter Rising and revolutionary strikes in Mexico in 1916, moved through anarchist and syndicalist revolts in Argentina, Brazil, Italy, Portugal, Spain and the Ukraine, *soviet* uprisings in Bulgaria, Finland, Germany, and Hungary, and colonial insurgencies in China, the Czech lands, Egypt, the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia), Ireland and Korea. While Britain, France, the Netherlands and the United States did not enter into a revolutionary situation, each experienced large-scale unrest, strikes and popular radicalism.

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[1] Pike, 1988, *op cit.*, pp. 103-5
[2] Simons, 1984, *op cit.*, p. 333
[3] Van Duin, 1990, *op cit*., p. 640 note 39
[4] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 200
[5] Schmidt and van der Walt, forthcoming in 2008, *op cit*.

Within South Africa, a sharp rise in the cost of living (part of an international trend) played an important role in the unrest. Prices rose from the start of the First World War, and inflation grew rapidly towards the end of 1917.[6] Prices for many commodities doubled by 1920, ad inflation reached twenty percent, but nominal wages remained static. On the Witwatersrand, the price of blankets rose from fifteen shillings to £2, with similar increases for trousers and coats, while the price of staple cereals may have risen by 300 percent.[7]

While rising prices could be presented as a necessary sacrifice in wartime, an argument with some local influence, ongoing post-war inflation saw a "whole pent-up reservoir of frustration" start to "burst its banks"[8] with demands for wage increases (or price controls and price cuts). This was the context in which an international influenza epidemic struck in late 1918 – on the Witwatersrand mines, for example, no less than 52,489 African mineworkers out of a total of 157,614 were hospitalised in the space of two months[9] – which probably contributed to labour unrest by increasing work pressure.[10]

In this context, the activities of the International Socialist League took two main forms. There was, on the one hand, a drive to reform the White trade unions of the South African Industrial Federation along IWW lines; on the other hand, the organisation also played a pioneering role in organising African and Indian workers.

The project of reforming the White unions took place in two phases. Initially there was an attempt to reform the unions from within through a multi-racial "Solidarity Committee", – a project that had little success, except perhaps in the Building Workers' Industrial Union. From 1918 onwards, inspired by the Clyde Workers' Committee in Scotland, the International Socialist League fostered an independent shopstewards' movement in the unions. A number of such bodies were formed in metals, mining and railways, but their links to syndicalism were often tenuous.

The International Socialist League had more success amongst workers of colour in this period. In early 1917, it helped establish the Durban Indian Workers' Industrial Union, also a syndicalist union that brought together a number of industries, which was one of the very first unions amongst the local Indians. The International Socialist League did not have the same success amongst Durban Africans. On the Witwatersrand, however, it formed the Industrial Workers of Africa, a syndicalist union for African workers. This was modelled on the IWW, which was the first union for African workers in South Africa, and in all likelihood, Britain's African empire.

Not only did these activities begin to transform the International Socialist League into a more multi-racial body – it began to have a layer of African and Indian members, including Cetiwe, Kraai, Moodley, Ramsamy, Bernard L.E. Sigamoney and Thibedi, mainly from its union work – but also gave syndicalism a wider influence amongst people of colour more generally.

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[6] See Bonner, 1982, *op cit*., pp. 273-6 including table 1
[7] Bonner, 1979, *op cit*., p. 279
[8] Bonner, 1979, *op cit*., pp. 279-280
[9] Bonner, 1979, *op cit*., p. 277
[10] See Alexander, 2001, *op cit.*, pp. 518-9; Alexander, 2004, *op cit*., p. 127

Contacts were made with Witwatersrand activists in the African Political Organisation (renamed the African People's Organisation in 1919), and there was also a direct influence on the Transvaal Native Congress, where Industrial Workers of Africa militants played a role in radicalising the organisation. Syndicalists were prominent in a move to organise an African general strike on the Witwatersrand in 1918, and formed the majority of defendants in the subsequent prosecution of the key figures in that movement. Success amongst workers of colour would help lay the basis for subsequent syndicalist unions in the Cape.

The International Socialist League's roots in the older syndicalist milieu of the early 1910s, and in the radical section of the SA Labour Party and unions, provided the organisation with resources, including an experienced cadre and leadership, the ability to systematically publish and distribute the *International* and other literature, to hold regular events and meetings, and to otherwise work to promote its policies.

There is a strong case to be made that the International Socialist League was fairly successful at the time, having an impact on workers across the racial spectrum, as well as some influence on Coloured and African nationalists. However, its achievements have generally not been recognised in the literature, something that may be explained by several important legacies of the Communist school.

One was a tendency to try presenting the International Socialist League as some sort of proto-Leninist Party. If the organisation is assumed to be moving towards a vanguard Party model, then its development in this period seems to show an inadequate exposure to that "light of Marxist-Leninist science" required by "the true vanguard":[11] the period then becomes a preliminary to the real history of socialism, starting with the CPSA in 1921. If, on the other hand, the International Socialist League is recognised as a syndicalist group influenced by the IWW, then its activities, judged as syndicalist activism, demonstrate a fairly successful attempt to foster an interracial and revolutionary union tradition.

Another legacy of the Communist school that has hampered assessment of the International Socialist League has been the claim that the organisation had (at best) an abstract internationalism in which that "the national oppression of the majority of people in our country was not really very worthy of consideration"[12] and (at worst) support for segregation and colour bars.[13]

This notion is tied closely to two key parts of the Communist school discourse: first, the "S.P. Bunting/Ivon Jones myth", in which the International Socialist League membership at large is presented as an "unwilling mass of white followers" who had to be "dragged" behind the "enthusiastic nigrophiles";[14] second, the view that it was only in 1924 and 1928 that local socialists, through the CPSA, came to take the national question seriously, orientating towards workers of colour and then adopting the two-stage "Native Republic" thesis.

The previous chapter has argued that the view that the International Socialist League ignored the national question (or pandered to White Labourism) was a serious caricature of its positions. While the organisation would almost certainly have rejected the two-stage approach, it took South Africa's racial

[11] Dedication on frontispiece of Harmel, 1971, *op cit.*
[12] Cronin, 1991, *op cit.*, p.12
[13] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, pp. 191-2
[14] Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit.*, p. 84

divisions very seriously indeed, and looked towards One Big Union as the means to unite workers, overcome racially discriminatory laws, and make the social revolution.

There is, of sometimes a gap between rhetoric and reality, but this chapter suggests that the two were closely linked in the International Socialist League. It is argued in this section that the "S.P. Bunting/Ivon Jones myth", and the view that the "even a majority" of the International Socialist League did not regard African, Coloured, and Indian workers as important,[15] is fundamentally misleading.

It is certainly true that a significant number of members focused on the organised White workers who made up the largest single part of the union movement at this time, and had militant traditions. It was in the 1920s that workers of colour would, for the first time in nearly forty years, come to constitute a narrow majority in the unions. In 1919, the South African Industrial Federation had a membership of 47,001 in 45 affiliated unions,[16] a loose federation with limited control over its affiliates and few financial resources,[17] but nearly five times the size of the old Transvaal Federation of Trade Unions.

There were two other important union bodies at the time, the NURHAS and the Cape Federation of Labour Unions, both predominantly White. Formed in 1913, the Cape Federation of Labour Unions was predominantly composed of craft unions, and a weak body that battled with worker apathy and employer hostility.[18] In 1919, it had sixteen affiliates with its largest union, the Cabinet Makers', barely over 400 members,[19] so the entire federation could probably not have been more than about 6,000 members. It jealously guarded its independence from the South African Industrial Federation, which organised the other provinces, and had a number of skilled Coloured members.[20]

However, an orientation towards White workers did not imply hostility towards workers of colour. Activists who focused mainly on White labour, such as Andrews in the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, Solly Sachs in the Reef Shop Assistants Union, and Tyler of the Building Workers' Industrial Union were nonetheless advocates of interracial and revolutionary unionism. The *content* of their work was more important than its site; calls to cross the colour line were maintained despite their evident unpopularity.

Further, the notion that the majority in the International Socialist League were an "unwilling mass" when it came to workers of colour is also unconvincing. S.P. Bunting and Ivon Jones certainly played an important part in the activities of the International Socialist League amongst workers of colour, but it is incorrect to present them as unpopular albeit "enthusiastic nigrophiles" who "dragged" the organisation in their wake. A large number of White activists were involved in organising amongst workers of colour, militants including Barendrecht, Dunbar, Gibson, Hanscombe, Israelstam, Gordon Lee, Mason, and Tinker. While S.P. Bunting was active in the Industrial Workers of Africa, he was mainly in the background, while Ivon Jones' role was minimal: the two main White speakers at meetings were Dunbar of the old IWW, and Gibson, of the old Socialist Labour Party. In Durban, the key figure was Gordon Lee.

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[15] Brian Bunting, 1975, *op cit.*, pp. 18-19
[16] Bernard Hessian, 1957, "An Investigation into the Causes of the Labour Agitation on the Witwatersrand, January to March, 1922", MA thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, p. 6
[17] Hessian, 1957, *op cit.,* p. 6
[18] Nicol, 1984, *op cit*., pp. 93-4
[19] See Giffard, 1984, *op cit*., p. 10
[20] Nicol, 1984, *op cit*., pp. 94-5

The view that there was a simple choice to be made between activities amongst White workers, and activities amongst other workers, appears in the later secondary literature,[21] but was not present in the ideology of the International Socialist League. To project such an either/or politics on that organisation is to misunderstand its politics, for its focus was explicitly on the working class as *a whole*, irrespective of colour. Choosing one group of workers over another went against the grain of its syndicalist vision of One Big Union across racial divisions.

Further, to speak of an "unwilling mass" in the International Socialist League opposed to engaging with workers of colour is to ignore one of the most significant developments in the organisation at this time: the recruitment of a layer of African and Indian members. If, moreover, the International Socialist League itself remained largely White, it is important to note that the racial composition of the local syndicalist *movement* as a whole began to shift as the new syndicalist unions drew in a great many workers of colour, and developed linkages with African and Coloured nationalists.

7.1. The International Socialist League and the working class unrest

During and immediately after the First World War, there were important changes in the size and composition of the local working class, with the rapid growth of a manufacturing sector alongside the existing commercial farms and mines, spurred by the import substitution that developed during the First World War and continued into the post-war boom lasting into 1920. From 1915/1916 to 1921/2 the number of industrial establishments on the Witwatersrand rose from 862 to 1,763, and the African working class employed outside the mining industry proper rose from 67,111 in 1918 to 92,597 in May 1920.[22] There were 6,000 factories recorded under the 1918 Factories Act by 1921, of which 4,300 were registered in 1919-1920, and employed between them 30,000 Whites and 74,000 people of other races.[23] By the end of 1920, there were an estimated 180,000 people employed in manufacturing establishments.[24] The number of "engineering" establishments doubled from 486 plants with 23,617 employees in 1916, to 918 establishments with 37,942 employees in 1920.[25]

The rapid increase in African urbanisation made the cities the main centre for African working class mobilisation, with the Witwatersrand becoming the "centre of gravity" for the African elite, and groups like the South African Native National Congress.[26] The growth of employment outside the closely regulated environment of the mines and farms opened up space for new layers of African workers to mobilise, while repressive legislation, high prices, low and declining real wages and a housing shortage provided a wide range of grievances.

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[21] For example, Johns: "The activist position of Bunting and Jones with regard to non-white workers continued to be countered by Andrews…" Johns, 1995, *op. cit.*, p. 101
[22] Bonner, 1982, *op cit.*, p. 272
[23] Simons, 1984, *op cit.*, p. 220
[24] Frederick Johnstone gives slightly lower figures: a growth in the number of manufacturing establishments from 2,400 to 7,000 from 1911 to 1921, with an increase in employees of colour from 44,000 to 116,000. See Johnstone, 1976, *op cit.*, p. 97
[25] Mantzaris, 1995, p. 98
[26] Bonner, 1982, *op cit.*, p. 272

At the same time, the rapid growth of manufacturing and services (and falling unemployment) meant that labour unrest was able to shift away form the mines. [27] New unions emerged on the docks, the factories, and the service sector. The strike wave of 1916 to 1922 in South Africa shows a wide range of workers moving into action.[28] Skilled White workers struck at the Jagersfontein mines, on the Pretoria railways, at the Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg municipalities, as did building workers. Other actions indicated the entry of new groups of workers into the struggle: printers' assistants in Johannesburg (mainly White women) came out; Coloured workers struck in the clothing factories and transport industry of Kimberley; the first unions emerged amongst Indian workers in Durban, and helped organise strikes by waiters in Durban and East London, and by Indian tobacco workers in Durban.

African and Coloured dockworkers struck in Cape Town, as did African municipal workers in Johannesburg, and African mineworkers on the Witwatersrand. In February 1918 African mineworkers boycotted the concession stores on the East Rand, affecting fifteen mines. An abortive movement towards a general strike by Africans followed on the Witwatersrand, a movement for higher wages in Bloemfontein in 1919, and street fighting in Port Elizabeth after the launch of a Native Labour Union. There were several strikes by African mineworkers, on the Durban railways, and then, in February 1920, a massive strike by 75,000 African mineworkers on the Witwatersrand – the largest strike by this group until 1946.

The struggles in South Africa should be seen as part of a regional wave of labour struggles, generally also centred on White workers, struggles that were, in turn, part of the international climate of proletarian revolt. From 1917 to 1921, the Port and Railway Employees Association headed a wave of strikes in Lourenço Marques, and on the railways, that also drew in African strikers. In Southern Rhodesia, the Rhodesian Mine Owners' Association was formed in 1920 to wage an onslaught on White miners, who had formed a general union in 1919, and inflicting a crushing defeat in early 1921 with a three-week lockout. In Angola, Portuguese immigrants on the mines and railways began to organise, culminating in a massive strike by White railwaymen in 1923, which was defeated with the use of troops.

In this context, official fears in South Africa – fears of extremist Afrikaner nationalism, White labour militancy, syndicalism and "Bolshevism", "foreign" agitators and "native unrest" – tended to reinforce one another. Smuts, for example, thought that the SA Labour Party itself was "drifting to an extreme socialist position and preaching a crusade for the nationalisation of the all land, mines, factories, and industry, and behind this advanced socialism is the menacing growing spectre of international socialism".[29]

J.S.G. Douglas, the Deputy Commissioner of Police in Johannesburg, wrote to the Secretary of Police in December 1917 to voice his concerns about African labour.[30] He was not an "alarmist", and there was simply no "likelihood of an armed rebellion springing up amongst the native tribes of this country". However, "the native today is very different from the native of twenty years ago". In this "industrial centre" Africans

[27] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 43-5
[28] The following overview draws heavily on Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit.*, pp. 59-85
[29] Quoted in Shain, 1994, *op cit.*, p. 90
[30] Letter of 11 December 1917 from S.G.D. Douglas, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Johannesburg District, to Secretary, South African Police, Johannesburg, on 'Native Unrest- Transvaal', in Government Native Labour Bureau, GNLB 278 354/17, "International Socialist League 1917-1919", National Archives, Pretoria, which is hereafter referred to as Government Native Labour Bureau, GNLB 278 354/17, *op cit.*



Industrial Unionism in South Africa demands solidarity with the Native and Coloured Striker.

Figure twenty-one: The implications of revolutionary industrial unionism spelled out: "Industrial Unionism in South Africa demands solidarity with the Native and Coloured Striker"

Source: *The International*, 23 January 1920

"know the white man's demand for higher wages and how such demands have been met". "Based on experience gained" from witnessing White strikes, "the natives are likely to make similar demands at some future date". What made matters worse was the activities of the International Socialist League: "Native minds are being poisoned by white men", inevitably leading to "native labour troubles in the future".

It was in the big cities and in the manufacturing and service sectors that the syndicalist initiatives of the time took place. The Building Workers' Industrial Union, the main syndicalist success (however partial) amongst White workers was based in the booming construction sector. The Industrial Workers of Africa had some connections on the mines, but its main activities were centred on the east-west axis of racially mixed working class areas in downtown Johannesburg, starting from Ferreriastown, Fordsburg and Vrededorp in the west, through the Newtown and Commissioner street areas, into Turffontein and Bezuidenhout Valley, in the east. The Indian Workers Industrial Union was based, above all, on the docks, in the restaurants and hotels, and in Durban factories. The syndicalist unions formed amongst workers of colour, in other words, existed in a particular segment of the local working class: not the migrant African workers of the mines, but amongst the urban workers of the slums and locations.

7.2. White Labourism, immigrant Jews, and interracial trade unionism

The activities of the International Socialist League between 1916 and 1919 were fundamentally informed by the goals of syndicalism. Despite ongoing controversies within the International Socialist League between the De Leonist majority and the faction centred on Dunbar, which opposed all participation in elections, the organisation ran a number of candidates in the Transvaal and in Durban. Results were typically discouraging, as the radical platform of the organisation attracted negligible support from the largely White electorate.

In October 1916, for instance, the International Socialist League stood candidates in the municipal elections in the Witwatersrand.[31] The candidates' manifesto, entitled "Call to the Workers of South Africa", argued that the key task facing the workers was the formation of industrial unions open to all workers. None of the International Socialist League candidates won a seat. In mid-1917, the International Socialist League again stood candidates in the provincial elections and urged workers to organise across racial lines, and to follow the road opened up by the February 1917 Russian Revolution.

The International Socialist League candidates, Andrews and S.P. Bunting, lost resoundingly, forfeiting their deposits and receiving 335 and 71 votes respectively. Opponents made much use of their support for rights for African workers. The radical views of the International Socialist League meant that it had little prospect of electoral success amongst contemporary White labour opinion, including its "anti-colour prejudice", which was "exceedingly virulent" amongst Afrikaner workers.[32] An SA Labour Party leaflet issued at Benoni stated that to "Vote for Andrews" was to "vote for the downfall of the workers and the blanket or kafir vote".[33] The "blanket vote" referred to the African vote, and, more particularly, to "raw" migrant workers from the countryside who wore blankets over their shoulders. By contrast, the leaflet continued, the SA Labour Party was "entirely against equal rights for White and Black".

By this time, the composition of the International Socialist League had undergone a significant change in three major respects. Firstly, although it retained a central core of radical skilled White workers, exemplified by Andrews and Dunbar, few former SA Labour Party members remained in the new organisation. According to the *International* in mid-1918, of the thirteen members of the organisation's Management Committee, eleven had never even been members of the SA Labour Party.[34] Further, "a glance at the local branch lists shows barely a score of ex-S.A.L.P.-ites".[35] The organisation's radical views were a central factor in the shift:[36]

> In its leftward move, the Socialist League organised black workers and some spoke of Africans providing the future leadership of a socialist South Africa. It required a leap of imagination in 1915 for socialists to see in black labour the future leaders of the country …

[31] *The International*, 6 October 1916, "Call to the Workers of South Africa"
[32] William H. Andrews, 28 December 1917, "The Working Class Problem in South Africa", *The Call*
[33] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p.180
[34] *The International*, 28 June 1918, "The Lying Jade"
[35] *The International*, 28 June 1918, "The Lying Jade"
[36] Hirson, 1995a, *op cit*., p. 14

> for many this was too much and they either drifted out of politics, or returned to the South African Labour Party which proclaimed its belief in the removal of Africans from the towns and the repatriation of Indians.

Writing in 1921, Ivon Jones stated that when the International Socialist League "declared for a revolutionary platform regarding the native workers", the majority of recruits from the SA Labour Party "slunk back".[37]

There is no doubt that the International Socialist League's opposition to racial discrimination and prejudice alienated many White workers, resulting in growing levels of harassment and even violence. The International Socialist League's 1917 May Day rally took the quite unprecedented step of having an African speaker share the platform. This was Horatio Budlwana Mbelle, an articled clerk from the Cape who became active in the Transvaal, before moving to Port Elizabeth.[38]

The meeting was broken up by a mob, while its weekly public meetings came under regular attack from ex-soldiers, often organised by a group called the "Comrades of the Great War" from September.[39] On one occasion, an indoor meeting was attacked by a "brutal mob" that "assaulted men and women comrades".[40] Clashes broke out, but two International Socialist League men were sentenced for violence, and fined £10 each or fourteen days. A delegation led by S.P. Bunting met T.C. MacFie (the Chief Magistrate of Johannesburg from 1916 to 1919) in the presence of the Chief of Police, and was informed that[41]

> No police protection can be given to our meetings, and we must follow the usual custom of regulating our indoor meetings. But we are liable under the Riotous Assemblies Act and the Moratorium Act if we publish matter calculated to excite public feeling. Further, if in the act of defending ourselves against the violence thus incited, we assault the incited persons, we have no privilege under the legal right of physical defence against violence, but are guilty of a second crime.

In September 1917 the International Socialist League was forced to vacate its offices in the Trades Hall at 5 Rissik Street, Johannesburg, after it refused to accept a management order barring Africans from using its facilities.[42] Obviously there had been complaints that Africans were visiting the organisation's offices. The organisation subsequently faced an ongoing problem, as it proved almost impossible to obtain meeting places open to all races elsewhere, due to customary and legal discrimination.[43]

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[37] Ivon Jones, [9 June 1921] 1988a, *op cit*., p. 122
[38] Skota, editor and compiler, [? 1930] n.d, *op cit*., p. 197
[39] *The International*, 4 May 1917, "Mob Law on Mayday" and "Hooliganism: the Last Ditch"
[40] William H. Andrews, 20 December 1917, "South African Freedom and General Smuts", *The Call*; also see William H. Andrews, 28 December 1917, "The Working Class Problem in South Africa", *The Call*
[41] William H. Andrews, 20 December 1917, "South African Freedom and General Smuts", *The Call*
[42] Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, pp. 75-6
[43] See, for example, William H. Andrews, 20 December 1917, "South African Freedom and General Smuts", *The Call*; *The International*, 2 August 1918, "Revolution in Britain"; *The International*, 23 August 1918, "Anniversary"

Even in this situation, however, the International Socialist League did not abandon its position. S.P. Bunting, for example, resigned from the management committee of the Trades Hall after it barred Africans, rather than compromise on principles. It established a new head office at 54 Fox Street in Neppe's Buildings, on the corner of McLaren and Fox streets, Johannesburg, Neppe being a Jewish supporter of the International Socialist League. These offices were used to produce the *International*, sell a wide range of literature, and to house a radical library – texts included a range of anarchist, Marxist and syndicalist works, such as Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid* – which was also used by "Socialist Sunday Schools" run by the organisation.[44]

As for the SA Labour Party's Benoni leaflet, Andrews replied with the unequivocal statement that "all segregation schemes are doomed to failure", that Africans should have the right to strike and that there must be "no distinction of Black and White before the law".[45] (Sometime in 1920, the International Socialist League was able to re-establish a presence at the Trades Hall, establishing a bookshop and reading room,[46] and the organisation returned to the Trades Hall in November that year.)[47]

Secondly, the International Socialist League drew on growing support from immigrant "Peruvian" (i.e. Baltic) Jews on the Witwatersrand. While many poor Whites were extremely conservative, and drawn towards Afrikaner nationalism or White Labourism, poor immigrant Jews were often strongly influenced by radical politics. Many joined the SA Labour Party from 1913 to oppose possible restrictions on Jewish immigration. As was the case in Cape Town, many were influenced by anarchism, syndicalism and the Jewish *Bund*. The radicals were drawn towards the War on War League, and then the International Socialist League.

A large and active "Yiddish-Speaking Branch" of the International Socialist League was constituted in August 1917.[48] It planned to promote "revolutionary socialism" on the "Jewish street".[49] In addition to veterans like Israelstam, who also had links to the *Bund*, prominent members included J. Adler, A. Goldman, I. Joffe, Kessler, T. Righthouse, and R. Sandler. The Yiddish-Speaking Branch published International Socialist League materials in Yiddish, addressed League meetings, organised meetings in the multi-racial slums of Johannesburg, and held innumerable social functions, some of which attracted up to eight hundred people. The influx of immigrant Jews meant both a change in the ethnic composition of the organisation, and its class character. The International Socialist League had initially largely been based amongst skilled White workers, mainly British: some Jewish immigrants worked as waged artisans, but others were poor but self-employed artisans and traders.

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[44] Details on the collection are inferred, in part, from a copy of the 1914 edition of *Mutual Aid* in the University of the Witwatersrand library, stamped "I.S.L. Sunday School Johannesburg" in the front, "Communist Party of South Africa Johannesburg Library" on page 292, and presented to the University by "A. Siff". I would like to thank Komnas Poriasiz for drawing this volume to my attention.
[45] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 181
[46] See, for example, *The International*, 17 September 1920
[47] *The International*, 22 October 1922, "I.S.L. Notes"
[48] Mantzaris, 1988, *op cit.;* see also Taffy Adler, 1977, "History of the Jewish Workers' Clubs", in *Papers presented at the African Studies Seminar at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, during 1977.* pp. 7-11
[49] Adler, 1977, *op cit.*, p. 8

The Yiddish-Speaking Branch also opened a library and reading room in the Palmerston Hotel in downtown Johannesburg in 1917.[50] Another important activity was regular study classes. Fraternal relations were also established with Poalei Zion ("The Workers of Zion", also known as the Jewish Socialist Society).[51] In 1919, the Branch managed to establish contacts in South West Africa. The Yiddish-Speaking Branch was openly hostile to Zionism, which it saw as a bourgeois movement; it denounced the notion of a classless Jewish community and advocated the international unity of the working class, and Jewish liberation through the establishment of socialism.[52] It played an important role in raising money to support strikes, and in acquiring a printing press for the International Socialist League in 1919,[53] which was subsequently housed at 54 Fox Street, and which subsidised the *International* by taking in some commercial work.[54] The Yiddish-Speaking Branch also seems to have been involved in a local Russian Literary-Dramatic Circle in Johannesburg, which was used for political discussions.[55]

Exact figures are not available, but Mantzaris estimated a membership of between five hundred and one thousand. This is probably too high, as overall figures for the International Socialist league were probably less than 500 members at any one time: the organisation's January 1919 congress had 39 delegates indicating a membership of no "more than a few hundreds",[56] while a later report suggested membership never exceeded 400.[57] However, it is quite possible that the Yiddish-Speaking Branch may well have been the largest single section of the International Socialist League, perhaps as large as all other branches combined. It was increasingly opposed to all participation in elections, sharing the anti-parliamentary views of men like Dunbar, the former general-secretary of the local IWW.[58]

Among the Jewish recruits to the International Socialist League was the young Solly Sachs, a first-generation Latvian immigrant who joined the organisation in 1917, and became secretary of its Johannesburg branch in 1919.[59] In 1919, Solly Sachs helped organise the Reef Shop Assistants union, one of several small unions that seem to have existed in the sector at this time,[60] and became its acting secretary in 1920. The union, though, was affiliated to the South African Industrial Federation. His younger brother, Bernard Sachs, also began to frequent the lectures and socials of the International Socialist League. He immersed himself "completely in this new world" and "drank thirstily from its fountains": De Leon provided his most "impressive reading", and S.P. Bunting a role model, a man "courageous beyond compare".[61]

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[50] Adler, 1977, *op cit.*, p. 36
[51] Mantzaris, 1988, *op cit.*
[52] Mantzaris, 1988, *op cit,* pp. 165-166
[53] Adler, 1977, *op cit.*, p. 10
[54] See, for example, the advertisement in *The International*, 15 October 1920, p. 3
[55] Johns, 1976, *op cit*., p. 379
[56] Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit*., p. 82
[57] Ivon Jones, [29 March 1921] 1981, *op cit.*, p. 52; also see Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., p. 256: "… the League's three or four hundred members …"
[58] Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, pp. 106-7
[59] Typed copy of article "E.S. Sachs", in *Forward*, 11 October 1935, in the Simons Papers, Manuscript and Archives section, African Studies Centre, University of Cape Town, section P.7.
[60] See Norman Herd, 1974, *Counter-Attack: the story of the South African shopworkers*, The National Union of Distributive Workers, Cape Town, pp. 22-29
[61] Sachs, 1973, *op cit*., 126-7

As in Cape Town, "the Jewish apostles of socialism preached human equality and the coming Social Revolution with the same vigour and determination they and their comrades had shown in the Pale of Settlement".[62] A well-known proselytiser was Jos. Gray, who would declaim in "ringing tones that echoed down the labyrinthine backyards of the slum": "Slaves, why don't you fight for freedom?"[63] A certain Max influenced both the Sachs brothers. A man of around fifty years of age, he regularly visited their parent's household where he "discoursed at great length on De Leon and other Socialist propagandists". [64] He "soon convinced us that the problem of equality was the most urgent of the day", Bernard Sachs remembered:

> His talk was magic to me, and I found a new zest in life in listening to him … Max was a major influence in my turning to the Socialist movement.

This was true of the older Solly Sachs as well.[65]

De Leonist ideas were a key feature in the brothers' "turning to the Socialist movement". Besides Max's discourses, pamphlets also played an important role in the political education of these youth. Bernard Sachs recalled De Leon's *The Brothers Gracchi* as his "most impressive reading during this period".[66] News of the Russian Revolution played an important radicalising role as well: the Jews in the Johannesburg slums "danced in the streets and embraced" on hearing of the abdication of Tsar Nicolas II in the February Revolution, and the "excitement of the Revolution and the subsequent civil war did not abate for years".[67]

7.3. The International Socialist League, interracial trade unionism, and African activists

A third, crucial, development in the evolution of the International Socialist League was the development of links with African activists and moves towards recruiting an African membership from 1916 onwards. While initially exclusively based amongst Whites, mainly skilled workers, the organisation adopted an internationalist outlook opposed to all racial discrimination and prejudice. A growing concern with the oppressive legal situation of the Africans, the developing view that capitalism was the primary beneficiary of the African cheap labour system, and a belief in One Big Union of all workers as the road to economic and social emancipation for the whole working class led directly to an orientation towards the urban African population on the Witwatersrand.

The *International* was careful to explain that it did not approach the Africans from the perspective of liberal philanthropies or African nationalism, but from the perspective of revolutionary class politics:[68]

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[62] Mantzaris, 1988, *op cit*., p. 163
[63] Sachs, 1973, *op cit*., 126
[64] Sachs, 1973, *op cit*., 126-7
[65] Sachs, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 74-5
[66] Sachs, 1973, *op cit*., 127
[67] Sachs, 1973, *op cit*., 125-6
[68] *The International*, 22 February 1918, "Pro-Working class, not Pro-Colour". This is also reproduced in Hirson, 1988a, *op cit.*, pp. 105-6

> We give increasing attention to the native workers not because they are natives but because they are workers. Correspondents who send us notes on coloured and native grievances ... should note this. We are not concerned with the civil disabilities of Indian storekeepers or native lawyers or coloured middlemen. For us they all belong to the parasitic class.
>
> Our concern with the natives and our faith in them is our concern in them as workers, as potentially the revolutionary proletariat. We are pro-working class, not pro-native. Constituting as they do the big majority of those who do the work of the country, we want the native workers to realise that it is their historic mission to bring about the emancipation of Labour. Everything is marking time for them. We also want the White workers to realise this.

However, given the absence of an African trade union movement, activists from the International Socialist League found that "increasing attention to the native workers" involved, initially at least, contact with the existing nationalist groups, notwithstanding its criticisms of such formations. On 10 February 1916, the International Socialist League organised a discussion on the 1913 Native Land Act in Johannesburg.[69] Addressed by the Reverend Francis Hill, the meeting also welcomed Saul Msane of the South African Native National Congress and several other African activists. Msane, who hailed from Natal, was an educated man who had worked as a compound manager and later as an African labour recruiter: he joined the South African Native National Congress soon after its formation, became a vice-president of the organisation, and was part of the 1913 deputation to Britain.[70]

The 10 February 1916 meeting, taking place six months after the formation of the International Socialist League, was a "landmark in the history of the liberatory movement – the first coming together in the Transvaal of white socialists and the African National Congress".[71] In a report on the meeting in the *International*, S.P. Bunting described the Land Act as a "barefaced attempt" to drive the African worker "cheap, helpless and unorganised, into the labour market ... ensuring to employers generally and particularly industrial employers, that most coveted plum of modern Imperialism, plentiful cheap labour". [72] Another meeting called for increased pay for both whites and Africans on the mines, equal pay for equal work, and the inclusion of the Africans in the South African Mine Workers' Union.[73]

On 8 June 1916, the International Socialist League hosted an address by Robert Grendon, then an editor of *AbantuBatho*. His talk was on the topic of "the Link between Black and White".[74] The meeting was attended by a "full and good humoured audience, with a large number of natives" present, again including Msane, who was described as "the veteran spokesman of the industrialised native". Grendon's talk dealt

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[69] *The International*, 18 February 1916, "Workers of the World Unite" (article by S.P. Bunting)
[70] J.E.H. Grobler, 1999, "Msane, Saul", in Sonderling, editor, 1999, *op cit*., pp. 139-140; also see Skota, editor and compiler, [? 1930] n.d, *op cit*., p. 71
[71] Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit.*, p. 54
[72] Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit.*, p. 54
[73] Gitsham and Trembath, 1926, *op cit*., p. 159
[74] *The International*, 9 June 1916, "Another Blow to Colour Prejudice"

""with the philosophic grounds for a better feeling between Black and White".[75] An animated discussion followed in which, to "boisterous approval" from all sections, Msane stated that it was essential that the White trade union movement begin to enrol African workers as members.

Some political difficulties were, however, inevitable in a joint meeting between syndicalists and the conservative nationalists who dominated the South African Native National Congress leadership. Towards the end of the function, Grendon, in line with the South African Native National Congress support for the British war effort, proposed a motion of sorrow at the death of Lord Kitchener, who had disappeared at sea. This rather shocked the members of the International Socialist League present, and Ivon Jones, who was in the chair, ruled the motion out of order. "One educated native in the audience, despite a courtesy innate, could not suppress a laugh with himself at the idea".[76]

The meeting with Grendon attracted some hostile media attention, and the International Socialist League gloated that it had given the capitalists the "scare of their lives".[77] Other meetings followed. In July 1916, a Johannesburg meeting discussed the "barbarities to which the Indians in Natal were treated".[78] On 9 March 1917, the International Socialist League held a protest meeting against the newly proposed Native Affairs Administration Bill, which essentially granted the Governor-General the right to rule Africans by decree.[79] The meeting was "an historic occasion as socialists demonstrated for the first time on the Rand against racial legislation that did not directly affect whites".[80] (The Bill was finally passed into law in 1927).

The audience included a "large sprinkling of natives" and "a solid block of whites in full sympathy", and was addressed by S.P. Bunting, Ivon Jones, Msane and Horatio Mbelle.[81] Horatio Mbelle commended the International Socialist League for its "sincere sympathy" and a "courageous step to combat race prejudice even against enormous odds".[82] "This meeting of whites and natives", stated the resolution passed at the gathering, condemns the bill as "designed to accelerate the manufacture of cheap labour and to keep the natives more than ever in the position of a serf", and warned that "the passing of this Bill in the teeth of determined opposition on the part of the natives forebodes grave danger to the peace of South Africa".

The meeting was matched by a radical critique of the Native Administration Bill in the *International*, written by S.P. Bunting.[83] In his view, the Bill was part of the broader strategy of creating a cheap and unfree African working class. The "whips" of the 1913 Natives Land Act, which were "outrageous enough", were being followed by the "scorpions" of rule by decree. The article argued that it was in the interests of all workers to oppose the Bill, and argued for a united and interracial working class movement:

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[75] *The International*, 9 June 1916, "Another Blow to Colour Prejudice"
[76] *The International*, 16 June 1916, "Disloyalty"
[77] *The International*, 23 June 1916, "In the Change House"
[78] *The International,* 28 July 1916, "Branch Notes"
[79] *The International*, 16 March 1917, "Workers of the World Uniting"
[80] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, p. 198; also see Johns 1995: 71
[81] *The International*, 16 March 1917, "Workers of the World Uniting"
[82] *The International*, 16 March 1917, "Workers of the World Uniting"
[83] S.P. Bunting, 9 March 1917, "Manufacturing the Proletariat", *The International*

> Nor yet do the native workers, and their white fellow-workers, yet more than dimly realise that this is fundamentally a realise that this is fundamentally no race or national matter of whites versus blacks; but that the campaign for emancipation is one for all wage-earners against all capitalists, and that the organised power of all workers, internationally combined, is the only deliverance from the Beast … Only the conscious identification with all wage earners – nay, an affection for them – as such, will lead us to the truth of things.

S.P. Bunting's article was subsequently reprinted, with a measure of approval, by Natal's *Ilange Lase Natal*.[84]

The International Socialist League declared itself definitely pleased with "the increased interest and freedom" shown by Africans in its meetings, and commented that "the hilarity and good feeling" which integrated meetings "produce in the mind must be due to the fact that Socialism is beginning to right a great wrong".[85] Doubtless the "hilarity and good feeling" also followed from the quite novel experience of racially integrated meetings on the Witwatersrand, something doubtless unprecedented in the experience of many present. The *International* also quoted a prominent SA Labour Party councillor, who was reported as calling for International Socialist League members to be deported for telling African workers to organise.[86] The paper responded forthrightly: "only the humane policy of Socialism" could prevent a bloodbath and solve the racial question in South Africa.

7.4. The Industrial Workers of Africa: pioneering syndicalist unionism amongst African workers

Given such perspectives, it comes as no surprise to note that the basic orientation of the International Socialist League members was to both propaganda and workplace organisation. A number of International Socialist League members were prominent in the mainstream White trade unions, which they sought to reform on the lines of interracial revolutionary industrial unionism.[87] Andrews was prominent in the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, Mason in the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, Brown in the Transvaal Miners' Association (and then the South African Mine Workers' Union), Solly Sachs in the Reef Shop Assistants Union, and Tyler in the Building Workers' Industrial Union.

Given that these unions were linked to the South African Industrial Federation, this meant that there was actually a bloc of syndicalists in the larger White labour movement that could act in concert at the Federation's conferences. While their work was, by definition, heavily focused on White workers, they championed the interracial and syndicalist views of the International Socialist League. It would be a fundamental mistake to assume that their focus on White workers implied a lack of interest in workers of other races, let alone actual racial prejudice.

On the other hand, however, the majority of union members did not accept the radical views of the small number of militants in the union leadership, and their efforts were continually constrained as a result.

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[84] *The International*, 4 May 1917, "American Reveries"
[85] *The International*, 9 June 1916, "Another Blow to Colour Prejudice"
[86] *The International*, 23 June 1916, "Socialism and Savagery"
[87] Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, pp. 64-9

Like many individual radicals in larger movements, they found their hard work appreciated by the membership, but their radical views blocked. Some stayed the course, but others buckled.

Brown subsequently dropped out of the International Socialist League: "as time went on Forrester Brown could not hold to these principles in the union or even begin to put them into effect".[88] Like Tyler, he had found that union members appreciated his efforts as a trade unionist, but disliked his more radical views; unlike Tyler, he was unable to maintain his principles. By the middle of 1918, he was a conventional White trade unionist along the lines of Crawford, was a general secretary of the South African Mine Workers' Union, and a supporter of the Status Quo Agreement signed by the Chamber of Mines and the South African Mine Workers' Union during the war, which fixed the proportion of African to White workers, and put a clear job colour bar in place.[89]

In August 1917, an effort was made to a form an organised syndicalist current within the existing unions. A committee was set up by International Socialist League activists, which issued a call for a conference to be held on 2 September 1917. The aim of the conference was "to discuss ways and means of urging the workers to unite and organise industrially so that they may be a in a position to present a united front to the employing class, and eventually to take over the control of the industry".[90]

Attended by forty-five workers, including three Africans, the conference elected a Manifesto Committee, which included one African, charged with drawing up a manifesto for a general convention on "the creation of a general industrial union embracing all industries … organising the movement on revolutionary industrial lines". The Manifesto Committee, which was renamed the Industrial Committee, and, then, the Solidarity Committee had prepared the draft by November 1917, and called for an "Industrial Conference" in Easter 1918. This effort had, as will be noted below, rather limited results.

In addition to work inside the mainstream unions, the International Socialist League set out at the same time to directly organise African, Coloured, and Indian workers into new syndicalist unions, and to recruit these workers into the International Socialist League. The first African member of the International Socialist League had already been recruited in 1916. He was T.W. Thibedi, an African schoolteacher who joined the International Socialist League after hearing a talk by S.P. Bunting in Johannesburg.[91] According to his own statement, he joined in 1916.[92] Unlike most educated Africans involved in politics he came – to judge from his surname – from the northern Transvaal, rather than the eastern Cape.

A "brilliant" and energetic man,[93] then in his twenties, Thibedi would remain a prominent figure on the left into the 1940s. His "initial training" was, however, in the politics of the International Socialist

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[88] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 186-7
[89] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 199
[90] This account draws heavily on Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, pp. 66-8.
[91] On Thibedi, see Drew, editor, 1996a, *op cit.*, editorial comment, p. 72 note 19; Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit.,* p. 108; *Umsebenzi: the voice of the South African Communist Party,* May 1991, "Party Pioneers: T.W. Thibedi: the first African Communist", vol.7, no. 2, new series
[92] T.W. Thibedi, 10 August 1932, letter to Leon Trotsky, in the Trotsky Papers, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, folder 1217. I would like to thank Allison Drew for providing me with a copy of these letters.
[93] Pike, 1988, *op cit*., p. 87

League.[94] Drawn from the educated African elite, he was far to the left of most of his contemporaries in the South African Native National Congress. According to Eddie Roux, Thibedi was a "genius at getting people together, whether workers in a particular industry, women, location residents, or whatever was needed at the moment".[95] He seems to have lived in the multi-racial slums of downtown Johannesburg in the 1910s.

In June 1917, the International Socialist League advertised a meeting in Johannesburg to "discuss matters of common interest between white and native workers".[96] The meeting, which was attended by ten white International Socialist League members, and twenty Africans, became the first of a series of weekly study groups, which were held in Neppe's Buildings in a room adjoining the International Socialist League offices.

The Africans who enrolled seem to have been largely drawn from multi-racial slums of Johannesburg and the nearby locations. The great majority enrolled gave addresses in downtown Johannesburg – Commissioner Street, Fox Street, Sauer Street, and Marshall Street were particularly prominent – although one was from Village Deep Mine, and another from "No. 3 Compound, Crown Mines"; both mines bordered on Johannesburg.[97] A number were already active in the Transvaal Native Congress. Holding the weekly meeting on Thursday nights probably played an important role in making it very difficult for workers from the mine and municipal compounds to attend: it was generally far more difficult for these workers to secure permission to leave the compounds during the week than at the end of the Saturday shift.

The Whites present were all members of the International Socialist League. Contrary to the "S.P. Bunting/Ivon Jones myth", the two most prominent speakers from the organisation were, in fact, Dunbar of the old IWW, and Gibson, a founder member of the old Socialist Labour Party and now author of the *International's* weekly political theory column. Also present were men such as Barendrecht, a Jewish immigrant and active member of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers who worked for the Johannesburg municipality,[98] S.P. Bunting, who was, it must be said, enthused about the weekly meetings, T.P. Tinker and the veteran De Leonist Israelstam. Contrary to Eddie Roux's claim that "Jones and Bunting, with the help of the International Socialist League, started in Johannesburg an organisation known as the Industrial Workers of Africa", Ivon Jones attended only infrequently, and S.P. Bunting, while a regular presence and an enthusiastic supporter of the initiative, rarely played much of a role.[99]

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[94] Walshe, 1970, *op cit*., pp. 170-1
[95] Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit.,* p. 108
[96] From the start, these meetings attracted police interest, and the following account draws heavily on the reports submitted to the Department of Justice by African detectives who infiltrated the meetings. These include almost verbatim accounts of the proceedings, several copies of membership lists, and even some intercepted correspondence. The main collection of this material is in the files of the Department of Justice, JD 3/527/17, National Archives, Pretoria, entitled "The ISL and Coloured Workers", which is referred to as Department of Justice, JD 3/527/17, *op cit.* Many of the materials gathered by the detectives were duplicated in other collections. One is Department of Justice, JUS 526, 3/527/17, National Archives, Pretoria, entitled "International Socialist League, reports on the activities of", which is hereafter referred to as Department of Justice, JUS 526, 3/527/17, *op cit.* The other collection is that in the Government Native Labour Bureau, GNLB 278 354/17, *op cit.* Correspondence with representatives of Native Recruiting Corporation appears on several occasions in these files, indicating that the detectives' reports were circulated quite widely within the ruling class.
[97] Membership list in Department of Justice, JD 3/527/17, *op cit.*
[98] Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., p. 75
[99] Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit.,* p. 130

It was in these dingy surroundings that the study groups were transformed into a union called the "Industrial Workers of Africa" in September 1917. This was the first African trade union in South Africa's history – indeed, one of the very first, if not the first – in Britain's African empire.

The first African trade union was also a syndicalist union, as is only to be expected given the syndicalist traditions of the International Socialist League. The syndicalism of the Industrial Workers of Africa has not always been properly understood or acknowledged in the literature. Although the union is mentioned in the literature of the Communist school, it usually presented as nothing but a general union. According to Eddie Roux, for instance, the efforts of the International Socialist League resulted in a "black workers' union", and the "idea was to develop it along the lines of the American IWW, an 'all-in union' for unskilled labourers".[100]

This is not much of a description of the IWW, which was meant to "One Big Union" for all workers, of whatever occupation. Moreover, it gives no indication of the revolutionary outlook of the American IWW, or of its enormous international influence – an influence that included a profound imprint upon the politics of the International Socialist League. Eddie Roux clearly believed that organisation was merely comprised of "tireless propagandists" for Marxism.[101] Brain Bunting's definition of the IWW is equally unhelpful: "the American IWW – the Industrial Workers of the World, a militant trade union known as the 'Wobblies'".[102]

These rather flat characterisations correspond to the limited attention paid to the Industrial Workers of Africa in the literature, where the union has tended to be regarded as a something of an adjunct to the International Socialist League or the Transvaal Native Congress, rather than a significant body with its own rich history. Several writers have noted that the "influence of the IWA has been grossly underestimated",[103] and that many of the details of the union's history remain unknown.[104] Mentions of the union are often vague or unreliable. Paul Maylam described the Industrial Workers of Africa as a "socialist group" linked to the International Socialist League,[105] rather than as a union; the content of the "socialism" of the two groups was assumed to be Marxist. Lungisile Ntsebeza claimed that the International Socialist League believed that African workers had to be educated about "trade unionism" before "socialist doctrine" could even be considered, and suggested that the union was consequently entirely apolitical.[106]

Several social histories have provided richer accounts, but these have been somewhat incomplete, and tended to ignore the role of syndicalism. Frederick Johnstone provided a pioneering account in 1979 – which remains the only specific study of the union – but only looked at the union on the Witwatersrand until the middle of 1918.[107] This leaves out a great deal of its history, including its subsequent role in Cape Town. While he described the union as based on "socialist" ideas, and as a "socialist group of African workers", part

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[100] Also see Eddie Roux [1964] 1978, *op cit.*, p. 130
[101] Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit.*, p. 77; also see Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit.*, p. 134
[102] Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit.*, p. 186, note 12, editor's comment by Brian Bunting
[103] Hirson, 1993e, *op cit.,* p. 5
[104] Johnstone, 1979, *op cit.,* pp. 248, 250
[105] Johnstone, 1979, *op cit*., pp. 248, 250; Paul Maylam, 1986, *A History of the African People of South Africa: from the Iron Age to the 1970s*, Croom Helm, London, David Philips, Cape Town, p. 160.
[106] Ntsebeza, 1988, *op cit.*, p. 40
[107] Johnstone, 1979, *op cit.*

of a "socialist movement", he did not actually describe it as syndicalist.[108] Philip Bonner touched on the union as part of a broader study of African unrest on the Witwatersrand from 1917 to 1920.[109] However, he incorrectly regarded the International Socialist League as "Marxist" and did not examine the ideology of Industrial Workers of Africa. Only Baruch Hirson, always noteworthy for his appreciation of the syndicalist element in the pre-CPSA left, suggested that the union's message was "couched in syndicalist terms".[110] While Tom Lodge frankly described the union as "syndicalist", he did not develop this point, which was made as aside.[111] Only Baruch Hirson – always noteworthy for his appreciation of the syndicalist element in the pre-CPSA left – suggested that the union's message was "couched in syndicalist terms".[112]

An examination of the record shows, however, that the initial study groups, and the subsequent Industrial Workers of Africa, were deeply shaped by syndicalist ideas. It is perhaps appropriate that it was Dunbar who opened the first meeting on 19 July 1917.[113] Dunbar started by arguing that the International Socialist League wished to "make the natives who are the working class of South Africa be organised and have rights as a white man".[114] Rather than advocate the narrow bread-and-butter trade unionism suggested by Ntsebeza, he called for a direct challenge to the cheap labour system: "natives should first of all have political rights so as to avoid pass laws, and then they will be able to strike for the other things".[115]

When asked by a member of the audience how these aims should be accomplished, Dunbar argued for mass strike action. "If the natives in the mines" are in "a Union, and strike", they will be able to force the Government to concede their demands. Not only would it be impossible for the State to arrest all the strikers, but also the strikers at large would be able to demand the release of all prisoners. Dunbar then stated that the African workers must organise themselves, and promised that the International Socialist League would give them aid and advice. These issues were then turned over to the audience for discussion and it emerged that the African workers' demand was brief and to the point: "*Sifuna Zonke!*" ("We want everything!").[116] The phrase was adopted as the slogan of the Industrial Workers of Africa. "What White trade union", S.P. Bunting would later comment, "ever aimed so high or true?"[117]

The views expressed by Dunbar were clearly rather different to those that might be expected if the Simons' characterisation of the man as a "pseudo-radical" opposed to work on the "native problem"[118] was

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[108] Johnstone, 1979, *op cit.*, pp. 248, 250
[109] Bonner, 1982, *op cit.*
[110] Hirson, 1993e *op cit.*, p. 5; Hirson with Williams, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 172
[111] Tom Lodge, 1983, *Black Politics in South Africa before 1945*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, p. 4
[112] Hirson, 1993e *op cit.*, p. 5; Hirson with Williams, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 172
[113] Wilfred Jali, report on meeting of 19 July 1917, in Department of Justice, JD 3/527/17
[114] Wilfred Jali, report on meeting of 19 July 1917, in Department of Justice, JD 3/527/17
[115] Such statements indicates that Dunbar's argument that there was not a "native problem but a workers' problem" at the first conference of the International Socialist League did not imply that he meant that the special oppression of African workers was irrelevant. See *The International*, 14 January 1916, "The First Conference of the League". The latter interpretation is put forward by the Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, p. 193.
[116] Forman, Eddie Roux and the Simons mention this statement, but do not date it. The police files, however, indicate the slogan was raised at the first meeting: 'On discussing the matter, it was found that a 'native should strike for everything'". See Forman, [1959] 1992, op *cit.*, p. 62; Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit.*, p. 130; Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, 204; Wilfred Jali, report on meeting of 19 July 1917, in Department of Justice, JD 3/527/17
[117] Quoted in Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, p. 204
[118] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, 193

taken seriously. Dunbar had, indeed, stated at the first conference of the International Socialist League in 1916 that there was not a "native problem but a workers' problem",[119] but there is no basis for the Simons' view that this constituted a refusal to deal with the specific problems facing African workers. On the contrary, his views, as expressed at the first meeting, and many that followed, clearly showed he believed the solution of the "workers' problem" required a radical and interracial class politics that ignored the specific oppression of Africans. Ntsebeza's claim that "no socialist education" was imparted at the weekly meetings is clearly also not accurate.[120]

At the end of the first meeting, which was obviously a promising start, Dunbar made arrangements for the next week's gathering. He advised caution in the face of possible State repression: "we [must] keep this meeting to ourselves until we see what we can do".[121] He returned to the need to organise in a secretive manner at a subsequent meeting: public meetings would be "stopped at once by the Police or those in authority".[122] Only "when you are strong enough ... will you have nothing to fear, even if your organisation is known". Such concerns undoubtedly also account for the singular lack of coverage of the study groups, and the later Industrial Workers of Africa, in the pages of the *International*.

At the second meeting, attended by "15 natives from [the] Town and Mines, and about 8 white men", Dunbar explained the class system.[123] He drew a diagram on a board showing that society was divided into three main classes: the small class of capitalists, the "masters of every man in the whole world", those "own everything"; the "Professional men or non-producing men ... Ministers, Lawyers, Shopkeepers etc."; and, finally, the "workers, every working man, black and white". The workers produced everything, but only received a fifth of their output back. "The white workers have nothing to do with" the bosses, "they are all under the capitalist".[124] The solution was[125]

> For all the workers black and white to come together in a union and be organised together and fight against the capitalists and take them down from their ruling place and let them come and work together with us ... and not own what other men produce.

Again, he advocated "mass passive resistance against and non-compliance with the pass laws".[126] He stated: "they can do it only [by] coming together and at the end of the month ... refuse to go and register their pass at the pass office".[127] He said that "he was sure the native affairs [Department] cannot arrest the whole lot of them" and would be forced to "abolish the pass laws".

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[119] *The International*, 14 January 1916, "The First Conference of the League"
[120] Ntsebeza, 1988, *op cit.,* p. 36
[121] Wilfred Jali, report on meeting of 19 July 1917, in Department of Justice, JD 3/527/17
[122] R. Moroosi, meeting of 25 October 1917
[123] Wilfred Jali, report on meeting of 26 July 1917, in Department of Justice, JD 3/527/17
[124] See Wilfred Jali, report on meeting of 26 July 1917, in Department of Justice, JD 3/527/17. See also "Simon", report on meeting of 26 July 1917 and William Mtembu, report on meeting of 26 July 1917 in *ibid*.
[125] Wilfred Jali, report on meeting of 26 July 1917, in Department of Justice, JD 3/527/17
[126] Johnstone, 1979, *op cit.*, p. 250
[127] Wilfred Jali, report on meeting of 26 July 1917, in Department of Justice, JD 3/527/17



Figure twenty-two: Reuben (Alfred) Cetiwe, a leading figure in the syndicalist Industrial Workers of Africa

Source: T.D. Mweli Skota, editor and compiler, [? 1930] n.d, *The African Yearly Register: being an illustrated biographical dictionary (who's who) of black folks in Africa*, R.l. Esson, Johannesburg, p. 292

Once the pass laws were destroyed, Dunbar continued, the African workers should organise "into one Union" and launch a general strike across the Witwatersrand for higher wages.[128] Dunbar said the "thing they are trying to do is to make ... both black and white ... get the same wages because they are both workers".[129] If workers were arrested, the strikers should demand their release. "If we strike for everything", Dunbar continued, "we can get everything ... If we can only spread the matter far and wide amongst the natives, we can easily unite".[130]

A "Russian" present – presumably an East European Jew, perhaps Barendrecht or Israelstam – told the meeting that in his homeland the workers had been slaves, treated "in the same way as a native is treated here", but had won their freedom through struggle: "the natives ... can gain it the same".[131] The question of revolution was raised directly with the whole meeting on 23 August 1917 given over to

[128] William Mtembu, report on meeting of 26 July 1917, in Department of Justice, JD 3/527/17
[129] Simon, report on meeting of 26 July 1917, in Department of Justice, JD 3/527/17
[130] Wilfred Jali, report on meeting of 26 July 1917, Department of Justice, JD 3/527/17
[131] Wilfred Jali, report on meeting of 26 July 1917, in Department of Justice, JD 3/527/17

developments in Russia, where the "Russian" outlined the Russian workers' struggle from the late nineteenth century until the present formation of *soviets*.[132]

In this way, the talks linked struggles around wages to struggles around oppressive laws, suggested that working class solidarity was more important than racial divisions, and tied trade unionism to the syndicalist vision of working class revolution from below. This can also be seen at the subsequent meeting on 13 September 1917, addressed by Gibson. Gibson's focus was on the system of "wage slavery".[133] The workers, "I mean the Industrial Workers of the World as a mass make all the wealth of the world", yet the bulk of this wealth went to the capitalists. The capitalists did not, however, take any responsibility for the well being of the workers. Instead, "when a worker has lost his strength and does not make money for the boss anymore, and cannot work to earn his daily food, he is bound to die of starvation ... He is thrown away the same as an old pair of boots which has lost its usefulness to the wearer". The capitalists caused other "misery and mischief", and had been a key force in instigating Britain to go to war with the Orange Free State and Transvaal in 1899. However, just as "a man has his period of life from childhood to old age", so "the wage slave system also must and is bound to come to an end".[134]

An African worker then asked the obvious question: could African and white workers unite? Gibson was cautious but somewhat optimistic in his response. He replied that the white workers tended to be racially prejudiced at the present time, and failed to recognise "the good that will arise out of the combination of white and black workers". The problem was that "the white workers in this part of the world do not think for themselves" but "let other people do their thinking for them" and blindly follow the traditions of their fathers. As a result, they fail to realise that "all the people of every colour and tribe come from one and the same stock" and that "the difference of colour of skin is due to climate, some having adopted white skin, others yellows or black skin". Still, it was to be hoped that the White workers would start to see things in a "new and better light". In the meantime, the African workers should begin to organise themselves.

Issues of ethnicity and race came to the fore regularly. At the meeting of 26 July 1917, for example, one African argued, "nothing can make all these different nationalities of natives under different governments unite".[135] Another mentioned an incident in which striking African miners clashed with non-strikers at the Premier Mine, leading to a "big strike [*sic*] among ourselves … so big that they had to send for soldiers from Pretoria to stop us from the strike".[136] Dunbar replied that there were also different nationalities amongst the white workers, "Scottish, British, Colonial, Irish, Russian etc.", yet they were able to unite where needed: the key was to organise all the different nationalities into a union.[137] There was also

[132] Wilfred Jali, report on meeting of Industrial Workers of Africa, 23 August 1917, in JD 3/527/17; Lymon Malinga, report on meeting of Industrial Workers of Africa, 23 August 1917, in JD 3/527/17.
[133] R. Moroosi, report on meeting of 13 September 1917, in Department of Justice, JD 3/527/17
[134] R. Moroosi, report on meeting of 13 September 1917, in Department of Justice, JD 3/527/17
[135] Wilfred Jali, report on meeting of Industrial Workers of Africa, 26 July 1917, in JD 3/527/17.
[136] Simon, undated report, but apparently referring to meeting of Industrial Workers of Africa, 26 July 1917, cited in JD 3/527/17.
[137] Wilfred Jali, report on meeting of Industrial Workers of Africa, 26 July 1917, in JD 3/527/17.

some distrust about the motives of the Whites in organising the meetings.[138] International Socialist League members had to repeatedly challenge the perception that all Whites were employers. Thus, Dunbar stated in July that the "native workers must not think that white workers have everything or have anything to do with them [the capitalists] they are all under the capitalist".[139]

The study groups were transformed into an African trade union on 27 September 1917.[140] Significantly, the new organisation was initially called the IWW – a title suggested by Dunbar. The reference was not lost on State officials, who were monitoring the meetings through several African detectives. In a confidential letter to the Commissioner of Police, the Secretary for Native Affairs asked if "the title of the society adopted at certain meetings, viz. 'Industrial Workers of the World' is generally recognised?" It was possible that "this is a branch of the wider organisation which would appear to have been suppressed in Australia and New Zealand".[141] Dunbar suggested that when the "Industrial Workers of the World" became "stronger and stronger", "the white workers will ... join us and all will strike and see the result".

On October 11 the name of the union was amended to the "Industrial Workers of Africa".[142] The reason is not quite clear. Perhaps the doctrinaire De Leonists wished to avoid an association with the Chicago IWW; perhaps it was hoped that the new name would appeal more strongly to African workers; perhaps, as the Commissioner of Police suspected, the name change was an attempt to hide the aims of the union:[143]

> … it is understood among themselves that they are one with the 'Industrial Workers of the World'. It would appear at present, presumably owing to the action taken against known members of the latter by the Australian, New Zealand and American governments that this title has not been adopted owing to the fear of action by the authorities.

What is clear is that the overall outlook remained that of syndicalism. The "Objects" were: "To find a better way of living and to inspire the true essence of unity; to meet together periodically to discuss matters of social and general interest to mutual improvement; to organise the members and to do without the capitalists".[144] The new union's political outlook was better summarised in a leaflet prepared by a committee of two International Socialist League and two Industrial Workers of Africa members in October 1917, and issued in Zulu and Sesotho in a print run of 10,000 copies, with the heading *Ba Sebetsi Ba Afrika* (also

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[138] For example, letter by James King, Detective, 21 September 1917, to Head Constable, Roodepoort, in JD 3/527/17.
[139] Simon, undated, but apparently report of Industrial Workers of Africa, meeting of 26 July 1917, in JD 3/527/17
[140] Wilfred Jali, report on meeting of 27 September 1917, in Department of Justice, JD 3/527/17
[141] Secretary of Native Affairs to Commissioner of Police, 14 November 1917, 983/17/F.473, in Department of Justice, JD 3/527/17
[142] R. Moroosi, report on meeting of 11 October 1917, in Department of Justice, JD 3/527/17
[143] Commissioner of Police to Secretary of Native Affairs, 26 November 1917, 6/490/17, in Department of Justice, JD 3/527/17
[144] Report on activities, read out by secretary, as quoted in Hirson, 1988a, *op cit*., pp. 107-8

known as the "Listen, Workers, Listen!" leaflet).[145] The main basic draft seems to have been written by Jones, an enormous contribution to what was a powerful leaflet:

> LISTEN, WORKERS, LISTEN!
>
> Workers of the Bantu race:
>
> Why do you live in slavery? Why are you not free as other men are free? Why are you kicked and spat upon by your masters? Why must you carry a pass before you can move anywhere? And if you are found without one, why are you thrown into prison? Why do you toil hard for little money? And again thrown into prison if you refuse to work? Why do they herd you like cattle into compounds? WHY?
>
> Because you are the toilers of the earth. Because the masters want you to labour for their profit. Because they pay the Government and Police to keep you as slaves to toil for them.
>
> If it were not for the money they make from your labour, you would not be oppressed.
>
> But mark: you are the mainstay of the country. You do all the work, you are the means of their living. That is why you are robbed of the fruits of your labour and robbed of your liberty as well.
>
> There is only one way of deliverance for you Bantu workers. Unite as workers. Unite: forget the things which divide you. Let there be no longer any talk of Basuto, Zulu, or Shangaan.
>
> You are all labourers; let Labour be your common bond.
>
> Wake up! And open your ears. The sun has arisen, the day is breaking, for a long time you were asleep while the mill of the rich man was grinding and breaking the sweat of your work for nothing. You are strongly requested to come to the meeting of the workers to fight for your rights. Come and listen, to the sweet news, and deliver yourself from the bonds and chains of the capitalist. Unity is strength. The fight is great against the many passes that persecute you and against the low wages and misery of you existence.

[145] The translation used here is that of the police spy Wilfred Jali, who infiltrated the union, and was attached to report on meeting of 1 November 1917, Department of Justice, JD 3/527/17. A translation also appeared in *The International,* 15 February 1918, "To the Workers of the Bantu Race". The latter version is also reprinted in Hirson, 1988a, *op cit*., p. 106

> Workers of all lands unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains. You have a world to win.

The *Listen, Workers, Listen!* pamphlet was distributed in locations, multi-racial slums, and mine compounds across the Witwatersrand, and as far away as Pretoria, the farming town of Rustenburg west of the Witwatersrand, at Heilbron in the Orange Free State, and even Cala in eastern Cape.[146]

Copies of the leaflet had begun to appear in the municipal compounds of Johannesburg as early as December 1917.[147] There were also contacts on the mines. In March 1918, for example, a "strange well dressed native" was seen in *one of the compounds on the Consolidated Main Reef Mine reading through the pamphlet to an appreciative group, and "explaining the contents thoroughly to his audience".[148] Johnstone identifies this man as Kapan Reuben, a member of the Industrial Workers of Africa, who sold patent medicines on the mines and propagated the union's views to the African mineworkers. Rueben was an early member of the union, gave his address as Beaufort Street, Johannesburg, and was "handed the hand-bills for distribution along the Reef".[149]

7.5. African syndicalists, the Transvaal Native Congress, the African Political Organisation, and the Transvaal trade unions

As would become the standard practice in the syndicalist unions formed by the International Socialist League, the members of the union were encouraged to elect a union committee from their own ranks, and efforts were also made to recruit both union office-bearers and rank-and-file to the League itself. By the time the Industrial Workers of Africa was launched, a layer of African activists had been trained in syndicalist ideas.

One of the most prominent was Cetiwe. Born and educated at Qumbu in the eastern Cape, Cetiwe seems to have lived in Johannesburg, where he worked as a picture framer's assistant.[150] He became a member of the Industrial Workers of Africa committee, and an advocate of a radical class politics. Addressing a meeting of the union in May 1918, for instance, he urged that "we should go to Compounds and preach our gospel":[151]

> We are here for Organisation, so that as soon as all of your fellow workers are organised, then we can see what we can do to abolish the Capitalist-System. We are here for the salvation of the workers. We are here to organise and to fight for our rights and benefits.

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[146] Hirson with Williams, 1995, *op cit.,* p. 173; Johnstone, 1979, *op cit*., pp. 258-260. Also see Paul Power, 1995, *The International Socialist League (South Africa) and Black Workers in the Transvaal, 1915-1918*, Honours dissertation, University of London, p.13

[147] Letter of 5 December 1917 from W. Walker, Inspector, Native Affairs Department, to the Director, Native Labour, "Pamphlet Found at the City and Suburban Compound", in Government Native Labour Bureau, GNLB 278 354/17, *op cit.*

[148] Johnstone, 1979, *op cit.*, p. 261; also see Hirson, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 174

[149] Membership list in Department of Justice, JD 3/527/17, *op cit.*

[150] Skota, editor and compiler, [? 1930] n.d, *op cit*., p. 137; *The International*, 13 September 1918

[151] Unlabelled report, May 1918 (full date illegible), in Department of Justice, JD 3/527/17

Another key figure was Kraai, a close friend of Cetiwe, who was born and educated at Peddie in the Cape.[152] He moved to Johannesburg, where he worked as a foreman in various wholesale stores, and was working as a parcels deliveryman in 1918. Thibedi, too, became involved in the leadership of the new union, becoming its secretary in June 1918, and its key figure from the middle of the following year.

It is possible to identify several important features of the men who played the key role in the Industrial Workers of Africa. Firstly, they were generally well educated and arguably part of the African middle class resident in Johannesburg and its environs. Cetiwe and Kraai came from the Cape, where it is almost certain that they attended mission schools and secured an education that was noticeably higher than that of the average African. Their employment, too, was either in professional and semi-professional jobs, or in fairly skilled work. Whether they had pass exemptions is not clear, but they certainly had rather more freedom than the African migrants who lived in the Witwatersrand compounds.

The social status of Cetiwe, Kraai and Thibedi was, indeed, fairly typical of many of the adherents of the commercial and educated elites that were drawn to the South African Native National Congress, and it is, perhaps, unsurprising that all three men were members of that organisation at the time, with Cetiwe and Kraai particularly prominent in the Transvaal Native Congress. What distinguished them from their contemporaries was their radical and syndicalist outlook, which was far more revolutionary than both the traditional nationalism of the South African Native National Congress and the Africanism of the Garveyists. Sometime in 1917, Cetiwe and Kraai followed Thibedi in joining the International Socialist League.

With their orientation towards the working class movement, the African syndicalists were a far cry from the "Black bellwethers for the capitalist class" lambasted in the pages of the *International*. They were eloquent proof that neither the African middle class, nor the African nationalist organisations, were politically homogeneous, and that the fact that the nationalists raised grievances around racial discrimination and prejudice attracted people who formed the nuclei of radical factions that rejected the politics of nationalism itself.

In November 1917, the Industrial Workers of Africa went ahead with plans to hold a public meeting in downtown Johannesburg. This fell through when the owners of the hall withdrew permission after learning that the meeting was for Africans. A police warrant was also issued prohibiting International Socialist League members, who were attracting notoriety for "meddling" with Africans, from attending.[153] The idea of public meetings was shelved for the time being, partly because of these difficulties, and partly of the argument that public meetings were a security hazard.

The Industrial Workers of Africa made some progress in developing relationships with the African Political Organisation in the Transvaal and the Transvaal Native Congress. In November and December 1917, the Industrial Workers of Africa had two joint meetings with the African Political Organisation and the Transvaal Native Congress on the question of organising African and Coloured workers.[154] The Industrial

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[152] Skota, editor and compiler, [? 1930] n.d, *op cit*., p. 167; *The International*, 13 September 1918
[153] Johnstone, 1979, *op cit.*, p. 257
[154] Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 73; Johnstone, 1979, *op cit.*

Workers of Africa also had a joint meeting with the African Political Organisation, on the question of organising workers of colour, and nine Industrial Workers of Africa members were elected to address an African Political Organisation meeting.[155]

At this time there was a broader interest in the African Political Organisation in forming trade unions amongst the Coloureds. Abdurrahman saw trade union work in narrowly ethnic terms of advancing Coloureds workers alone. If they joined interracial unions, and won higher wages, he argued, Whites would get the jobs: his solution was undercut the Whites to ensure regular work.[156] This made little sense to many Coloured unionists in the Cape, who had some access to the union linked to the Cape Federation of Labour, formed in 1913, as discussed in Section 8.3. Talbot-Williams, soon the African Political Organisation organiser for the Transvaal and Orange Free State, was among those who hoped to open the existing White unions to Coloureds.

The prospect of opening the union movement to Coloureds may have seemed feasible in the Cape, but had far less chance of success elsewhere in the country, as both the International Socialist League and Talbot-Williams would learn. International Socialist League union leaders attended the December 1917 congress of the South African Industrial Federation, where they distributed the manifesto of the Solidarity Committee.

The manifesto of the Solidarity Committee attacked the existing unions in no uncertain terms for "their narrow craft vanity, their still narrower colour prejudice, their exclusive benefit funds, their compromising with the robber system, their friendly agreements with their masters to the neglect of the bottom toiler, their scabbery on the unskilled and one another".[157] The existing unions were a "delusion and a snare", which served "only the interests of the Capitalists", and had to be superseded by interracial and revolutionary industrial unions, linked up in one National Industrial Union. This "one Industrial Union will become the Parliament of Labour and form an integral part of the International Industrial Republic".[158]

All supporters of these aims were invited to attend the Easter 1918 conference of the Solidarity Committee, but there were few recruits: only members of the International Socialist League and the Industrial Workers of Africa were present at the Easter meeting.[159] The main business of that meeting became a lengthy discussion on which IWW *Preamble* should be adopted by the Solidarity Committee: the 1905 *Preamble* associated with the De Leonists, or the 1908 *Preamble* of the Chicago IWW. The De Leonists version was eventually endorsed, and a new executive elected, including two Africans (probably Cetiwe, Kraai or Thibedi), but the Solidarity Committee subsequently faded away. The International Socialist league's main success in the mainstream unions – and a partial one at that – at the time remained the adoption of a syndicalist platform by the Building Workers' Industrial Union, as discussed in Section 6.5.

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[155] Johns, 1995, *op cit*., p. 73; Johnstone, 1979, *op cit*., p. 258
[156] Nicol, 1984, *op cit*., p. 94 note 94
[157] *The International*, 22 February 1918, "Industrial Unionism in South Africa", described as the "manifesto of the Solidarity Committee, reprinted here by order of the I.S.L. Management Committee"
[158] *The International*, 22 February 1918, "Industrial Unionism in South Africa", described as the "manifesto of the Solidarity Committee, reprinted here by order of the I.S.L. Management Committee"
[159] Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, pp. 67-8

In the meantime, Talbot-Williams had also had an unhappy experience at the South African Industrial Federation congress. He was sent to the conference as a delegate for the Cape unions, armed with a speech advocating interracial trade unionism, but barred from speaking when large blocs of White workers refused to admit any Coloured delegates.[160] In January 1918 he delivered the speech at the Pilkington Hall in multi-racial Ferreirastown, home to a large number of Coloureds, to an audience of Coloured workers.[161] Talbot-Williams' talk was a scathing attack on the White trade unions, an appeal for labour unity across racial lines, and a call for "*the organisation of black labour*, upon which the whole commercial and mining industry rests today".[162]

Talbot-Williams' general line of argument, his tone, and his phraseology was strikingly similar to that found in the pages of the *International*, and the call for interracial unionism was also unusual for an African Political Organisation organiser. At some point he had linked up with members of the International Socialist League or its Solidarity Committee. Perhaps this was before he came to the Transvaal, or perhaps afterwards, for it is difficult to judge exactly when the speech was written or, perhaps, revised. He had, it seems, been amongst those who attended the joint meetings of the Industrial Workers of Africa, the African Political Organisation and the Transvaal Native Congress, and he had spoken to members of the International Socialist League or its Solidarity Committee at the South African Industrial Federation congress.

There can be little doubt, however, that Talbot-Williams must have found the International Socialist League's forthright support for the organisation of workers of colour, and of interracial unionism, attractive; that International Socialist league members had opposed his exclusion at the South African Industrial Federation congress must also have made an impression. He gave the International Socialist League permission to issue his speech as a pamphlet, and it duly appeared, complete with an IWW *Preamble*.[163] The African Political Organisation also issued the leaflet in a separate edition.[164]

In 1918, the International Socialist League held its May Day celebrations outside the Pilkington Hall: the owner refused to let the hall to the organisation, least of all for an interracial meeting.[165] This was the first time in South African history that a May Day rally had been "directed to non-European workers".[166] The speakers were also an interracial group. Besides Barendrecht, Hanscombe, Israelstam, Kessler, and Tinker, it also included Talbot-Williams and Thibedi, who addressed an audience of between one and two hundred people, mainly Coloured workers.

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[160] Simons, 1984, *op cit.*, pp. 204-5

[161] R. Talbot Williams, 4 January 1918, *The Burning Question of Labour in South Africa: being an address delivered by R. Talbot-Williams, organising secretary of the African Political Organisation (Transvaal and Free State Executive) to a gathering of Coloured workers at the Pilkington Hall, Johannesburg, 4th January 1918*, International Socialist League, Johannesburg. A copy may be found on the microfilm of *The International* in 1918 at the Johannesburg Public Library.

[162] Emphasis in the original

[163] Forman's claim that the "ISL never got round to the actual issue of the leaflet" is obviously untrue: Forman, [1959] 1992, op *cit.*, p. 64

[164] *White Trade Unionism, or a call to the Non-European Workers of South Africa*: a copy of this edition may be found in the Department of Justice, JUS 526, 3/527/17, National Archives, Pretoria, entitled "International Socialist League, reports on the activities of", part 3.

[165] Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit.*, p. 65

[166] Forman, [1959] 1992, op *cit.*, p. 66

It is not clear whether Talbot-Williams actually became a syndicalist or a member of the International Socialist League, although he may have joined the Industrial Workers of Africa, but his views changed later in the year. He moved back to the Cape where he actually joined the National Party, justifying his actions on the grounds that "one must live".[167] He may have been influenced by Afrikaner nationalist hints of a special deal for Coloureds for at the time – hints designed to cynically win the Coloured vote. He died in the influenza epidemic later that year.

Relations with the South African Native National Congress and its Transvaal section, dating back to 1915, had deteriorated sharply in late 1917, when *Abantu Batho* attacked the Industrial Workers of Africa. It described the International Socialist League as "cranks" unpopular with most Whites, and chided "those few of our leaders who are apt to be over-zealous in the suggested collaboration with any section of white labourers".[168] The *International* responded with the blunt accusation that the paper was subsidised by the government and the "Corner House" through advertisements.[169] As such its capitalist sympathies were obvious.

Furthermore, the *International* argued, the African nationalists had again revealed their elitist character and their inability to emancipate African labour. Only revolutionary trade unionism could provide the force to break the laws that weighed upon the African worker, but the cowardly nationalists, the "holy men, perhaps the editor of the 'Abantu-Batho' among them" who "hold up horrified hands at the thought of the natives organising", drew back in horror from class struggle and direct action. Interracial labour unity was, in short, clearly to be preferred to the pitfalls of nationalism.[170]

The same conflict between the syndicalists and the nationalists played out in subsequent months. The November 1917 joint meeting between the Industrial Workers of Africa, the African Political Organisation and the Transvaal Native Congress went fairly smoothly, but at the second there was a marked division between the "horny handed" Industrial Workers of Africa, taking up one side of the hall, and a smaller group of Transvaal Native Congress leaders, "more sedate and middle-class looking".[171] The "Industrial Workers put in good class war points, and … seemed to have a knack of 'riling' the T.N.C. 'respectables' beyond all patience". Indeed, a Mr. Sebeho of the Industrial Workers of Africa almost came to blows with Mvabaza, after he demanded to know what the Transvaal Native Congress was actually doing for workers.[172]

At a subsequent meeting of the Industrial Workers of Africa, held on 3 January 1918, hostility towards the Transvaal Native Congress was quite evident: "some of the members seemed to dislike the members of the Congress to join us as workers".[173] One member, for example, argued "we must not talk

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[167] Hirson, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 177
[168] *The International*, 19 October 1917, "'Beware of Labour Cranks'"
[169] *The International*, 19 October 1917, "The Pass Laws: organise for their abolition" and in the same issue, "'Beware of Labour Cranks'"
[170] *The International*, 19 October 1917, "'Beware of Labour Cranks'"
[171] *The International*, 4 January 1918, "A Unique Meeting"
[172] Johnstone, 1979, *op cit.*, p. 260
[173] As quoted in Johnstone, 1979, *op cit.*, p. 260

about Congress anymore, as they are the men who organise rich and high people who are the men who suck our blood and sell us".[174]

However, matters were more complex than at first appeared. There was a clash between syndicalists and nationalists, but it was not a neat or simple clash *between* organisations, between the Industrial Workers of Africa, the International Socialist League and the *International*, on the one side, and the Transvaal Native Congress and *AbantuBatho*, on the other. Rather, it was a clash that spilt over *into* the Transvaal Native Congress itself, partly because key figures in the Industrial Workers of Africa – notably, Cetiwe, Kraai and Thibedi – were also members of the Congress, forming a syndicalist bloc within that body, and partly because the syndicalist bloc was able to win some support from moderates within it. Important moderates would align with the syndicalists in 1918 and 1919; some would be influenced by syndicalist ideas, even if they did not become thoroughgoing syndicalists.

The hold of the conservative nationalists on the South African Native National Congress and its affiliates was under a great deal of pressure at the time, particularly on the Witwatersrand. The countrywide upsurge of worker action and African interest in trade unionism suggested an alternative to the traditional approach of deputations and petitions. Furthermore, whole layers of the African elite across the Witwatersrand were in turmoil as inflation and racial discrimination pressed them ever closer to the urban African workers amongst whom they lived.[175] Finally, as the rise of the Industrial Workers of Africa indicates, the International Socialist League had won a section of the politically active Africans on the Witwatersrand to a syndicalist outlook.

An important consequence was that the leadership of the Transvaal Native Congress became deeply fractured by political and social divisions. The more prosperous elements of the African elite, particularly those with independent sources of income, tended to remain loyal to the South African Native National Congress's traditional conservatism. More economically marginal layers of the African middle class cast around for an alternative: some to socialism and syndicalism, as discussed below, some to religious millenarianism,[176] some to the radical Africanist nationalism of the Garveyists,[177] and some to socialist and syndicalist ideas.

Within the Transvaal Native Congress, there was a tussle between traditional and militant approaches, with moderates in the middle moving, in 1918 and 1919, towards the militants,[178] who included the men of the syndicalist bloc. While men like Grendon and Horatio Mbelle stayed loyal to the traditional approach, and while Cetiwe and Kraai headed up the syndicalist bloc, moderates like C.S. Mabaso, Letanka, Mvabaza and Ngojo, all of whom were involved with *AbantuBatho*, moved towards the left, aligning with the syndicalists, and sometimes adopting some of their ideas. By early 1918 *Abantu Batho* had abandoned its

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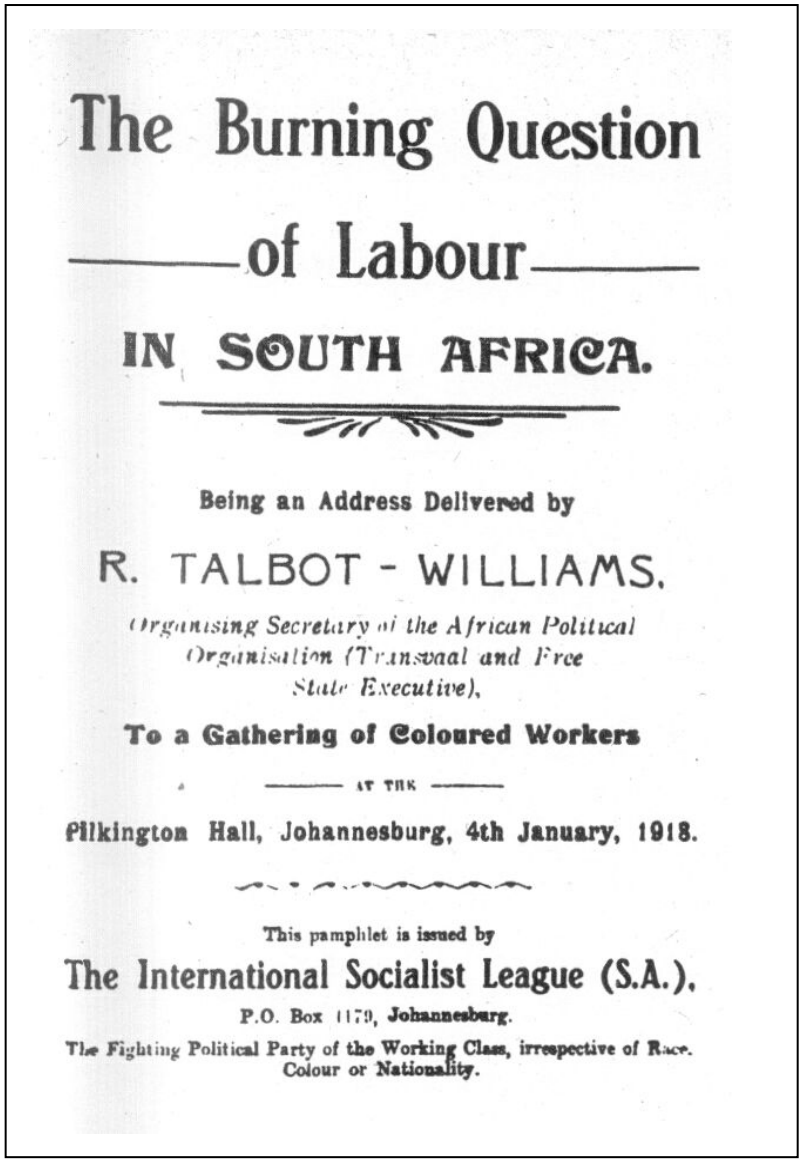
[174] As quoted in Johnstone, 1979, *op cit.*, p. 260
[175] As noted, particularly, by Bonner, 1982, *op cit.*
[176] Robert Edgar, 1988, *Because they Chose the Plan of God: the story of the Bulhoek massacre*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg
[177] Couzens, 1982, *op cit.*
[178] I am indebted to Bonner's careful analysis of the political divisions amongst the contemporary African elite in drawing these distinctions: see Bonner, 1982, *op cit.*, pp. 288-290, 298-299, 302-306



The Burning Question

of Labour

IN SOUTH AFRICA.

Being an Address Delivered by

R. TALBOT - WILLIAMS,

Organising Secretary of the African Political Organisation (Transvaal and Free State Executive),

To a Gathering of Coloured Workers

AT THE

Pilkington Hall, Johannesburg, 4th January, 1918.

This pamphlet is issued by

The International Socialist League (S.A.),

P.O. Box 1179, **Johannesburg.**

The Fighting Political Party of the Working Class, irrespective of Race, Colour or Nationality.

Figure twenty-three: R. Talbot Williams' speech at the Pilkington Hall, 4 January 1918, published by the International Socialist League

Source: Microfilm of *The International*, Johannesburg Public Library

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distrust of the International Socialist League, and was openly promoting the Industrial Workers of Africa in its columns:[179]

> Perhaps the people outside Johannesburg are not aware that there is an organisation of workers which is trying to organise itself called the Industrial Workers of Africa. It has been found that the whole country, its money and wealth, is made by labour, but all for nothing.

[179] Quoted in *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 20 April 1918, "From South Africa"

> One feels ashamed to see the sons of men going down into the bowels of the earth digging gold and diamonds and coal, yet only get three pounds per month. These men have found out that it is necessary to start an organisation which is known as the Industrial Workers of Africa.

Mabaso was a qualified bookkeeper and secretary, and sometime clerk for the Native Recruiting Corporation, who subsequently worked as secretary and bookkeeper for *AbantuBatho*.[180] Letanka was a court interpreter and a musician from the Cape, and a founder member of the South African Native National Congress.[181] Mvabaza, another mission-educated African from the Cape, was a journalist and sometime businessman, and also a founder member of the organisation.[182] Ngojo was also from the Cape, where he had worked as a court interpreter at Paarl.[183]

The clash between the syndicalists and the traditional Congress approach, in short, also played out *within* the Transvaal Native Congress, as will be seen in Section 7.8. The years 1918 and 1919 would see men like Letanka and Mvabaza allying with Cetiwe and Kraai. If the International Socialist League had been correct in its overall account of the class character of nationalism, it had not adequately recognised the contradictions that could emerge *within* nationalist groups. The activities of the African syndicalists in this period showed that these contradictions were important, but the International Socialist League never fully grasped the lesson: in March 1921, for example, Ivon Jones still dismissed "The Native Congress" as a "small coterie of educated natives … black-coated respectables".[184]

7.6. Syndicalist organising in Durban: the International Socialist League, the Indian Workers' Industrial Union, and African protest

Important developments had taken place in Durban a few months before the move to form an African syndicalist union in Johannesburg. From 1915 onwards, activists in the local branch of the International Socialist League had been involved in attempts to organise Indian workers.[185] Members of the Durban branch of the International Socialist League helped launch an Indian Workers' Industrial Union "on the lines of the IWW" in March 1917.[186] It was a general union, and claimed a membership amongst workers in the docks, garment workers, laundry workers, painters, hotel employees and waiters, and tobacco

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[180] See Skota, editor and compiler, [? 1930] n.d, *op cit*., pp. 174-175; T.D. Mweli Skota, editor and compiler, n.d. [1966], *The African Who's Who: an illustrated classified register and national biographical dictionary of the Africans in the Transvaal,* Frier and Munro, Johannesburg, third revised edition, p. 114

[181] "Letanka, Daniel Simon", in E.J. Verwey, editor, 1995, *New Dictionary of South African Biography*, HSRC publishers, Pretoria, vol.one, pp. 137-9. This dictionary is hereafter Verwey, editor, 1995, *op cit.* Also see Skota, editor and compiler, [? 1930] n.d, *op cit*., pp. 170-171; Skota, n.d. [1966], *op cit.,* p. 65

[182] "Mvabaza, Thomas Levi", in Verwey, editor, 1995, *op cit.*, pp. 193-195; also see Skota, editor and compiler, [? 1930] n.d, *op cit*., p. 221; Skota, editor and compiler, n.d. [1966], *op cit*., p. 80

[183] Skota, editor and compiler, [? 1930] n.d, *op cit*., p. 225

[184] Ivon Jones, [29 March 1921] 1981, *op cit*., p. 53

[185] Mantzaris, 1983, *op cit*., p. 116

[186] *The International*, 3 August 1917, "A Forward Move in Durban"

workers.[187] It also reportedly attracted the interest of waiters, mineworkers and the "sugar slaves" of the plantations.[188]

The union has, however, been largely ignored in the literature.[189] Its history is doubly significant: it undermines the view that White labour alone was active and organised in Durban, and its shows an important element of the syndicalist movement in South Africa in the 1910s. It was not the first time that Indian activists had taken note of syndicalist ideas, but it was certainly the most important.

In 1911 and 1912, for example, there was a passive resistance campaign against the £3 poll tax imposed on Natal Indians who had entered indenture after 1895. During the campaign, A.S. Aiyar, a leading figure in the campaign, a key figure in the increasingly vocal Indian educated elite, and a sometime member of the Natal Indian Congress and the Colonial Born Indian Association, had praised the politics of the IWW in his paper, the *African Chronicle*, concluding that "the time is not far distant when the evils of capitalism as we know it will be done away with, and a more rational and in every sense a sounder system of the employment of capital will be substituted".[190] However, he did not seriously consider strike action or union activity, and little came of the interest in the IWW; the 1913 strike was initiated by Gandhi as an extension of his *Satyagraha* strategy.

During the First World War, there was a rapid expansion of Indian employment in the factories and hotels of Durban, as the clothing and textiles, food, furniture and other manufacturing industries expanded rapidly.[191] The number making a living in town as hawkers, market gardeners and independent fishermen fell quickly, and the Indian working class of Durban grew rapidly, living in multi-racial areas such as Grey Street, or in shack settlements on the outskirts of the White areas. Many factory owners preferred settled Indians to migrant Africans as a source of cheap labour, while White workers responded with a drive to impose job colour bars.

Given the racial divisions in the broader Durban working class, Indian labour organisations emerged as separate bodies from 1917 onwards. The syndicalists played a key role in this process from the start of the year. The key figure was Gordon Lee, who became chairman of the Durban branch of the International Socialist League in August 1917.[192] He succeeded Sofus Maurits "S.M" Pettersen, a ship's engineer who was born in Norway in 1880.[193] Pettersen had been stranded at Robben Island off the coast of Cape Town in 1910, when the whaler *Carmen* was shipwrecked. He subsequently settled in South Africa, becoming a prosperous businessman involved in building, engineering, farming, and shipping.

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[187] Gordon Lee, 26 October 1917, "Indian Workers Waking Up", *The International*; also see Desai, Padayachee, Reddy and Vahed, 2002, *op cit.*, pp. 59-61; Mantzaris, 1983, *op cit.*, p. 117

[188] Gordon Lee, 26 October 1917, "Indian Workers Waking Up", *The International*

[189] The only real study of the union and its background remains Mantzaris' pioneering work from two decades ago: Mantzaris, 1983, *op cit.* At the time, Mantzaris noted that the union barely registered in most accounts: unfortunately, this still remains the case.

[190] Quoted in Swan, 1985, *op cit*., p. 214

[191] Marie, 1986, *op cit*., pp. 38-42

[192] F.A. Mouton, 1987, "Van Matroos tot Senator: the kleurryke and stormagtige politieke loopbaan van S.M. Pettersen", *Klio*, no. 19; *The International*, 10 August 1917, "Durban Notes"; Desai, Padayachee, Reddy and Vahed, 2002, *op cit*., p. 59. It should be noted that Desai, Padayachee, Reddy and Vahed, 2002, *op cit*., incorrectly identify Lee as a member of the *Industrial* Socialist League.

[193] All biographical detail on S.M. Pettersen is drawn from Mouton, 1987, *op cit*., pp. 29-33

Perhaps somewhat incongruously, given his growing prosperity, Pettersen retained the socialist convictions he had adopted in 1899. Indeed, he moved sharply to the left in the 1910s, notwithstanding his own rise out of the working class: an early member of the SA Labour Party, and chair of its Durban branch, Pettersen had supported the 1913 Indian strike and was subsequently a founder member of the International Socialist League. He provided Andrews with a job after he lost his parliamentary seat in 1915, represented Durban at the first conference of the International Socialist League in 1916, and supported the organisation's attempts to organise Africans.

Gordon Lee was described in the *International* as an "IWW organiser"[194] (and a "follower of De Leon" by the Simons),[195] but it is not clear whether he had any links to the older IWW tradition in Durban, or to the IWW internationally. One of the key ways in which the Chicago IWW spread internationally was through its Marine Transport Workers' Industrial Union, a racially integrated union that organised sailors and dockworkers at ports across the globe.[196]

Unlike many other unions in the maritime sector, such as the International Sailors Union of the United States, the British-based National Seamen's and Fireman's Union and the German-based Deustcher Transportarbeiterverband, the Marine Transport Workers' Industrial Union at no point excluded workers on the basis of race, and had a substantially mixed membership. It maintained waterfront offices and meeting halls in Australia, Canada, Chile, Germany, Mexico, Puerto Rico and Sweden,[197] as well as Cuba, Ecuador, and Japan, and likely, as noted below, in Cape Town as well. It is certain that members of the Marine Transport Workers' Industrial Union would have occasionally stopped off at Durban. Unlike the situation in Cape Town, discussed below, the role of IWW sailors in Durban is far from clear.

An Indian Workers' Industrial Union was formed in March 1917, initially chaired by Lee. It is not clear whether this was the first Indian workers' union in Durban, but it was certainly one of the very first.[198] As was the case in Johannesburg, militants from International Socialist League encouraged the members of union to elect a committee from their own ranks to take care of day-to-day union business. By August 1917, the key union functions were being undertaken by local Indians, most notably Moodley and. Sigamoney, who had a "good … grip on the class struggle".[199] In line with the emerging International Socialist League practice, efforts were made to recruit the union committee and members, and Moodley, Sigamoney and one Ramsamy became active in the syndicalist cause. Sigamoney was soon "a committed socialist and a leading

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[194] *The Internationa*l, 26 October 1917, "Indian Workers Union"
[195] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., p. 293
[196] On the Marine Transport Workers' Industrial Union as an international and interracial trade union, see *inter alia*, Jon Bekken, 1995b, "Marine Transport Workers IU 510 (IWW): direct action unionism", *Libertarian Labour Review*, no. 18; Hartmut Rubner, 1998, "Occupational Culture, Conflict Patterns and Organisational Behaviour: perspectives of syndicalism in 20th century shipping", revised version of paper presented at *Syndicalism: Swedish and Historical Experiences*, Department of Economic History, Stockholm University, March 13-14, 1998, especially pp. 13-17; and van der Linden, 1998, *op cit*. I would like to thank Hartmut Rubner for supplying me with a copy of his paper. The history of the Marine Transport Workers Industrial Union in the United States, with particular reference to its racial politics, is discussed in Brown, 1968, *op cit*.; Foner, 1974, *op cit.*; McGirr, 1995, *op cit*.; Spero and Harris, 1931, *op cit*.; Jeff Stein, 1987, "Ben Fletcher: Black Syndicalist", *Libertarian Labour Review*, no. 3
[197] Bekken, 1995b, *op cit.*, p. 20
[198] Cf. Marie, 1986, *op cit*., p. 45
[199] *The International*, 3 August 1917, "A Forward Move in Durban"

member of the ISL, and received fraternal support from trade-unionists and members of the same organisation".[200]

Sigamoney was born in Durban in 1888, [201] and, like his African counterparts Cetiwe, Kraai and Thibedi, he was a member of the educated elite,[202] a distinct layer from the older and established merchant elite, and broke with nationalism favour of syndicalism in the late 1910s. Given the role of mission schools in providing education, it is perhaps not surprising that Sigamoney was raised a Christian, unlike many of his compatriots. He was headmaster at Estcourt Indian High School, and then taught at St. Aidans Boys' School in the 1910s. A keen sportsman, he was elected vice-president of the Durban and District Indian Cricket Union in 1910. In 1913, this Cricket Union affiliated to the South African Coloured Cricket Board, which brought together teams of colour in the Cape and Natal. Sigamoney represented Durban on the Cricket Board, and served on the 1913 Natal Indian team that competed at Kimberley for the Board's "Barnato Trophy", which was donated by De Beers.

Connections with the Board broke down in the First World War, and Sigamoney's attention turned to boxing and cricket in Durban. A great believer in the value of sport in building character and fortitude, and in promoting fair play and teamwork, Sigamoney believed that sport should "have the same prominence as any other subject in the curriculum" in schools.[203]

At the same time, Sigamoney became increasingly involved in politics. Initially quite moderate, he seems to have moved left during the First World War when he addressed a number of meetings on the question of growing food shortages in Durban. This was, perhaps, where he came in contact with the local section of the International Socialist League and Gordon Lee.

Sigamoney subsequently joined the Indian Workers' Industrial Union, and then the International Socialist League. He quickly became the most prominent Indian trade unionist in the city, not to mention its most prominent Indian socialist. In October 1917 he chaired a socialist conference in Durban on the relative merits of pure industrial action along the lines of the Chicago IWW, versus a tactical use of elections.[204] The conference seems to have been organised by Pettersen, who organised and attended a number of socialist meetings that drew in Coloured and Indian socialists.[205] Sigamoney was present at the International Socialist League's annual conference in January 1918, where "he spoke as an Indian worker protesting against the outrageous violation of the principle of civil equality contained in the new Railway Regulations as applied to natives, Indians, coloured people", referring to the segregation of coaches.[206]

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[200] Mantzaris, 1983, *op cit.*, p. 116
[201] Biographical details are drawn from Desai, Padayachee, Reddy and Vahed, 2002, *op cit*., pp. 38, 42, 45-51, 57, 59-61, 69-70; Mantzaris, 1983, *op cit*., p. 116
[202] Swan, 1985, *op cit*., p.11
[203] Bernard Sigamoney, 30 November 1918, as quoted in Desai, Padayachee, Reddy and Vahed, 2002, *op cit*., p. 38. As these authors note, the purported role of sports in inculcating these values rendered it extremely attractive to many members of Durban's commercial and educated Indian elite. Some took an extreme position, arguing that sports would help "civilize" Indians, thereby buttressing claims for equal rights. See Desai, Padayachee, Reddy and Vahed, 2002, *op cit*., pp. 36-8. It may, however, be questioned whether everyone who saw sports as a positive influence on character necessarily followed this line of reasoning.
[204] *The International*, 9 November 1917, "A Socialist Conference in Durban"
[205] Mouton, 1987, *op cit*., p. 32
[206] *The International*, 11 January 1918, "Our Annual Gathering"

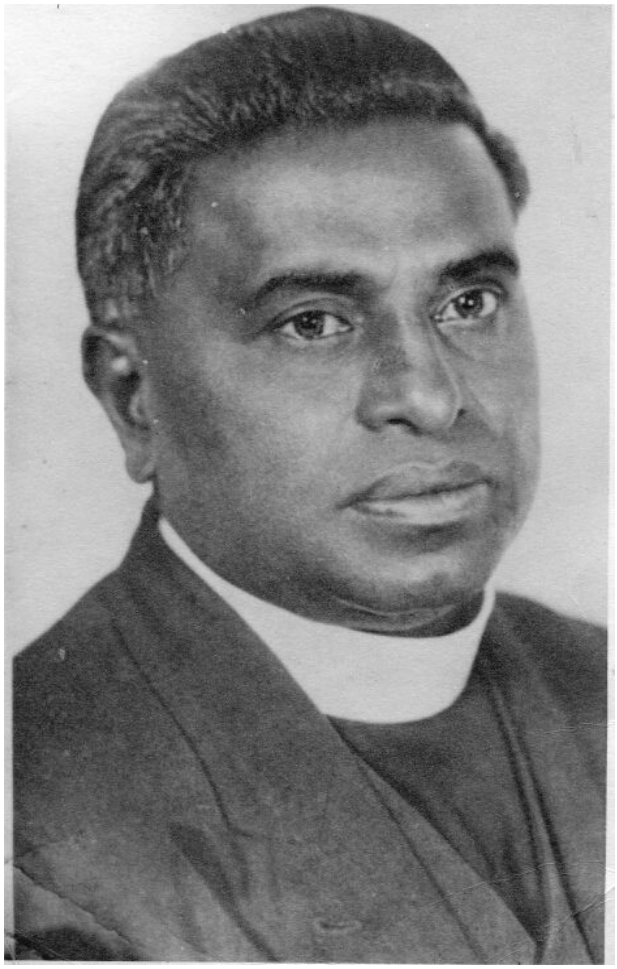

Figure twenty-four: Bernard Sigamoney of the International Socialist League and Durban Indian Workers' Industrial Union, in later life.

Source: Bernard Sigamoney Papers, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand

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The overlapping membership between the Indian Workers' Industrial Union and the International Socialist League was one sign of the relationship between the two organisations. A relationship between an Indian union and a political group was most unusual at the time, and the Indian nationalist groups had "very little contact" with workers at the time.[207] This distance was not particularly surprising, given that the Indian business elite dominated these groups at the time. It was only in the 1930s and 1940s that the CPSA re-established links with Indian trade unionists.

The syndicalist character of the Indian Workers' Industrial Union was quite clear. In conjunction with the International Socialist League, it organised open-air mass meetings of Indian workers at the corner of Grey and Victoria streets, where "the Indian Workers Choir entertained the crowds by singing the Red Flag, the International and many IWW songs".[208] There were also regular classes in the evenings, which pored

[207] Marie, 1986, *op cit*., p. 62
[208] Mantzaris, 1983, *op cit.*, pp. 116-117

over works by De Leon and Marx. Ivon Jones made several trips to Durban, where he shared the platform with Moodley and Sigamoney.

Plans were also made to print International Socialist League literature in Tamil, Hindi and Telegu, all of which remained commonly spoken by local Indians: in 1904, only five percent of Natal Indians were literate in English,[209] although a higher number could speak the language, and there was a fair amount of Indian language publishing in the province. It is not clear whether these translations did, in fact, appear, but the Indian Workers' Industrial Union certainly attracted widespread attention, not least in India itself. According to the *Indian Opinion* of Durban, the "fame of the Indian Workers Union, and Comrade Sigamoney's activities therein reached Lahore in India".[210] A "Lahore paper" had reported on the developments in Durban, and had asked:[211]

> Is there no lesson for this to the working classes in India? For in India the workmen are entirely unorganised for their mutual benefits.

While the Indian Workers' Industrial Union was particularly prominent amongst Indian workers in Durban, a number of Indian unions operated independently amongst drivers, dockworkers, hotel employees, shop assistants, workers at the sugar mills, and waiters.[212] In July 1919, Indian waiters formed a union, which announced its intention at its launch to affiliate with the Natal Shop Assistants' and Commercial Workers Union.[213] The latter had been organised on a platform of interracial membership, open to all workers "irrespective of sex, race or colour",[214] apparently by more radical layers of White labour. It is not clear whether it was linked to a Distributive and Mercantile Workers Industrial Union launched in late 1918 by Haynes of the local Social Democratic Party.[215]

The unionised Indian waiters went on strike in both Durban and East London later in 1919. By this time the waiters seem to have opted, instead, for the Indian Workers' Industrial Union,[216] it giving the Indian Workers' Industrial Union a base beyond the immediate vicinity of Durban. The strike was bitterly fought. White workers scabbed on the Indians, and the only White trade unionists that publicly supported the Indian strikers were those enrolled in the Building Workers' Industrial Union.[217]

There was also, at this time, a Tobacco Workers' Union amongst Indian workers, which was strongly supported by Sigamoney and the International Socialist League, who provided financial support and organisers.[218] Tobacco had become a profitable business in Natal, and was controlled by a small interlocking group that dominated farming, manufacturing and distribution, and which included both Indian and White

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[209] Swan, 1985, *op cit*., p. 12
[210] Cited in *The International*, 9 November 1917
[211] Cited in *The International*, 9 November 1917
[212] Mantzaris, 1983, *op cit.*, p. 118
[213] *The International*, 11 July 1919
[214] *The International*, 27 June 1919, "Pietermaritzburg Notes"
[215] *The International*, 11 October 1918, "Industrial Unionism"
[216] Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 98; *The International*, 11 July 1919; cf. Mantzaris, 1983, *op cit*., p. 118
[217] See Mantzaris, 1983, *op cit.*, p. 90.
[218] Mantzaris, 1983, *op cit*., pp. 118, 120

capitalists.[219] The biggest single grower and manufacturer was R.B. Chetty of the Imperial Cigar Manufacturing and Trading Company, vice-president of the Natal Indian Congress, and owner of a tobacco factory in Durban employing 120 Indians.

In October 1920 the Indian tobacco workers struck for better conditions and higher pay, and against overwork.[220] The workers had been quiet for many years, as they were afraid of losing their jobs. When Chetty brought in scab labour, the political temperature rose quickly, and several strike-breakers were attacked, resulting in two strikers being charged with assault and fined £5 each. The workers then elected a fifteen-person strike committee, which set out to win support in Indian neighbourhoods, managed to raise a substantial amount of money through donations, and held regular mass meetings in the neighbourhoods. One result was that a number of strike-breakers hired by Chetty came out on strike, and had to be replaced by other scabs.

Indian railway workers then came out on a solidarity strike, while the owners of other tobacco factories and related businesses lined up against the strikers at Chetty's.[221] The strike became the city's talking point, and conservatives called for a united front against trade unionism in general, while an organisation called the South Africans' League used the strike as an opportunity to promote an anti-Indian platform.[222] Predictably, the South African Industrial Federation ignored the strike, as did the local SA Labour Party, which was concentrating on winning elections to the Provincial Council.

Andrews and Ivon Jones of the International Socialist League arrived in Durban, where they called on all workers to join the struggle against capitalism, and establish *soviets* in every workplace, including Chetty's factory.[223] Responding to an invitation to share a platform with the South African Industrial Federation and the South African League, the International Socialist League accused the South African Industrial Federation of betraying the working class and lining up with the South Africans' League, and appealed for solidarity from White workers.[224] Again, only the Building Workers' Industrial Union supported the strikers.

The International Socialist League's Indian and White members had little influence within the actual strike committee at Chetty's.[225] The committee tended to reduce the strike to a dispute over wages and working conditions, and avoid political issues, and became entangled in a lengthy negotiations process as a growing number of local capitalists began to accept the need to deal with the union. J. Kerr, the local secretary of the International Socialist League, Ivon Jones and Sigamoney all tried to use the strike to promote radical views,[226] although it was resolved by the end of the month, in an outright victory for the

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[219] Mantzaris, 1983, *op cit*., pp. 118-119
[220] Mantzaris, 1983, *op cit*., pp. 120-125
[221] Mantzaris, 1983, *op cit*., pp. 120-125
[222] See Mantzaris, 1983, *op cit*., p.123
[223] Mantzaris, 1983, *op cit*., pp. 122-123
[224] J. Kerr, 15 October 1920, "White Worker vs. Indian: Durban Federation allies of the 'smellers out,'" *The International*
[225] Mantzaris, 1983, *op cit*., pp. 122-123
[226] For example, activities reported in David Ivon Jones, 15 October 1920, "Indian Workers on Strike: some piquant lessons", *The International*

strikers.[227] Subsequently, Andrews, Pettersen and Sigamoney were active in support of striking Indian furniture workers.[228]

There was, however, rather less success for the syndicalists amongst the African population of Durban, whose numbers grew from 17,925 in 1918 to 29,011 in 1921 against the backdrop of the growing manufacturing sector.[229] The African working class of Durban was in a most unhappy situation. There was no African location in the town, with most workers housed in grim compounds; the so-called *togt* system required African work seekers to purchase a badge when entering town to find work; the municipality had a legal monopoly on beer sales, and used the revenue from its beer halls to fund the police, the municipal bureaucracy and municipal compounds, saving property owners the trouble of high taxes; post-war inflation created enormous pressures on the low-waged African workers; there was a nine o'clock curfew and restrictions on walking on pavements.

These workers were a perennial source of worry to the authorities, particularly given the spread of anti-capitalist ideas amongst African workers on the Witwatersrand and in Cape Town at this time. As growing numbers of Durban's African workers became restive, they looked towards the International Socialist League and the South African Native National Congress for leadership, but it was the latter that provided it.[230] It was the Natal Native Congress, firmly under the control of conservative nationalists, not the syndicalists, which played the key role in channelling Durban's working class unrest.

The propaganda of the International Socialist League was "warmly received" by many African workers,[231] but clearly given a lower priority than work amongst Indian and White workers, where the League was having some success. The International Socialist League's 1918 leaflet "The Bolsheviks are Coming"[232] was evidently directed at Africans in Durban and Pietermaritzburg, appearing in Zulu and Sesotho as well as English. It certainly alarmed the authorities with its calls for breaking down the colour line, organising African workers and, of course, the seizure of the means of production by workers.[233]

At least one African was involved in distributing the leaflet in Pietermaritzburg, resulting in a scuffle with an ex-soldier, and in Durban it caused (claimed the *International*) "great excitement"[234] In his evidence in the subsequent trial of Ivon Jones and Greene, the government censor, one of the officials called by the prosecution, expressed concern about calls to take over the mines: "if they did that with the mines it [*sic*] would do the same thing with the sugar and wattle plantations".[235]

However, the leaflet did not provide much in the way of a concrete strategy, and was not coupled to any systematic work amongst Africans along the lines of the Industrial Workers of Africa on the

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[227] Mantzaris, 1983, *op cit*., p. 124; also see David Ivon Jones, 29 October 1920, "Indian Workers Win", *The International*
[228] *The International*, 7 January 1921, "Indian Furniture Strike in Durban"
[229] Figures from Hemson, 1979, *op cit*., p. 162
[230] Hemson, 1979, *op cit*., pp. 166-7
[231] Hemson, 1979, *op cit*., p. 166
[232] Reprinted in *The International*, 25 April 1919
[233] Hemson, 1979, *op cit*., pp. 179-180
[234] Hemson, 1979, *op cit*., p. 179
[235] Quoted in Hemson, 1979, *op cit*., p. 179

Witwatersrand.[236] J.S. Warwick, manager of the Durban Municipal Native Affairs Department and a witness at the 1919 trial of Ivon Jones and Greene in Pietermaritzburg, was convinced that the "preaching of Socialism and syndicalism amongst the Natives in their present backward state is wholly undesirable".[237]

However, while it is quite incorrect to suggest the International Socialist League was "basically oriented towards the White labour movement",[238] its role in the "preaching of Socialism and syndicalism" to Africans in Durban was limited. Pettersen was intensely active from 1915 to 1917, but mainly amongst Indian and White workers, although he joined Andrews on several trips into the countryside to address meetings of Africans.[239] Lee and Sigamoney concentrated on the Indian Workers' Industrial Union. Ivon Jones returned to the Witwatersrand where he became increasingly focused on international issues, and Greene does not seem to have done much to recruit Africans after Ivon Jones' departure.

There were several attempts to link the Industrial Workers of Africa on the Witwatersrand to the syndicalist unions in Durban, but without much success. At the meeting of the Industrial Workers of Africa on 27 September 1917 Dunbar had stated that the union would soon be linked to workers in Durban, where "the natives and Indians had formed their branch".[240] An African delegate was indeed dispatched to Durban but proved unable to make contact with Lee of the International Socialist League, or any other organiser of the Indian Workers' Industrial Union.

A layer of African syndicalists did not emerge in Durban, in contrast to the situation in Johannesburg. Instead, African worker unrest was channelled through Dube, editor of the *Ilanga lase Natal*, and president of the Natal Native Congress, and formerly the first president of the South African Native National Congress. Master of the petition and the deputation, his politics centred on a belief in "the sense of common justice and love of freedom so innate in the British character".[241]

In 1918, a series of strikes by African workers threw up a layer of militant organisers. Dube's response was to organise a campaign of petitions by for voluntary wage increases by employers as an alternative.[242] His approach was for workers to intercede with the authorities, and had no real place for trade unionism, although at times he was pressured to adopt a more militant approach. Dube was careful to distance himself from any links to the International Socialist League, and his hostility towards radical ideas played a central role in isolating the African workers of Durban from the Industrial Workers of Africa.[243]

At a mass meeting of 800 workers on 27 July 1918, Dube asked the African foremen ("boss boys" or *indunas*) present to formulate requests for the workers, which would be presented to the authorities as petitions, and also sent to African chiefs with the hope that the latter would join the chorus.[244] Local government and other employers decided to maintain a united front against wage increases, while the

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[236] Hemson, 1979, *op cit*., pp. 180-181
[237] Quoted in Hemson, 1979, *op cit*., p. 163
[238] As suggested by Hemson, 1979, *op cit*., p. 166
[239] Mouton, 1987, *op cit*., pp. 29-33
[240] Wilfred Jali, report on meeting of 27 September 1917, in Department of Justice, JD 3/527/17
[241] Quoted in Hemson, 1979, *op cit*., p. 167; for more on his background, see Skota, editor and compiler, [? 1930] n.d, *op cit*., pp. 144-5
[242] Hemson, 1979, *op cit*., pp. 167-8, 170-172
[243] Hemson, 1979, *op cit*., pp. 172, 190
[244] Hemson, 1979, *op cit*., pp. 171-2

workers' demands had started to centre on a 1-shilling-a-day increase. Dube came in for serious criticism from workers at a subsequent meeting on August 10, showing growing doubts about the policy of deputations and petitions, but lacked a clear alternative. Several independent strikes by African dockers followed that month: despite the fact that these workers had raised their demands with the authorities through Dube's petitions, many were fined or jailed.[245]

The mobilisation of the workers declined, and Dube, warned by officials to stop holding workers' meetings, quietly withdrew from the movement. A "nasty spirit" towards employers was still clearly evident amongst many workers a year later.[246] A large number of African railway workers went on strike in July, but police crushed the strike.

This was an example, the *International* complained, of the State's crudely repressive approach to African workers, sarcastically described as varying between the "Firm-and-Just" policy and the "Just-and-Firm" policy.[247] Authorities suspected the influence of "unscrupulous Europeans" in the railway strike – clearly meaning members of the International Socialist League – but failed to uncover much evidence.[248] Sigamoney was also investigated by the police in this regard, but cleared by officials.

7.7. The South African syndicalists and the Shop Stewards' and Workers' Committee Movement in Britain

The project of working within the mainstream unions was in disarray with the failure of the Solidarity Committee to achieve any real results, but got a new lease of life in July 1918, when Andrews returned from an eleven-month stay in Britain. In 1916, the International Socialist League praised the holding of an international socialist conference in Zimmerwald, Switzerland. Great hopes were placed in the conference by many syndicalists, including the anti-war sections of the French CGT.[249] Anarchists were, however, specifically excluded, and the conference, notable for the presence of the Bolsheviks, mainly drew together moderate anti-war groups.

In 1917, the International Socialist League was invited to a proposed socialist peace conference in Stockholm. A national conference was held in Johannesburg on 5 August 1917, attended by the Indian Workers Industrial Union, the International Socialist League, Poalei Zion (the Jewish Socialist Society), the "Kimberley Socialists", the Pretoria Socialist Society, the "Native Workers Union, Johannesburg" (presumably the nucleus of the Industrial Workers of Africa), the Social Democratic Federation (SDF), the Social Democratic Party in Durban, as well as a Tailors' and Tailoress' Union from Johannesburg, the South African Peace and Arbitration Society from Cape Town, and "many unattached socialists".[250]

It was this meeting, held at the Trades Hall, which provided the immediate backdrop to the eviction of the International Socialist League from those facilities. The presence of an African from the "Native

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[245] Hemson, 1979, *op cit*., pp. 172-179
[246] Hemson, 1979, *op cit*., p. 181
[247] *The International*, 25 July 1919, "The 'Firm-and-Just' Policy"
[248] Hemson, 1979, *op cit*., p. 184
[249] *The Socialist*, April 1916, "'La Vie Ouvriere': the lesson of 1870-1 not forgotten"
[250] *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 14 December 1918, "South African Socialists: South Africa and the Inter-Allied Socialist Conference"

Workers Union, Johannesburg", possibly Thibedi, Cetiwe or Kraai, and an Indian from Durban, almost certainly Sigamoney, led the administrative council of the SA Labour Party, then meeting in a nearby room, to walk out in protest and reconvene in a nearby hotel.[251] The party and the unions then used their control of the facilities to bar the International Socialist League from using the facilities for meetings, and gave them notice to vacate its offices.

Andrews was chosen as an international delegate by the Johannesburg conference, and mandated to attend both the Stockholm meeting and an upcoming Inter-Allied Labour and Socialist Conference, to be held in London in the third week of September. The British Labour Party had invited the SA Labour Party to the Inter-Allied Conference, but not the International Socialist League.[252] Departing by ship on August 19, Andrews arrived just too late for the Inter-Allied Conference, but made arrangements to attend a second Inter-Allied Conference, set for the February 1918.

Despite assurances by the representatives of the British section of the former Labour and Socialist International, drawn from the British Socialist Party and the Independent Labour Party, Andrews was apparently denied the right to speak at the February 1918 meeting, being admitted only as an observer. Andrews blamed the British Labour Party (which played a central role in organising the Conference, and was generally pro-war), and others on the British left believed he had been excluded due to his radical anti-war views.[253] The February 1918 meeting accepted the British Labour Party's pro-war *War Aims Manifesto* almost verbatim.

This would have been consistent with the exclusion of other groups, including the Independent Labour Party and the British Socialist Party,[254] but it is also possible that the organisers wanted to avoid disputes over war policy, as the war issue was generating deep cleavages in labour and the left. While the British Socialist Party, for example, had initially supported the war effort, a rank-and-file revolt from 1915 to 1916 had ousted Hyndman and pushed through an anti-war position. Hyndman had then led a pro-war breakaway (the National Socialist Party, later renamed the Social Democratic Federation), which kept control of *Justice*, the party paper, leading the British Socialist Party to establish the *Call*.

The Stockholm Peace Conference, the second item on Andrews' itinerary, was being organised in neutral Sweden by other sections of the former Labour and Socialist International. An increasing number had moved from their initial war fervour to the view that the war must end as quickly as possible. The leading spirits in this move were the Mensheviks, now part of the Provisional Government in Russia, who favoured an end to the war on the basis of no annexations, and no indemnities. In Germany, the main body of the SDP remained committed to the war effort, but a split to the left headed by Kautsky in 1917, called the Independent SDP, favoured the Menshevik proposal. The conference initiative collapsed when the Allied governments forbade all citizens from attending.

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[251] William H. Andrews, 20 December 1917, "South African Freedom and General Smuts", *The Call*
[252] *The Call*, 11 April 1918, "Demonstration for W.H. Andrews"
[253] *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 14 December 1918, "South African Socialists: South Africa and the Inter-Allied Socialist Conference"
[254] *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 2 March 1918, "The Inter-Allied Socialist Conference"

Nonetheless, Andrews made good use of his time in Britain. He managed to make contact with Maxim Livitnov, the unofficial Soviet representative in Britain, as instructed by the International Socialist League.[255] He also renewed his friendship with Tom Mann, and made contact with a range of left-wing and labour organisations. Andrews wrote a number of articles for the radical press, and gave numerous talks.

Addressing the British Socialist Party, Andrews criticised the British Labour Party as "an awful lot, just as bad as the S.A. crowd", and suggested the socialists disaffiliate.[256] A "noteworthy meeting" with an "enthusiastic audience" was held in London on 4 April 1918.[257] It was organised jointly by the London sections of the British Socialist Party and the Independent Labour Party, along with the Workers' Welfare League of India and the Workers' Suffrage Federation. Sylvia Pankhurst headed the Workers' Suffrage Federation, which had started as the East London Federation of the Suffragettes in 1913; it was renamed the Workers' Socialist Federation in 1918, and published the radical weekly, the *Workers' Dreadnought*.[258]

With Pankhurst in the chair, Andrews stressed that the International Socialist League advocated equal treatment for "white, Native and Indian labour in South Africa": [259]

> It presented a plain case on behalf of Dutch [i.e. Afrikaner] and British workers, of Indian immigrants, of coloured and black labour, in South Africa. It defended equal treatment, not on grounds of sentiment for depressed or subject races, but as workers on behalf of fellow-workers.

Andrews also met with branches of the Socialist Labour Party, which praised the International Socialist League's stand on "the race question and on industrial unionism".[260] Attending a lecture at the main offices of the Socialist Labour Party in Glasgow, he was struck by an "atmosphere … reminiscent of the I.S.L., Johannesburg".[261] He added: "the S.L.P. are the dangerous people" as "is shown by the close attention given them by the authorities. They are the young men here, as in South Africa, and youth will not be denied".

In addition to meeting the De Leonists, Andrews met members of the IWW (aligned to the Chicago IWW), as well as the Socialist Labour Party and the Industrial Workers of Great Britain.[262] He also made contact with the emerging Shop Stewards' and Workers' Committee Movement, a rank-and-file movement within the existing unions, and influenced by syndicalism, that made a profound impression on the veteran unionist. This movement had started in the Clydeside industries, which had expanded massively during the war: one hundred thousand people came to the area, including sixty thousand to Glasgow, to work in the

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[255] Johns, 1976, *op cit*., p. 375
[256] *The Socialist*, September 1918, "Andrews Hits Out"
[257] *The Call*, 11 April 1918, "Demonstration for W.H. Andrews"
[258] Shipway, 1988, *op cit*., pp. 3-6. A useful compilation of her writings is provided by Kathryn Dodd, editor, 1993, *A Sylvia Pankhurst Reader*, Manchester University Press, Manchester
[259] *The Call*, 11 April 1918, "Demonstration for W.H. Andrews"
[260] *The International*, 16 August 1918, "An Appreciation from the S.L.P."
[261] Bill Andrews, 16 November 1917, "Notes from Comrade Andrews", *The International*
[262] *The Socialist*, August 1912, "Industrial Unionism: Industrial Workers of Great Britain"

munitions factories and shipyards, where growing State intervention in the war industry, attempts to restructure work, coupled with rising rents, and an established local socialist tradition, created an explosive mixture. [263]

The Clyde Workers' Committee had emerged in a wage strike by metal workers in February 1915. When the leadership of the established union condemned this strike, and tried to reach a deal with employers, the workers stayed out in defiance of their officials, and established instead an independent strike committee, the "Central Labour Withholding Committee" of shop stewards.[264] Members of the Committee maintained contact with each other, and helped initiate the Clyde Workers Committee in October 1915, when it became clear that the union leaders were unwilling to take up workers' concerns or challenge war-time restrictions on the right to strike.

Based on regular mass meetings of delegates, the policy of the Clyde Workers Committee with regard to the existing unions' structures was independent rank-and-file organisation: "We will support the officials just so long as they rightly represent the workers, but we will act independently immediately they misrepresent them".[265] Government actions against the Committee, including the deportation of six members, including A. MacManus, the editor of the Socialist Labour Party's *Socialist*, [266] failed to stem the growth of the movement.

While the Clyde Workers' Committee often focused on immediate workplace concerns such as deskilling (and remains criticised for a tendency to remain silent on the war issue), circumstances drove it into continual conflict with the system. Strikes clashed with State attempts to stop workers' action in the war industry through measures such as the Munitions Act and the Defence of the Realm Act. In November 1915 the Clyde Workers' Committee was also pulled into a broader rent strike initiated by women, a response to surging rents. When landlords approached employers to deduct rents directly from workers' wages, the committee went on strike, preventing the deductions and forcing the State to implement rent controls.

Members of the Socialist Labour Party led the actual Clyde Workers Committee.[267] "The *ultimate aim* of the Clyde Workers' Committee", wrote Gallacher, its chair and a De Leonist, in January 1916, "is to weld these [existing] unions into one powerful organisation that will place the workers in complete control of the industry".[268] Similar organisations sprang up around Britain, and had a marked syndicalist influence, with members of the Socialist Labour Party playing a particularly important role in Scotland. One consequence was raids on the Socialist Labour Party press and offices at Glasgow,[269] and the arrest of Gallacher and other members.[270] Such repression was not, however, restricted to the De Leonists, for a wide range of dissidents was persecuted during the war.

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[263] Milton, 1978a, *op cit*., p. 14
[264] James Hinton, 1973, *The First Shop Stewards Movement,* George Allen and Unwin, pp. 103-120
[265] Hinton, 1973, *op cit.*, p. 119
[266] *The Socialist*, April 1916, "Government Declares War on the Clyde" and "Notice to Sympathisers"
[267] See Hinton, 1973, *op cit.*, pp.122-3. Gallacher's autobiography is also of some interest here, although marred by Gallacher's continual attempts to downplay his links to syndicalism and De Leonism: Gallacher, 1978, *op cit.*
[268] Cited in Hinton, 1973, *op cit.*, p. 129.
[269] *The Socialist*, April 1916, "An Appeal"; *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 20 July 1918, "Questions of the Day"
[270] *The Socialist*, March 1917, "Release of the Clyde Prisoners"



Figure twenty-five: A radical shopstewards' movement against capitalists and union officials: cartoon from the *International.* "Chamber of Mines (to Trade Union Official): 'Help me to upset him. A'ch "e": I'm not the only one he does not like, you know'"

Source: *The International*, 25 February 1921

In England, members of the British IWW (linked to the Chicago IWW) won a number of committees to the 1908 IWW *Preamble* from 1917.[271] Meanwhile, J.T. Murphy, the leading figure in the Sheffield Workers' Committee, joined the Socialist Labour Party and became a member of its executive. He was widely regarded as the theorist of the emerging workers' committee and shopstewards' movement, and aimed at replacing the "territorially constructed State" in favour of the "real democracy" based on Industrial Unionism,[272] with the workers' committee an important step on the road to a "'Workers' Republic'".[273] This outlook was reflected in the stated aims of the movement: "it has for its objective control of the workshop,

[271] Arthur E. Titley, 2 October 1920, "The I.W.W. in England", *The Workers' Dreadnought*
[272] *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 19 October 1918, "Marxist Industrial Unionism"
[273] J.T. Murphy, 31 August 1918, "The Embargo", *The Workers' Dreadnought*

control of the Industry, the overthrow of the present capitalist system of society and the establishment of Industrial Democracy".[274]

Clearly, the British De Leonists were far less dogmatic and sectarian than their American counterparts, dropping De Leon's dual unionism dogma in order to embrace a new approach of working within existing unions independently of the leadership. In other words, they abandoned their traditional focus on building the Industrial Workers of Great Britain[275] as a counterpart of the Workers' International Industrial Union in the United States.

Despite strong syndicalist influences, however, the emerging "Shop Stewards' and Workers' Committee Movement" was by no means purely syndicalist. It also included numerous activists from the Independent Labour Party, and a number from the British Socialist Party, while the sectarianism of many De Leonists also tended to alienate people. The most notable classical Marxist figure in the movement was John MacLean, a Scottish teacher based on the Clydeside who ran large and well-attended classes in Marxist theory for the British Socialist Party.[276] His views were similar to those of Debs in the United States (and the younger Crawford), favouring a strong union and a strong party.[277] Not all of his students agreed: Gallacher, converted to socialism by MacLean, became a member of the British Socialist Party, then a supporter of the IWW during a stay in Chicago in 1913, then a De Leonist.[278] The two clashed openly by 1914, MacLean regarding his former student as "an openly avowed anarchist".[279] MacLean was one of the best-known victims of the wartime repression, receiving a five-year sentence.

By 1919, the emerging "Shop Stewards' and Workers' Committee Movement" had begun to congeal into a countrywide structure, with a national administrative committee headed by Murphy, and its own paper, *Solidarity*. It published a second paper in Scotland, the *Worker*:[280] regarded as a "splendid revolutionary paper" by the *Socialist,*[281] it was printed on the Socialist Labour Party press.[282] The movement held a national conference in September 1919,[283] and another in February 1920 alongside the official Trade Union Congress.[284] Following the latter (which also drew in the syndicalist South Wales Unofficial Reform Committee),[285] the movement established close links with the Chicago IWW, including an arrangement for

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[274] *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 9 March 1918, "The Workers' Committee"
[275] A clear recognition of this shift is provided by *The Socialist*, 26 June 1919, "Clyde Notes: One Union Movement conference"
[276] Milton, 1978a, *op cit*., pp. 10-14
[277] See, *inter alia*, John MacLean [7 January 1911 and 28 January 1911], "The Rise in Prices", in Milton, 1978b, *op cit*.; John MacLean, [15 April 1911] 1978, "The End of the Singer's Strike", in Milton, 1978b, *op cit*.; John MacLean, [October 1921] 1978, "Speech from the Dock, October 1921 (excerpts)", in Milton, 1978b, *op cit*.; John MacLean, [14 February 1923] 1978, "Municipal Election Address to the Electors of the Thirtieth Ward", in Milton, 1978b, *op cit*. Also see Milton, 1978a, *op cit*., p. 14; Milton, 1978b, *op cit*., p. 29
[278] Milton, 1978a, *op cit*., pp. 12-13
[279] John MacLean, [December 1920] 1978, "A Scottish Communist Party", in Milton, 1978b, *op cit*., p. 225
[280] Sylvia Pankhurst, 13 August 1921, "Zinoviev to the Comintern: a 'left' wing view", *The Workers' Dreadnought*
[281] A. MacManus, 3 July 1919, "Belated", *The Socialist*
[282] *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 20 July 1918, "Questions of the Day"
[283] Arthur E. Titley, 2 October 1920, "The I.W.W. in England", *The Workers' Dreadnought*
[284] J.T. Murphy, 29 November 1919, "The Workers' Committee", *The Workers' Dreadnought*
[285] *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 14 February 1920, "Rank and File Convention"

the interchange of membership cards.[286] (It also sent Gallacher to the Comintern and Profintern in Moscow, and the *Solidarity* editor to the IWW convention in the United States.)[287]

Invited to address the Clyde Workers Committee by Gallacher in 1918, Andrews "reminded the British workers of the struggle in South Africa, and the task of liberating the Native peoples there and elsewhere in the Empire".[288] The Committee excited Andrews' "particular admiration", and Andrews became convinced of the need to "organise the South African workers on similar lines".[289]

At his reception in Johannesburg in July 1918, Andrews gave an enthusiastic account of the Shop Stewards Movement, which he described as the means by which "Industrial Unionism will most rapidly be brought about in England".[290] The reception was attended by most of the sponsors of the trip, including members of the Indian Workers' Industrial Union and the Industrial Workers of Africa.[291] A more formal subsequent meeting was held on 11 August 1918, attended by representatives of all the sponsoring groups, issued a strongly worded statement that made a "most emphatic protest" at Andrews' shabby treatment in being denied full status at the February 1918 Inter-Allied Conference.[292]

At a special International Socialist League conference in mid-August 1918, Andrews was appointed full-time industrial organiser for the organisation.[293] From early 1919, the International Socialist League was distributing *The Workers' Committee: an outline of its principles and structure* by J.T. Murphy, recommending it as a work which "all wage workers would do well to buy".[294] Critical of trade union centralisation and "government by officials", it advocated an independent shopstewards' movement amongst ordinary union members and aimed at a "great Industrial Union of the Working Class".[295] Critical of the sectional style of unionism, in which each workplace had innumerable unions for each trade, grade and department, it advocated unity from below through shopstewards' committees elected all sections of the workforce, thereby organising on industrial lines. It stopped short of advocating a revolutionary strike.

As industrial organiser for the International Socialist League, Andrews addressed over twenty trade union meetings in what remained of the year, and "regularly preached antagonism to the leadership of the SAIF [S.A. Industrial Federation] and the extension of industrial unionism and worker-controlled shop committees".[296] He hoped that the shop committees would overcome divisions amongst workers, form

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[286] See F. Thompson and P. Murfin, 1976, *The IWW: its first 70 years.* Published by the IWW in Chicago. p. 135
[287] Wilfred J. Braddock, 25 February 1922, "The Dying National Workers' Committee", *The Workers' Dreadnought*
[288] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 192
[289] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 191-2; Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, pp. 68-9
[290] *The International*, 2 August 1918, "Revolution in Britain"
[291] *The International*, 2 August 1918, 'Revolution in Britain'
[292] *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 14 December 1918, "South African Socialists: South Africa and the Inter-Allied Socialist Conference"; the full statement may also be found in *The Socialist*, 2 January 1919, "Protest against Labour Party"
[293] *The International*, 23 August 1918, "Our 'Great Push'"
[294] *The International*, 17 January 1919. A copy, stamped with the contact details of International Socialist League, may be found in the Department of Justice, JUS 526, 3/527/17, National Archives, Pretoria, entitled "International Socialist League, reports on the activities of"
[295] J.T. Murphy, 1918, *The Workers' Committee: an outline of its principles and structure*, Sheffield Workers' Committee, Sheffield, pp. 4, 15
[296] Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, pp. 69, 102

district groups and eventually form a Witwatersrand Shop Stewards' Council.[297] Given the role that unofficial structures had played in the 1913 general strike, Andrews probably had ample grounds for his optimism.

Results were, however, mixed. An independent shopstewards' organisation was formed at the Denver Engineering Works on the Witwatersrand in 1919-1920, while shopstewards and works committee structures were also formed at the State railway workshops in Pretoria.[298] On 10 November 1919, the shopstewards' movement at Denver organised a strike against the victimisation of two workers, one of whom was the head of the workshop committee.[299] The unions played little role in the Denver strike, which was managed by shopstewards elected from amongst the skilled trades, but support from the South African Industrial Federation and other union structures was sought. Contacts were also developed with the International Socialist League. The main demands of the strike centred on reinstatement of the dismissed workers, and greater power for the shopstewards' structure.

Management was very reluctant to negotiate with strikers who operated outside the unions, and intensely hostile to the shopstewards' organisation, while the strike attracted a great deal of support from the White trade unions. The Building Workers' Industrial Union donated £50, and Brown gave a surprisingly militant speech calling for *soviet* control of production.[300] Encouraged by the support given the workers, and hoping that the example of a militant shopstewards' movement would spread, the *International* suggested that a movement of this time could challenge capitalism just as effectively as actual *soviets*.[301]

The situation on the mines was more complicated. Here an independent shopstewards' movement emerged, in the form of "Works Committees" organised around rank-and-file bodies of shaft-stewards and shopstewards. Andrews played a role in the process, helping inspire several of the committees on the mines.[302] The Works Committee movement was based mainly amongst semi-skilled White workers, generally Afrikaners recruited during the war,[303] and there was a wave of unofficial actions, ranging from go-slows to "lightening strikes", on the mines, with the Works Committees – to the alarm of the Chamber of Mines – acting in defiance of the no-strike agreements and opposition by union officials.[304] There was an increase of illegitimate absentee shifts of 82,128 per year from 1914 to 1919.[305]

The rise of an independent shopstewards' movement was, perhaps, a vindication of the *International's* belief that the working class could never truly be co-opted by capital, but it should also be stressed that there was no clear relationship between the emerging movement and the ideals of the syndicalists. The State and the mine owners worried that the rise of unofficial actions provided "undesirable

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[297] *The International*, 12 December 1919; also see Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 102
[298] On the latter bodies, see *The International*, 19 November 1920, "S.A. Railways and the Shop Steward Movement"
[299] Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit.* pp. 99-105
[300] Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit*., p.102 and p. 111 note 48
[301] *The International*, 28 November 1919
[302] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 200; Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, pp. 100-101
[303] Johnstone, 1976, *op cit*., p. 114-5
[304] Johnstone, 1976, *op cit*., pp. 114-118
[305] Johnstone, 1976, *op cit*., p. 114

opportunities to extremists", and had a "disturbing effect upon the natives",[306] and made plans to meet a general strike on the mines.[307]

However, Ivon Jones believed that the International Socialist League played a very limited role in the independent shopstewards' movement, and was, specifically, unable to prevent it from failing to involve African workers.[308] The Denver strike, for example, was confined to skilled White workers, with the 110 Africans at the plant ignored by both management and strikers.[309] The strikers might have been were sceptical of the union leaders but had no intention of creating an alternative leadership, and the dispute was referred to the South African Industrial Federation.[310] Despite some contacts with the syndicalists, and praise from the *International*,[311] the Denver movement showed little sign of revolutionary fervour.

The demands of the Works Committees on the mines were often centred on the job colour bar. Matters were further complicated by moves by Afrikaner nationalists to set up a moderate Afrikaner general workers' union,[312] along the lines of the defunct *Arbeid Aldelt*. This was influenced by hostility to "foreign" radicalism, as well as resentment at the ongoing domination of the South African Mine Workers' Union by English-speakers, but the *Algemene Afrikaanse Werkersvereniging* (General Afrikaans Workers' Society) formed in August 1917 – soon renamed the *Zuid-Afrikaanse Werkers' Bond* (South African Workers' League) – was not a success.[313] Most Afrikaner workers (including prominent members of the *Werkers' Bond*) refused to leave the Mine Workers' Union, and the rival union collapsed in 1921.

However, there was one important difference between the situation at Denver and on the mines: there *was* a radical current in the Works Committees, headed by men like Fisher, Ernie Shaw and H. Spendiff, which was deeply influenced by syndicalism. This current seems to have arisen largely outside of the International Socialist League. Shaw was a member of that body (and, later, the CPSA), but the other two figures were not members of either, and seem, to judge from the *International*, to have been unknown to the organisation before 1921, with their politics still something of a cipher that year.[314]

In 1921, the syndicalist current in the Works Committees was involved in a split in the South African Mine Workers' Union, leading to the formation of a separate Council of Action in Johannesburg on 24 July 1921, with a manifesto clearly located within the syndicalist tradition.[315] "By organising in revolutionary industrial units within each industry, and throughout all the industries, the class-conscious working class are preparing that form of power which will be required to carry out the organisation of production during the transition period … [and] … a Republic of Industrial Workers".[316] Andrews subsequently viewed Fisher and

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[306] Report of the Low Grade Mines Commission of 1920, as quoted in Johnstone, 1976, *op cit*., p. 114
[307] Johnstone, 1976, *op cit*., pp. 116-7
[308] Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, pp. 100-101
[309] Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 99, 104, 107
[310] Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 103-5
[311] For example: *The International*, 2 January 1920, "Shop Control by the Workers"
[312] Visser, 2003, *op cit*., pp. 7-8
[313] Visser, 2003, *op cit*., pp. 7-8, 16
[314] For example, *The International*, 12 November 1920, "City Deep Strike: an ultimatum"; *The International*, 19 November 1920, "Unauthorised Strikes Condemned: an ultimatum"; *The International*, 7 January 2921, "The Mine Workers' Union: change of officials"
[315] F.W. Pate and A. McDermid, 18 February 1922, "Manifesto of the Mineworkers", *Workers' Dreadnought*
[316] F.W. Pate and A. McDermid, 18 February 1922, "Manifesto of the Mineworkers", *Workers' Dreadnought*

Spendiff as "fiery opponents of capitalism", "prepared to die for their class": the "general aim … was that the workers should somehow gain control of the mines and run them themselves". [317] The syndicalist character of these men was also shown in subsequent developments. The Council of Action would play a central role in the events of the 1922 Rand Revolt, as discussed in Section 9.6.

7.8. The general strike movement of 1918: the International Socialist League, the Industrial Workers of Africa and the Transvaal Native Congress

The formation of the Industrial Workers of Africa, and the rising tide of African working class action more generally, provided the International Socialist League with growing opportunities to influence African workers. The International Socialist League supported as many of the struggles of African, Coloured and Indian workers as possible, raising money, providing publicity and addressing crowds wherever possible. In May 1919, for example, the *International* reported on strikes by African workers at Volksrust, at collieries at Burnside and Witbank, and at the Messina Mine.[318] In July 1919, it publicised a strike by African workers on the railways in Durban.[319]

More direct support was provided where possible. The International Socialist League raised money to support striking Coloured building workers in the Transvaal.[320] It was forthright in supporting an African wage campaign in Bloemfontein started in early 1919 by H. Selby Msimang, a founder member of the South African Native National Congress and brother of R.W. Msimang, the lawyer who drafted that organisation's constitution. Born to a typical *kholwa* family, Msimang was trained as a teacher but had worked as a court interpreter and a clerk, and edited a local African paper, *Morumioa-Inxusa* ("the Messenger"), in Bloemfontein.[321] He was a leading figure in the Orange Free State section of the South African Native National Congress (the National Congress of the Orange Free State), and grasped, unlike most of his contemporaries, the centrality of the wage issue in the unrest of the time.[322]

Msimang began a campaign for higher wages in February 1919, but local private and State employers were unwilling to meet his demand for a minimum daily wage of 4-shilings-and-6-pence.[323] On February 28 he was arrested in terms of the Riotous Assemblies and Criminal Law Amendment Act, which led to a "demonstration, widely reported, which added to his prestige".[324] Several hundred people smashed the windows of unpopular "blockmen" – low-level African officials in the local location – and stoned the police. Official attempts to calm the situation failed, Msimang was released on an onerous bail of £500, continued to hold public meetings pending his court appearances, and finally appeared in court in May 1919.

The *International* described the official repression of the wages campaign in Bloemfontein, and the arrest of Msimang, as an example of the "white bosses' ultra-Tsarist terrorism": the very crumbs of the

[317] Cope, [? 1943] n.d., *op cit*., p. 251
[318] *The International*, 6 June 1919, "Labour Notes"
[319] *The International*, 25 July 1919, "The 'Firm-and-Just' Policy"
[320] *The International*, 18 April 1919, "League Notes"
[321] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 98-99
[322] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 99-105
[323] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 99-105
[324] Trapido, 1970, *op cit*., p. 13

banquet table of capitalism were not available to the "native toiler of India or Africa".[325] Under the capitalist system the "black proletarian's portion is to slave for the white boss always; to grovel for a below subsistence wage, to die by the thousands in slum, location and kraal; to have no wants, no ambitions, no self-respect".[326]

Contrary to the view that Andrews was uninterested in the struggles of African workers, he intervened from the floor at a mass meeting of the South African Industrial Federation, called on the question of working hours, to propose the following resolution:[327]

> That this mass meeting of workers protests in the strongest possible manner against the attempt being made by the O.F.S. [Orange Free State] authorities to intimidate the native workers [in Bloemfontein] from seeking to improve their conditions of life, by arresting and imprisoning their delegates or representatives.

The motion was carried with (some) acclaim.

As the *International* noted, for the "first time" in local "industrial history white workers have thus publicly and corporately associated themselves with the grievances of native workers". [328] This was true, but it was not the forerunner of the growing solidarity across racial lines that the *International* predicted. To aid the struggle in Bloemfontein, and draw in workers on the Witwatersrand, the International Socialist League launched a Native Labour Defence fund to raise money for Msimang's legal costs in March.[329] Msimang was acquitted, because the charges were simply too vague.

Later that year, the International Socialist League raised money to aid a strike by African and Coloured dockworkers in Cape Town.[330] The International Socialist League was somewhat more lukewarm towards the 1918 concession stores boycott on the mines: while praising the workers for their solidarity and militancy, it chided them for striking at the "branch" of capitalism (distribution through the market) rather than the "root" (exploitation at the point of production).

The formation of the Industrial Workers of Africa, and the recruitment to the International Socialist League of African syndicalists such as Cetiwe, Kraai and Thibedi, provided the syndicalists with the opportunity to directly inspire, and influence, African workers' struggles – as well as shape the direction of the Transvaal Native Congress.

Although the International Socialist League was critical of the stores boycott that broke on the mines, there is some evidence that the Industrial Workers of Africa helped inspire the protest. The *Rand Daily Mail* reprinted the "Listen, Workers, Listen!" leaflet, and claimed that it had been distributed in the

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[325] *The International*, 7 March 1919, "The Terror in Africa"
[326] *The International*, 7 March 1919, "The Terror in Africa"
[327] *Rand Daily Mail*, 3 March 1919, "White Workers' Sympathy with Natives", quoted in Ulrich, 1998, *op cit*., p. 8
[328] *The International*, 7 March 1919, "The Ice Broken"; *The International*, 2 May 1919, "Defend Your Comrades!"; *The International*, 9 May 1919, "On the Drum"
[329] *The International*, 4 March 1919, "The Ice Broken"; *The International*, 2 May 1919, "Defend Your Comrades!"; *The International*, 9 May 1919, "On the Drum"
[330] Wickens, 1973, *op cit.*, p. 80

mine compounds in January 1918. [331] It blamed the boycott on the "sinister influence of socialists and pacifists" subsidised by "German gold".[332]

While the *International* thanked the *Rand Daily Mail* for reprinting the leaflet, thereby providing invaluable (and free) propaganda, it was obviously disturbed by the "German gold" slander, which had, after all, been used to suppress the IWW in Australia, Canada and the United States.[333] It was also used in Britain to slander a range of radical groups, including the Socialist Labour Party.[334] The International Socialist League had followed the fate of the IWW and the Workers' International Industrial Union elsewhere very closely,[335] and the *International* was itself banned from the United States mail at the time.[336] The charges were the signal for an outburst of media hysteria, with the *Natal Mercury*, for example, referred to the role of the "Industrial Workers of the World, notoriously funded by Germany", in the concession stores boycott. [337]

Although the press exaggerated the "sinister influence" of the radicals, there is no doubt at all that the "Listen, Workers, Listen!" leaflet was being circulated and discussed in the compounds on the mines. It would be wrong to blame the boycott on a leaflet, but it obviously "touched a nerve"[338] In contrast to the limited role of the Industrial Workers of Africa in the boycott, the larger South African Native National Congress played no role at all.[339]

In March 1918 the Industrial Workers of Africa held a fundraising concert, attended by 50 Industrial Workers of Africa members and twelve people from the International Socialist League.[340] A month later, both organisations suddenly found themselves at the head of a movement for a general strike by Africans across the whole Witwatersrand. In the middle of May 1918, there was successful strike by White workers at the Johannesburg power station, resulting in a substantial wage increase for all White municipal workers.[341] Inspired by the example of the White workers, Africans in the municipal compounds also demanded higher wages, and refused to scab on one another.[342]

Municipal sanitary workers (the so-called "bucket boys" who collected sewerage buckets in the parts of Johannesburg where water-borne sewerage facilities did not exist) went on strike in June 1918.[343] It seems that these workers were housed in compounds in the Newtown area, which was also site of other government-run industries, including railway yards, tram yards, and power stations.

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[331] Hirson, 1995, *op cit.*, pp. 174-6
[332] Hirson, 1995, *op cit.*, pp. 174-6
[333] *The International*, 4 January 1918, "The Class Struggle Declared Criminal"; *The International*, 22 November 1918, "Chestnuts"
[334] *The Socialist*, 22 May 1919, "Lest we Forget"
[335] See, see *inter alia*, *The International*, 4 January 1918, "The Class Struggle Declared Criminal"; *The International*, 11 October 1918, "Dirty Work Down Under"; *The International*, 4 January 1919, "Freedom in Canada"
[336] *The International*, 22 November 1918
[337] An overview of press attacks on the International Socialist League in this period may be found in *The International*, 4 October 1918, "A Frame-up Fiasco". See also Hirson, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 177
[338] Hirson, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 176
[339] Ntsebeza, 1988, *op cit.*, p. 38
[340] Johnstone, 1979, *op cit*., p. 261
[341] Bonner, 1982, *op cit.*, p. 289; Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit.*, p. 66
[342] Bonner, 1982, *op cit.*, pp. 290-1
[343] Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit.*, p. 77

Predictably, the press blamed the International Socialist League,[344] although the *International* claimed that its writers had first heard of the strike through the mainstream press.[345] This was probably true enough, as the influence of the International Socialist League and the Industrial Workers of Africa was centred on the urban Africans outside the compounds, and the tenuous links that existed with migrant workers were confined to the mines.[346]

In any case, the State clamped down heavily on the African sanitary workers. One hundred and fifty two African workers were arrested, and sentenced to two months' hard labour under the Riotous Assemblies and Criminal Law Amendment Act. In the words of the Chief Magistrate of Johannesburg, T.C. MacFie, who passed sentence:[347]

> While in goal they would have to do the same work as they had been doing, and would carry out the employment with an armed escort, including a guard of Zulus armed with assegais and white men with guns. If they refused to obey orders they would receive lashes as often as might be necessary to make them understand they had to do as they were told.

However, as was the case in Durban,[348] the ruling class and official circles were divided between those who favoured outright repression of African protest, and those who favoured a more conciliatory and moderate approach. A substantial section of White opinion condemned MacFie's sentence, with criticisms by the *Star* and the *Cape Times*, and a strong condemnation by the Bishop of Pretoria.[349]

The harsh sentencing also sparked a wave of protest by the syndicalists and the African nationalists. The *International* did not fail to note the "glaring contrast between the policies of bribing the white workers and bludgeoning the black".[350] The capitalists, it argued, were willing to make concessions to the "top grades" who "can always be relied on to help keep to keep down the lower dog", but to give a wage increase to African workers due to a strike would be "the deadly thing": "these are the workers of whom the ruling class are in real *fear*".[351] The International Socialist League condemned MacFie as a "bear on the bench", as "his worship … the capitalist jackal".[352]

While the overall South African Native National Congress had not even raised the issue of wages at national meetings in March and May 1918,[353] the situation was rather different in the Transvaal Native Congress. A wave of anger at the sentencing swept the Africans in the multi-racial slums of downtown Johannesburg. The rise of a syndicalist bloc, and a leftward shift by Congress moderates, led the

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[344] *The International*, 28 June 1918, "The Lying Jade"
[345] *The International*, 7 June 1918, "Forbidden Fruit"
[346] Peter Walshe claims that the Industrial Workers of Africa was directly involved in the sanitary workers' strike, but provides no evidence. The broader data suggests that they were not. Cf. Walshe, 1970, *op cit.*, pp. 71-2, 81
[347] Quoted in Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 197; Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit.*, pp. 77-8; a slightly different version is given by Wickens, using government reports: Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., p. 113
[348] Hemson, 1979, *op cit*., pp. 180-181
[349] Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit.*, p. 67
[350] *The International*, 28 June 1918, "Two Voices"
[351] *The International*, 7 June 1918, "Forbidden Fruit", emphasis in original
[352] *The International*, 14 June 1918, "A Bear on the Bench"
[353] Bonner, 1982, *op cit.*, p. 289

organisation to organise a number of joint rallies in Johannesburg in June 1918 with the Industrial Workers of Africa and the International Socialist League.[354]

At these meetings, the influence of syndicalism was evident. The first meeting was organised on June 10 at the Ebenezer Hall in Main Street, Johannesburg, by the Transvaal Native Congress. Horatio Mbelle, a representative of the traditional approach of the South African Native National Congress, proposed that a petition be sent to the Governor-General in protest against the sentencing.[355] His view was challenged from the floor by a member of the Industrial Workers of Africa named "Mtota", who called for a general strike to be held if the workers were not released.[356]

This sentiment was strongly supported by the crowd and when another conservative leader, Isaiah Mbelle – a court interpreter and insurance agent from the Cape, secretary-general of the South African Native National Congress from 1917 to 1919, and Sol Plaatje's brother-in-law[357] – intervened to state that the "Congress at Bloemfontein decided its sentiment was against any form of strike" and pleaded that if "we do not stop the strike the whole of Johannesburg will be in flames" the crowd told him to "let it burn".[358]

Speakers from the Industrial Workers of Africa and the International Socialist League were also given the platform. Tinker, then acting secretary of the International Socialist League, proposed a second mass meeting, this time to be held under the auspices of both the Industrial Workers of Africa and the TNC. A five-person joint committee of the Industrial Workers of Africa, the International Socialist League and Transvaal Native Congress was set up on to propose the way ahead at a subsequent meeting.[359]

This effectively placed the leadership of the campaign largely in syndicalist hands, for the Transvaal Native Congress delegates on the committee, notably Mvabaza, were drawn from those aligned to, or influenced by, the syndicalists. It was from this point that the rallies began to develop into a general strike by Africans across the Witwatersrand. The central role of the syndicalists (and those linked to them) in this campaign – which was, it is worth stressing, the closest South African syndicalists *ever* came towards organising a general strike – has been gleaned from many accounts, which treat the protests mainly as a Transvaal Native Congress movement, while doing little to unravel the political influences on the Congress at the time.[360]

At least a thousand Africans and forty whites (mainly socialists, but also including Father Hill of the Community of the Resurrection) attended the next public meeting on Wednesday, June 19.[361] The joint committee addressed the crowd,[362] and the predominant influence of the syndicalists in that structure was

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[354] Johnstone, 1979, *op cit.*, p. 263, 271 note 834
[355] Bonner, 1982, *op cit.*, p. 291; Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit.*, p. 66
[356] Bonner, 1982, *op cit.*, p. 291
[357] Skota, editor and compiler, [? 1930] n.d, *op cit*., p. 136
[358] Report on meeting of Transvaal Native Congress and Industrial Workers of Africa, 19 June 1918 by unknown detective, in Department of Justice, JD 3/527/17, *op cit.*
[359] Johnstone, 1979, *op cit.*, p. 263
[360] Forman studiously avoids mentioning the presence of Industrial Workers of Africa members: there are just "speakers" or members of the Transvaal Native Congress: Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit.*, pp. 66-9
[361] Report on meeting of Transvaal Native Congress and Industrial Workers of Africa, 19 June 1918 by unknown detective, in JD 3/527/17. Bonner gives a figure of 1,000 people present; the *International* estimated twice as many: Bonner, 1982, *op cit.*, p. 292; *The International*, 21 June 1918, "'Native Unrest'"
[362] Johnstone, 1979, *op cit.*, p. 263



Twenty-six: Hamilton Kraai, activist in the syndicalist Industrial Workers of Africa

Source: T.D. Mweli Skota, editor and compiler, [? 1930] n.d, *The African Yearly Register: being an illustrated biographical dictionary (who's who) of black folks in Africa*, R.l. Esson, Johannesburg, p. 292

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soon clear: it proposed, to acclaim, that the imprisoned strikers be released at once, and that all African workers on the Witwatersrand should be given a wage increase of 1-shilling-a-day from July 1, failing which an African general strike would take place across the Witwatersrand.[363] According to Mvabaza, speaking for the committee,

> If they do not agree to pay every native 1/- per day then the strike will follow on the 2 July 1918. There will be no native working from Springs to the West Rand. [364]

[363] Unnamed detective, 19 June 1918, report on meeting of TNC and Industrial Workers of Africa, in These files are hereafter referred to as Department of Justice, JD 3/527/17; also see Bonner, 1982, *op cit.*, p. 294

[364] Report on meeting of Transvaal Native Congress and Industrial Workers of Africa, 19 June 1918 by unknown detective, in JD 3/527/17. It is clear from this document that the resolution had been developed in the committee, and was not simply Mvabaza's personal view, an impression that does arise from some of the literature.

> The capitalists and workers are at war everywhere in every country… The white workers do not write to the Governor-General when they want more pay. They strike and get what they should.[365]

That it was Mvabaza of *Abantu Batho* who presented the demand was no coincidence. He had attended International Socialist League meetings "since late the previous year", and his speeches at the time clearly showed the imprint of that organisation's ideology, which presented the demand to the crowd.[366] This underlines the impact of the syndicalists on the Transvaal Native Congress.

The wage demand raised at the meeting was almost identical to that being sought by African workers in Durban at the same time, but there were important differences. While the African workers' movement in Durban was controlled by the conservative Dube, and steered clear of direct action, the Johannesburg movement had started to centre on the threat of a general strike. While the African workers' movement in Durban threw up worker militants, it lacked a clear class politics.

The difference between the two movements, then, lay in the syndicalist influence amongst Africans on the Witwatersrand, an influence that penetrated the Transvaal Native Congress. The *International* seems to have noted the point, commenting that it was "both remarkable that such influences have asserted themselves so early in the movement, and gratifying that the rank and file already appreciate their significance",[367] and hoped that attempts to "enlist" white workers on "Capital's side against the unskilled non-white workers" might "come too late in the day".[368] It could be hoped that a "really GENERAL strike, from top to bottom, all co-operating" might develop from the evident unrest amongst all workers of all colours.[369] Nonetheless, there was a "grave danger" that the White workers would fail to "stand up for their convicted fellow workers and strikers".[370]

In one sense, the wage demand raised at the rally was fairly moderate: there were 20 shillings to a pound, and some categories of skilled worker earned over £6 a week. On the other hand, it implied an enormous increase in the overall wage bill, including the wages of African mineworkers, at a time when average wages for unskilled workers ranged from 2-shillings to 2-shillings-and-6-pence:[371] coupled with an outright call for the release of African strikers imprisoned under the Master and Servants Act, it was a direct challenge to the system of cheap and unfree African labour.

These developments alarmed the conservative nationalists in the Transvaal Native Congress. Isaiah Mbelle had already telegraphed the Minister of Justice to inform him that the "senior officers of our congress" were having trouble "calming the natives" and appealed for clemency for the sanitary strikers as

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[365] Quoted in Luli Callinicos, *Working Life: townships and popular culture on the Rand, 1886-1940* Ravan Press, Braamfontein, 1987, p. 90.
[366] Bonner, 1982, *op cit.*, p. 294; also see "Mvabaza, Thomas Levi", in Verwey, editor, 1995, *op cit.,* pp. 193-5
[367] *The International*, 14 June 1918, "Black Crawfords"
[368] *The International*, 14 June 1918, "Class War Episodes"
[369] *The International*, 21 June 1918
[370] *The International*, 21 June 1918, "'The Crisis'"
[371] This figure is from Eddie Webster, 1974, "Champion, the ICU and the Predicament of African Trade Unions", *South African Labour Bulletin*, vol.1, no. 6/7, double issue, p. 7

soon as possible.[372] At June 19 rally, the crowd shouted down opposition by conservative leaders.[373] An attempt was then made by the conservatives to play the race card, referring to the International Socialist League members present as White men who would join the government in shooting down strikers.[374]

However, the controversy that the International Socialist League was attracting in the press as a result of its activities amongst people of colour stood them in good stead. An African speaker "retorted by quoting a newspaper remark that the socialists are spoiling the natives and adding 'If so, good luck to them'".[375] Tinker also spoke, stating that there were also black and yellow socialists, and supported the proposal for a general strike. However, he stressed the need for thorough "industrial organisation" as the means of organising a successful strike, and the need to avoid giving the police a chance to use violence.[376] Tinker also went to caution against giving the police a chance to use violence against the workers:[377]

> If the natives knew their force, they could destroy Johannesburg in a day or stop the mines in an hour; but to do that they would have to organise and all come out on strike, for which 20,000 men were necessary. Let them go home and organise, and tell the other boys to come out; if they meant to come out on Saturday the 29, they must be quick. The strike was not for one shilling a day but for Africa which they deserved.

By this stage the momentum for a general strike was very powerful indeed, and another joint committee was quickly established to propose a concrete strategy to secure the demand. The general strike was provisionally set for ten days' time, that is, July 1.

The authorities and large sections of the White public were alarmed. The government mobilised soldiers, and marched through Johannesburg in a show of strength. The South African Industrial Federation invited magistrate MacFie to a meeting, where he told them that White workers should be organised against a possible "native rising", which he blamed on the "sinister encouragement of certain whites".[378] Crawford and Brown, in their new roles of orthodox White union leaders, even approached the Ministry of Defence with an offer to organise "labour battalions".[379]

The International Socialist League was shocked: "We have criticised the [South African Industrial] Federation till we were sick of it; but in our most bitter dreams we never imagined that it could sink to so disgraceful a level of treachery to the proletariat as this".[380] Crawford and his unions were hypocrites who complained when the South African Defence Force was used against White workers, but were happy to help

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[372] Cited in Bonner, 1982, *op cit.*, p. 292
[373] Bonner, 1982, *op cit.*, p. 294
[374] *The International*, 21 June 1918, "'Native Unrest'"; also Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit.*, p. 67
[375] *The International*, 21 June 1918, "'Native Unrest'"
[376] *The International*, 21 June 1918, "'Native Unrest'"; also see Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit.*, p. 67. The source materials are somewhat contradictory at this point. At least one police report states unequivocally that Tinker was *not* given the platform. See report on meeting of Transvaal Native Congress and Industrial Workers of Africa, 19 June 1918 by unknown detective, in JD 3/527/17.
[377] Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit.*, p. 68; also see *The International*, 2 August 1918, "The Geweld Case"
[378] Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit.*, p. 68; also see Hirson with Williams, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 185
[379] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 198-9; Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit.*, p. 68
[380] *The International*, 5 July 1918, "The Darkest Blot of All"

if "black hides", rather than their own, were to be "riddled".[381] Their treachery, the "darkest blot of all" "will be neither forgiven nor forgotten".

However, the general strike, set for 1 July 1918, was called off at the last minute. The cancellation of the strike probably reflected the view amongst members of the International Socialist League and Industrial Workers of Africa that the African working class was not organised enough to carry out a protest on this magnitude,[382] possibly some cold feet at the prospect of leading a vast movement, and certainly the lack of a decisive programme of action. The Industrial Workers of Africa held a meeting on Thursday, June 27, attended by around 160 people, including members of the International Socialist League and the Transvaal Native Congress. Mvabaza stated that the strike would *not* start on July 1: "I said the 1/- must start from 1st July 1918 and if it is not done you will tell us to fix the day of the strike".[383] A meeting the next day, also attended by Talbot-Williams, was just as indecisive. There is also some evidence that Talbot Williams had lost his nerve, and was secretly co-operating with the authorities to forestall a strike.[384]

There is little doubt that the strike would have been at least a partial success. The news did not reach everybody in time. Several thousand African mineworkers went on strike on a number of gold mines, to be met by armed police.[385] There were clashes at several compounds, where mineworkers, armed with pick handles, iron bars and pipes, and axes fought the police. Given that the strike movement was centred amongst the urban Africans of Johannesburg, and given the difficulties of communicating with workers in the compounds, who often only received news of events off the mine premises on the weekends when they visited friends in town and at other mines,[386] this mix-up, the result of last minute vacillations by the key figures, was inevitable. The strikes soon extended beyond the gold mines of the Witwatersrand to the coalmines at Witbank,[387] where a series of strikes began in August,[388] the first major strikes at the town.[389] The strikes at the collieries were partly a response to broader factors such as inflation, but the example of African unrest on the Witwatersrand and the mix of nationalist, socialist and syndicalist ideas at the time, were also important.[390] Unlike the situation on the Witwatersrand, the strikers at the collieries won a number of concessions, including better food and an amended shift system.[391]

The strikes at the gold mines and the collieries provide an indication that the idea of the general strike had spread, and that links were being forged between the urban Africans and the world of the migrant labourers. As noted above, there were direct contacts in March 1918, and the developments later in the year demonstrated that the educated, urban Africans from the slums of downtown Johannesburg, notably in

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[381] *The International*, 28 June 1918, "Two Voices"
[382] Bonner, 1982, *op cit.*, p. 295
[383] Quoted in Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., p. 115
[384] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., p. 116 note 1
[385] *The International*, 5 July 1918, "Capital and Labour"; Wickens gives the number as 15,000: Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., p. 114
[386] A point stressed by T. Dunbar Moodie in his examination of the backdrop to the 1946 African mineworkers' strike: see Moodie, 1986, *op cit.*, pp. 7-12, 30
[387] Bonner, 1979, *op cit*., p. 277
[388] Alexander, 2001, *op cit*., pp. 517-520
[389] Alexander, 2004, *op cit*., p. 127
[390] Alexander, 201, *op cit*., pp. 519, 521
[391] Alexander, 2001, *op cit.*, pp. 519-520 and p. 520 note 103

Vrededorp, and employed on the mines, provided an important linkage between the worlds of the urban Africans and the migrants.[392] Department of Mines correspondence at the time showed a clear appreciation of these connections:[393]

> Native meetings still continue. Intention to pull out all town natives. To this end being assisted by native women. If successful will then try Mine natives. At present all quiet on mines. Bunting, Tinker, Ritch [presumably L.W. Ritch, formerly linked to the *Voice of Labour* network], Andrews are very active. Strong application force necessary to prevent present position becoming dangerous.

These developments showed the *potential* for a decisive action in 1918, providing a compelling demonstration of the spread of radical ideas and a militant mood, and the willingness of African workers to confront employers and the State. The movement of 1918 placed local syndicalists on the verge of leading a general strike, but they stepped back, and the opportunity was lost.

It is important to also stress that the general strike movement on the Witwatersrand, however abortive, was a notable shift from the traditional politics of the Transvaal Native Congress. While the pressures on sections of the African elite help explain the leftward movement of moderates like Mvabaza, and while the broader climate of international and local unrest are important factors to consider when examining the radicalism of the period, the *content* of the Witwatersrand movement must be understood against the backdrop of the influence of the syndicalism of the Industrial Workers of Africa and the International Socialist League.

Recognition of the syndicalist current sheds new light on the period. Peter Walshe wrote of new ideological influences on African politics in the post-war period.[394] However, his account would have been greatly enriched by recognition of the role of syndicalist and IWW ideas – and greater care to avoid the assumption that the International Socialist League was "Marxist". Likewise, Johnstone[395] and Bonner suggested that the "influence of the ISL and IWA" on the events of 1918 should not "be underestimated",[396] while Lodge suggested that it played a role in radicalising the Transvaal Native Congress,[397] but none of these writers developed these crucial points through an examination of the ideology of the organisations. Johnstone's account, moreover, closed in early 1918, while Bonner focussed on the role of economic forces in the radicalisation of the African petty bourgeoisie.

The above account suggests that the "influence" of the syndicalists was profound, and that the syndicalist movement overlapped directly with the Transvaal Native Congress, both through the rise of a syndicalist bloc within that body, and through the movement of a number of Congress moderates towards

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[392] For example, Philip Bonner: "… radical impulses flowed back and forth" from the mines and Vrededorp in Johannesburg. See Bonner, 1979, *op cit*., p. 282, also see p. 286
[393] Memorandum of 2 April, probably 1918, cited in Alexander, 2001, *op cit*., p. 521
[394] Walshe, 1970, *op cit.*, pp. 89-108
[395] Johnstone, 1979, *op cit.*, pp. 363-4
[396] Bonner, 1982, *op cit.*, p. 298; also cf. Bonner, 1979, *op cit*., p. 282
[397] Lodge, 1983, *op cit.*, p. 4

the syndicalists, and that the impact of syndicalism – and the "glorious period" of anarchism and syndicalism internationally – should thus be firmly integrated into accounts of this period.

Contrary to the mythology of the Communist school, overlaps between nationalist and socialist organisations were not an innovation arising from the 1928 "Native Republic" thesis: they could be found a decade earlier, when they involved syndicalists, rather than Leninists.

7.9. The 1918 "treason trial" and the revival of the Industrial Workers of Africa

The State had been sufficiently alarmed to make concessions in advance. Having warned that African workers would be shot down if they went on strike, and the mines probably closed down forever, the government released the jailed municipal workers, and promised an enquiry into the grievances of the urban population.[398] In the estimation of the *International*, these concessions were both a retreat by the government and an attempt to prevent the workers from emancipating themselves: "That is not clemency but camouflage".[399] In future, the paper continued, the workers, African and White, would have to organise and educate themselves for effective strike action. However, insufficient account was taken of the demoralising effects of the cancellation of the strike: an Industrial Workers of Africa meeting a few days after July 1 was attended by only twenty-one people. [400]

While the more conservative Transvaal Native Congress leaders had jumped at the opportunity to avoid a confrontation, and a section of the moderates moved quickly to the right, the strike idea retained a considerable appeal. It is simply not accurate to suggest that the Transvaal Native Congress unanimously broke off connections with the International Socialist League,[401] or repudiated the ideas so current in 1918.

Msane, who had flirted with the International Socialist League and the 1918 general strike movement, was basically a conservative.[402] He reverted to type during the trial, circulating a leaflet in June that argued against strikes and boycotts along the lines suggested by Dube's petition campaign in Durban. It was widely published, with obvious approval, in conservative White Sunday newspapers, and stated:[403]

> If you do wish to ask for more money, choose your leaders amongst yourselves, and approach your employers in the proper way. There is no harm in asking your employers for a rise in wages. One thing we ought to do is to ask the Government to reduce the rent which storekeepers near the compound have to pay. It is because of these rents that charges have gone up … This is my injunction. Not a single man must leave work. Keep at work all of you. The question of a rise in wages can be presented while you are still at work.

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[398] Bonner, 1982, *op cit.*, p. 295; Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit.*, p. 68
[399] *The International*, 28 June 1918, "'Strike Ethics'"
[400] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 117-118
[401] Cf. Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 117-8
[402] Grobler, 1999, *op cit*., pp. 139-140
[403] Quoted in Willan, 1978, *op cit*., p. 208 note 36

This was a rather naïve, not to mention patronising, view, lacking a serious analysis of the problems facing African workers. Msane was also out of touch with the mood of many Africans. His leaflet earned him the unenviable reputation of *Isita sa Bantu*, an "enemy of the people".[404] According to Plaatje, what happened was as follows:[405]

> During the past year or so Mr. Msane became very unpopular among the younger native workers on the Reef. The cause was rather extraordinary. A small band of white men, the Industrial Workers of the World, boldly and openly sympathised with the natives in the long hours they have to work and on the niggardly pay as well as the bad housing conditions on the Witwatersrand. Naturally their programme appealed to the native labourers.
>
> But, rightly or wrongly, Mr. Msane held that it would be suicidal for the helpless natives to ally themselves wit an insignificant group of white extremists who were in the bad books of the Government and very unpopular with Boers and English alike: and each time there was a clash Mr. Msane threw the whole weight of his influence on the side of the authorities, and earned thereby the name among the natives of 'Isita- sa Bantu',

Msane and Plaatje were not the only conservative nationalists alarmed by the spread of the doctrines of the International Socialist League and the Industrial Workers of Africa. Dube argued that "We would advise our people to steer clear of these foreign adventurers with palpable stories of 'good times to come' to the Natives if they join themselves to their creeds, and rely more on accustomed authorities who have proved themselves the friends in need to the Natives and have 'no axes to grind'".[406]

D.D.T. Jabavu, an African arch-conservative who remained outside the South African Native National Congress, warned the Natal Missionary Conference in July 1920 that "Bolshevism and its nihilistic doctrines are enlisting many Natives up-country ... Socialism of the worst calibre is claiming our people".[407] He complained of the "large number of Natives from the better educated class who have seized the opportunity of the general state of dissatisfaction to stir up the populace to desperate acts": "armed with rallying catch phrases and a copious Socialist vocabulary they play as easily as on a piano upon the hearts of the illiterate mine labourers". [408] Like Msane, his solutions were just as unrealistic: missionary work, sports clubs, and exercise would help kill the germ of Bolshevism.

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[404] Bonner, 1982, *op cit.*, p. 296; Hirson, 1995, *op cit.*, pp. 176-7
[405] Quoted in Willan, 1978, *op cit*., p. 207
[406] Quoted in Willan, 1978, *op cit*., p. 208
[407] D.D.T. Jabavu, [July 1920] 1972, "Native Unrest", in Thomas Karis and Gwendolyn M. Carter, editors, 1972, *From Protest to Challenge: a documentary history of African politics in South Africa, 1882-1964*, vol.one, pp. 118-125. The quote is from p. 124. Jabavu's talk was also widely distributed as a pamphlet entitled *Native Unrest: its cause and cure*. A copy of the latter may be found in the Historical Papers collection, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand
[408] Jabavu, [July 1920] 1972, 'Native Unrest', pp. 124-125

There was certainly some cause for the alarm on the part of conservative African nationalists. The African syndicalists and their current allies amongst the moderates of the Transvaal Native Congress made a big impression at the August 1918 executive conference of the South African Native National Congress in Bloemfontein. The "black Bolsheviks [*sic*] of Johannesburg", complained Plaatje, exemplified the lamentable "spread among our people of the Johannesburg Socialists' propaganda".[409] Their "concord and determination" at the conference was "perfectly astounding": they "spoke almost in unison, in short sentences, nearly every one of which began and ended with the word 'strike'".

The conservative nationalists prevailed, however, and passed resolutions "respectfully requesting" the State to "appeal" to employers to raise wages, while thanking the government for releasing the municipal workers.[410] In Plaatje's view, the attempt of the "black Bolsheviks" to take control of the conference was only narrowly averted. This was something of an exaggeration. The conservative African nationalists remained powerful in the Transvaal, and the "black Bolsheviks" were certainly a relatively small faction within the South African Native National Congress as a whole. While divisions over the organisation's policy towards the growing unrest of African working class were becoming evident many months earlier,[411] the sides were by no means evenly matched.

However, the emergence of a group of African syndicalists whose conception of national liberation struggle transcended *nationalism* for class politics was a "perfectly astounding" development. The emergence on the Witwatersrand of a syndicalist movement that drew in both the "younger native workers" and a "small band of white men" was indeed "rather extraordinary".

Following the cancelled Witwatersrand general strike, the press campaign against the International Socialist League broke out in full force, characterised by a mixture of anti-alien sentiment and wild concern about the dangers of "tampering with Natives". In Parliament, Prime Minister Louis Botha had complained that[412]

> … attempts had been made to get the Natives on the Rand to organise themselves into a union. It was a serious state of affairs. If it was allowed to go on, where would it end?

One newspaper alleged that the International Socialist League had received ten thousand pounds from the German government for the express purpose of causing African unrest.[413] The *Graaf–Reinett Advertiser* complained of "International Socialists, Bolshevists, Revolutionists, Communists and all the elements of the conglomeration of 'workers' who do not work and only stir up agitations and turmoil and ill feeling".[414] The radicals were painted as the "ragtag and bobtail of Europe or America", undesirable immigrants who "do us more harm than good" by sowing "the seeds of Communism and Bolshevism in the

[409] Plaatje, [3 August 1918] 1996, *op cit.*, p. 237
[410] Rall, 2003, *op cit*., pp. 176-7; Willan, 1984, *op cit*., pp. 222-3
[411] Rall, 2003, *op cit*., p. 176; Willan, 1984, *op cit*., pp. 221-2
[412] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 196; also partially quoted in *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 27 July 1918, "The International"
[413] Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit.*, p. 68
[414] Cited in Shain, 1994, *op cit.*, pp. 90-91

receptive native mind". The *Cape Times* added a cal for curbs on undesirable immigrants from countries where "western concepts of morality are quite unappreciated".[415]

In early July 1918, the authorities arrested and charged five Africans and three Whites for incitement to public violence under the Riotous Assemblies Act. The defendants were a predictable cross-section of people involved in the agitation of June: Cetiwe, Kraai and Ngojo, S.P. Bunting, H.C. Hanscombe and Tinker of the International Socialist League, and Letanka and Mvabaza of the *AbantuBatho.* Police raided the International Socialist League's head office in Fox Street, Johannesburg, and confiscated "practically everything of importance", also raiding the homes of the White accused.[416] This political trial, the first in modern South Africa to place both Africans and Whites in the dock together, may be seen as the forerunner of the multi-racial trials of the 1940s and 1950s.[417] The prisoners were held at the Fort, a fortress-like prison on Hospital Hill in Johannesburg, but of course, segregated form one another.[418]

Although it is commonplace in the literature to stress that the African defendants were linked to the South African Native National Congress,[419] this is only half the story, and easily lends itself to a superficial analysis of the trial. It is just as significant that two of the Africans, Cetiwe and Kraai, were also members of the Industrial Workers of Africa and the International Socialist League, that a third, Ngojo, was also a leading figure in the union, and that these three comprised a large part of the syndicalist bloc within the Transvaal Native Congress. Furthermore, Letanka, Mvabaza and Ngojo were among the moderates that were aligned to, and influenced by, the syndicalists at the time.

None of the African defendants, in short, were typical examples of contemporary South African Native National Congress leaders. Once this is noted, the trial of these Africans, alongside three Whites from the International Socialist League, including the acting editor of the *International*, S.P. Bunting, and Tinker, the acting secretary,[420] who had been deeply involved in the 1918 strike movement, assumes a different significance. It is by no means an exaggeration, then, to suggest that the trail was, in part, a trial of Witwatersrand *syndicalists*. This is even more evident when it is noted that the main aim of the prosecution was to blame both the African sanitary workers, and the July strikes by African mineworkers on the Industrial Workers of Africa and the International Socialist League.

S.P. Bunting, Hanscombe and Tinker maintained the position that the International Socialist League had played no role in organising the sanitary workers' strike. However, they defended industrial unionism and the right of African workers to organise, and steered a careful course through the trial proceedings. The Whites, as well as Cetiwe and Kraai, "seized the occasion to make propaganda for the cause of industrial

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[415] Cited in Shain, 1994, *op cit.*, p. 91
[416] *The International*, 26 July 1918, "No Socialism for Natives: the case of 'Luke Messina his mark'"; also see *The Socialist*, September 1918, "Proletarians Black and White, Unite!" and 7 September 1918, "The International"
[417] Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit.*, pp. 68-69
[418] Brian Bunting, editor, 1996a, *op cit*., editor's comments, p. 29
[419] For example, Callinicos, 1987, *op cit.*, p. 90; Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit.*, p. 69; Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit.*, p. 78; Walshe, 1970, *op cit.*, p. 72
[420] *The International*, 12 July 1918, "An Appeal". The presence of these men at the meetings, of course, contradicts Johns' assertion that only Bunting and Jones were making "direct approaches" to Africans in this period, and that the International Socialist League on the Witwatersrand was "noticeably inactive" during this period of protest. See Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, p.98.

unionism for all and socialism for South Africa",[421] submitting lengthy statements on syndicalism.[422] These stressed that the International Socialist League only advocated strikes when workers had adequate industrial organisation.[423]

On the other hand, the *International* downplayed the role of the International Socialist League and the Industrial Workers of Africa in the events of 1918.[424] It claimed, rather unconvincingly, that the Industrial Workers of Africa was simply a "little body of native students of socialism which has met from time to time, at its own request, been addressed by members of the League on elementary principles of the working class movement".[425] This view, which has been accepted at face value by a number of commentators,[426] is deliberately misleading. There is also absolutely no doubt that International Socialist League militants like Tinker actively promoted a general strike by Africans at this time, both within public meetings and in smaller closed meetings amongst African contacts.[427]

The presence of spies in the Industrial Workers of Africa had been suspected some time earlier: several suspects were met outside the public meeting on 19 June 1918 by union members, who curtly told them that "if they were wise enough" they would not attend the meeting.[428] Further proof emerged during the 1918 trial, when the evidence of African detectives who had infiltrated the union was brought to bear in the case.[429]

As it turned out, this was more of a liability than a strength, because the prosecution's case collapsed when one such spy, Luke Messina, retracted his evidence that the accused had conducted the July strike from Neppe's shop.[430] Messina denied that he had read, written or signed the relevant affidavit, claiming that he had appended his signature to a statement prepared by White policemen.[431] He also retracted his (probably accurate) testimony that S.P. Bunting had personally instructed him to go to the mine compounds and persuade workers to strike.[432] Messina was arrested for perjury, but was acquitted at

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[421] Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 75

[422] See *The International*, 30 August 1918, "The Need for industrial Organisation", which was the submission to the court by Tinker; 6 September 1918, "Socialism and Violence", submission to the court by S.P. Bunting; Hanscombe's statement was not reproduced in the *International*, but is described in a note after S.P. Bunting's statement as revolving on "passages from IWW literature on the subject" of violence.

[423] Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit.*, p. 131

[424] See, in particular, *The International*, 5 July 1918, "The Hidden Hand"

[425] *The International*, 5 July 1918

[426] Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit.*, p. 68; Ntsebeza, 1988, *op cit.*, p. 40.

[427] Report on meeting of 1 June 1918 at Neppe's shop, in 'International Socialist League 1917-1919', in Government Native Labour Bureau, GNLB 278 354/17, *op cit.*

[428] See Wilfred Jali, report on meeting of Transvaal Native Congress and Industrial Workers of Africa, 19 June 1918 in JD 3/527/17

[429] See *The International*, 26 July 1918, "No Socialism for Natives: the case of 'Luke Messina his mark'". These are the records contained in the files of the Department of Justice, JD 3/527/17

[430] See *The International*, 26 July 1918, "No Socialism for Natives: the case of 'Luke Messina his mark'"

[431] *The International*, 26 July 1918, "No Socialism for Natives: the case of 'Luke Messina his mark'"; Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 198; Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit.*, p. 70.

[432] Letter from Deputy Commissioner of the Central Investigation Department, Transvaal Division, K.R. Vachell, 21 October 1918, "S.P. Bunting, Johannesburg, claim for unlawful arrest", to the Deputy Commissioner of Police in the Transvaal, held in file Department of Justice, JD 3/882/18, National Archives, Pretoria, entitled "Charge of Public Violence: S.P. Bunting"

his trial in January 1919.[433] Of course, as the *International* noted, no evidence of "German gold" was forthcoming.[434]

Messina's perjury was widely respected by Africans: the spy had stood up for his people and his class at the crucial moment, wrecking the State's case at the cost of an arrest and the loss of his job. In the mid-1940s, two White socialists witnessed a striking event at an ANC meeting in Johannesburg, addressed by ANC leader Doctor A.B. Xuma:[435]

> While Xuma was speaking, a man entered and there was silence while he walked to a chair. 'We greet Luke Messina', said Dr Xuma, and the audience stood and applauded. I later learnt that Messina had been a detective who … was called as a state witness in a famous trial in 1918. However, he turned against the state … the story behind the story as told by Ivon Jones in Moscow in 1921 in an obscure Comintern paper … was even stranger … In terms of this fuller information, the applause was even more justified…

While the case collapsed, however, there were real consequences for many involved. Cetiwe, Kraai and Hanscombe (a shop assistant), all lost their jobs as a direct result, leading the *International* to appeal for comrades to come to their assistance.[436] When S.P. Bunting visited his mothers' family, the Lidgetts, in Natal in Augusts, his fellow train passengers kept whispering and pointing at him,[437] and the family ostracised him.[438] S.P. Bunting also launched a counter-claim for wrongful arrest.[439]

The subsequent history of the Industrial Workers of Africa has hardly been addressed in the literature. It is usually claimed that the union collapsed on the Witwatersrand following the trial,[440] but this is far from accurate. Attendance at the Industrial Workers of Africa meetings had increased rapidly during the strike. More than 130 people, for example, attended a meeting held on 20 June 1918.[441] The trial did prove disruptive, but in September 1918, the *International* was able to report that the union had been reconvened with a "gratifyingly large attendance".[442] In October 1918, Tinker revived the study groups for Africans in

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[433] *The International*, 17 January 1919, "Hushed Up"; Forman, [1959] 1992, *op cit.*, p. 70
[434] *The International*, 2 August 1918, "The Geweld Case"
[435] Hirson, 1995a, *op cit.*, pp. 181-2
[436] *The International*, 13 September 1918
[437] S.P. Bunting, [letter of 31 August 1918] 1996a, in Brian Bunting, editor, 1996a, *op cit*., pp. 31-2
[438] S.P. Bunting, [letter of 1 September 1918] 1996a, in Brian Bunting, editor, 1996a, *op cit*., p. 33
[439] Letter from Deputy Commissioner of the Central Investigation Department, Transvaal Division, K.R. Vachell, 21 October 1918, "S.P. Bunting, Johannesburg, claim for unlawful arrest", to the Deputy Commissioner of Police in the Transvaal, held in file Department of Justice, JD 3/882/18, National Archives, Pretoria, entitled "Charge of Public Violence: S.P. Bunting"
[440] For example, Johns, 1995, *op cit.,* p. 76; Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit.,* p. 132; Peter L. Wickens, 1978, *The Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of South Africa*, Oxford University Press, p. 49. According to the editorial notes by Mohamed Adhikari to La Guma, [1964] 1997, *op cit.*, p. 84: "police entered the organisation which was soon rendered defunct". The impression of a collapse in 1918 is perhaps also suggested by Frederick Johnstone's account of the union, which cuts off in mid-1918: Johnstone, 1979, *op cit.*
[441] Report on meeting of Industrial Workers of Africa, 20 June 1918 by unknown detective, in Department of Justice, JD 3/527/17
[442] *The International*, 13 September 1918

Johannesburg.[443] Two members of the Industrial Workers of Africa, most likely Cetiwe and Kraai, were present at the January 1919 annual conference of the International Socialist League.[444] Aspects of the subsequent history of the union will be examined in the next chapter.

Andrews was, in the meantime, part of an International Socialist League delegation, which attended the December 1918 conference of the South African Native National Congress. The Management Committee of the International Socialist League had organised the delegation: it was an opportunity, "however scanty", to "increase intercourse between white and black workers" and attendance would not only teach White activists about the "range of ideas prevailing at such a congress" but also provide a possible occasion for "widening that range".[445]

Andrews was invited to address the South African Native National Congress on one of the evenings, and outlined, with the help of two translators, the International Socialist League's position: "organisation of the wage workers, irrespective of race, colour or creed" to "take and run industry" thus making the means of life equally available to all.[446] The *International* was critical of the conference, although it commended Andrews for his efforts. Its organisers were politically confused, inviting the Mayor of Johannesburg to address the gathering in the wake of the dramatic events of the year, while passing passed "loyal resolutions to the Flag after declaring their gross disabilities under its sway".[447] The multi-class composition of the conference also led the African workers present to be "drawn away from a realisation of their economic status" into "the whirl of a rudderless opportunism inseparable from racial or patriotic movements as such".[448] It would be better, the paper argued, for the African workers to meet as a "democratic working class body" than as part of a nationalist gathering.

7.10. In conclusion: racial politics, nationalism and the One Big Union

The discussion in this chapter, and the previous one, have demonstrated that the Internationalist Socialist League was firmly opposed to racial discrimination and racial prejudice, favoured mass struggle by the African working class, and was consistently involved in attempts to organise African and Indian workers, and to break the colour bar to open the White trade unions. Further, it has been argued that one consequence was the development of an interracial syndicalist movement. The International Socialist League remained largely, but not entirely, White, but it had begin to recruit African and Indian militants, while the Industrial Workers of Africa and the Indian Workers' Industrial Union drew in African and Indian workers. The syndicalist *movement* as a whole had begun to undergo a profound shift in its racial composition.

These points have not always been adequately recognised by the literature, in part because the Communist school has misrepresented the politics of the left, claiming to discern a lack interest in (or active hostility towards) African, Coloured and Indian workers. This line of argument sometimes takes the form of

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[443] *The International*, 25 October 1918, "Native Study Class"
[444] *The International*, 10 January 1919, "1919 Annual Conference"
[445] *The International*, 13 December 1919, "A Native Congress"
[446] *The International*, 21 December 1918, "Nationalism Freedom's Foe"
[447] *The International*, 21 December 1918, "Nationalism Freedom's Foe"
[448] *The International*, 21 December 1918, "Nationalism Freedom's Foe"

the "S.P. Bunting/Ivon Jones myth" which retains a central place in recent literature – Johns' claims, for instance, that the International Socialist League was "noticeably inactive in the face of visible non-white discontent on the Witwatersrand" and that "direct approaches to non-whites were mostly limited to Jones and Bunting".[449] As this chapter has shown, the very opposite is true.

There is also certainly no evidence to support the Simons' claims that the International Socialist League was "more isolated in 1918" than ever before, that the organisation had no African or Coloured members, that it "refused" to "support the struggle of the Africans as an oppressed race", or that it failed to "formulate" an approach "acceptable" to Coloured and African "leaders".[450] Like so much in the Simons' account of the pre-CPSA left, these assertions are demonstrably untrue, illogical and contradicted by the Simons' own data.

The very same chapter that delivers these claims discusses the Indian Workers' Industrial Union, the Industrial Workers of Africa, the prosecution of Greene and Ivon Jones, official alarm at the spread of socialism amongst Africans, and the fact that the International Socialist League had African and Indian members.[451] It also reports that it was the International Socialist League's declared policy to mobilise Africans, that the organisation described "the brown and the black man" as the backbone of labour", argued that "while the black worker is oppressed, the white worker cannot be free", and stated that labour could not conquer until prejudice was destroyed.[452]

The Simons' attempts to avoid these obvious contradictions simply raise more questions about their analysis of the International Socialist League. On the one hand, they misrepresent the 1918 general strike movement on the Witwatersrand: the "ANC launched a campaign…".[453] On the other hand, they claim that the organisation's interest in African politics "dwindled after the war", as the Russian Revolution became the main focus of the organisation.[454] This is hardly logical: if, as the Simons insist, the International Socialist League had no interest in Africans in 1918, its interest could hardly have "dwindled" later. Moreover, the Simons' own account reports that the 1919 annual conference of the organisation reaffirmed an orientation towards agitation and education amongst Africans.[455]

This raises the question of why the Simons persist in drawing conclusions that are so sharply at odds with the data they provide. The answer, as suggested in earlier chapters, lies in large part with their inability to admit that a class politics that was openly hostile to nationalism could nonetheless be opposed to national or racial oppression. This is a fundamental error, centred on a tendency to conflate nationalism with national liberation and a deep adherence to the CPSA's post- 1928 "Native Republic" strategy.

All the evidence suggests that the International Socialist League was committed to a radical and interracial emancipatory project that opposed racial discrimination and prejudice, and saw the One Big Union as the movement that would overthrow racial oppression as well as State power and capitalist exploitation.

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[449] Johns, 1995, *op cit.,* p. 98
[450] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, p. 210
[451] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., pp. 201-219
[452] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., pp. 205, 216-7
[453] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., p. 207
[454] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., pp. 214-5
[455] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., pp. 215-6

The theoretical components of this outlook were examined in the previous chapter; this chapter has shown a close fit between that theory and the actual practice of the organisation. It did not, contrary to the Simons' claims, regard racial oppression and nationalism as "momentary abstractions" that would "automatically disappear",[456] or be safely ignored. On the contrary, it characterised racial discrimination as profitable for capitalists and suicidal for the working class, and as a major obstacle to the very possibility of revolution:[457]

> The choice is either to seek an alliance with the middle class or with the bottom dogs of wage-labour. So long as the white worker looks on his fellow wage-slave, the native worker, as an object to be kicked, instead of a work-mate to be linked up industrially to help him fight his industrial battles, so long will the white worker be the fool of imperialist notions and alarums. The one follows the other.
>
> *The whole of the fight against capitalism is a fight with the prejudices and capitalist-engendered aversions of the workers. Conquer these and capitalism is conquered*. While these remain, it is useless whining about the disunity of labour. The job is to create among workers that feeling of unity with all those who labour for wages, irrespective of what pigment may have been injected by Nature into the labourer's skin, or what tools he may or may not have learnt to use. That is the only unity.

Even while the International Socialist League correctly saw White workers as a strategically central layer at the time – a justifiable position – it never believed them capable of making a revolution on their own. It was necessary to "sweep away" the "chief barriers to efficient working class solidarity", such as the "denial of equal civil liberty to the natives" and the cheap labour system based on compounds and indentured labour.[458] By 1918, the *International* commented:[459]

> … the outlook of the League has become more and more clarified in the direction of our responsibility towards the native worker, and the solidarity of labour irrespective of colour has eclipsed the War-on-War principle in importance. It has become the revolutionary touchstone, the magic word from which all reformist goblins flee, and the key to the capitalist fortress as well.

Of course, the International Socialist League was not a homogenrous organisation, but to suggest that its ongoing practice championing the rights and organisation of workers of colour represented the views of a *minority* is hardly convincing. The "S.P. Bunting/Ivon Jones myth" can hardly explain why the

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[456] Legassick, M., 1973, *op cit.*, p. 3, and note 1. Legassick is citing Simons, *op cit.*, p. 290. C.f. also Dixon, February 12 1997, *op cit.*
[457] *The International*, 22 September 1916, "Disunity of Labour", emphasis added
[458] *The International*, 25 February 1916, "Mineworkers and Political Action"
[459] *The International*, 4 January 1918

organisation consistently maintained its views on race and its aim of an interracial One Big Union, nor can it account for the range of activists and activities that put these into practice. It was those who opposed the existing politics that constituted a minority: in August 1918, for instance, there was "some dissatisfaction" at the policy of the *International*, but it was confined to a minority, for the "consensus was that the 'International' represented the views as expressed in the constitution of the League", and S.P. Bunting was confirmed as acting editor.[460] This is hardly what would be expected if an "unwilling mass of white followers" were simply "dragged" behind "nigrophiles",[461]

To pose the issue as a conflict between "nigrophiles" and their enemies is to misrepresent the syndicalism of S.P. Bunting and Ivon Jones, to ignore the policies and practices of the larger organisation, and to fail to recognise its focus on the working class as *a whole.* Andrews and Dunbar, the supposed exemplars of ignoring workers of colour,[462] showed a continual interest in African workers. Andrews championed their cause amongst White workers, while Dunbar immersed himself in the Industrial Workers of Africa. Even Ivon Jones described work on the "white political field", meaning elections as a "fine opportunity of forcing the issue" of "solidarity with the native workers" on "the attention of the white workers with immunity from the police".[463] "And, he added hopefully, "an echo of this propaganda reaches the native workers as well". At the core of all of the efforts, the thin red-and-black line that bound them all together, was the syndicalism that drove efforts to organise across colour lines and identification with the struggles of African workers, in the drive for One Big Union. This is a crucial point, also touched on in Sections 3.7. and 6.7., and was exemplified by Ivon Jones' recollection that:[464]

> Imbued with the ideas of De Leon … the League proclaimed the fight for Industrial Unionism … Therefore craft unions were declared odious for dividing the workers instead of uniting them, on the larger basis of industry. And as part of this craft disunity the exclusion of the native workers from part or lot in the labour movement was denounced as a crime.

[460] *The International*, 23 August 1918, "League Conference: special session"
[461] Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit*., p. 84
[462] For example, Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, pp. 100-102
[463] Ivon Jones, [9 June 1921], 1988a, *op cit.*, pp. 119-122
[464] Jones, [29 March 1921] 1981, *op cit*., pp .54-5. Cf. Verity Burgmann on the Australian IWW: "The IWW's anti-racism was a consequence of its revolutionary *method* – the organisational principle of industrial unionism". See Burgmann, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 91

Chapter 8

Syndicalism in the Cape: The Industrial Socialist League, syndicalist unions in Kimberley, the Industrial Workers of Africa, and the ICU, 1916-1920

This chapter examines the history of syndicalism in the Cape during the First World War and in the immediate post-war period. It argues two main points. First, the organised syndicalist movement, represented by syndicalist unions and by syndicalist groups like the International Socialist League, played an important role in the Cape, and also had some impact on the Cape Native Congress. Secondly, it suggests that – as was the case with White workers in 1913 and 1914 – syndicalist ideas also emerged, partly independently of the organised syndicalist movement, and had an influence amongst sections of Africans and Coloureds, most notable at the 1920 "One Big Union" congress in Bloemfontein. Syndicalism also had an important influence on the ICU, later the largest African popular movement in South Africa, and a body with branches in Northern and Southern Rhodesia, as well as South West Africa. The influence of syndicalism on the ICU will also be examined in the next chapter.

The partial success in the Building Workers' Industrial Union, followed by the formation of syndicalist unions amongst Africans and Indians on the Witwatersrand and in Durban, helped provide a template for local anarchists and syndicalists. The larger context of rising labour militancy, high inflation, and burgeoning manufacturing and services described in the previous chapter also played a role in developments in the Cape. Local manufacturing had been growing since the early 1900s onwards, employing a largely Coloured workforce,[1] with Africans a minority that was concentrated in the docks. Africans made up only 4 percent of the *industrial* workforce in 1916, and only 14 percent after 1924.[2]

Manufacturing in Cape Town had expanded rapidly during the war and the import substitution it fostered, and this growth continued in the post-war boom lasting into 1920. By 1916/17, there were 21,000 workers in industry in Cape Town, rising to 31,700 in the post-war boom that lasted until 1920, concentrated in clothing, food and drink, metals and engineering, and building.[3] Local manufacturing was centred on the

[1] On the factories, see Bickford-Smith, 1995, *op cit*., p. 128
[2] Nicol, 1984, *op cit.*, p. 75
[3] Nicol, 1984, *op cit*., pp. 71, 73

production of consumer goods, and there were almost no large industries comparable to the mines and emerging manufacturing concerns on the Witwatersrand.[4]

The location of the new factories was often in the racially mixed working class districts of central Cape Town, such as District Six and Woodstock. Their location was shaped partly by proximity to sources of labour, but can also be seen as influenced by a broader drive to segregate the urban areas by keeping Coloureds out of more prosperous White areas.[5] Doubtless many workers also preferred the arrangement, crowding into housing near the factories to save spending money on transport costs.[6]

Inflation was a factor in the Cape, as it was in the rest of the country. In Cape Town itself, food prices rose 74,7 percent from 1910 to 1919, and the price of cereals rose 112,7 percent over the same period, while wages remained unchanged.[7] On the other hand, while the overall size of factory workforce was grew rapidly, and while there was a rapid escalation of disputes in the second half of the 1910s, Cape Town did not experience worker unrest on a scale comparable to that of Durban or the Witwatersrand. The relatively small size of the African workforce, so important to the struggles elsewhere, was a factor, but the small workplaces also played a role. In 1904, the average number employed in Cape Town factories was 19 – very few plants indeed reached one hundred employees – which allowed employers to closely control the workforce.[8]

The docks, which employed a multi-racial workforce, were one of two important exceptions. The docks had the largest single concentration of workers in Cape Town employed by relatively few companies: the parastatal South African Railways and Harbour Administration, and several private shipping and stevedoring firms.[9] This facilitated organising, while the strategic position of dockworkers in the Cape Town economy provided a great deal of leverage in industrial disputes. The government railway yards at Salt River were probably nearly as important: it was here that Harrison was arrested during the 1914 general strike for statements to a crowd of 400.[10]

In Port Elizabeth, meanwhile, Samuel Masabalala, a local teacher and clerk, formed a local union amongst Africans and Coloureds,[11] one of several general unions in the town. (The local Federation of Trades, linked to the Cape Federation of Labour Unions, also had Coloured members, as did the local Building Workers' Industrial Union.)[12]

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[4] Nicol, 1984, *op cit*., p. 68
[5] Bickford-Smith, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 128, 165-6
[6] Nicol, 1984, *op cit*., p. 65
[7] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 44-6
[8] Bickford-Smith, 1995, *op cit*., p. 165
[9] Wickens, 1978, *op cit*., p. 28
[10] Harrison, n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 40-43
[11] On the events in Port Elizabeth, see Gary F. Baines, 1991, "From Populism to Unionism: the emergence and nature of Port Elizabeth's Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union, 1918-1920", Journal of Southern African Studies, vol.17, no. 4, and Noor Nieftagodien, 1994, "Popular Organisation's In Port Elizabeth, 1926-1932", Honours dissertation, History, University of the Witwatersrand. On Masabalala, see Gary F. Baines, 1999, "Masabalala, Samuel Makama Martin", in Neley E. Sonderling, editor, 1999, *New Dictionary of South African Biography*, Vista University, Pretoria, vol.two, pp. 95-6. Also see Skota, editor and compiler, [? 1930] n.d, *op cit*., p. 187
[12] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 139-140

In 1920 Masabalala organised a general union amongst African and Coloured unskilled workers, and led a controversial campaign for a 10-shillings-a-day wage for male workers, and 7 shillings and six pence for women. Employers refused to negotiate, and supporters of Masabalala assaulted the Reverend Walter Rubusana – a conservative South African Native National Congress leader along the lines of Dube and Plaatje – when he tried to avert a threatened general strike. This indicated renewed impatience with Congress conservatives.[13] Masabalala was arrested, blamed for the violence, and a demonstration outside the police station ended tragically when police and ex-servicemen shot twenty-four protestors, an incident described by the *International* as the "Port Elizabeth Horror", the "Bay Pogrom", to be compared to the Amritsar massacre in India.[14] Masabalala was subsequently acquitted, but his campaign collapsed.

In May 1918 a new syndicalist group – the *Industrial* Socialist League, rather than the *International* Socialist League – was established in Cape Town. It was a breakaway from the Social Democratic Federation (SDF), mainly by militant younger members who felt the SDF "too academic and not sufficiently in touch with the immediate ravages of industry, nor sufficiently in the vicinity of the proletariat".[15] Its platform was that of the Chicago IWW, as opposed to the De Leonism that influenced the International Socialist League, but while the two groups remained separate, they were on very friendly terms for many years. The SDF also remained active in Cape Town, and in contact with the International Socialist League, with the anarchist Harrison continuing to play a prominent role in local politics.

Publishing a monthly (the rather misleadingly named the *Bolshevik*), the Industrial Socialist League was mainly active amongst Coloured and White workers. It was initially headquartered in District Six, later moving to offices in Plein Street near the centre of town, where the opening of its Socialist Hall in early 1919 attracted a large and mixed crowd of several hundred people. Besides securing "the services of a few coloured and Malay comrades",[16] the organisation also formed a syndicalist Sweet and Jam Workers' Industrial Union in 1918. Like the syndicalist unions in Natal and the Transvaal, this union was based in urban manufacturing and services, in this case amongst Coloured workers in the Cape Town city centre.

In early 1919, the Industrial Workers of Africa played an important role in an anti-pass law protest movement on the Witwatersrand, following Cetiwe's and Kraai's move to Cape Town. Here they formed an Industrial Workers of Africa branch on the docks, mainly amongst Africans from Ndabeni township and the Docks Location. (The Johannesburg section also remained active in 1919 and 1920, now headed by Thibedi.) Despite initial rivalry, the Cape section started co-operating with the newly formed ICU, then based mainly amongst Coloureds, and headed by the colourful Clements Kadalie.

In Kimberley, meanwhile, the International Socialist league established an office, and concentrated its attention on union work. In 1919, a syndicalist Clothing Workers' Industrial Union was established, which later spread to Durban and Johannesburg. It was based among Coloured workers in that declining town, as was a second syndicalist union, the Horse Drivers' Union, also based amongst Coloured workers. Both unions

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[13] *The International*, 22 October 1920, "Native Workers and their Leaders"
[14] *The International*, 29 October 1920, "The Port Elizabeth Massacre: its lessons"; also see *The International*, 29 October 1920, "The Bay Pogrom"
[15] Harrison, n.d., *op cit.*, p. 64
[16] *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 7 August 1920, letter from Manuel Lopes

were initiated by the International Socialist League, which had established offices in Kimberley, and led to a substantial influx of Coloured working class people into that organisation, most notably a young Johnny Gomas.

The Industrial Socialist League developed links with both the Industrial Workers of Africa and the ICU, although it advised workers to join the explicitly syndicalist union in preference to the ICU. It was less successful in making connections with the local African Political Organisation, which was trying to form Coloureds-only unions and was hostile to the left in the wake of electoral challenges from the SDF.

However, the Industrial Socialist League was able to win the support of Coloured and White unionists in the Cape Federation of Labour Unions, with members playing important roles in affiliated unions. Unlike the International Socialist League in the South African Industrial Federation, the Industrial Socialist League was able top make real inroads into the Cape Federation of Labour Unions. In 1919 and 1920, activists were able to pass resolutions at Federation congresses to replace craft with industrial unionism, to join the Profintern, and to abolish capitalism. The practice of the Cape Federation of Labour Unions changed very little, but it is significant that radicals were able to pass such resolutions – the Cape tradition of unions was certainly different to the tradition elsewhere, not only because of its (admittedly limited) multi-racial policies but also its relative openness, at this time, to socialist views.

In late 1919, the Industrial Workers of Africa and the ICU co-operated in organising a strike on the Cape Town docks. This is important to note, partly because the role of the Industrial Workers of Africa in this strike has generally been forgotten, and partly because the strike tore the two unions apart for a time. The ICU accused the syndicalists (and the newly established Cape Native Congress) of striking a separate deal with the authorities.

Cetiwe and Kraai, still members of the International Socialist League, had clearly joined the Cape Native Congress in Ndabeni in 1919 or 1920, a body admitted as the provincial section of the South African Native National Congress in 1920. Again, however, the pair used the nationalist organisation as a platform for their own views, appearing at the May 1920 Queenstown national congress to demand (unsuccessfully) that the organisation organise a general strike if wage demands were not met. That they were able to use the Cape Native Congress as a vehicle for their ideas suggests a real influence in that body, perhaps similar to that established in the Transvaal Native Congress in 1918 and 1919.

The African syndicalists were, however, decisively beaten at Queenstown, and the South African Native National Congress plotted a moderate course throughout the 1920s and 1930s. The Cape section of the Industrial Workers of Africa was subsequently involved in an attempt in 1920 to bring together the emerging African unions of Bloemfontein, Port Elizabeth and Cape Town in Bloemfontein that year.

Although the key figures were men like Msimang from Bloemfontein, Kadalie from Cape Town, and Masabalala from Port Elizabeth, the Bloemfontein congress showed apparent syndicalist influences. Kadalie later claimed "we had the 'One Big Union Movement' in view",[17] and the meeting resolved to "form one great union of skilled and unskilled workers of South Africa, south of the Zambesi", "to bring together all

[17] Kadalie in 1923, as quoted in Wickens, 1973, *op cit.*, p. 97

classes of labour, skilled and unskilled, in every sphere of life whatsoever", but also to "endeavour to settle differences" with employers by "amicable and conciliatory means".[18]

The language used in Bloemfontein, which cannot easily be attributed solely to the efforts of Cetiwe and Kraai, indicates that syndicalist ideas were having an influence amongst a layer of African and Coloured unionists that was partly independent of the organised local syndicalist movement. Syndicalist influences on the ICU were also evident, and, when the ICU managed to take control of moves towards a single African union, they became more so, with the ICU incorporating the (Cape) Industrial Workers of Africa by 1921, and adopting a version of the IWW's 1908 *Preamble* in 1925.

8.1. The SDF, the Industrial Socialist League and the IWW in Cape Town

At the start of the First World War, the SDF had been split over the war issue, with a pro-war group breaking away from the internationalist majority centred on Harrison. Such splits were always a problem for the SDF: as a politically mixed organisation, it always included people of divergent views. In the middle of May 1918, the SDF suffered another split, this time to the left.

They broke away to form the Industrial Socialist League on a platform based on the 1908 *Preamble* of the IWW. Harrison continued to defend the traditional approach of the SDF, and denied the view that the organisation was out of touch with the working class, but it is difficult to deny that the SDF's lack of a real strategy beyond the making of propaganda must have frustrated many members, particularly those who favoured syndicalist organisation and direct action.

The SDF, for its part, was not particularly active in Cape Town in the latter half of the 1910s, and was clearly overshadowed by the Industrial Socialist League by 1920. Besides the usual round of public meetings, and sales of the *International*, it played little role in the working class unrest of the time. Its most noteworthy activity was hosting "two supposed emissaries from Bolshevik Russia" in 1918.[19] The two "emissaries", Lapitsky and Sonsovik, were not Bolsheviks at all – one was a former Menshevik minister, and the other was apparently on a health trip – but they had been in Russia during the initial events of 1917. Such was the general excitement about events in Russia that the two men attracted a great deal of notoriety, being closely monitored by police while lauded by local radicals.

An address by the two at the City Hall, supported by the SDF and the Industrial Socialist League, was a great success, and was quickly followed by an official request to board the next ship out, with the government providing "a free trip back to Russia".[20] Besides the loss of members to the Industrial Socialist League, the weakness of the SDF at the time was also due to physical exhaustion on the part of Harrison, whose doctor instructed him to "slow down or suffer the alternative and die a martyr to the cause".[21]

Many of the leading figures in the new Industrial Socialist League were waged artisans and traders, but there were also a few professionals. East European Jewish immigrants were very prominent in the new organisation. A.Z. Berman was a key member: a schoolteacher, and a Jew, and former SDF member, he was

[18] Quoted in Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 145-146
[19] Harrison, n.d., *op cit*., pp. 63-68
[20] Harrison, n.d., *op cit*., p. 67
[21] Harrison, n.d., *op cit*., p. 62



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THE OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE INDUSTRIAL SOCIALIST LEAGUE OF SOUTH AFRICA

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VOL. 1. MAY, 1920. NO 8.

THE DAWN.

From a woodcut by [*M. Kotler.*

Long have we laboured in darkness and sorrow,
Robbed of the bread of our toil and our sweat;
Dare we to strive for a brighter to-morrow?
What though our path be with perils beset?
So march on, O comrades, march till the day break;
Red glows the Flag of Revolt in the dawn! (*Twice*)
See in the East how the cloud-wrack is breaking!
Comrades arise for the morn is at hand!
Souls that have slept in oppression are waking,
Dayfight is dawning in every land!

Rouse in your souls all the passion that slumbers,
Gulled by the guile of the princelings of gold;
Press with the power and pride of your numbers
The leeches of Mammon to loosen their hold.
Muster your millions, ye drudgers and moilers!
Straighten your backs, O ye slaves of the soil!
March in your might to the spoil of your spoilers;
Enter your kingdom, O Children of toil!
So march on, O comrades, march till the day break!
Red glows the Flag of Revolt in the dawn! (*Twice.*)

Twenty-seven: The multi-racial South African proletariat greets the Red Dawn on the May 1920 cover of the Industrial Socialist League's *The Bolshevik*.

Source: *The Bolshevik*, May 1920

Russian-born and been educated in Russia and Germany,[22] and also owned a forage depot.[23] Isaac Vermont was another: he was a former member of the SDF, previously linked to Harrison.[24] Other Jewish immigrants were travelling salesmen, notably Solomon Buirski, I. Noeik and Percy Thomas. Several members were drawn from the skilled Jewish workers of the Cape Town: Joe Pick, another SDF veteran,[25] was a watchmaker with a small shop;[26] C.D. Fox was a tobacco worker; I.J. Reinstein was an upholsterer; Abraham Baskin, a shoemaker.[27]

Other immigrants active in the Industrial Socialist League also tended to be involved in small businesses or in skilled labour. The Lopes brothers, Manuel Lopes and F. Lopes, were travelling salesmen, sons of Portuguese immigrants, and M. Walt was an accountant.[28] Tailors were also prominent. They included the three Dryburgh brothers, among them William and D.L. Dryburgh,[29] the latter a former SDF member,[30] as well as a young C. Frank Glass. Born in 1901 in Birmingham, England, Glass was one of the youngest members of the organisation.[31] He arrived in Cape Town with his family as a boy in 1911, apparently joined the British army briefly towards the end of the First World War, was radicalised by South Africa's myriad injustices and by the example of the Russian Revolution, and briefly joined the SDF, before leaving as part of the Industrial Socialist League breakaway.

The new organisation also attracted support from older anarchists. Henry Glasse, who was then in his sixties, wrote an occasional piece for the Industrial Socialist League press. S.H Davidoff, an actor, also joined the organisation and became an active member.[32] It is probable, but not definite, that this was the anarchist Davidoff that Harrison knew in the Pretoria Socialist Society.

The Industrial Socialist League was mainly based in Cape Town, with some contacts in the immediate hinterland. It rented a hall in Ayre Street, District Six, "the central residential area of the Coloured community",[33] which reportedly seated 600 people.[34] Members initially wrote for the *International*, which was distributed in Cape Town at the time by both Industrial Socialist League and SDF members. The Industrial Socialist League launched its own monthly journal, *The Bolshevik: the official organ of the Industrial Socialist League of South Africa,* in May 1919.

The first issue of the paper, entitled the *Bolshevist*, was immediately seized by the police who arrested Berman, who was the editor, Manuel Lopes and Pick, the printers who had published the paper, as

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[22] Harrison, n.d., *op cit*., p. 65-66
[23] Harrison, n.d., *op cit*., pp. 64, 68-70; Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit.*, pp. 7-10
[24] Harrison, n.d., *op cit*., p. 52
[25] Harrison, n.d., *op cit*., p. 52
[26] Drew, 2002, *op cit*., p. 47
[27] Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit.*, pp. 7-10. Jeremy Baskin, formerly of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), once told me that his grandfather had been a member of the far left in the 1910s, and then the CPSA. His grandmother burnt all of his papers when the Suppression of Communism Act came into effect. It seems likely that Abraham Baskin was the grandfather in question.
[28] Drew, 2002, *op cit*., p. 52; Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit.*, pp. 7-10
[29] Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit.*, pp. 7-10;
[30] Harrison, n.d., *op cit*., pp. 56-7
[31] Hirson, 1988b, *op cit*.; Hirson, 1993a, *op cit.*
[32] Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 10
[33] Harrison, n.d., *op cit.*, p. 64
[34] *The International*, 21 December 1918, "Cape Notes"

well as several newspaper boys found selling it. The charges against the boys are unclear, but the others were prosecuted for publishing an unregistered newspaper, and not listing the name and address of the printer, violating a century-old ordinance.[35] The Industrial Socialist League members were subsequently acquitted, but the printers were fined £2.[36] The censor banned a leaflet entitled *What British Soldiers are Dying for*, which came out around the same time.[37] The next issue of the journal, now renamed the *Bolshevik*, appeared in September 1919. The paper may have had a circulation of 2,500 copies per issue in late 1919, but this seems to have fallen to 1,000 by mid-1920.[38]

The new organisation was also attacked by the commercial Cape press from its inception, with the *Cape*, for instance, complaining of the "seditious, poisonous and inflammatory utterances" being made "a mere stone's throw" from parliament.[39] The press and the police made much of the "Peruvian" origins of Berman, Buirski, Pick and Davidoff,[40] part of a growing pattern of identifying immigrant Jews with "Bolshevism" and subversion.[41] The older stereotype of the "Peruvian" Jew as a greedy, dirty, and parasitic alien was now "embellished with the Bolshevik bogey" to such an extent that Bernard Alexander of the conservative Jewish Board of Deputies in Johannesburg felt compelled to state in 1919 that:[42]

> I wish it to be clearly understood that every Jew is not a Bolshevist and every Bolshevist is not a Jew … The Jews are not Bolshevists and I say there are none more loyal than the Jews.

Like the International Socialist League, the Industrial Socialist League espoused syndicalism, but its outlook was that of the Chicago IWW. Its basic statement, "What WE Stand For", was directly based on the Chicago IWW *Preamble* of 1908:[43]

> The interests of the Working Class and of the Employing Class are diametrically opposed. There can be no peace as long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people, and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life.
>
> Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the all the toilers come together on the industrial field, and take and hold what they produce by their labour, through an economic organisation of the working class, without affiliation to any political party.

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[35] Manuel Lopes, 23 May 1919, "Cape Notes", *The International*; Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, p. 221
[36] A.Z. Berman, 27 June 1919, "Cape Notes", *The International*
[37] A.Z. Berman, 27 June 1919, "Cape Notes", *The International*
[38] Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 9
[39] Shain, 1994, *op cit.*, p. 85
[40] Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit.*, pp. 7-10
[41] Shain, 1994, *op cit.*, pp. 83-91
[42] As quoted in Shain, 1994, *op cit.*, p. 88
[43] *The Bolshevik*, February 1920, "What WE Stand For"



Figure twenty-eight: Solomon Biurski of the Industrial Socialist League

Source: Wilfred H. Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *Memoirs of a Socialist in South Africa 1903–47*, Stewart Printing, Cape Town, with foreword by Tommy Boydell, p. 113



Figure twenty-nine: Isaac Vermont of the Industrial Socialist League shows a copy of *The International*

Source: Wilfred H. Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *Memoirs of a Socialist in South Africa 1903–47*, Stewart Printing, Cape Town, with foreword by Tommy Boydell, p. 113

The objects of the organisation in described were described in the statement as "The abolition of the wage system and the establishment of a Socialist Commonwealth based on the principle of self-governing industries, in which the workers will work and control the instruments of production, distribution and exchange for the benefit of the entire community". Its methods were the propagation "by every means in our power" of "the principles of Industrial Unionism", "advising and assisting the working class in the establishment of such forms of industrial organisation as will enable them not only to improve their present condition but eventually take over complete control of all industries".[44] "By solidifying the ranks of the workers", commented the *Bolshevik*, "by building up that efficient organisation commonly known as the One Big Union, we hope to put an end to all class war, class rule, class distinctions and class hatred – in a word, to *abolish* classes".[45]

Like the International Socialist League, the Industrial Socialist League was openly hostile towards craft unionism. This was condemned for weakening workers' struggles: within a given workplace, the other trades continued working when one craft was on strike, as did the semi-skilled and unskilled, who were excluded from the unions altogether.[46] Given that the "[c]apitalist class is united today in one close and perfect organisation, and that all members of this class stand together as one man – whether master-bakers or master-confectioners or master-millers for all that matters,- we think it is nothing short of a scandal that the workers should not do likewise".[47] In contrast to this show of unity, the organised workers established craft unions were restricted to waged artisans in the Cape (usually white, but sometimes Coloured), while in the Transvaal they did not even admit into their "ranks the native and coloured workers, who form the vast majority of the South African proletariat".[48] The Industrial Socialist League also condemned unions for excluding women from their ranks.[49]

Through these actions, the workers were playing into the hands of the ruling class, with its policy of "divide and rule": terrified of a "well organised, disciplined and class-conscious proletarian army intent on … the overthrow of the present system", the masters played off sections of the working class against one another, using "patriotism, racial pride and nationalism".[50] In such a situation, it was criminal that trade union leaders not only failed to unite the workers, but also spent their time "urging the workers – not to organise – but to go to the front to "fight for Democracy" in the war while waiting upon Ministers and conferring amicably with the Masters".[51]

What was needed instead was "One union for all the workers in each industry, and One Big Union for the entire working class" aiming to "banish for ever the tyranny of greed from the land of gold". [52]

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[44] *The Bolshevik*, February 1920, "What WE Stand For"
[45] *The Bolshevik*, April 1920, "The War of the Classes"
[46] *The Bolshevik*, November 1919, "The Bankruptcy of Trades' Unionism"
[47] *The Bolshevik*, November 1919, "The Bankruptcy of Trades' Unionism"
[48] "Searchlight", November 1919, "Trade Union Notes", *The Bolshevik*
[49] "Searchlight", January 1920, "Trade Union Notes", *The Bolshevik*
[50] *The Bolshevik*, January 1920, "The Strongest Weapon of Capitalism I"; also see February 1920", The Strongest Weapon of Capitalism II"
[51] "Searchlight", November 1919, "Trade Union Notes", *The Bolshevik*
[52] *The Bolshevik*, December 1919, "'Efficiency Dope'".

However, although the Industrial Socialist League's views were similar to those of the International Socialist League in many respects, the Industrial Socialist League was always firmly opposed to any suggestion of "taking part in Parliamentary work".[53] Its statement on "What WE Stand For" included the provision that the "League is strictly anti-political and anti-militarist".[54] If "political action as expressed in the present Capitalist state "Parliamentary action" – may have once served a useful function, this was no longer so. "Parliamentary government exists only in order to shield behind it the real organisations" which the capitalist "has established based on economic and industrial combinations, viz., trusts, amalgamations, Chambers of Mines, manufacture and Commerce, rings, banks etc."[55] This was where real power lay.

Parliament was a "sham institution", a "farce" which did nothing to challenge the "real rulers of this earth"; on the contrary, it served to co-opt the workers, which was precisely why the capitalists constantly advised workers to rely on the ballot box.[56] Unlike the International Socialist League, the Industrial Socialist League denied the usefulness of elections as a "means of carrying on Socialist propaganda". [57] There was "no use" for parliament as a "tribune for socialist propaganda":[58]

> As long as the workers have no press, their representatives in parliament talk only to their honourable friends, the capitalist press boycotting or distorting their speeches; where the workers would have a press, the same representative could write there in an article all he would say in a Parliamentary speech.

Whatever the *intentions* of the parties who engaged in electoral activity, the actual effect of such work was to reinforce illusions in parliament and the class inequalities it concealed: "What then are our political friends doing if not indirectly restoring the interest in the elections that the workers, guided by sheer interest and class consciousness, have dropped – and thus doing the greatest service to the Capitalist class?" [59] The result was that workers were pacified, led to expect "all improvements from their representative", as opposed to relying upon their own efforts and their "own activities".[60]

To rely on parliament for emancipation was to "concentrate against the enemy on a point which is not a vital one to him at all".[61] A genuine struggle should instead "attack him there where his actual strength comes from", that is, at the point of production: "only by smashing the source of his power can the workers expect to overthrow the capitalist class".[62] This required the "only organisation that can do something for the worker … an organisation to which his enemy has no access – i.e. his Industrial Organisation".[63] When

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[53] "Communist", January 1920, "On Political Action", *The Bolshevik*
[54] *The Bolshevik*, February 1920, "What WE Stand For"
[55] "Communist", January 1920, "On Political Action", *The Bolshevik*
[56] "Communist", January 1920, "On Political Action", *The Bolshevik*
[57] "Communist", January 1920, "On Political Action", *The Bolshevik*
[58] *The Bolshevik*, March 1920, "Trades Union Notes"
[59] "Communist", January 1920, "On Political Action", *The Bolshevik*
[60] *The Bolshevik*, March 1920, "Trades Union Notes"
[61] "Communist", January 1920, "On Political Action", *The Bolshevik*
[62] "Communist", January 1920, "On Political Action", *The Bolshevik*
[63] *The Bolshevik*, March 1920, "Trades Union Notes"

the One Big Union formed the "government of the country", then "the moment will come [of] the salvation of the working class". The Industrial Socialist League took the anti-parliamentary principle very seriously: two members who assisted candidates in elections were expelled.[64]

The question of elections was the key point of divergence between the Industrial Socialist League and the International Socialist League. This difference should, however, be correctly understood: it was a replay of the split in the American IWW in 1908, which had also been played on the Witwatersrand by the IWW and the Socialist Labour Party. It did not at this stage preclude fraternal relations with the International Socialist League, and in December 1919, the Industrial Socialist League offered subscriptions to the *International*.[65]

Like the International Socialist League, the Industrial Socialist League was deeply impressed by the example of the Russian Revolution of 1917, as the name of the organisation's journal attests. "Who is the working man who will not rejoice on the sixth of November?" asked the *Bolshevik*: "Is there one whose heart will not ring through with boundless happiness and enthusiasm on that historical day", the anniversary of the Russian Revolution which gave birth to the Socialist Workers' Republic?[66] The paper repeatedly denounced armed intervention and diplomatic intrigues against the Russian Revolution, and sought to expose these to workers. The Russian Revolution, it argued, was simply the start of a global "SOCIAL REVOLUTION" to be brought about by the overthrow of the "International Capitalist Class" by the "International Working Class".[67]

Like the International Socialist League, the Industrial Socialist League regarded the Russian Revolution as a vindication of its syndicalist beliefs.[68] It spoke in support of the "Dictatorship of the Working Class",[69] but it did not interpret this as a centralised and coercive Socialist State under the direction of a vanguard party, but as the rule of the working class as a whole, exercised through its revolutionary industrial organisations.[70] It was, in brief, just as ignorant as the International Socialist League regarding the real character of Bolshevism in power, unaware that the *soviets* were hollow shells, the workplaces under State control, political debate suppressed, and the Bolshevik Party firmly in charge of the ferocious State machinery of the actually existing "dictatorship of the proletariat".

"Given solidarity, class-consciousness and industrial organisation amongst the workers, the task of taking over the Nation's means of production and distribution can be accomplished without violence and bloodshed".[71] Unless circumstances were "exceptionally favourable, as it was in Russia", the use of violence for revolutionary purposes "is attended with disaster for the workers".[72] In the normal course of events, "All the means of 'civilised' warfare are in the hands of the capitalist class, guns, aeroplanes, poison gas and

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[64] *The Bolshevik*, May 1920, "A Year's Activity"
[65] *The Bolshevik*, December 1919.
[66] *The Bolshevik*, November 1919, "All Hail the Workers' Republic!"
[67] *The Bolshevik*, February 1920, "Shaking Hands with Murderers"
[68] See also Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit.*, pp. 10-13
[69] "A Delegate", November 1919, "A Conference of Dead-Heads", *The Bolshevik*
[70] See for example *The Bolshevik*, March 1920, "The True Meaning of Bolshevism"
[71] *The Bolshevik*, December 1919, "'Liberty of the Press'"
[72] "Communist", January 1920, "Socialism v. Violence", *The Bolshevik*

liquid fire". Any workers' rising based on "physical force" would therefore be "suppressed in blood, and followed by a course of suppression that will put the Labour movement back many years".

The real weapon of the working class was "economic organisation", which could be used to force the capitalists to concede immediate demands, in the present, and "in the case of the general strike, to overthrow the dominance of the capitalist class".[73] Revolution certainly involved force, but the force of "economic power" was crucial: such force could only be obtained by "organising industrial unions". When sufficiently powerful, organised, such unions would "assume the administrative power in the land and usher in the Workers' Republic" in a "bloodless revolution".[74]

Given these perspectives, it is not surprising that the Industrial Socialist League established close links with elements in the International Socialist League opposed to participation in elections, most notably Dunbar and the Yiddish-Speaking Branch. Its members were also in contact with Pankhurst's Workers' Socialist Federation and the *Workers' Dreadnought* in Britain, contributing a number of articles[75] and distributing the paper locally.

8.2. The Industrial Socialist League, race, and popular education

Although the Industrial Socialist League did not develop as detailed a critique of racial discrimination and racial prejudice as the International Socialist League, it developed a radical politics that advocated interracial labour unity in One Big Union and the abolition of racial discrimination and prejudice. Socialism, argued Vermont of the Industrial Socialist League, demanded for "every worker, white or coloured, … the full value of what he may produce". It "claims for every man, women or child, white or coloured, the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness".[76] The organisation was critical of the SA Labour Party and the White craft unions for their racially discriminatory and conservative policies. The SA Labour Party, argued Manuel Lopes, was a right-wing organisation of the "docile followers of social patriotism".[77] It was made up of "upper layers of the white workers and the middle class … aristocratic unions … that, with their feet on the natives, shriek of exploitation; shopkeepers [who] foam at the mouth with anger against the large combines that are cutting down their profits; and the middle class [who] are feeling the pinch of the steady increase in the cost of living".

White workers who refused to support the struggles of African workers were condemned in the strongest terms. Their actions were "the limit of treachery to the working class … craft unionism in excelsis".[78] This aligned the White workers with the capitalists and raised the "spectre of racial warfare". Such "scabbing" had to be replaced with the principle of "solidarity of labour irrespective of colour or race":[79]

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[73] "Communist", January 1920, "Socialism v. Violence", *The Bolshevik*
[74] "Communist", January 1920, "Socialism v. Violence", *The Bolshevik*
[75] For example: M. Walt, 12 June 1920, "May Day in Cape Town", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 7 August 1920, letter from Manuel Lopes
[76] Isaac Vermont, March 1920, "Socialism and the Coloured Folk", *The Bolshevik*
[77] Manuel Lopes, April 1920, "Socialism and the Labour Party", *The Bolshevik*
[78] *The Bolshevik*, March 1920, "Trades Union Notes"
[79] *The Bolshevik*, March 1920, "Trades Union Notes"



Figure thirty: C. Frank Glass of the Industrial Socialist League

Source: Wilfred H. Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *Memoirs of a Socialist in South Africa 1903–47*, Stewart Printing, Cape Town, with foreword by Tommy Boydell, p. 113

> We need their assistance to win our industrial fights now; we shall need them when we are establishing the workers councils; we shall need them when we are building up the workers' commonwealth.

The workers on the Witwatersrand, in particular, were advised to hold united May Day rallies in which the White workers must not stand "with their feet on the native worker but … shoulder to shoulder with him in their industrial organisations".

It has been suggested by Allison Drew that the Industrial Socialist League's anti-parliamentary position was based on an abstract approach that ignored the political inequalities in South Africa. Citing an article by Manuel Lopes in the *Bolshevik*,[80] she suggested that a call to boycott parliament was irrelevant in a society "in which the majority was disenfranchised due to colour and gender", and was "quite clearly directed at the white minority".[81]

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[80] Manuel Lopes, April 1920, "Socialism and the Labour Party", *The Bolshevik*
[81] Drew, editor, 1996a, editorial notes, *op cit.*, p. 17

This is not, however, a fair assessment of the views of the Industrial Socialist League. The call to boycott parliament was a matter of principle for the organisation, not a tactical approach to White workers: it would have been raised, in other words, even in a situation of universal suffrage. In this sense, it was no more an abstract position than the organisation's call to abolish capitalism. It did not imply a lack of interest in workers of colour on the part of the Industrial Socialist League: the organisation was strongly orientated towards winning Coloured supporters, as the decision to locate in District Six indicated, and as the subsequent discussion will show. Moreover, given the racial composition of the western Cape, and given the fact of a limited non-racial franchise which resulted in a significant Coloured vote in Cape Town, the stronghold of the Industrial Socialist League, the call to boycott parliament was far from irrelevant in Cape Town, where the African Political Organisation's Abdurrahman, the South African Party, the SA Labour Party, the SDF and, later, even the National Party, competed for the Coloured vote.

The article cited by Drew was, it should also be noted, a critique of the SA Labour Party, rather than a representative example of the organisation's thinking on the franchise. While any radical organisation in South Africa had to take the the White working class into account, the article in question was far from an abstract appeal to "the white minority". It specifically criticised the "upper layers of the white workers" and the "aristocratic unions" that "with their feet on the natives, shriek of exploitation".[82]

An article in the issue of the *Bolshevik* preceding that cited by Drew showed, finally, that the Industrial Socialist League's "case against parliamentarism" drew explicit connections to the racially restricted franchise in South Africa.[83] The strategy of using parliament for working class emancipation or for propaganda must also fail, it was argued, because the "big masses of the proletariat, natives and a big section of coloured have no vote at all". Hence, "Labour can never gain a majority". This situation could only be changed from outside of the parliament, using "'direct action' by the working class" in disregard to constitutional authority. Likewise, even basic social reforms, such as minimum wage laws, would have to be forced on parliament from without. All of this would require the industrial organisation, which was, however, precisely the mode of action that would render parliament redundant. [84]

The Industrial Socialist League set up a library of left-wing literature, printed leaflets, and provided an extensive book service. The literature sold by the Industrial Socialist League, or kept at the Library, included "a wide range of books and pamphlets on Russia, economics, sociology, history, and all questions of interest to the working class".[85] These included eyewitness accounts of the Russian Revolution such as "Six Weeks in Russia" by Arthur Ransome, as well as writings by Lenin such as *The Collapse of the Second International* and the earlier parts of *Trotsky's History of the Russian Revolution*. These writings seemed to have had little obvious effect on the politics of the Industrial Socialist League: syndicalist in tactics and strategies, the organisation was convinced that it was "Bolshevik from A to Z".[86]

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[82] Manuel Lopes, April 1920, "Socialism and the Labour Party", *The Bolshevik*
[83] *The Bolshevik*, March 1920, "The Case Against Parliamentarism"
[84] *The Bolshevik*, March 1920, "The Case Against Parliamentarism"
[85] *The Bolshevik*, December 1919
[86] Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 10

The Industrial Socialist League also undertook a vigorous programme of educational work. In 1919, it organised regular classes on ""elementary Economics, Sociology, History etc."[87] These classes, which consisted of a series of nine lectures, were held on Thursday nights. Like the International Socialist League, the Industrial Socialist League experimented with "Socialist Sunday Schools" for children and youths. In 1919, pupils of the Industrial Socialist League's Socialist Sunday School formed a "Young Socialist Society" on "their own initiative", which may be regarded as the youth section of the League.[88]

The organisation was amazingly active in organising outdoor meetings. In 1920, it was holding five outdoor propaganda meetings and one lecture a week.[89] Between May 1919 and May 1920, 135 outdoor meetings were held, as well as 32 lectures in the League's hall in Plein Street and six indoor meetings "such as socials, lectures etc".[90] In February 1920 alone, nineteen meetings were held, and "attendance was very good indeed" with "lots of literature sold" and the speakers receiving a "most sympathetic hearing".[91] The Industrial Socialist League also held a number of joint meetings with the SDF in Adderley Street, notwithstanding the split.[92] It annually celebrated the anniversary of the Revolution (November 6), often in co-operation with the SDF and the ("The Workers of Zion"), (the Jewish Socialist Society)[93] Members also sought to intervene in various Jewish cultural and political societies, such as "The Jewish Amateurs", a theatre group), and Poalei Zion.[94] Joe Pick, a member of the Poalei Zion managed to recruit most of its Cape Town members to the Industrial Socialist League in late 1920,[95] by which time Walt also seems to have been serving as the Poalei Zion secretary.[96]

8.3. The Industrial Socialist League and the unions: the Cape Federation of Labour, syndicalist unions, and IWW sailors

As an organisation that sought "direct involvement with the trade union movement in the Cape, and the organising of strikes and industrial unity across colour lines", the Industrial Socialist League directed its propaganda at white and Coloured waged artisans, and African labourers in the docks and factories.[97] This work seems to have borne fruit, police informers writing to the Police Commissioner that "considerable numbers of coloured and native people have been attending meetings in District Six where the movement is reported to be growing in numbers and importance".[98]

The Industrial Socialist League was, like the International Socialist League in Johannesburg, deeply interested in union work, and made several attempts to form unions of its own in the factories that sprang up across Cape Town. The trade union movement that developed in the Cape was different to that which

[87] *The Bolshevik*, November 1919
[88] Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 13
[89] *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 7 August 1920, letter from Manuel Lopes
[90] *The Bolshevik*, February 1920, "League Notes"
[91] *The Bolshevik*, February 1920, "League Notes"
[92] Harrison, n.d., *op cit.*, p. 68; Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit.*, p.4
[93] See, for example, Manuel Lopes, 29 November 1918, "Cape Notes", *The International*
[94] Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 8
[95] Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 8; Johns gives a later date, January 1920: Johns, 1995, *op cit*., p. 115
[96] Johns, 1976, *op cit*., p. 388 note 52
[97] Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit.*, pp. 2-3
[98] Cited in Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit*., pp.3-4

existed elsewhere in the country in several ways. The Cape unions tended to be weaker, and class struggle generally had a "low level of intensity" compared to (for instance) the upheavals on the Witwatersrand.[99] In the first two decades of the twentieth century, the unions were typically organised on a craft basis, usually quite fragile and often very cautious, and in many cases very short-lived.[100] While craft unions based amongst printers, engineers and carpenters were fairly durable, many more were not: from 1900 to 1925, for instance, at least five unions of clothing workers emerged and disappeared.[101]

The Cape Federation of Labour Unions, formed in 1913, predominantly made up of craft unions, and rather weak compared to the South African Industrial Federation, had a number of Coloured members.[102] It is against this backdrop that Talbot-Williams' appearance at the 1918 conference of the South African Industrial Federation, and his boycott by its delegates, should be understood. The interracial character of the Cape unions was – as suggested in Section 4.3 – partly the product of efforts by unionists linked to the SDF. However, the interracial tradition should also not be exaggerated: it was not a general feature of the Cape unions; White Labourism was a powerful influence amongst Cape Town's White workers, while the nationalism of the African Political Organisation had a real influence amongst Coloured workers.

The craft union structure excluded semi-skilled and unskilled labour, which effectively meant that the majority of workers of colour were outside the unions, while the segregation of African labourers from both Coloureds and Whites created further divisions. On the docks, for example, the skilled White and Coloured workers were organised into a section of the NURHAS, but the remainder of the workforce, largely Coloured and African, was largely ignored, and the Africans were further isolated by both Coloured and White workers in the Ndabeni township and the smaller Docks Location. There were, however, some countervailing forces. A.L. Clark of the Social Democratic Party in Durban was president of the union, and argued for interracial unionism in the *Railway Review*,[103] and the union seems to have experimented with separately organised African and Coloured branches in Cape Town around 1918 and 1919.[104]

The Cape Federation of Labour Unions also tended to be isolated from the unions elsewhere in the country. Dominated by Robert "Bob" Stuart from 1913 to 1950, the Cape unions consistently opposed all attempts to form a single national trade union centre in South Africa.[105] Born in Scotland and a stonemason by trade, he arrived in South Africa in 1901, and was the dominant figure in Cape trade unionism from the 1910s to the 1940s.[106]

Stuart had been a member of the SDF: he claimed to have left after 1905 due to the influx of "young Communists",[107] but represented the SDF at an inter-colonial labour conference in 1909,[108] and may

[99] Nicol, 1984, *op cit*., pp. 68-9
[100] Nicol, 1984, *op cit*., pp. 93-4
[101] Nicol, 1984, *op cit*., pp. 93-4
[102] Nicol, 1984, *op cit*., pp. 93-5
[103] Gitsham and Trembath, 1926, *op cit*., pp. 164-5
[104] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., p. 61 note 1
[105] Nicol, 1984, *op cit*., pp. 21-2, 95-7
[106] Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., pp. 295-6
[107] Nicol, 1984, *op cit*., p. 96
[108] Ticktin, 1973, *op cit*., p. 415

have been an active member as late as 1914.[109] A relentless opponent of all "politics" in the trade unions and, like the later Crawford, a proponent of class collaboration, he obstructed every effort at unity as well as attempts by unions from elsewhere to get a base in the Cape. The Cape Federation of Labour Unions did not join the South African Industrial Federation, nor did it amalgamate with the subsequent SATUCand SATLC. This was partly because of Stuart's "Cape chauvinism", not to mention his very real interest in safeguarding his job as full-time secretary from 1915 to 1941. [110]

A further problem was that few Cape Town employers wished to deal with unions. Some tried to prevent unionisation with pre-emptive reforms from above; others simply called in the police. In January 1919, an Industrial Socialist League meeting outside a factory's gates was closed down when a cordon of police "surrounded the workers" and would not allow the speakers to carry on the meeting.[111] Nonetheless, the Industrial Socialist League was able to form a syndicalist union amongst Coloured workers in the confectionary factories in 1918,[112] neglected by the existing unions.[113] It was called the Sweets and Jam Workers' Industrial Union.[114] The Industrial Socialist League also helped finance the union.[115]

Attempts to form links with the African Political Organisation failed. The nationalist organisation was then engaged in its own attempt to form Coloureds-only unions to undercut White workers, and was hostile to the left in the wake of the SDF's electoral challenges. Nonetheless, the Industrial Socialist League was able to attract support from Coloured trade union leaders outside the Sweets and Jam Workers' Industrial Union. The opening of a new Socialist Hall by the Industrial Socialist League on 12 January 1919 drew a crowd of "between 300 and 400 persons".[116] The new hall was located more centrally in Cape Town at Plein Street, and superseded the earlier offices in District Six.[117]

The audience, which crowded the hall "to the doors" despite heavy rain,[118] included a large number of "Cape Malays" and "coloured trade unionists".[119] Members of the SDF spoke, as did Boydell of the SA Labour Party, Haggar, a sometime member of that party, and the Coloured trade unionists Brown, M.A. Gamiet and Kies.[120] Gamiet, formerly president of the Cape Malay Association, headed a Tailors' and Tailoress' Union: based mainly amongst Coloured workers, and affiliated to the Cape Federation of Labour Unions, it organised a large strike later that year, which was the first major strike by a union largely made up of Coloured workers in Cape Town and attracted a great deal of publicity.[121]

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[109] Harrison, n.d., *op cit*., pp. 23, 52-3
[110] Nicol, 1984, *op cit*., pp. 21-2
[111] L. Turok, 24 January 1919, "Cape Notes", *The International.* Obviously this 1919 meeting was not the organisation's "first attempt" to organise a union, as the Simons suggest: Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, p. 215
[112] Manuel Lopes, 27 September 1918, "Cape Notes", *The International*, also see Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 13
[113] Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 89
[114] *The International*, 21 December 1918, "Cape Notes"
[115] Manuel Lopes, 27 September 1918, "Cape Notes", *The International*, also see Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 13
[116] Manuel Lopes, 24 January 1919, "Cape Notes", *The International*
[117] Harrison, n.d., *op cit.*, p. 68
[118] Manuel Lopes, 24 January 1919, "Cape Notes", *The International*
[119] Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 4
[120] Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 4
[121] Nicol, 1984, *op cit*., pp. 55-61

The strength of the Tailors' and Tailoress' Union was tied to the special conditions of the First World War, when the disruption of international trade provided protection from cheap imports, and when the garment and textile industry were further boosted by a large number of military contracts.[122] It was, however, a fragile industry, and hard hit by the resumption of normal trade with Britain.[123] Further problems were created when a number of clothing manufacturers unilaterally applied wage raises and reductions in working hours after the war, and the Tailors' and Tailoress' Union collapsed in 1919.[124]

By 1920, the Industrial Socialist League could claim to have developed a constituency amongst Coloureds. Who exactly these members or sympathisers were is not clear, although they may have included workers from the Sweets and Jam Workers' Industrial Union, or unionists like Brown, Gamiet and Kies, all three of whom were later associated with the CPSA,[125] or Talbot-Williams prior to his untimely death. In August 1920, in any event, Manuel Lopes could report in the *Workers' Dreadnought* that:[126]

> We are gaining ground slowly, especially among the coloured and native people, as the white workers are still obsessed with colour prejudice. The race hatred which we are fighting exists in all sections, Mahommedan [Malay], white, coloured and native, and is our greatest obstacle.
>
> Due, however, to our obtaining the services of a few coloured and Malay comrades in our propaganda, we are making better progress lately. This propaganda amongst the coloured and native workers is the work that counts and which directly undermines capitalism in South Africa as the capitalists can always count on a section of the white workers to shoot down the 'niggers'.

The Industrial Socialist League did not make a principle of forming dual unions outside existing organisations, unlike the Chicago IWW. It actively cultivated influence within the existing trade unions, and tried to change the practices and policies that it saw as obstacles to the formation of One Big Union. Members of the Industrial Socialist League were active in the Cape Federation of Labour Unions. Like the International Socialist League, which criticised Crawford's South African Industrial Federation, the Industrial Socialist League was critical of Stuart's Cape Federation of Labour Unions. However, its effort to change these unions from within was somewhat more successful than those of the International Socialist League and its "Solidarity Committee" in the Transvaal.

In the late 1910s, the Industrial Socialist League made real gains in the Cape Federation of Labour Unions. Berman was elected treasurer of the federation, while F. Lopes became President of its Tramway

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[122] Nicol, 1984, *op cit*., pp. 55-61
[123] Nicol, 1984, *op cit.*, 91
[124] Nicol, 1984, *op cit*., pp. 55-61, 91-2
[125] Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 4
[126] *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 7 August 1920, letter from Manuel Lopes

Workers' Union.[127]At the second annual conference of the Cape Federation of Labour Unions in 1920, Industrial Socialist League members managed to pass resolutions calling for the emancipation of the working class, and the socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange.[128] Industrial Socialist League members also managed to introduce changes to its constitution, committing it to the "formation of Industrial Unions out of the existing Trade Unions" and the creation of a strong Federation executive to help unite the unions and organise sympathetic strike actions.[129] The conference closed with a lusty singing of the *Red Flag*. It was probably at the urging of these syndicalists that the Cape Federation passed a resolution condemning the massacre at Port Elizabeth as a crime by the "employing class", to be answered by the "struggle of labour", "irrespective of colour or sex".[130]

At the third conference of the Cape Federation of Labour Unions in 1921, Berman was even able to have resolution passed to affiliate the Federation to the Profintern in Moscow, and abstain from parliamentary action.[131] The radical resolutions were not, however, carried out.[132] A large part of the Cape Federation of Labour Unions was conservative or moderate. It was the Mayor of Cape Town and the Minster of Mines and Industries who opened the 1921 conference that resolved on joining the Profintern.[133]

However, the Industrial Socialist League was rightly sceptical about these apparent gains. In its view the craft unions and their leaders would continue to nullify all radical resolutions, and only voiced support for radical aims because it was convenient at the time.[134] On the Witwatersrand, the syndicalists helped push working class unrest to the left, while in Durban, Lee and Sigamoney promoted militant unionism and Dube discouraged it. In Cape Town, by contrast, Stuart used the climate of working class unrest to win the Cape Federation of Labour Unions credibility with employers as a force that could be relied upon to provide moderation and stability, and prevent "industrial warfare".[135]

Efforts were also made to expand the influence of the organisation into the rural hinterland of Cape Town. Buirski, then working as a travelling salesman, helped circulate the *Bolshevik* in the countryside.[136] The May 1920 issue of that paper also requested "Country readers and comrades who want to take bundles" of the special May Day edition for distribution to "place their order without delay".[137] Whether this indicated the existence of an actual "country" readership, or a strategy to develop one, is not quite clear.

The Industrial Socialist League was also able to make direct contact with sailors from the IWW abroad. In early 1919, for example, Manuel Lopes reported that "twelve members of the IWW, lately from off sailing vessels" had met with the Industrial Socialist League.[138] The IWW sailors would have been members of the Marine Transport Workers' Industrial Union: the visitors were, according to Manuel Lopes,

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[127] Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 13
[128] Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 12
[129] *The Bolshevik*, May 1920, "Trade Union Notes"; Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 12
[130] The resolution may be found in *The International*, 26 November 1920, "Port Elizabeth Massacre"
[131] Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 25, note 106.
[132] Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 12
[133] Quoted in Nicol, 1984, *op cit*., p. 98
[134] Nicol, 1984, *op cit*., p. 98
[135] Nicol, 1984, *op cit*., pp. 98-9
[136] Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit.*
[137] *The Bolshevik*, May 1920
[138] Manuel Lopes, 24 January 1919, "Cape Notes", *The International*; also see Philips, 1978, *op cit.*, p. 127

"'rebels' in the best sense of the term" and "taught the League to sing, and given us quite a repertoire of the songs of labour".[139]

There were several reports in the overseas IWW press about attempts to form a more organised Marine Transport Workers' Industrial Union presence in South Africa. There were several reports that the union had contacts in South Africa and was establishing a hall at the Cape Town docks, but the information is scanty.[140] The February 4 issue of the *One Big Union Monthly*, for example, reported that Tom Barker, having helped the syndicalist movement in Chile and Argentina, was now planning to "get a foothold in South Africa".[141]

Barker, born in Westmoreland, England, to a farm worker's family, moved to New Zealand where he was a militant in the New Zealand Socialist Party and then the IWW, and then became a key figure in the Australian IWW.[142] He became editor of *Direct Action* in 1915 after Glynn was jailed, but was also arrested for anti-militarist activities. In 1918 he was deported to Chile, and then expelled to Argentina, where he was active in the Marine Transport Workers' Industrial Union in Buenos Aires. Barker left in 1920, but never arrived in South Africa. He represented the FORA at the Marine Transport Workers' Industrial Union conference in Oslo, Norway, and then went to an international syndicalist conference in Berlin, following which he attended the 1921 Profintern congress as a FORA representative. He later stayed in the Soviet Union for several years, never accepted Bolshevism, and moved to England, where he was later a Labour councillor.

8.4. The International Socialist League, Coloured workers, and syndicalist unions in Kimberley

There were further developments in Kimberley, where the International Socialist League, not the Industrial Socialist league, played the key role. Kimberley was a declining town in the 1910s, and the main areas of employment, besides the mines, where in commerce, in skilled trades, and in clerical work. Nonetheless, the town was affected by the broader wave of labour mobilisation sweeping South Africa in the late 1910s. In line with the policy following from the conservative nationalist victory at the South African Native National Congress meeting in Bloemfontein in August 1918, Plaatje wrote a polite letter to the president of the Kimberley Chamber of Commerce.[143] Noting that the "local leaders of Native thought" had thus far managed to prevent the "trouble" of the times from spreading to Kimberley, he politely requested that the Chamber consider "kindly requesting" local employers to assist by raising wages:

> … if employers could be persuaded to appreciate the labourer's point of view and grant an increase in wages wherever possible, it is urged that this will strengthen the hands of our committee in preventing a possible movement to organise the existing discontent, thus

[139] Manuel Lopes, 24 January 1919, "Cape Notes", *The International*
[140] Hartmut Rubner, personal communication, 1 May 1998, in my possession.
[141] Hartmut Rubner, personal communication, 1 May 1998
[142] For biographical details, see Barker, [1965] 1998, *op cit.;* Burgmann*, 1995, op cit.,* pp. 69, 70-71, 115, 164, 190, 192, 204, 214, 218, 271, E.C. Fry, [1965] 1998, "Introduction", to Barker, [1965] 1998, *op cit.*
[143] Sol Plaatje, [18 November 1918] 1996, "Letter to the President, Kimberley Chamber of Commerce, 18 November 1918", in Willan, editor, 1996, *op cit*., pp. 237-9

> creating a friction 'twixt master and man' with all its attendant inconvenience, dislocation and bad feeling.
>
> In conclusion I would beg to assure you that there are no politics behind these representations; our only object is to keep Kimberley free from the ugly features that characterised the movement in other towns, and our own desire to perpetuate the healthy equilibrium that subsisted hitherto between the several sections of the community in this city.

This request neatly summed up Plaatje's politics of class collaboration and moderation, and was an excellent sample of the outlook of the conservative African nationalist tradition. Perhaps Plaatje's appeal had some influence. At a 1919 meeting of the Chamber of Commerce, the municipality, the South African Railways and De Beers Diamond Mines did consider taking steps to ameliorate the distress of workers, and De Beers, at least, began to sell food and clothing at a loss to its employees.[144]

However, a "movement to organise the existing discontent … creating a friction "twixt master and man"" did emerge outside of the mines. In 1919, the International Socialist League noted a "great awakening of industrial solidarity among the Coloured workers … a large portion of the community here".[145] That year it dispatched Sam Barlin, a Jewish activist from Johannesburg – apparently a tailor by trade[146] – to Kimberley as an organiser. Barlin, who had been actively involved in the campaign to raise funds for the League's press, established an International Socialist League office in Kimberley, located on Jones Street, near the offices of the South African Native National Congress and the African Political Organisation (renamed the African People's Organisation that year).[147]

In 1919, Barlin helped establish two syndicalist unions in the town, mainly based amongst Coloured workers. The most important was the Clothing Workers' Industrial Union, based amongst the several hundred local tailors and other garment workers in the town, and formed in 1919.[148] In Kimberley at that time, tailoring was a skilled trade. Like the skilled trades in the town's construction industry, it was dominated by Coloureds, although there were also a number of Indians and immigrant East European Jews; Jews also owned most of the clothing workshops.[149] The skilled Coloured tailors were the "target of vehement White racism".[150]

Following the International Socialist League practice in Durban and Johannesburg, Barlin organised a number of meetings to recruit clothing workers to a proposed new union. When the Clothing Workers'

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[144] Wickens, 1973 *op cit*., pp. 133-134
[145] *The International*, 20 December 1919, "Kimberley Tailors' Strike"
[146] See, for example, the advertisement of 8 December 1922, *The International*, back page
[147] Musson, 1989, *op cit.* pp. 16-17
[148] Doreen Musson gives the date of the Clothing Workers' Industrial Unions' founding as November 1919: Musson, 1989, *op cit*., p. 23. This is not, however, consistent with what is known of the broader history of the union, as recounted below.
[149] Musson, 1989, *op cit*., pp. 16-17, Roberts, 1976, *op cit*., p. 272
[150] Musson, 1989, *op cit*., p. 17

Industrial Union was constituted, the Coloured workers were encouraged to elect a union committee from their own ranks. At the same time, Barlin set out to recruit union office-bearers and members to the International Socialist League. The union committee had a Mr. Davis as chairperson, and Fred Peinaar as secretary, and shopstewards were also elected at the various workshops were members were employed. Efforts to recruit the union members to the International Socialist League were extremely successful. Twenty-seven union members, all Coloureds, joined the International Socialist League, with many drawn from the three main workshops: Myer Gordon Tailors in Jones Street, the Reid company, and that owned by Brown.[151]

The recruit to the International Socialist League who would play the greatest role in the later history of labour and the left movements was Gomas. Born in 1901 on a mission station in the Cape to David and Elizabeth Gomas, Gomas was largely brought up by his mother, a devout Christian; he was profoundly alienated from his drunken father, a labourer who later abandoned the family.[152] He was educated in the mission school, until his mother moved the family to Kimberley in 1911 in search of work and to get away from abusive her husband.[153] Elizabeth ended up a domestic worker, and the family lived in the Malay Camp.

A studious youth, Gomas was forced by poverty to leave school early to find a job, and was apprenticed at Gordon's in 1915.[154] Fred Pienaar, a slightly older man, was an apprentice at the same firm. Gordon, a Russian Jew, was an unusual employer for the cutthroat garment and textile industry of the time. A genial man, he even spoke to his two apprentices about socialism.[155] However, the example of Peinaar and the experience of the Clothing Workers' Industrial Union seem to have played the central role in radicalising the young Gomas.[156] Gomas seems to have subsequently joined the local branch of the Cape Native Congress, the provincial section of the South African Native National Congress in 1919 or 1920 – a move highly unusual for a young Coloured – and, apparently, the ICU.[157]

By the middle of 1919, the Clothing Workers' Industrial Union had secured an agreement with employers that provided recognition for its shopstewards, the closed shop and substantially higher wages.[158] The deal also protected workers from victimisation – a key demand in small establishments – and allowed union representatives to enter any establishment for an inspection. A section of the union had also been established in Johannesburg around the same time.[159] The Clothing Workers' Industrial Union also appears to have established a section in Johannesburg in June 1919When the firms of Reid and Brown reneged on the agreement, the workers came out on strike, and were joined by the employees of Gordon's.[160] The

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[151] Musson, 1989, *op cit*., pp. 16, 21
[152] Ray Simons, 1991, *op cit*.
[153] Musson, 1989, *op cit*., pp. 11-13; also see *Grassroots*, September 1982, "Johnny Gomas: a lifetime of struggle"
[154] Musson, 1989, *op cit*., pp. 15-6
[155] Musson, 1989, *op cit*., p. 17
[156] Musson, 1989, *op cit*., p. 17; also see "Gomas, John Stephen", in Verwey, editor, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 80-84
[157] Musson, 1989, *op cit*., pp. 20-2
[158] *The International*, 20 December 1919, "Kimberley Tailors' Strike"; also Musson, 1989, *op cit*., pp. 17-18
[159] *The International*, 27 June 1919; *The International,* 4 July 1919; also see Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 98
[160] *The International*, 20 December 1919; Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 98; Musson, 1989, *op cit*., p. 17

three-day strike was settled to the workers' satisfaction, notwithstanding the hostility of employers and the local press to Barlin, a "professional agitator from Johannesburg", and to the "hostile" strikers.[161]

Barlin also helped form a Horse Drivers' Union in Kimberley in 1919. Again, it was based amongst Coloured workers, who had dominated the driving of carts and wagons in Kimberley since the 1870s.[162] Again, it had an elected committee, including K.C. Fredericks as chairperson, and Jan C. Smuts (it is not clear whether this was his real name, or a pseudonym!) as secretary.[163] It is quite likely that both men were among the twenty-seven Coloureds recruited to the International Socialist League.

That year the Horse Drivers' Union organised a strike by thirty workers employed by Knights Cartage, which was contracted to the South African Railways and the Kimberley municipality. The strike was for a 25 percent wage increase, and a minimum wage of £2 a month.[164] Despite "more white scabbing",[165] hostility from employers and from the press, and well-meaning suggestions from more conservative Coloureds that the workers adopt a moderate approach, the strike lasted two weeks.[166] African scabs were sent from the railways, but were approached by the strikers, who explained the position: the Africans withdrew, leaving their supervisors fuming.[167] The strikers eventually won a wage of £7 a month.

The decline of Kimberley created a certain desperation that was not always evident elsewhere. While Gomas had become a "rebellious, even defiant young man" at the age of eighteen, he was also drawn into crime. In September 1920 he was involved in a burglary at Gordon's, and was arrested the next day with his two confederates.[168] Because there was insufficient evidence, Gomas was given a suspended sentence, but was charged with an attempt to escape while awaiting trial, which resulted in three months' hard labour. Upon his release the family moved to Cape Town to make a fresh start. It is not quite clear how clear his political views were at this time: Musson suggests "he had no clear idea", but also states that he was enthusiastic about politics and even tried to recruit prisoners to join the ICU; further, she adds that he remained "schooled in the tradition" of the International Socialist League before 1927, advocating "scientific industrial" principles in the unions, and holding to the vision of One Big Union into the 1930s.[169] Gomas, in other words, seems to have been part of the broader syndicalist influence on the ICU.

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[161] Musson, 1989, *op cit*., pp. 17-18
[162] Turrell, 1987, *op cit*., p. 89
[163] Musson, 1989, *op cit*., p. 18
[164] *The International,* 2 January 1920, "Kimberley Strikes: more white scabbing". This demand seems very low, and, while I have followed the *International* in reporting the demand as a mere £2 a month (for example, van der Walt, 2004a, *op cit*., p. 82) I am increasingly inclined to the view that the *International* erred in its report. Doreen Musson speaks of a demand for £2 *a week*, which is more likely: Musson, 1989, *op cit*., p. 18
[165] *The International,* 2 January 1920, "Kimberley Strikes: more white scabbing"; also see Eddie Roux [1964] 1978, *op cit*., p. 155
[166] Musson, 1989, *op cit*., p. 18
[167] Musson, 1989, *op cit*., p. 18
[168] Musson, 1989, *op cit*., p. 20
[169] Musson, 1989, *op cit.*, pp. 30, 31, 49, 106, 116-126, 132-8

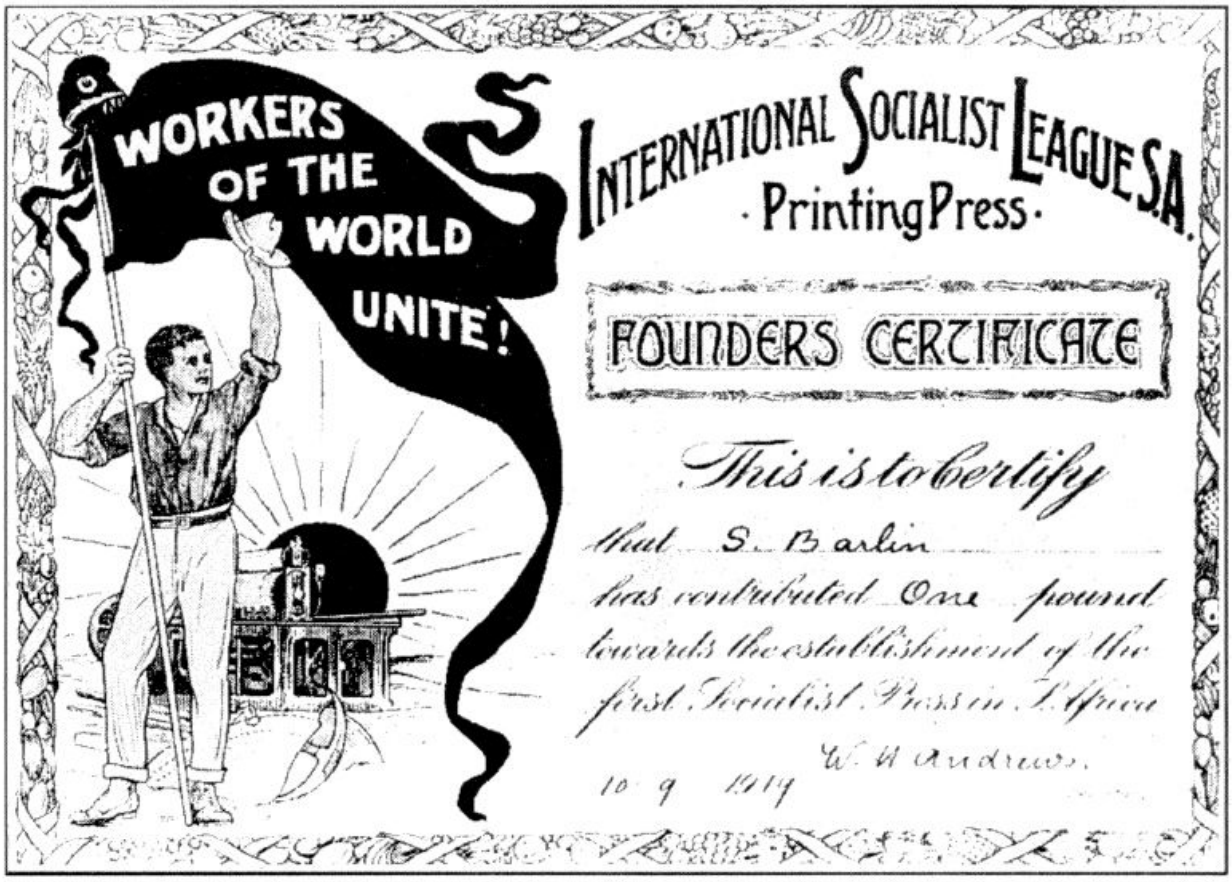

Figure thirty-one: An International Socialist League printing press "Founders' Certificate" awarded to Sam Barlin, the Kimberley organiser, and signed by W.H. Andrews

Source: W.H. Andrews Papers, Mayibuye Centre, University of the Western Cape

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8.5. The Industrial Workers of Africa, the Transvaal Native Congress, and the 1919 campaign on the Witwatersrand against the pass laws

Members of the Industrial Workers of Africa also played a key role in a campaign against the pass laws initiated by the Transvaal Native Congress on the Witwatersrand in early 1919. While it can be argued that the leaders of the Transvaal Native Congress were retreating from working class organisation to the "more familiar ground of campaigning on general issues",[170] the 1919 anti-pass campaign was nonetheless quite different to the petitions and deputations favoured by the conservative nationalists.

The campaign started with a meeting in the Vrededorp slum in western Johannesburg on Sunday 30 March 1919, where passes were collected from Africans present.[171] A crowd marched on the Johannesburg pass offices on Albert Street the following day. The march was led by the two sections of the Transvaal Native Congress leadership drawn to direct action: the radicals, represented by Cetiwe and Kraai, and the moderates, represented by Mabaso, Horatio Mbelle and E. Dunjwa. The Chief Pass Officer agreed to receive

[170] Ntsebeza, 1988, *op cit*., p. 41
[171] This account of events is based on Bonner, 1982, *op cit.*, pp. 300-303; Hirson with Williams, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 182-3

a deputation of ten people, including the five leaders of the march, while the crowd waited outside in an excited state. Following an unsatisfactory meeting, the deputation addressed the crowd, which sang "Rule Britannia" and gave three cheers for the King before putting its passes in sacks, and collecting passes from surrounding streets, gathering 2,000 in this way.[172] Police then waded into the crowd and began arresting people.[173]

A meeting held the next day resolved to extend the campaign to the municipal compounds and to the mines. The protests spread quickly across the Witwatersrand, with groups going around collecting passes in bags and taking them to pass offices, where officials were informed that the passes were no longer wanted.[174] The idea seems to have been to collect enough passes to render the pass laws unworkable. State repression followed, with police trying to force passes on Africans who resisted, and violence sometimes broke out in consequence.[175] There were also several violent clashes with white strikers at the Johannesburg municipality, who had formed a "Board of Control" under the leadership of Bain, a sort of *soviet* for Whites only, of which more later. There were also violent racial clashes in the multi-racial areas of Fordsburg and Vrededorp, leading to one hundred and eight arrests, and the death of at least one African.[176]

The violence surrounding the campaign, and the determination of the State authorities to avoid a repetition of the events of 1918[177] – an echo of the approach used against the 1914 general strike after the events of 1913 – saw swift police action against protestors. Two hundred Africans appeared in court during the campaign for disturbing the peace, or for inciting Africans to break their indenture. The trials of protestors now became the focus of the campaign. Large African crowds gathered outside the Magistrate's Court in Johannesburg, and made several attempts to rescue those on trial. As a result, police began moving the prisoners between the jail and the courts in columns with mounted guards.

S.P. Bunting appeared frequently in the Magistrate's Court as an attorney for the Africans. He was assaulted by Whites outside the court during a lunch hour towards the end of March, being "frog-marched" – carried along the streets face down by four people, each holding a limb.[178] The hooligans included municipal strikers. By the time the pass law campaign died out in May, over 700 Africans had been arrested, receiving sentences ranging from extremely high fines of £10 (or two months in jail), to four months hard labour and eight lashes.[179]

This campaign must be seen against the backdrop of the general strike movement on the Witwatersrand in 1918. The rise of an African syndicalist group within the leadership of the Transvaal Native Congress, centred on Cetiwe and Kraai, and the leftward movement of moderates like Letanka and Mvabaza towards syndicalism, helped create a situation in which a confrontational protest movement was possible.

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[172] Walshe, 1970, *op cit*., p. 82
[173] Walshe, 1970, *op cit*., p. 82
[174] *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 10 January 1920, "The Colour Bar"
[175] *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 10 January 1920, "The Colour Bar"
[176] *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 12 April 1919, "Blacks and Whites in Johannesburg"
[177] Grobler 1968, *op cit*., pp. 382-383
[178] Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit.*, pp. 82-3
[179] Walshe, 1970, *op cit*., p. 83

It is, moreover, possible to draw a clear link between the anti-pass campaign and ideas of the International Socialist League and the Industrial Workers of Africa. The link to radical socialist ideas, sometimes noted in the literature,[180] needs to be seen against the backdrop of the activities of the syndicalists. The *International* advocated industrial action against repressive laws,[181] seeing "the Industrial Union" as "the root of all the activities of Labour, whether political, social or otherwise".[182] Dunbar had taken this idea further, suggesting civil disobedience against the pass laws to the meetings that became the Industrial Workers of Africa.[183] Cetiwe told the Industrial Workers of Africa on 23 May 1918:[184]

> These passes are main chains [*sic*], enchaining us from all our rights. These passes are the chains chaining us in our employers' yards, so that we cannot go about and see what we can do for ourselves … It is the very same with a dog …

In the context of mounting economic and political grievances, and the failure of the 1918 general strike, the notion of civil disobedience against the pass laws – an idea promoted by the syndicalists – was very attractive. While the 1918 "treason trial" had disrupted the Industrial Workers of Africa's activities, the union had been revived later in the year. In February 1919, the union held a "packed meeting of native workers" where "many speakers urged the need of industrial unity".[185] Cetiwe and Kraai were part of the deputation to the pass offices on Albert Street on 31 March 1919, and among those who addressed the waiting crowd.[186] In May 1919, they applied for representation at a labour conference organised by the South African Industrial Federation in Bloemfontein as representatives of the Industrial Workers of Africa: their application was, unsurprisingly, rejected.

The end of the anti-pass campaign marked the end of the militant phase of Transvaal Native Congress activity. Conservative Transvaal Native Congress leaders had begun to have "serious misgivings" from an early stage, staying away from meetings, as did a growing number of the moderates. Both jumped at an offer by the Director of Native Labour to grant one week's grace in which Africans could obtain duplicate passes,[187] which effectively nullified the entire campaign.

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[180] F.J. Grobler described some of the speeches given during the protests as "beslis Bolsewisties" ("certainly Bolshevik") and suggested that the International Socialist League had a hand in the events: Grobler 1968, *op cit*., pp. 382-383

[181] *The International*, 19 October 1917, "The Pass Laws: organise for their abolition", my emphasis

[182] *The International,* 5 May 1916, 'What's Wrong With Ireland'; cf. also *The International*, 4 August 1916, 'Chopping off Heads'.

[183] Wilfred Jali, report on meeting of Industrial Workers of Africa, 26 July 1917, in JD 3/527/17; William Mtembu, report on meeting of Industrial Workers of Africa, 26 July 1917, in JD 3/527/17

[184] Report on meeting of Transvaal Native Congress and Industrial Workers of Africa, 23 May 1918 by Wilfred Jali, in JD 3/527/17.

[185] *The International*, 28 February 1919

[186] This account of events is based on Bonner, 1982, *op cit.*, pp. 300-303; Hirson with Williams, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 182-3; Walshe, 1970, *op cit*., p. 82

[187] Bonner, 1982, *op cit*., pp. 302-3



Figure thirty-two: Johnny Gomas of the Clothing Workers' Industrial Union and the International Socialist League

Source: Doreen Musson, 1989, *Johnny Gomas: voice of the working-class: a political biography*, Buchu Books, Cape Town, plate 3

Members of the Industrial Workers of Africa led a rank-and-file revolt, but with little long-term effect. At a mass meeting in Vrededorp on 6 July 1919, Thibedi challenged the decision to accept one week's grace from the floor, with approval from the crowd. Another member of the audience accused the speaker, Mabaso, one of the moderates linked to *AbantuBatho*, of being bribed. This led to a rush on the platform in which Mabaso narrowly avoided being assaulted.[188]

Key figures of the Industrial Workers of Africa then tried to take advantage of the dissent to organise a split away from the Transvaal Native Congress. Thibedi advertised a meeting "of all labourers" at St. Mary's Hall in downtown Johannesburg on 26 July 1919, where he argued that 25,000 workers must be recruited to the Industrial Workers of Africa so that a renewed offensive on wages and passes could be launched in May 1920.[189] Announcing that he had left the South African Native National Congress, Thibedi argued "Congress don't utilise money properly, they use it for themselves, and we, the working men, get nothing":

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[188] Bonner, 1982, *op cit*., p. 303
[189] Report on meeting of 26 July 1919 at St. Mary's Hall, Government Native Labour Bureau, GNLB 278 354/17, *op cit.*

> We must separate and call ourselves the Labourers and have our own leaders. The workers must separate from Congress.

However, he badly misjudged the situation, and the meeting broke up in disarray when a large part of the crowd vehemently disagreed with his views on the Transvaal Native Congress. Tinker, who was also present, did not have a chance to speak, but a meeting was promised for the following week. It did not, however, take place.

Thibedi issued a new leaflet for the Industrial Workers of Africa in April 1919, which took a far softer approach to the Transvaal Native Congress.[190] The Industrial Workers of Africa was described as a "Native Council" for African workers: "All workers are poor therefore they should have their own Council". However, it was not a rival to the Transvaal Native Congress: this was "not to say that we workers stop you from joining any other Councils", but that "you must know what you are in the Country (rich or poor)". The leaflet then went on to list the grievances of African workers, before appealing for prospective members to contact Thibedi.

> *Item 1:* Friend are you not a worker?
>
> *Item 2:* Is it not true that we Black People do every work in the country?
>
> *Item 3:* If so why do you not become a member of the Industrial Workers of Africa?
>
> *Item 4:* Why should all workers be pressed down by the rich where they all do the work of the Country?
>
> *Item 5:* Why should you be kicked and spat at whilst working.
>
> *Item 6:* How is it that you black workers asking for bread from the Government as their children, are arrested and sent to gaol?
>
> *Item 7:* 0! Oh! Workers your children died in German East Africa and West. Others were drowned in the sea. Upon that you are still burdened and compelled to carry 100 Passes in your father's country.

[190] The leaflet is reproduced in Hirson, 1988a, *op cit*., p. 107. Also see Johnstone, 1979, *op cit*., p. 263 and Peter L. Wickens, 1974a, 'The One Big Union Movement among Black Workers in South Africa', in *International Journal of African Historical Studies*. 7/ 3, p. 395, note 27

> *Item 8:* Workers come together and be united and join your own Native Council. Why are you afraid to become members of the Industrial Workers of Africa whilst you call yourself Workers?

While "Item 2" made serious concessions to nationalism – the claim that "we Black People do every work in the country" was not compatible with the International Socialist League's stress on interracial worker unity, and ignored class divisions amongst "Black People" – the leaflet can be seen as a fair example of Industrial Workers of Africa discourse. The reference in "Item 7" to the people "drowned in the sea" was apparently to the sinking of the *HMS Mendi* in February 1917 en route to France, in which more than six hundred African servicemen died. The sinking of the *Mendi* became the subject of annual "Mendi Day" activities in Witwatersrand townships from 1932, sponsored by local businesses and officials in conjunction with African moderates,[191] and scorned by radicals.[192]

Within the Transvaal Native Congress, the radicals were fighting a losing battle. The Transvaal Native Congress was pushed towards agreeing to a second general strike on 1 October 1919, but this fell through. Letanka, Mvabaza and Ngojo moved away from the syndicalists, allowing the conservative nationalists to realign the organisation with the traditional politics of the larger South African Native National Congress.

In December 1918, a special meeting of the South African Native National Congress had decided to send a second deputation to Britain about the 1913 Land Act. The timing was significant: the First World War had ended, protests of this sort could no longer be seen as disloyal, while the Allies talk of freedom, democracy and self-determination gave rise to hopes of fair treatment for African subjects. The five-man deputation left in June 1919, and included Mvabaza and Plaatje, who had also been part of the 1913 deputation to Britain. It visited the Versailles Peace Conference and Britain, meeting with British officials who politely stated that the King could not interfere in South Africa's internal affairs: "They were advised to return to Africa and humbly submit the grievance of the black men to the Union Government". [193]

The deputation did receive some sympathetic coverage in the British radical press towards the end of the year,[194] and only returned in 1920. The Afrikaner nationalists, led by Hertzog, had also sent a deputation, appealing for a South African republic. It, too, was rebuffed. Letanka later organised a legal campaign by the Transvaal Native Congress against a poll tax on African men that was introduced in the Transvaal in 1921, and the Supreme Court overturned the ordinance in 1922. In 1924 he became secretary

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[191] The 22 February 1948 commemorations attracted 5000 people. See the *Bantu World*, 14 February 1948, *Bantu World* 21 February 1948, and *Bantu World* 28 February 1948.

[192] Albert Nzula, the first African general-secretary of the CPSA, and active in the New Line period, described the 1932 Mendi Day as a collaboration of "native lickspittles" and "'good boy' reformists" with "white exploiters" and "jingoists" to cast a "mystic glamour" over the "ugly reality of African workers and peasants dying in the cause of their bloody capitalist enslavers": Albert Nzula, [1932] 1979, "South Africa and the Imperialist War", reproduced as appendix E in Albert Nzula, Ivan I. Potekhin and Aleksander Zusmanovich, [1933] 1979, *Forced Labour in Colonial Africa*, Zed Books, London, edited and introduced by Robin Cohen, p.p. 185-6. Cohen's introduction is hereafter referred to as Cohen, [1933] 1979, *op cit*., and the book itself as Nzula, Potekhin and Zusmanovich [1933] 1979, *op cit*.

[193] Skota, editor and compiler, [? 1930] n.d, *op cit*., p. 425, also see p. 145

[194] For example, in the *Workers' Dreadnought* of the Workers' Socialist Federation: *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 10 January 1920, "The Colour Bar". Also see Rall, 2003, *op cit.*, pp. 193-195

of the ANC's Council of Chiefs.[195] Mvabaza remained active in the South African Native National Congress, a loyal member of moderate views: it was Mvabaza who proposed the ANC flag of black, green and gold.[196] Ngojo also remained active, strongly opposing any confrontation with the authorities.[197]

The Industrial Workers of Africa and the Transvaal Native Congress had started to part ways. The Industrial Workers of Africa was reported to have enrolled many "fresh members" in July 1919,[198] and was still operative in Johannesburg in mid-1920, [199] mainly as a small syndicalist circle based amongst Africans. It never became the One Big Union, but it succeeded in spreading syndicalist ideas amongst many Africans.

8.6. The Industrial Workers of Africa, the ICU, and the 1919 dockworkers' strike in Cape Town

In the meantime, the Industrial Workers of Africa remained active in Johannesburg, and spread to Cape Town. Police reports indicate that the union was still operative in Johannesburg in mid-1920, although less as a union than as a more socialist circle amongst Africans headed by Thibedi.[200] By this stage Cetiwe and Kraai had relocated to Cape Town. In the wake of the anti-pass campaign on the Witwatersrand, the two men set out to establish a branch of the Industrial Workers of Africa. Given that the docks employed the largest single workforce in the city, including the majority of African workers, it was an obvious starting point. The first Industrial Workers of Africa meeting in Cape Town was held on the docks on 10 July 1919.[201]

Peter Wickens has suggested that the local Industrial Workers of Africa was "hostile to Europeans".[202] This is difficult to reconcile with the activities of Cetiwe and Kraai in Johannesburg, their membership of the International Socialist League, and Cetiwe's stated view that if "[w]e now think we can do without white fellow workers'" then we "are making a great mistake".[203]

This does not, of course, suggest that the outlook of the pair might not have changed at some point. This is, indeed, what Wickens suggests.[204] Musson, citing Wickens, argues that the Industrial Workers of Africa were "defiantly African" because of experiences in the Transvaal: she lists the betrayals of White workers in the "1918-1919 railway and dockworkers' strikes in Kimberley and the ports of Cape Town and Durban", and the failure of the International Socialist League to mobilise White labour support for the 1918 general strike movement.[205]

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[195] "Letanka, Daniel Simon", in Verwey, editor, 1995, *op cit.*, pp. 137-9
[196] "Mvabaza, Thomas Levi", in Verwey, editor, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 195
[197] At the 1925 annual congress of the ANC, for example, held in the wake of the shooting of Africans at Bloemfontein, he opposed Mvabaza being sent to Bloemfontein as he "would only incite the natives to further disturbances", but was mollified when told that Mvabaza's mission was merely to "help the authorities in restoring order": Divisional Criminal Investigations Officer, Witwatersrand Division, 25 April 1925, letter to Deputy Commissioner, South African Police, Witwatersrand Division, report on annual congress of the ANC, Johannesburg, in Department of Justice file, JUS 268 1/387/13, National Archives, Pretoria
[198] *The International*, 25 July 1919
[199] Wickens, 1974a, *op cit.*, p. 395, note 27
[200] Wickens, 1974a, '*op cit*., p. 395, note 27
[201] *The International*, 25 July 1919
[202] Wickens, 1974a, *op cit*., pp. 394-5; Wickens, 1978, o*p cit.* p. 27; also see Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., p. 54
[203] Quoted in Johnstone, 1979, *op cit*., p. 262
[204] Wickens, 1974a, *op cit*., pp. 394-5; Wickens, 1978, o*p cit.* p. 27; also see Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., p. 54
[205] Musson, 1989, *op cit.*, p. 27

However, there is no evidence that Cetiwe and Kraai became chauvinist nationalists before or after moving to Cape Town. The record for the Transvaal shows no sign of a shift from syndicalism to a chauvinist nationalism: no such change is reported in the columns of the *International*, which was exceedingly sensitive to any signs of colour prejudice and nationalism; nor do other records show the supposed shift.[206] Musson's list of embittering experiences is also not very convincing. The Industrial Workers of Africa had no connection to movements in Durban and Kimberley, nor, it seems, to railwaymen; the dockworkers only struck in Cape Town at the end of 1919, well after the Industrial Workers of Africa's supposedly "defiantly African" stance; White workers from the International Socialist League did not betray the Industrial Workers of Africa, but were jointly prosecuted with Cetiwe and Kraai in 1918.

In Cape Town, Cetiwe and Kraai immediately established close links with the largely White Industrial Socialist League,[207] and 10 July 1919 a meeting was organised with the help of the Industrial Socialist League.[208] They managed to establish a base in the Ndabeni location, and in late July 1919, the *International* reported that a number of "fresh members" had enrolled in the union in Cape Town.[209] The recruits were, it seems, mainly African dockworkers. Against this background, Wickens' sole evidence for the Industrial Workers of Africa's supposed an Africanist position– a single article in the *Cape Times*, which claim the union was "said to have" objected to Whites[210] – seems somewhat unconvincing.

Both Cetiwe and Kraai retained their links with the South African Native National Congress. At the first meeting on the docks, plans were made to get "well-known native leaders" to address future meetings.[211] An overlap between the Cape section of the Industrial Workers of Africa, centred on Ndabeni, and the branch of the Cape Native Congress in that township, soon developed. This paralleled the earlier overlap between the Industrial Workers of Africa and the Transvaal Native Congress on the Witwatersrand. The Cape Native Congress was a fairly loose body, and was only formally constituted in 1919, although it had existed for several years, and had been the main channel to articulate African grievances before the emergence of the ICU and the local Industrial Workers of Africa.[212] It must be noted, too, that the Industrial Workers of Africa was also very loosely organised, with very little contact between the Cape and Johannesburg sections.

Relations with the ICU, which was founded in January 1919, were more complex. The key figure in the ICU was Kadalie, an educated Nyasa immigrant. The huge network of mission schools in Nyasaland, coupled with a lack of job opportunities that country, meant that educated Nyasas tended to emigrate elsewhere, often becoming employed as African mining clerks across in the region.[213] Kadalie was a fair

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[206] I have in mind, specifically, the records kept by police detectives on the activities of the Industrial Workers of Africa, the International Socialist League, and the Transvaal Native Congress: Department of Justice, JD 3/527/17, *op cit.*; Department of Justice, JUS 526, 3/527/17, *op cit.*; Government Native Labour Bureau, GNLB 278 354/17, *op cit.*
[207] Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 5
[208] *The International*, 25 July 1919
[209] *The International*, 25 July 1919. Also see Wickens, 1974a, *op cit*., p. 393
[210] Wickens' source is an article from the *Cape Times* from the 9th October 1919: see Wickens, 1974a, *op cit*., pp. 394-5 and Wickens, 1978, o*p cit.* p. 27
[211] *The International*, 25 July 1919.
[212] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., p. 51 note 3, 52
[213] Van Onselen, 1976, *op cit*., pp. 118-121, 206-7

example. He was born in Chifira Village near the Bandawe Mission Station on the shores of Lake Nyasa, and christened on Easter Day, 1896.[214] His father apparently hoped he would become a minister.[215] Part of a prominent African chiefly lineage, Clements Kadalie was trained at the Livingston Missionary Institution as a schoolteacher, and worked at that job from 1912 to 1915, when he decided to leave his country "in quest of a higher civilized life".[216]

Kadalie went first to Mozambique, followed by Southern Rhodesia, where he worked as a clerk in various jobs from 1916 to 1917 and was radicalised by White prejudice and the job colour bar.[217] In 1918, he arrived in South Africa, where he met Alfred F. Batty, a White trade unionist who had just formed his party as a breakaway from the SA Labour Party that opposed the colour bar. Kadalie's social background was very close to those of the leaders of the South African Native National Congress. His views were complex, and not always consistent, varying from conservative to radical nationalism, from moderate trade unionism to Communism and syndicalism. Syndicalism would be an important influence on Kadalie and the ICU, but he was also influenced by figures like Marcus Garvey.

Kadalie was unable speak any of the local African languages, and was often taken to be "an American Negro".[218] Perhaps because of this situation, Kadalie was associated with local Coloureds and the West Indian immigrant communities in his early years in Cape Town. The early ICU, too, was largely a Coloured union, and at least ten of thirteen office-bearers in 1920 were Coloureds.[219] Clements Kadalie initially resided with his brother, Robert Victor Kadalie, who had a Coloured wife, and he later married a Coloured woman, a Mrs. Ever B. Kadalie.

Kadalie developed close connections with several White trade unionists associated with the Cape Federation of Labour and a breakaway from the SA Labour Party called the Democratic Labour Party, which was formed in late 1915 or early 1916.[220] This body, which was "confined to Cape Town", shared the SA Labour Party's parliamentary socialism, but rejected its racially discriminatory policies, favouring an interracial labour movement and an expanded African and Coloured franchise.[221] It was, in other words, roughly the same as Norrie's Social Democratic Party in Durban.

The key figures were Alfred F. Batty, who had stood unsuccessfully for the SA Labour Party in 1915, and two other White trade unionists, F. Rayner and J.H. Dean. Batty was an organiser for the Democratic Labour Party and an Amalgamated Society of Engineers representative in the Cape Federation of Labour Unions; Dean represented the Operative Bakers' Union, was a trustee for the Federation, and helped organise a number of other unions; Rayner represented the Bioscope Operators' union and was involved in

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[214] Skota, editor and compiler, n.d. [1966], *op cit*., pp. 60-61; Roth, 1999, *op cit*., pp. 477-480; also see Kadalie, 1970, *op cit.*

[215] Wickens, 1973, *op cit.*, p. 13

[216] Kadalie, 1970, *op cit*., p. 33

[217] Kadalie, 1970, *op cit.,* pp. 34-7; Ranger, 1970, *op cit*., p. 150

[218] Kadalie, 1970, *op cit.,* pp. 54-5

[219] Wickens, 1978, *op cit.,* pp. 39-40, note 35

[220] Darcy Du Toit, 1981, *Capital and Labour in South Africa: class struggle in the 1970s*, Kegan Paul International, London, Boston, p. 102; Sheridan W. Johns, 1967, 'The Birth of Non-white Trade Unionism in South Africa', *Race,* vol.11 no. 2, p. 179. There are several versions of how Batty and Kadalie met, and of their respective roles in the organising the ICU: see Wickens, 1973, *op cit.*, pp. 2-5

[221] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 8-12, and see p. 9 note 1 for excerpts from its programme

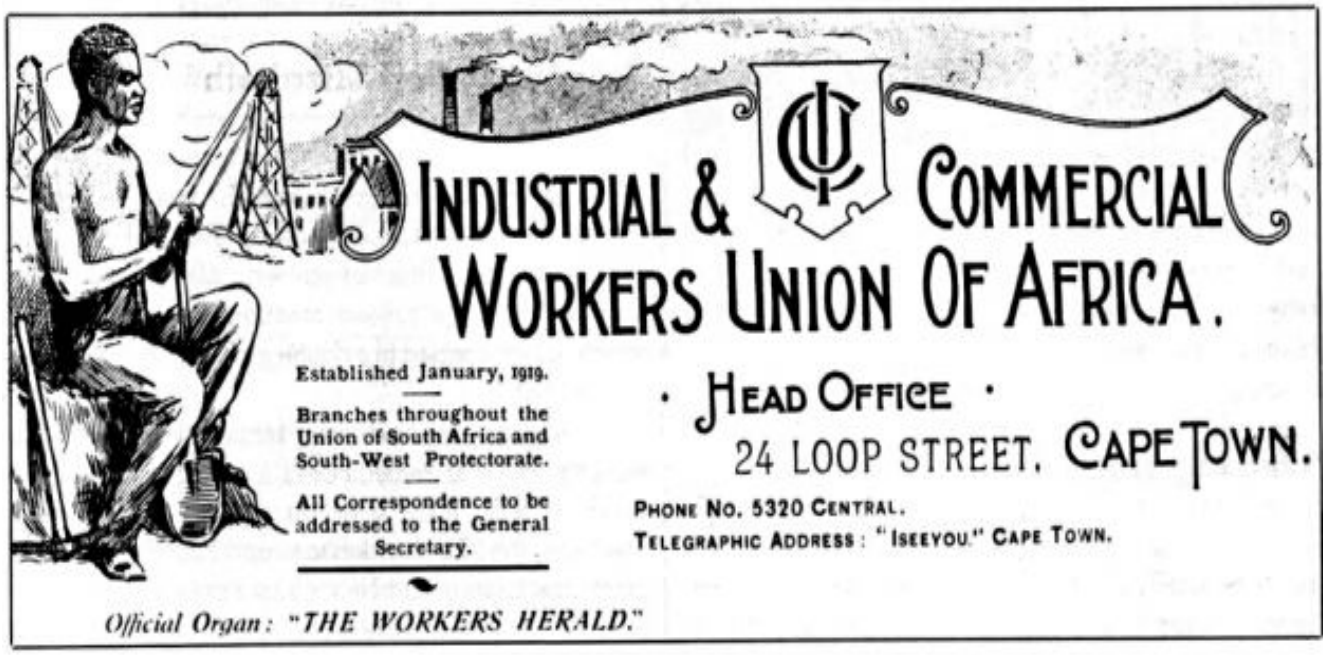

Figure thirty-three: The logo of the ICU, which later incorporated the Industrial Workers of Africa and a version of the 1908 IWW *Preamble*

Source: Luli Callinicos, 1987, *Working Life: factories, townships and popular culture on the Rand, 1886-1940*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, p. 107

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forming a Tenants' Protection League in 1920.[222] Dean may have been a member of the SDF as well.[223]

Kadalie apparently met Batty in a chance encounter in 1918, just prior to a parliamentary by-election in the local Cape Town Harbour constituency, which Batty was contesting for his party.[224] Kadalie was quickly enrolled as one of Batty's electoral agents, mobilising the African and Coloured vote.[225] The ICU was formed in the middle of January the next year, with twenty-four members, mainly "Coloured men engaged at the docks".[226] Kadalie was secretary, and Batty, Dean and Rayner were also involved. Batty was genuinely in favour of trade unionism amongst Coloureds and Africans, and apparently also hoped the new union could provide an electoral machine amongst African and Coloured voters.[227]

The ICU was invited to the 1919 congress of the Cape Federation of Labour Unions, where it was represented by Dean and one Joe Paulse.[228] It did not, however, affiliate. For the remainder of the year, Kadalie worked in various jobs, including packing and delivery, but would become a full-time ICU official at the start of 1920. A charming and charismatic man, he demonstrated a talent for fiery oratory: his speeches

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[222] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., p. 7 notes 1 and 2
[223] Wickens cited a police report from 1920 to this effect, although he described the SDF as "Marxist"; Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., p. 94 note 4
[224] Kadalie 1970, *op cit.,* pp. 39-40; Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit*., pp. 153-4
[225] Trapido, 1970, *op cit*. pp. 12-13
[226] Kadalie, 1970, *op cit.,* p. 40; Trapido, 1970, *op cit*., pp. 12-13
[227] Kadalie, 1970, *op cit.,* p. 40; Trapido, 1970, *op cit*., pp. 12-13
[228] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 54-5

were "very lengthy, very rapidly delivered, very vivid, often amusing, usually abusive and always in English".[229]

In Cape Town, Kadalie also came into contact with Berman and Walt of the Industrial Socialist League, who aided the early ICU – at least until the arrival of the Cetiwe and Kraai in the middle of the year.[230] Police reports spoke in alarmed terms of Kadalie's contacts with the White radicals, claiming that he was "in constant negotiations and communications, and conducting propaganda with them, identifying … with the revolutionary movement".[231] Such claims were clearly exaggerations, revealing more about official concerns about Bolshevism, Jews and "native unrest" than Kadalie. The influence of Berman and Walt on the ICU was probably limited, and Kadalie's own political views were never very consistent, and the White activists to whom he was closest were the men of the moderate Democratic Labour Party. Yet it is also clear from the subsequent development of the UICU that syndicalism did have some impact on the union.

With the arrival of Cetiwe and Kraai, the Industrial Socialist League encouraged dockworkers to join the Industrial Workers of Africa in preference to Kadalie's ICU.[232] Relations between the Industrial Workers of Africa and the ICU unions have been described as "evidently somewhat cool",[233] perhaps because the two unions began competing for members.[234] The distrust that many members of the Cape Native Congress felt towards Kadalie, a newcomer, an unknown quality, and a foreigner who had attracted Africans dissatisfied with the older organisation,[235] probably also played a role. The possibility of amalgamating the two unions was discussed in August 1919, but broke down because the Industrial Workers of Africa opposed links with the Democratic Labour Party and the Cape Federation of Labour Unions. This was probably mainly due to their traditional hostility towards anything that smacked of conventional White trade unionism or the SA Labour Party.[236] The respective size of the two unions is hard to judge, but the ICU claimed around a thousand members in October 1919.[237]

The two unions continued on their separate ways, until a strike in December 1919 brought them together once more. In December 1919, the Cape Federation of Labour Unions called on all workers to campaign against the export of foodstuffs to Europe as a protest against the rapidly rising cost of living. This campaign reflected the simplistic view, shared by Kadalie[238] and Stuart, that the post-war rise in food prices was the result of the law of supply and demand: excessive exports led to local shortages which led to high prices. Both the Industrial Workers of Africa and the ICU were consulted by Stuart, and agreed to lend their support to the proposed campaign,[239] as did the NURHAS, which was outside the Federation.

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[229] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., p. 17
[230] Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 4; Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 89-90
[231] Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 4
[232] *The International*, 25 July 1919; also see Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 5
[233] Wickens, 1978, *op cit.,* p. 27; cf. Johns, 1995, *op cit.,* p. 95, and Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., p. 53
[234] Du Toit, 1981, *op cit.*, p. 102; Johns, 1967, *op cit.*, p. 179; Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., p. 53
[235] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., p. 53
[236] Wickens suggests that the issue was the presence of Whites in the Democratic Labour Party, but, as noted earlier, there is little support for sort of explanation: Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 53-4, 107; Wickens, 1978, *op cit.,* p. 27
[237] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 56-7
[238] Kadalie, 1970, *op cit.,* p. 41
[239] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 63-5; Wickens, 1978, *op cit.,* p. 29

A strike began on the docks on 17 December 1919, which lasted nearly 14 days, in which the three unions brought out 3,000 workers.[240] A strike committee was set up to co-ordinate the actions, and was chaired by Dean, with Rayner as treasurer.[241] The Industrial Workers of Africa and the ICU also used the occasion to demand a pay rise from four shillings to eight shillings-and-six pence a day for labourers, a demand that was not supported by the NURHAS (nor by the whole strike committee).

The role of the Industrial Workers of Africa in the events has been largely ignored in the literature. Eddie Roux notes the presence of the Industrial Workers of Africa, but dismisses the union as unimportant and ""presently absorbed" into the ICU.[242] Helen Bradford's history does not mention the presence of the Industrial Workers of Africa on the docks at all.[243] Kadalie's autobiography, *My Life and the ICU*, [244] is partly to blame for the situation. An invaluable source, it is somewhat unreliable, being marred by Kadalie's continual attempts to claim sole credit for events. If Kadalie's account is to be believed, there simply was no other union amongst African and Coloured workers on the docks besides the ICU, and he, and he alone, mobilised African and Coloured strikers.

An uncritical reliance on Kadalie's version of events leads to a misleading picture. As already noted, the Industrial Workers of Africa was an established body, and had clashed with the ICU on several occasions. The Cape press certainly regarded the Industrial Workers of Africa as a force of some importance on the docks during 1919 and 1920.[245] When private employers at the harbour offered a wage increase of between one and two shillings a day, both the Industrial Workers of Africa and the ICU rejected the offer,[246] effectively closing off the possibility of a negotiated solution.

Questions must be raised, then, about Kadalie's claim that the ICU alone was active on the docks. It was, moreover, at a joint meeting of the Industrial Workers of Africa, the ICU and the Cape Native Congress in Ndabeni on December 16 (a public holiday) that the two unions adopted the wage demand. This meeting in the Industrial Workers of Africa's stronghold was attended by over 800 people, and was chaired by Kraai.[247] Besides passing resolutions against the high cost of living and the low wages being paid, the meeting endorsed a resolution, put forward by Cetiwe, to again approach the employers to demand wage increases for both Africans and Coloureds.

Both the Industrial Workers of Africa and the ICU played a role in mobilising strikers,[248] as did the NURHAS. The strikers were a cross-section of the main groups at the docks, including railway workers at the local railway goods yard. The NURHAS was not very wholehearted in its support of the action and the White workers seem to have stayed at work: its main support seems to have been to encourage its members not

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[240] Du Toit, 1981, *op cit*, p. 105; Johns, 1967, *op cit*., p. 180; Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit.,* pp. 132, 154
[241] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., p. 60; also see Kadalie, 1970, *op cit*., p. 43
[242] Eddie Roux [1964] 1978, *op cit*., p. 154
[243] Bradford, 1987, *op cit.,* p.5
[244] Clements Kadalie, 1970, *op cit.* p.42
[245] This is quite clear from, for example, the press reports cited in Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 50-129
[246] Wickens, 1978, *op cit.,* p. 30
[247] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., p. 67; Wickens, 1978, *op cit.,* p. 30
[248] Du Toit, 1981, *op cit.*, p. 105; Johns, 1967, *op cit.*, p. 180; Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit.*, pp. 132, 154.

to scab on the strikers.[249] A number of supervisory, skilled and long-service workers of all races also remained at their jobs, where they were helped by casual labour hired during the strike.[250] The strike, which was marked by daily mass assemblies on the Grand Parade in the morning, followed by regular evening meetings on Adderley Street,[251] was therefore mainly an African and Coloured affair, although the strike committee was interracial. The strike committee was able to use the offices of the Cape Federation of Labour Unions on the corner of Darling and Plein streets for meetings. [252]

Perhaps because of the involvement of the NURHAS and the Cape Federation of Labour Unions, a great deal of support was forthcoming to the strikers. The Democratic Labour Party and the Industrial Socialist League were both involved in solidarity work with the strike, and with the Cape Federation of Labour Unions, and the South African Industrial Federation helped raise regular strike pay and food for the strikers.[253] So, too, did the International Socialist League.[254] Waterston, now an SA Labour Party member of parliament, and Walter Madeley, another party parliamentarian, sent £50, which was used for strike pay for the African and Coloured strikers.[255]

Government officials were sent to Cape Town to advise the Africans to stop striking, but a meeting in the Docks Location was a failure.[256] Once the government announced that it would stop exports of foodstuffs, the NURHAS withdrew, and began scabbing on the African and Coloured strikers, who stayed out in order to win the wage increase. Troops were then despatched to Cape Town from the army base at nearby Wynberg. Hearing the news, Kadalie claimed, Stuart closed the union offices and fled in an "excited" state.[257] Policemen and soldiers paraded through the town, and subsequently began to evict African strikers from the Docks Location on Christmas Eve.[258] The men, mainly migrant workers, were moved to a temporary camp at Milnerton, and it is probable that they would have been sent back to the rural areas had the strike continued.[259]

The strike began to break down after Christmas. Kadalie claimed the strike was called off "three weeks" after it began, mainly because the ICU lacked the funds and solidarity to continue.[260] This is not quite accurate. The strike was, in fact, called off on Saturday, 27 December 1919, just over a week after it started. Neither Kadalie, nor the ICU, nor the strike committee made the decision to end the strike.

What seems to have happened is that the Industrial Workers of Africa and the Cape Native Congress had bypassed the strike committee: claiming to be "the real leaders of the people, they made a separate deal with the authorities earlier that day.[261] In return for a promise by the Mayor of Cape Town and the

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[249] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 70-2; Wickens, 1978, *op cit.*, pp. 31-2
[250] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., p. 70
[251] Kadalie, 1970, *op cit*., p. 42; Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 69-74; Wickens 1978, *op cit.,* p. 31
[252] Kadalie, 1970, *op cit*., p. 42
[253] Wickens, 1978, *op cit.,* p. 33
[254] Wickens, 1973, *op cit.*, p. 80
[255] Kadalie, 1970, *op cit*., p. 42
[256] Kadalie, 1970, *op cit*., p. 43
[257] Kadalie, 1970, *op cit*., p. 43
[258] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 73-79
[259] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 82-3
[260] Kadalie, 1980, *op cit*., p. 44
[261] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 79-80; Wickens, 1978, *op cit.,* p. 33

Assistant General Manager of the Railways and Harbours to hold a joint conference of employers and workers to investigate African and Coloured wages in the Cape Peninsula, they had agreed to go back to work.

This behaviour was hardly in the best interests of working class solidarity during a strike, and demonstrated a tendency to put the interests of the Industrial Workers of Africa and Cape Native Congress ahead of the broader interests of the strikers as a whole. Rivalry with the ICU doubtless played an important role. Faced with this action, and citing the scabbing of the NURHAS and the "half-hearted support of the Federation of Trades", the strike committee called off the strike on Saturday evening.[262] When the decision was announced in Ndabeni the following day, it "encountered considerable credulity and opposition",[263] and the ICU was quite free in its criticisms of the actions of the Cape Native Congress and the Industrial Workers of Africa. Resistance to the decision to go back to work continued onto the Monday, but on Tuesday, December 30, most of the men were back at work and the evicted dockers began to return to the Docks Location.[264]

Overall, the Cape Town dockworkers' strike for higher wages was a failure, although it showed the ability of African and Coloured dockworkers to organise a large and peaceful strike. The *International* blamed the defeat on the failure of the Cape Federation of Labour Unions and the NURHAS to support the African and Coloured strikers, and its annual conference, meeting in January 1920, passed a resolution condemning the "shameful scabbing on Native and Coloured strikers by white workers".[265] The government also quickly reneged on its commitment to end food exports, while the African and Coloured strikers failed to win the wage demands. Moreover, considerable rancour developed between the different labour organisations that made future struggles difficult.

There is no evidence to support the contention that the Industrial Workers of Africa was absorbed into the ICU during the strike.[266] The end of the strike, on the contrary, showed that unity between the two unions was as distant as ever. Rather than link to the ICU, the Industrial Workers of Africa spent the first part of 1920 strengthening its links with the Cape Native Congress. In May 1920 that year, it was admitted "as a branch of Congress" at the first annual conference of the Cape organisation.[267]

Cetiwe and Kraai clearly intended to attend the upcoming national conference of the South African Native National Congress in Queenstown. Here, it seems, they intended to link up with their former associates in the Transvaal Native Congress and try to win the nationalist organisation to a third attempt at an African general strike, following the failures of 1918 and 1919. Such an approach was perfectly consistent with Cetiwe and Kraai's ongoing association with the left wing of the South African Native National Congress, and their hopes were perhaps raised by the activities of Msimang in Bloemfontein from 1919 onwards.

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[262] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., p. 79
[263] Wickens, 1978, *op cit.,* p. 33
[264] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 79-80
[265] Eddie Roux [1964] 1978, *op cit*., p. 155
[266] Cf. Du Toit, 1981, *op cit.*, p. 102; Johns, 1967, *op cit.*, p.180; Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit.*, p. 154
[267] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., p. 52 note 1

At the same time, it is clear that the union had few links with the Industrial Socialist League, which seemed to have started focusing its energies on the Cape Federation of Labour Unions. In 1920, the Industrial Socialist League members also joined the local May Day rally, the first ever in Cape Town, which was organised mainly by the Cape Federation of Labour Unions. The Industrial Socialist League carried banners such as "Follow the Lead of Free Russia" while the Young Socialist Society had one advocating the need to "Prepare the Young Generation for Socialism", and members spoke from the platforms at the end of the march.[268]

Again, radical resolutions were passed. The rally ended with a mass meeting at the Grand Parade in Cape Town, which adopted a resolution clearly inspired by the Industrial Socialist League. All present would "prepare by organisations of industries to be in a position to carry on production and distribution in the time of capitalist dissolution, through the DICTATORSHIP of the Working Class into the Co-operative Commonwealth".[269] By contrast, the Industrial Socialist League does not seem to have played any role the Cape Native Congress' first annual conference later that month.

8.7. Syndicalist unions, the ICU, and the project of "one great union of all skilled and unskilled workers of South Africa, south of the Zambesi"

Although the Industrial Workers of Africa was an important force on the Cape Town docks in 1919 and early 1920, there is no doubt that the ICU rapidly outpaced the other union from 1920 onwards. If Kadalie made no serious intellectual contribution to the labour movement, he was a skilled organiser, and was very effective in securing publicity for the union and in drawing together the emerging African labour movement under the ICU banner.

Rather than work through the existing South African Native National Congress, like Cetiwe and Kraai, Kadalie aimed to build his own national organisation. He contacted Msimang in March 1919, establishing friendly ties, and in August 1919, invited Msimang to address a meeting of the ICU in Cape Town.[270] Msimang was introduced to the meeting as an ICU organiser, and discussions between Kadalie and Msimang saw the two men agree to try to unify the incipient African workers' movements across the country. The Industrial Workers of Africa was also contacted in August, as noted earlier, but no agreement on a merger could be reached. By contrast, Msimang's Native and Coloured Workers' Association seems to have adopted the ICU constitution and name.

The January 1920 annual conference of the ICU was a big success, with four hundred members present.[271] The union claimed several thousand members, including a thousand in Bloemfontein alone, although these figures may be questioned. Later that year, Jimmy La Guma, then working at Lüderitz in South West Africa, contacted Kadalie and joined the ICU, establishing a Lüderitz branch in December 1920. This was the first time the ICU had spread beyond the borders of South Africa, but by no means the last.

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[268] M. Walt, 12 June 1920, "May Day in Cape Town", *The Workers' Dreadnought*
[269] Quoted in Nicol, 1984, *op cit*., p. 98
[270] Trapido, 1970, *op cit*., p. 13; Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 98-107
[271] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 83-4, 107

Jimmy La Guma's development into a trade union militant and a socialist in the 1910s, and the regional growth of the ICU in the 1920s and 1930s is discussed in a subsequent chapter.

Kadalie continued to maintain links with the Democratic Labour Party in 1920, and was a speaker at a meeting organised by that party in early February on the high cost of food.[272] Members of the party, along with the African Peoples Organisation and, it seems, the Cape Federation of Labour Unions, helped oppose an attempt to deport Kadalie as an undesirable immigrant later that year.[273] Relations with the Democratic Labour Party soured in 1921, and were broken off. Efforts were also made to reconcile with the Industrial Workers of Africa in 1920. In March 1920, a joint meeting by the two unions at the Grand Parade drew three hundred people, and called on the government to convene a conference of the unions and the Railways and Harbours Administration.[274]

At the May 1920 annual conference of the South African Native National Congress in Queenstown in the eastern Cape, Kraai tabled a resolution for a minimum wage of 10-shillings-a-day for all African workers, to be enforced by a general strike on July 31 if necessary.[275] While supported by Mabaso and Mvabaza, the resolution met with considerable opposition.

That Cetiwe and Kraai were able to use the Cape Native Congress as a vehicle for their ideas suggests a real influence in that body, perhaps similar to that established in the Transvaal Native Congress in 1918 and 1919. On the other hand, the limits of the Industrial Workers of Africa influence in the Cape may be judged form the fact that other delegates from that province were particularly prominent in opposing the resolution for a general strike. The conservative nationalists were firmly in control, and their main interest was in the organisation's third deputation to Britain.[276]

Msimang then proposed a general labour conference in Bloemfontein. This was not greeted with much enthusiasm by most of the delegates at Queenstown, but was eventually supported on the grounds that it was the correct forum to discuss a possible general strike.[277] The "Conference of non-European workers" was then organised in Bloemfontein in July 1920. Msimang was the main organiser, and many delegates present were from Bloemfontein. Also present was Samuel Masabalala from Port Elizabeth, now treasurer of the Cape Native Congress.[278]

From Cape Town came seven delegates, representing the Industrial Workers of Africa and the ICU, including Cetiwe, Kraai and Kadalie.[279] There were no delegates from Natal or the Transvaal, with the exception of Charlotte Maxeke of the nationalist Bantu Women's National League of South Africa, which had

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[272] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., p. 84
[273] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 90-93; for Kadalie's version of events, see Kadalie, 1970, *op cit.*, pp. 45-7
[274] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., p. 84
[275] Wickens, 1973, op *cit*., p. 109; Wickens, 1974a, *op cit.*, p. 394
[276] Bonner, n.d., (2), *op cit*., p. 5
[277] Bonner, n.d., (2), *op cit*., p. 6; Trapido, 1970, *op cit*., p. 13; Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., p. 108
[278] On the events in Port Elizabeth, see Gary F. Baines, 1991, "From Populism to Unionism: the emergence and nature of Port Elizabeth's Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union, 1918-1920", Journal of Southern African Studies, vol.17, no. 4, and Noor Nieftagodien, 1994 "Popular Organisation's in Port Elizabeth, 1926-1932", Honours dissertation, History, University of the Witwatersrand.
[279] Wickens, 1974a, *op cit.*, p. 395

some links to the South African Native National Congress.[280] The Johannesburg section of the Industrial Workers of Africa was not present. There were also delegates from Kimberley who had joined Msimang's organisation.[281] There were around thirty delegates in total, two-thirds from branches formed by Msimang, or under his influence.[282]

Wickens suggested that the absence of Transvaal delegates reflected the failure of strong African unions to emerge on the Witwatersrand, and a general decline of the Industrial Workers of Africa and the Transvaal Native Congress from the middle of 1919 onwards.[283] He suggested similar reasons to explain the absence of Natal delegates. This explanation has some merit, but is only partially correct. There were a number of other strong unions across the country that did not attend the 1920 Bloemfontein conference. These included syndicalist unions in the Cape, Natal and the Transvaal: the Clothing Workers' Industrial Union (Durban, Kimberley, and Johannesburg), the Durban Indian Workers' Industrial Union, the Horse Drivers' Union (Kimberley), and the Sweet and Jam Workers' Industrial Union (Cape Town). On the other hand, the unions that attended from Bloemfontein and Port Elizabeth were not self-evidently much stronger than, for example, the Industrial Workers of Africa in Johannesburg.

The view that the absence from the Bloemfontein conference of particular cities and provinces was basically a reflection of the absence of viable organisations from those areas is, therefore, incomplete. The Bloemfontein conference cannot be regarded as a census of contemporary trade unionism amongst Africans, Coloureds and Indians: some sort of selection took place. It might be supposed that the conference organisers were uninterested in the aforementioned syndicalist unions because of their largely Coloured and Indian membership, but such a view would be mistaken. The ICU was heavily based amongst Coloureds, both Msimang and Masabalala's unions specifically sought Coloured members, and the Bloemfontein meeting was directed at all races of "non-European workers".

The most likely explanation for the absence of particular areas and organisations from the Bloemfontein conference is rather simple. The organisers could not, and did not, invite every single possible African, Coloured or Indian union operating in South Africa at the time. Rather, they recruited those labour unions with which they were directly in contact, or were indirectly linked through the organisations and networks with which they were associated. Kadalie and Msimang were in direct contact with one another, and each was able to mobilise other unions and structures with which they were in contact, such as the Industrial Workers of Africa in Cape Town. Masabalala, like Msimang, was a member of the South African Native National Congress.

On the other hand, the other syndicalist unions in Cape Town, Durban, and Kimberley did not have any direct links to Kadalie or Msimang, and their Coloured or Indian members had no links to the South African Native National Congress. Gomas was an exception, having joined the Cape Native Congress and, it seems, the ICU in 1919 or 1920.[284] If he did, indeed, join the ICU in Kimberley, he was joining the branch

[280] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 109-111
[281] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 132-133
[282] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., p. 145
[283] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 127-129
[284] Cf. Musson, 1989, *op cit*., pp. 20-2

established by Msimang's organisation. However, he was not very active in the Cape Native Congress in Kimberley, which was a conservative body led by Plaatje. He does not seem to have attended the Queenstown conference of the South African Native National Congress. He was also drifting into crime at the time, and was jailed later that year, as noted earlier, following a burglary. His family moved to Cape Town after his release.

Given that Kadalie and Msimang did not have contacts in Natal, and given the Natal Native Congress did not throw up any trade unionists at this time, the absence of delegates from that province is easily understood. The case of the Transvaal is more complex, but may be partly explained in light of the developments on the Witwatersrand discussed in the previous chapter and in Section 8.5. The tightening grip of the conservative nationalists in the South African Native National Congress resulted in the moderates moving rightwards – a shift exemplified by Mvabaza's shift from calling for strike action in 1918 to joining the South African Native National Congress's third deputation to Britain in 1919.

Secondly – and it is here that Wickens' explanation for the absence of Transvaal delegates is very useful – the Transvaal Native Congress suffered a general decline after the anti-pass campaign of 1919. While the 1919 deputation to Britain got some favourable press from the radical left,[285] it was a failure and proved both demoralising[286] and crippling. Unwilling to break with an approach that was demonstrably unsuccessful, the dominant faction in the Transvaal Native Congress, the conservative nationalist group, was paralysed.

Finally, there had been a withdrawal of the syndicalists from the Transvaal Native Congress in the middle of 1919: Thibedi had tried to use the collapse of the anti-pass campaign to build the Industrial Workers of Africa as a rival to the Transvaal Native Congress, while Cetiwe and Kraai had left for Cape Town. There were, in short, few people left in the Transvaal Native Congress in 1920 who were attracted to the Bloemfontein meeting announced at the Queenstown conference, while those might have been interested, like Thibedi, were apparently outside the provincial organisation at the time.

The noticeable absence of the South African Native National Congress – it did not send an official delegation; neither did any of its provincial sections[287] – from the Bloemfontein conference is easily understood in this context. Of course, there were members of the organisation present, including Cetiwe, Kraai and Msimang, but they attended in their capacity as trade unionists: the absence of an official delegation reflected the decisive victory of the conservative nationalists at the Queenstown congress. The South African Native National Congress (renamed the ANC in 1923) spent most of the 1920s and 1930s as an inoffensive and ineffectual body, intent on forging an alliance between the educated elite and the chiefs, and overshadowed by the ICU.

Despite the absence of most of the syndicalist unions operating in South Africa at the time, it is striking that many people at the Bloemfontein conference saw the gathering as an attempt to form One Big Union. Looking back on the meeting in 1923, for example, Kadalie reflected: "we had the 'One Big Union

[285] For example, *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 10 January 1920, "The Colour Bar"
[286] Wickens stresses the role of the failed delegation in leading to the decline of the Transvaal Native Congress from its "high water mark" in 1919: Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 119-120
[287] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 109-110

Movement' in view".[288] Indeed, the first item on the agenda was the formation of a single union for "all the non-European workers of Africa south of the Sahara", and a lengthy discussion led to the following resolution:[289]

> That it is the opinion of this representative Conference of non-European workers to form one great union of skilled and unskilled workers of South Africa, south of the Zambesi, and that it be an instruction to all unions represented in this Conference to carry out this great principle and recommend or approach all other unions not represented with a view thereto, based on the following, among other, objects:-
>
> … to bring together all classes of labour, skilled and unskilled, in every sphere of life whatsoever … to obtain and maintain for them equitable rates of wages, and reasonable conditions of labour, to regulate the relations between employer and employed and to endeavour to settle differences between them by amicable and conciliatory means … to promote co-operation, insurance, sick and out-of-work benefits, old-age pensions, and such other objects as the Union may from time to time determine …

There was more than a hint of syndicalist influence here. Given that it is unrealistic to attribute these views entirely to the efforts of men like Cetiwe and Kraai, who did not play a terribly central role at the congress, it would seem that syndicalist ideas emerged partly independently of the organised syndicalist movement, with an influence on a section of Africans and Coloureds. This parallels developments amongst White workers in the 1913 and 1914 general strikes, where syndicalist ideas emerged even in the absence of an organised syndicalist movement.

The unions present were amalgamated as a confederation called the "Industrial and Commercial Workers Coloured and Native Workers Union of Africa", or ICWU, and decided to avoid "political" issues, a particularly difficult task given the centrality of the South African State to industrial relations. Nonetheless, it was probably with the hope of avoiding repression – the commitment to "regulate the relations between employer and employed and … settle differences … by amicable and conciliatory means" – that congress advised delegates to make only moderate wage demands.[290]

The immediate aftermath of the conference was "euphoria",[291] The Industrial Workers of Africa and the ICU held a mass meeting in Cape Town on July 25, which resolved to set up a "non-European Workers' Federation, to include Indians, Malays, Coloured and natives … to work and manage its own affairs independently of the whites' Federation of Trades".[292] A newspaper was also established, *the Black Man*,

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[288] Kadalie in 1923, as quoted in Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., p. 97
[289] Quoted in Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 145-146
[290] Webster, 1974, *op cit*., pp. 8-9
[291] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 152-3
[292] Quoted in Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., p. 153

which was edited by S.M Bennet Ncwana, a "rather strange figure",[293] a paper praised by the *International* for recognising that industrial organisation was necessary for freeing African labour from its "semi-serf" conditions.[294]

The Bloemfontein labour conference also attracted a great deal of attention from the rich and powerful. It is against the backdrop of the conference that the sudden willingness of the private employers at the Cape Town docks to agree to an ICU wage demand in August without even a serious strike threat – a minimum of 8 shillings for labourers, 12 shillings-and-6 pence for foremen, plus double pay for overtime – should be understood.[295] In the meanwhile, with an eye on the 1920 Bloemfontein ICU conference, officials of the British South Africa Company nervously considered the possibility of "one big Union" emerging in Southern Rhodesia.[296]

Towards the end of 1920, problems began to appear. Masabalala's wage campaign in Port Elizabeth made demands well in excess of the figures recommended at the Bloemfontein congress. Further, the post of ICWU president had gone to Msimang, and his paper, *Morumioa-Inxusa*, became the official organ of the new union.[297] Msimang supporters had also defeated Kadalie's bid for the post of general secretary.[298] The tensions that arose were sharpened when Kadalie was criticised for showing too much independence in approaching the harbour companies in August.[299] The ICU withdrew from the ICWU, joined by the Industrial Workers of Africa, which sided with Kadalie.

After a lengthy struggle, Kadalie finally defeated Msimang, merging his ICU with most of the sections of the ICWU, including the important Port Elizabeth branch under Masabalala, on the basis of the ICWU programme but under his own leadership and the banner of the ICU.[300] The ICWU continued to exist until around 1925, but Msimang withdrew and the union was never a significant force compared to Kadalie's ICU. Msimang, who had been better known than Kadalie at the time of the 1920 Bloemfontein labour conference, became an increasingly marginal figure, while Kadalie's star blazed ever brighter.

Kadalie's ICU was basically a Cape union in its early years, with twenty-nine of the thirty delegates at the January 1923 conference from the Cape Province.[301] The main branches were Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and East London and, with a few outposts in towns like Kimberley. The Cape branch dated back to 1919 and the Port Elizabeth branch built on Masabalala's organisation. In 1920, a Native Employees Association was formed in East London in an atmosphere of working class unrest, leading a strike a harbour workers in 1921.[302] Building on these efforts, an ICU branch was formed in the town a year later.[303] The

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[293] Emmett, 1986, *op cit.*, pp. 32-3, 47 note 136
[294] *The International*, 5 November 1920, "The 'Black Man'"
[295] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, pp. 228-9; Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit.,* p. 279; for Kadalie's version of events, see Kadalie, 1970, *op cit*., pp. 45-6
[296] As quoted in Phimister, 1988, *op cit*., p. 189; also see Ian Phimister and Charles van Onselen, 1997, "The Labour Movement in Zimbabwe: 1900-1945", in Raftopolous and Phimister, editors*, op cit.,* p. 39
[297] Wickens, 1974a, *op cit*., p. 406
[298] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 150-151
[299] Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 153-4
[300] Bradford, 1987, *op cit.,* p. 6; Wickens, 1973, *op cit.*, pp. 151-2, 175-184
[301] Peter Wickens, 1974b, "The Organisation and Composition of the ICU", *South African Labour Bulletin*, vol.1, no. 6/7, double issue, p. 28
[302] Beinart and Bundy, 1987, *op cit*., p. 276

Industrial Workers of Africa in the Cape also amalgamated with the ICU in late 1920, or early 1921, but the exact date remains unclear. Kraai may be found addressing an ICU meeting in February 1921,[304] but it is not clear whether this meant the merger had already taken place.

As the next chapter will demonstrate, syndicalist influences played an important role in the subsequent history of the ICU. The ICU was not a syndicalist union, but it was clearly influenced by syndicalism, at least as far back as the 1920 Bloemfontein labour conference. The vision and language of "One Big Union" and a cataclysmic general strike that would liberate African labour was a recurrent feature of the outlook of many in the ICU, leading one writer to dub its politics "millenarian syndicalism".[305] The subsequent history of ICU in South Africa and in neighbouring countries must, then, be understood in the context of the broader history of anarchism and syndicalism in South Africa, for syndicalism was part of the complex and unstable mixture of ideas that made up the discourse of the ICU.

A notable consequence of this syndicalist influence was that the ICU saw itself as simultaneously engaged in economic *and* political struggles, which derived, in part, from the syndicalist view that the union itself could fight around political issues, and that such issues were by no means the exclusive provinces of a political party, an important break with "economism". The nature of the ICU has sometimes been posed – in Johns' memorable formulation – as a "changing, but permanently unstable, combination of trade union, political pressure group, and mass movement".[306] Posing an opposition between these three forms is, however, not a very useful, for it assumes that trade unions must play a narrow workplace role: in line with syndicalism more generally, the ICU saw refused such a distinction, and saw itself as simultaneously embodying all three roles.

It was, above all, Kadalie who shaped the ICU. Only one other ICU leader would come even close to Kadalie's influence and prestige in the union. This was Allison W.G. Champion, who became full-time secretary for the ICU in Natal in 1925. Born to a *kholwa* family, and previously employed as a policeman and a mine clerk, he was previously president of the Transvaal Native Mine Clerks' Association, which was formed at the Randfontein Estates on the West Rand in February 1920.[307]

While both Champion and Kadalie were drawn from the African elite, their views were rather more militant than the conservative nationalists who dominated the South African Native National Congress. On the other hand, Champion – whose views were a mixture of Zulu nationalism and of elements of both conservative and radical African nationalism – was generally rather more conservative than Kadalie, whose views were a mixture of moderate trade unionism, syndicalism, and various types of African nationalism. Both men were of a similar type to the vacillating moderates of the post-war Transvaal Native Congress,

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[303] Beinart and Bundy, 1987, *op cit*., p. 276
[304] Wickens, 1974a, *op cit*., p. 406
[305] Bonner, n.d. (2), *op cit.,* p. 25; Bonner, n.d. (1), *op cit*., p. 11
[306] Sheridan W. Johns, 1970, "Trade Union, Political Pressure Group, or Mass Movement? The Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of Africa", in Robert L. Rothberg and Ali M. Mazrui, editors, *Protest and Power in Black Africa*, Oxford University Press, New York, pp. 753-754
[307] Notice from Randfontein Compound Clerks, dated 25 February 1920, attached as letter from H.E. Allen, manager Luipaardsvlei Estate and Gold Mining Company, 26 February 1920, to the secretary and legal adviser Transvaal Chamber of Mines, in the Native Recruiting Corporation file, "Native Strike February 1920", TEBA archives, Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit/ University of Johannesburg.

such as Mvabaza, but Kadalie was influenced by socialist ideas to a degree Champion never shared, and among those ideas was syndicalism.

8.8. In conclusion: the political and social character of syndicalism in South Africa in the late 1910s

From the above discussion, it is possible to identify important similarities, and differences, between the syndicalist movement in the Cape and elsewhere. A number of broader conclusions about the political and social character of syndicalism in South Africa in the latter half of the 1910s may also be drawn. In this way, it is possible to draw a general picture of the local anarchist and syndicalist movement at its height, and on the eve of the shift towards Bolshevism that culminated in the formation of the CPSA in July 1921.

Firstly, like the syndicalist movement on the Witwatersrand and in Natal, the organised syndicalist movement in the Cape was a bifurcated one. There were, firstly, the specific political organisations: the International Socialist League, on the one hand, and, on the other, the Industrial Socialist League, and, to a lesser extent given its politically mixed character, the SDF. Secondly, there were syndicalist unions: on the Witwatersrand and in Natal there were the Clothing Workers' Industrial Union, Durban Indian Workers' Industrial Union, and the Industrial Workers of Africa; in the Cape Province, the syndicalist unions included the Clothing Workers' Industrial Union, the Horse Drivers' Union, the Industrial Workers of Africa and the Sweet and Jam Workers' Industrial Union.

There was a racial component to this bifurcation, in that the specific political organisations were largely based amongst White workers, mainly skilled British workers and immigrant Jews, while the syndicalist unions were based amongst Africans, Coloureds and Indians. At the same time, however, there were overlaps inasmuch as both the International Socialist League and the Industrial Socialist League began to recruit African, Coloured and Indian members and supporters, mainly from the syndicalist unions, and inasmuch as a number of White activists were also involved in organising the syndicalist unions.

It is therefore possible to argue that the local syndicalist movement as a whole, including both specific political groups and syndicalist unions, was founded by Whites but was increasingly racially mixed. While it can be argued that local socialist movement – a movement that was predominantly syndicalist – was relatively "tiny", it would be quite wrong to suggest that it was "marginal".[308]

Secondly, as was the situation during the 1913 and 1914 general strikes by White workers, it is important not to reduce the influence of syndicalism in South Africa to the influence of *organised* syndicalist groups. In 1913 and 1914, there had been syndicalist influences in the absence of an organised syndicalist movement: a layer of strikers expressed syndicalist ideas, apparently independently of the earlier organised syndicalist movement; a number of people who were not otherwise syndicalists were influenced by syndicalist ideas; and individual anarchists and syndicalists also promoted their views.

There seems to have been a parallel in the Cape and the Orange Free State at this time, where syndicalist ideas seem to have had an influence amongst sections of African and Coloureds, at least partially independently of the organised syndicalist movement. This was evident at the 1920 labour congress in

[308] According to Allison Drew, the "movement remained tiny and marginal": Drew, 2002, *op cit.,* p. 40

Bloemfontein, with its talk of "one great union of skilled and unskilled workers of South Africa, south of the Zambesi", "to bring together all classes of labour, skilled and unskilled, in every sphere of life whatsoever".[309]

These ideas jostled with others, however, for the same congress spoke of a union that would also to "endeavour to settle differences" with employers by "amicable and conciliatory means".[310] This suggests that, as in 1913 and 1914, there were people influenced by syndicalism without necessarily being committed syndicalists. A politics that mixed syndicalism with other elements would be an important feature of the ICU, the body that emerged out of these early moves towards unity, and which would not only explode across South Africa in the 1920s, but also become transnational, with branches in Northern and Southern Rhodesia, as well as South West Africa. The influence of syndicalism on the ICU will also be examined in the next chapter.

Thirdly, the size of the local anarchist and syndicalist movement – judged by membership of one or the other *organisation* – was unlikely to have been much over one thousand members, with a large bloc of four hundred in the International Socialist League. In terms of influence, however, its impact was somewhat more considerable. The events of 1913 and 1914, the formation of the Industrial Workers of Africa, the overlap with the Transvaal Native Congress in 1918 and 1919 (and the impact on the African Political Organisation in the Transvaal), and later the Cape Native Congress, the role of the Industrial Workers of Africa and the International Socialist League in the 1918 general strike movement on the Witwatersrand, and, finally, the impact of syndicalism in the Bloemfontein labour conference of 1920, and also on the ICU, demonstrates that syndicalist influences were far larger than mere numbers might suggest, and should not be judged simply by reference to organised syndicalist groups and unions.

[309] Quoted in Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 145-146
[310] Quoted in Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 145-146

Chapter 9

The CPSA, the Council of Action and the ICU: Echoes of anarchism and syndicalism in southern Africa after 1921

In previous chapters I have discussed the impact of anarchism and syndicalism in South Africa, suggesting that anarchism and syndicalism played an important role in the local socialist and labour movements, as well as influenced sections of the local African and Coloured nationalist movements. The movement was a minority one, perhaps, but a significant one, and its influence grew rapidly in the 1910s, such that it becomes possible to speak of an interracial syndicalist movement by this time, comprising both political groups, like the International and Industrial Socialist Leagues, and half-a-dozen unions, spread over the country. Overall, then, it seems clear that the "glorious period" of anarchism and syndicalism, from the 1890s into the 1920s, had affected South Africa, and that the practice of dating the history of the local left by CPSA and SACP anniversaries can no longer be seriously defended. The left that emerges is not quite the left we thought we knew.

What, then, happened? The decline of local anarchism and syndicalism is the focus of this chapter. It is necessary to examine this issue in the context of the common view that the rise of Bolshevism ended the history of anarchism and syndicalism. Hobsbawm provides a representative example, arguing that, with the Russian Revolution, "Marxism was henceforth identified with actively revolutionary movements", and "Anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism entered upon a dramatic and uninterrupted decline".[1] On the contrary, however, anarchists and syndicalists were major beneficiaries of the unrest of the 1916 to 1923 period across the world. The Italian USI, for instance, surged from 80,000 in 1912 to 800,000 in 1920,[2] the Spanish CNT grew from 100,000 members in 1914 to 700,000 in 1919,[3] and, while the Argentinean FORA had split into the FORA of the 9th congress (FORA IX) and the FORA of the 5th congress (FORA V), both sections grew rapidly, the FORA IX from 20,000 in 1915 to 70,000 in 1920, and the FORA V to 180,000 members.[4] Nor was Marxism necessarily "henceforth identified with actively revolutionary movements": some major anarchist

[1] Hobsbawm, 1993, *op cit.,* pp. 72-3
[2] Williams, 1975, *op cit*., pp. 194-5
[3] Woodcock, 1975, *op cit*., p. 352
[4] Munck, R. 1987, *Argentina: from anarchism to Peronism: workers, unions, and politics, 1855-1985*, London, Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey, Zed Books, p. 82, 87-88; Rocker, [1938] 1989, *op cit*., pp. 140-141

and syndicalist movements were really only founded in the late 1910s, and/or peaked in the 1920s or 1930s, including, arguably, the Bolivian, Korean, Malaysian, Spanish, Peruvian, and Vietnamese movements.[5]

Lenin was well aware that anarchists and syndicalists headed many of the largest revolutionary movements outside Russia in the late 1910s and early 1920s, and one of the main reasons for the formation of the Profintern was an (unsuccessful) attempt to draw the syndicalists into the Comintern.[6] Moreover, while many early Communist Parties (for example, in Brazil, Britain, Chile, China, Mexico and the United States) were heavily drawn from the anarchist and syndicalist milieu, there was not always a sharp break with the old ways: the older milieu often left a deep imprint on the new Parties, Thus, for example, the First Communist Conference of Brazil in 1919 was really an "'assembly of the whole Brazilian anarchist movement", and the initial programme of the Brazilian Communist Party was an anarchist one.[7]

The fate of anarchism and syndicalism in southern Africa in the 1920s was similar in some respects. There was certainly no sharp eclipse by Bolshevism from 1917 onwards: on the contrary, the syndicalist movement grew rapidly from 1917 onwards, with new groups and unions formed across the country. The formation of the CPSA certainly heralded the beginning of the end for local anarchism and syndicalism: the very fact that an official Party, on Bolshevik lines, accepting the "21 Conditions of Admission" to the Comintern, was formed was a sign of a break with the older traditions, and of the growing prestige of Leninism.

There was, however, no smooth or inevitable transition to Bolshevism, as claimed by the Communist school, where the International Socialist League is presented as immersed in Bolshevism from19017 onwards, led by a "Communist nucleus" of "true socialists",[8] and bathed in the "light of Marxist-Leninist science".[9] Moreover the break with anarchism and syndicalism also slow, really only in evidence towards the end of 1920, and by no means complete when the CPSA was founded in founding June 1921. The unity process in 1920 and 1921, aimed at the formation of a single local Communist Party with a uniform platform, was often not fought out in between clear-sighted Bolsheviks and old-school syndicalists: in many cases, the divisions in the unity talks still followed the *pre-existing* divisions amongst local anarchists and syndicalists (and, particularly, those between the two wings of the IWW).

As was the case with in other contexts, the prime movers in the formation of the local Communist Party were heavily drawn from the ranks of the anarchists and syndicalists. Just as they tended to see the Russian Revolution as syndicalism in action, they fought for a long time to have a CPSA that corresponded to their own brand of syndicalism. Thus, debates were often framed as debates over the meaning of "Bolshevism": more specifically, as debates over which *syndicalist* approach was the more truly "Bolshevik".

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[5] Allen, 1999, *op cit*.; John Crump, 1996, "Anarchism and Nationalism in East Asia", *Anarchist Studies*, vol.4, no. 1; Ha Ki Rak, 1986, *A History of Korean Anarchist Movement* [sic], Anarchist Publishing Committee, Korean Anarchist Federation, Taegu, Korea; Hue-Tam Ho Tai, 1992, *Radicalism and the Origins of the Vietnamese Revolution*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England; C.F. Yong, 1991, "Origins and Development of the Malaysian Communist Movement, 1919-1930", *Modern Asian Studies*, vol.25, no. 4

[6] Thorpe, 1989, *op cit*., pp. 132-3

[7] Dulles, 1973, *op cit.*, pp. 87-90

[8] Dadoo, 1981, *op cit*., p. xv

[9] Dedication on frontispiece of Harmel, 1971, *op cit.*

Contemporary claims to "Bolshevism" by, for example, the Industrial Socialist League should not, then, be taken out of context and presented as evidence of any sort of profound understanding of Leninism, for even quotes from Bukharin, Lenin and Trotsky were used as ammunition in a long-standing local divisions, structured around different views of anarchism and syndicalism. Thus, the major split that took place amongst local syndicalists in 1920 saw the supporters of the Chicago IWW position (a breakaway group from the International Socialist League linked to the Industrial Socialist League) found the first self-described Communist Party in Africa, but this was a syndicalist Communist Party with an IWW platform, with Dunbar playing a leading role in the organisation.

Besides the adoption of the "21 Conditions" in July 1921, there was another important place where the formation of the CPSA involved a break: the politics of class and race. Whereas the pre-CPSA syndicalist tradition had typically seen One Big Union as the vehicle of economic and racial emancipation, the CPSA tried to mechanically apply Lenin's dictum that the new Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) affiliate to the British Labour Party. This led to a narrow focus on White labour, as the Party sought affiliation to the SA Labour Party. One consequence was a retreat from the older tradition of forthright opposition to job colour bars and White Labourism; another was a general abandonment of activism amongst workers of colour: with the exception of Thibedi, none of the activists of colour recruited to the syndicalist movement in the latter 1910s joined the CPSA in 1921. It was only in 1924 that the CPSA began to seriously turn its attention to workers of colour, a shift in which S.P. Bunting, and his protégé Eddie Roux, played a key role.

The Communist school has fundamentally misapprehended the changing racial politics of the left at the time. The 1924 shift towards a more interracial politics has been portrayed in the literature of the Communist school (and in many studies influenced by that school) as the *first* time that local socialists paid attention to workers of colour, and to the national question in South Africa. This claim is central to the "S.P. Bunting/Ivon Jones myth", which portrays the pre-CPSA left as either oblivious to people of colour, or racially prejudiced, with only a few brave souls like S.P. Bunting and Ivon Jones daring to swim against the tide; from such a perspective, the orientation of the early CPSA towards White labour is seen as a *legacy* of the pre-CPSA period.

As argued in earlier chapters, however, there is no evidence to support the "S.P. Bunting/Ivon Jones myth" for the pre-CPSA period: on the contrary, anarchists and syndicalists were champions of racial equality and an interracial working class movement. The focus on White labour from 1921 to 1924, then, cannot be a legacy of the earlier period, but should be seen rather as a direct consequence of an attempt to formulate a Party strategy in line with what the Party believed was *Comintern* policy: that is, it was an *innovation* that turned the Party *away* from an *established* practice of working with people of colour.

The 1924 turn towards workers of colour was not a rupture with a supposed tradition of focusing on White labour that reached back into the 1910s, but a break with the CPSA's recent interpretation of Comintern directives, as well as a *return* to the older interracial tradition of the anarchists and syndicalism. This was *exactly* how S.P. Bunting viewed the matter, for he lamented in 1923 that "our old policy of liberation to the native worker (since 1915) has been dropped", and the *International* "closed to anything

that might offend white prejudice".[10] Contrary to the teleology of the Communist school, the story of the CPSA was not that of an ongoing victory over "errors" on the national question with the "fraternal assistance of the world Communist movement and the inspiration of Lenin's ideas",[11] inevitably leading to a situation where the "class struggle … merged with the struggle for national liberation",[12] but a rather more fitful process, and the initial politics of the CPSA were a major step *backwards* from the syndicalist position.

In contrast with Hobsbawm's image of "dramatic and uninterrupted decline", the rupture represented by the formation of a CPSA on Bolshevik lines, approved by the Comintern, was only *partial*, for there were at least three important *continuities* with the past, three echoes of anarchism and syndicalism, in the 1920s. The first echo was within the CPSA itself. It incorporated the Social Democratic Federation (SDF), the Industrial Socialist League and the International Socialist League, as well as several other small groups, and the International Socialist League played a particularly prominent role. It provided key figures like Andrews, S.P. Bunting and Ivon Jones, the *International* became the CPSA journal, and the International Socialist League printing equipment became the Party press.

The break with the past, and the adoption of a definite Bolshevik politics, only took place from late 1920, and was only *partial* for many years. In the run-up to the formation of the Party, pre-existing syndicalist positions played an important role, and after the formation of the CPSA, syndicalism remained an important factor. Old habits died hard, and "syndicalist concepts remained within the Communist Party for many years after its foundation; echoes of their approach and phraseology appear in many documents and journals".[13] Another aspect of this situation was that a radical tendency – centred on Dunbar and sticking to the platform of the 1920 syndicalist Communist Party – operated openly in the early CPSA. This faction linked up with Sylvia Pankhurst and the Workers' Socialist Federation, British anti-parliamentary Communists who held views very close to those of Chicago IWW and who later identified with Council Communism.

In other words, the major continuity between the CPSA and the International Socialist League (besides an organisational continuity) was not the existence of a "Communist nucleus" of "true socialists",[14] bathed in the "light of Marxist-Leninist science",[15] but the syndicalist tradition that linked local socialists to the "glorious period" of anarchism and syndicalism worldwide. Moreover, the early CPSA was a far more complex body than generally believed, a point that the literature's focus on the struggle between Andrews and S.P. Bunting over the question of African workers has tended to obscure.

The other two echoes of the older anarchist and syndicalist tradition in the 1920s were to be found outside of the CPSA, although both had some connections with the older syndicalist milieu. One was within the White working class, linked to a syndicalist current within the independent shopstewards' movement on the mines and a split in the South African Mine Workers' Union in 1921. Headed by figures like Fisher, Shaw and Spendiff, it coalesced as the Council of Action, adopting a manifesto that was clearly located within the

[10] S.P. Bunting, [letter of 2 May 1923] 1996a, in Brian Bunting, editor, 1996a, *op cit.*, p. 59, emphasis added
[11] Harmel, 1971, *op cit*., p. 42
[12] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, p. 609
[13] Harmel, 1971, *op cit.*
[14] Dadoo, 1981, *op cit*., p. xv
[15] Dedication on frontispiece of Harmel, 1971, *op cit.*

syndicalist tradition: its "general aim … was that the workers should somehow gain control of the mines and run them themselves".[16]

The other echo was amongst African and Coloured workers in both South Africa, and, specifically, in the ICU, which absorbed the Cape Industrial Workers of Africa by 1921, as well as a number of other African and Coloured unions in the Cape and Orange Free State. The ICU was, from an early stage, vastly larger than the South African Native National Congress (not to mention the existing syndicalist organisations). From the mid-1920s, the ICU exploded across South Africa, claiming 100,000 members by 1927: its actual membership has been estimated at anything from 100,000 to 250,000.[17] As early as the 1920 Bloemfontein labour conference, some syndicalist influences were in evidence, and the 1920s showed ongoing tendencies towards syndicalism. The most notable was the adoption, in 1925, of a Constitution with a *Preamble* modelled directly upon that of the Chicago IWW.

ICU leaders regularly invoked the imagery of the One Big Union, and the vision of a cataclysmic general strike. Much of the explosive growth of the ICU was the result of an influx of African farm tenants feeling the effects of 1913 Land Act, facing evictions or pressure to descend from sharecropping into labour tenancy. In many country districts, the ICU came to be seen as a movement that would return land to Africans through a general strike, and has been dubbed a form of "millenarian syndicalism".[18] The ICU saw itself as simultaneously engaged in economic *and* political struggles, and this break with "economism" found its roots in syndicalism.

This is not to suggest that syndicalism was the only influence on the ICU, for it was not, nor to suggest that the millenarianism of the ICU was rooted solely in syndicalist visions, for that would also not be accurate. Rather, the point is that syndicalism was an important part of the broad melange of ICU discourse and practice, which also included influences like conservative African nationalism, Garveyism, and religious millenarianism. The internal regime of the ICU was often undemocratic and corrupt, and far from the model of a self-managed labour movement advocated by syndicalism. Moreover, the ICU also attracted into its ranks large numbers of the African elite, including traditional chiefs.

Even so, it is not possible to understand the politics of the ICU without understanding the impact of syndicalism. Tim Couzens has suggested that two "transatlantic connections" to black America shaped local African politics: a connection to moderates like Booker T. Washington, and to more militant nationalists like Du Bois and Garvey.[19] Recognition of the syndicalist connection suggests another "transatlantic connection", a connection to working class America, and, specifically, to the interracial *syndicalist* tradition represented by the IWW. Indeed, if one envisages the political and social connections between African communities on the Atlantic seaboard as a "Black Atlantic",[20] it follows that syndicalism was *also* part of the world of the Black

[16] Cope, [? 1943] n.d., *op cit*., p. 251
[17] The actual figures are in some dispute, not least because the ICU kept very poor records. The figures cited here are from Bradford, 1987, *op cit.,* p. 2. T.D. Mweli Skota gave a "rumoured" figure of 100,000: Skota, editor and compiler, [? 1930] n.d, *op cit*., p. 429. David Hemson gives a figure of 200,000 in 1928: Hemson, 1979 *op cit.*, p. 198
[18] Bonner, n.d. (2), *op cit.* p. 25
[19] Couzens, 1982, *op cit.*
[20] Paul Gilroy, 2002, *The Black Atlantic: modernity and double consciousness*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass.

Atlantic. Given that the ICU spread into South West Africa (1921), as well as Southern Rhodesia (1927) and Northern Rhodesia (1931) – a direct consequence of the transnational linkages within the southern African working class, the same linkages that saw another tradition, the White Labourism of the South African Mine Workers' Union, spread into the Rhodesias – the ICU also helped spread elements of syndicalism across southern Africa, providing a channel through which the international wave of the "glorious period", having flowed into South Africa, now flowed northwards.

The last phase of anarchism and syndicalism in southern Africa ended in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The Council of Action was destroyed in the suppression of the 1922 Rand Revolt, in which its key figures died. The South African ICU fell apart in the late 1920s, and the other national sections became defunct in the 1920s and early 1930s. The Comintern intervened heavily in the CPSA from 1928 onwards: on the one hand, the "Native Republic" line was imposed on the party, divorcing struggles against capitalism from struggles for national liberation into two stages; on the other, the "New Line" period of 1928 to 1935 saw a determined attempt to "Bolshevise" the CPSA including the expulsion or resignation of most veterans of the pre-CPSA period: those who remained active either rejoined the Party later with suitably chastened views, or formed the nucleus of local Trotskyism. When the Popular Front policy was adopted in 1935, the CPSA was revitalised, but its connection to the broad anarchist tradition was broken.

9.1. The International Socialist League and the founding of the Comintern

The working class unrest of the post-war period continued into the early 1920s, and provided the backdrop to local moves to form a Communist Party. Interest in establishing such a Party had been aroused by developments in Russia, which local syndicalists generally regarded as a vindication of their existing policies. In January 1919, the Bolshevik Party issued a broad invitation to a conference in Moscow in March 1919,[21] which was explicitly directed at radicals outside the old parties of the Labour and Socialist International who "stand by and large for the proletarian dictatorship in the form of Soviet power": "Chief among these are the syndicalist elements in the workers' movement".[22]

The subsequent formation of the Comintern in March 1919 did little to dispel the widespread conflation of Bolshevism and syndicalism. The Comintern manifesto spoke of the need to break with reformism, and to strive for violent revolution, the destruction of the capitalist State and a "proletarian dictatorship" based on *soviets*, but the leading role of the Party (and the actual structure of the Russian system) was not discussed.[23] (The Bolshevik party congress, two weeks later, had none of this ambiguity, speaking of the need for the party to win "decisive control, influence and complete control in all organisations of the working people", including a "position of undivided political supremacy in the soviets and of actual control over all their work".)[24]

[21] Thorpe, 1989, *op cit.*, pp. 100-101
[22] Thorpe, 1989, *op cit.*, p. 104
[23] Thorpe, 1989, *op cit.*, pp. 105-7, 127
[24] Thorpe, 1989, *op cit.*, p. 126

Radicals were invited to affiliate to the new international, and the Comintern specifically invited "all groups of revolutionary syndicalists and the IWW" to attend the second Comintern conference in 1920.[25] A "wave of enthusiasm for the newly-founded Comintern … swept through the syndicalist movement", not least because a serious attempt to establish a syndicalist international in 1912 and 1913 had been interrupted by the outbreak of the First World War.[26] The Italian USI and the Spanish CNT were among many syndicalist unions that decided to provisionally join the Comintern at the time.

Vague news of the founding of the Comintern filtered into the *International* from March 1919,[27] but it was only in late June 1919 that news of the invitation to the second congress appeared.[28] It was also reported that the Italian, Norwegian and Swiss socialist parties had affiliated to the Comintern, although there was not much information about the Comintern's platform.[29] It was only towards the end of August 1919 that the *International* was able to provide more substantial information about the Comintern, and was eventually able to serialise the Comintern manifesto.[30]

The International Socialist League was very keen to identify itself with the Comintern (as was the Industrial Socialist League in the Cape). However, there is little support for the claims, originally put forward by the Communist school, that the International Socialist League had developed an "unerring accuracy" in its understanding of events in Russia,[31] that the "the teachings of Lenin" were an important influence,[32] and that key figures like Ivon Jones had become "convinced" Bolsheviks,[33] "devotees of the emerging cult of 'Leninism'".[34]

The insistence on viewing the Russian Revolution as a vindication of existing syndicalist views, with the *soviets* cast in the role of the Russian form of the Industrial Union,[35] with Lenin and Trotsky mere "delegates of the Russian Federation of Labour",[36] persisted throughout this period. Local syndicalists took heart from Arthur Ransome's *Six Weeks in Russia*, which claimed that Lenin was amazed at "how far and how early De Leon had pursued the same train of thought as the Russians".[37] This claim was picked up by the De Leonists in Scotland, and loudly proclaimed in the *Socialist*,[38] and was mentioned more than once,

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[25] Thorpe, 1989, *op cit.*, pp. 107, 129
[26] See Thorpe, 1989, *op cit.*, pp. 53-91, 125. The agenda of the 1913 syndicalist conference that laid the foundation for the abortive syndicalist international conference may be found in Wayne Thorpe, 1981, "Documents: the Provisional Agenda of the International Syndicalist Congress, London 1913", *International Review of Social History,* no. 16, and its declaration of principles may be found in Thorpe, 1989, *op cit.*, p. 320, as appendix B.
[27] *The International*, 28 March 1919, "The New International"
[28] *The International*, 27 June 1919, "The 'Third International'"
[29] *The International*, 27 June 1919, "How Long, O Lord?"
[30] *The International*, 22 August 1919, "The new Communist International"
[31] See "Notes by Brian Bunting, " in Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit.*, p. 186; Brian Bunting, 1981, editor, *op cit.*, p. 27; Cronin, 1991, *op cit.*; Cronin, [? 1991] n.d.
[32] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 194
[33] For example, Hirson, 1988a, *op cit*., p. 104
[34] Hyslop, 2004, *op cit*., pp. 274-275, 277; the spelling of Marxism is Hyslop's.
[35] *The International*, 18 May 1917, "Russian Workmen Vindicate Marx"
[36] *The International*, 1 March 1918, "The Call of the Bolsheviks- League Manifesto"
[37] Quoted in D. Raper*,* 12 June 1919, "Short Lengths", *The Socialist.* The Socialist Labour Party press in Glasgow also produced an edition of this work.
[38] Ransome, quoted in D. Raper*,* 12 June 1919, "Short Lengths", *The Socialist*

and always enthusiastically, in the *International*.[39] If people like Gibson wrote about "revolutionary political action based on revolutionary industrial organisation",[40] they did so confidently, believing that Lenin endorsed every word.

The continuity in South African radical politics at the time is readily demonstrated by reference to Gibson's weekly theoretical column in the *International*. Writing in August 1918, for instance, he criticised "state socialism" in favour of "proletarian dictatorship", but remained vague regarding what the latter meant: "We cannot fill in the details".[41] A month later, Gibson filled the "details" in, reaffirming the centrality of revolutionary unionism, complemented by a revolutionary political party and "political action" in the De Leonist sense, with De Leon quoted at length.[42] The *meaning* given to "proletarian dictatorship" must then, be properly understood: if Gibson returned to this theme on several occasions,[43] it must be borne in mind that he was speaking of the "dictatorship" of the *whole* working class through the One Big Union, for he continued to defend self-management and reject nationalisation and State dictatorship,[44] and praise moves towards One Big Union.[45]

The Benoni branch of the International Socialist League, traditionally a De Leonist stronghold, drew up a "Suggested Explanation of the I.S.L. Platform" for the 1919 annual conference,[46] to be held on January 5-6. Brian Bunting of the Communist school has claimed that the document was "a formal Marxist analysis of the political situation at home and abroad",[47] but this is a misleading claim. The document was made up of the usual syndicalist formulations, peppered with a few references to "Bolshevism".

The "Suggested Explanation" affirmed the centrality of the class struggle (and the view that "labour cannot emancipate itself in South Africa until it has conquered all race prejudice and antipathy of colour") and went on state the need for the "political dictatorship of the proletariat" through the capture of the "public power".[48] However, the "dictatorship" and the "capture" were discussed in De Leonist terms: One Big Union had to be formed; there would be "elections to public bodies" amongst voters, plus *soviets* for the disenfranchised; the existing State, having been captured, was immediately dissolved and replaced by the One Big Union:

> Each individual plant will be controlled by its own Committee of Workmen. Each individual industry by its Association of such Committees. Industry as a whole by combination of these

[39] *The International*, 18 July 1919, "Ransome on Lenin"
[40] J.M. Gibson, 11 July 1919, "Opportunism", *The International*; J.M. Gibson, 18 July 1919, "National Guilds", *The International*,
[41] J.M. Gibson, 16 August 1918, "Our Objective", *The International*
[42] J.M. Gibson, 20 September 1918 "The Strike"; J.M. Gibson, 20 September 1918, "Political Action", *The International*
[43] J.M. Gibson, 21 December 1918, "Proletarian Dictatorship", *The International*
[44] For example, J.M. Gibson, 16 August 1918, "Our Objective", *The International*; J.M. Gibson, 21 February 1919, "The Workers not Educated", *The International*
[45] J.M. Gibson, 11 October 1918, "One Big Union"
[46] *The International*, 4 January 1919, "Suggested Explanation of the I.S.L. Platform"; also available in Brian Bunting, editor, 1981, *op cit*., pp. 36-8
[47] Brian Bunting, editor, 1981, *op cit*., p. 36 editorial comment
[48] *The International*, 4 January 1919, "Suggested Explanation of the I.S.L. Platform"; also available in Brian Bunting, editor, 1981, *op cit*., pp. 36-8

> associations into one Industrial Republic, national and international, which will co-ordinate the industrial activities and supply the needs of all the people.
>
> Thus, with the obligation of all to work, all classes will vanish, and the last act of the political dictatorship of the proletariat [*sic*] will be to abolish itself. The Class State will die out.

The "Suggested Explanation of the I.S.L. Platform" was adopted as an official "Declaration of Principles", and the International Socialist League reformulated its aims in a brief formula: "To establish the Socialist Commonwealth".[49]

The Management Committee also suggested that the organisation make "propaganda on an unprecedented scale" "as the necessary condition for true industrial organisation", with "special attention being paid to native workers".[50] The "Methods" of the International Socialist League were changed in only one respect: "special attention" to "native workers" was added. The Management Committee, having noted that the organisation had "born the brunt of capitalist hatred for challenging its right ruthlessly to exploit the black man" (and "the wrath of large sections of the white workers") restated the need for interracial unionism;[51] there was little support for the Communist school's image of an International Socialist League that was either oblivious to "the national oppression of the majority of people in our country",[52] or embraced segregation and the colour bar.[53] Nor is there evidence here to support Eddie Roux's claim that only S.P. Bunting and Ivon Jones were "really enthusiastic about work among the blacks" at the time.[54]

Further, it was resolved to establish better contacts with the revolutionary workers of Germany and Russia, and to promote increased co-operation with other socialist groups in South Africa. There were also some changes in the Management Committee. Ivon Jones was suffering greatly from his recurrent tuberculosis, and stepped down from his post as secretary as well as his increasingly nominal role as editor of the *International*. A new post was established for Andrews, secretary-organiser, and S.P. Bunting, who was already *de facto* editor of the *International*, was formally confirmed in his position. This involved a heavy burden for S.P. Bunting once the International Socialist League managed to purchase its printing press in 1919: he "kept long lists of 'sympathisers' and was always moving about collecting whatever he could get for the press".[55] This was a "constant source of anxiety", as the organisation now employed its own printers, who were all union men from the Typographical Union, while the manager of the press "had an uncertain temper and had to be handled carefully".

Over 100 people were present at the 1919 conference, including 39 delegates and 2 members of the Industrial Workers of Africa – most likely Cetiwe and Kraai – and rapid growth in the organisation was

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[49] *The International*, 10 January 1919, "1919 Annual Conference"
[50] *The International*, 10 January 1919, "1919 Annual Conference"; also see Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, pp. 215-6
[51] *The International*, 10 January 1919, "1919 Annual Conference"
[52] Cronin, 1991, *op cit.*, p.12
[53] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, pp. 191-2
[54] Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit.*, p. 90
[55] Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit.*, p. 87

reported: there were functioning branches in Benoni, Durban, Germiston, Johannesburg – where there were three branches, recently amalgamated, plus the powerful Yiddish-Speaking Branch, which remained separate – and in Pretoria. Veteran activists reappeared, including J.P. Anderson,[56] and Philip Roux.[57] By the middle of 1919, a branch was established in Kimberley, which made headway in organising local syndicalist unions,[58] and the circulation of the *International* was reported to have doubled since January.[59]

Syndicalism remained the keynote. In January and March 1919, Gibson lambasted craft unions, and called for "industrial unions, one big union on a class conscious basis, with a recognition of the fundamental truth that there can be no identity of interests between robber and robbed".[60] He was echoed by "W.R." – probably W. Reid, a member of the Management Committee who was elected in January 1919, and who married Andrews' daughter, Kathleen Mary, in April 1919[61] – on the necessity for revolutionary unionism "giving the required death blow to the present system and the forming the foundation of the future system, the Industrial Republic".[62]

For May Day 1919, the International Socialist League issued a special edition of Connolly's syndicalist classic, *Socialism Made Easy.*[63] S.P. Bunting remained very much a De Leonist, rather than a blind follower of "Marxist propaganda", a man "obsessed with the Marxist doctrine".[64] This was reflected in the *International*. In June 1919, for example, he looked forward to the day when "labour, organised in *one union for every purpose*, shall by sheer strength of its organisation eliminate the masters' rule and politics, now become nothing better than an instrument of capitalist oppression, shall give place to the Industrial Commonwealth in which there shall be neither ruling nor oppressed class".[65]

The longstanding stress on national liberation and racial equality also continued. Reports on proletarian revolts in the *International* were coupled to a series of articles that examined contemporary anti-colonial protests in India, Ireland and Egypt.[66] The race riots that took place in Britain and the United States were unreservedly condemned, and the need for interracial working class unity was stressed.[67] The paper also praised initiatives to organise black workers in the United States,[68] seen as a step towards One Big Union.

Overall, the phrase "proletarian dictatorship" appeared more frequently in the *International*, and pictures of Lenin, Liebknecht, MacLean and Trotsky were printed, but "the teachings of Lenin" were

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[56] *The International*, 10 January 1919, "League Notes"
[57] Philip R. Roux, 8 May 1919, "Evolution and Revolution", *The International*
[58] *The International*, 20 June 1919, "League Notes"
[59] *The International*, 20 June 1919, "Be a 'Booster'"
[60] J.M. Gibson, 17 January 1919, "Joint Boards", *The International*; J.M. Gibson, 7 March 1919, "Shadows", *The International*. The quotation is from the first article.
[61] *The International*, 2 May 1919, "League Notes"
[62] "W.R", 24 January 1919, "Amalgamation", *The International*,
[63] *The International*, 2 May 1919, "The Workers' Rally: May Day Demonstration"
[64] Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit*., p. 89
[65] *The International*, 6 June 1919, "Notes and Comments", emphasis in the original
[66] For example, *The International*, 21 December 1918; *The International*, 9 May 1919, "The Causes of the Indian Unrest"; *The International*, 23 May 1919, "'Protecting' a Protectorate"; *The International*, 30 May 1919, "Imperial Violence"; *The International*, 20 June 1919; *The International*, 13 June 1919, "Violence or Provocateurs?"
[67] *The International*, 20 June 1919, "Another Week of Capitalism"
[68] *The International*, 27 June 1919, "Labour Unionism amongst Negroes"

refracted through local prejudices and understandings. If the League spoke of the "Call of the Bolsheviks", it continued to insist that Bolshevism was its own existing approach made flesh.[69] There was nothing unusual in this, for syndicalists around the world commonly spoke in terms of an "an ill-defined dictatorship of the proletariat" at the time (the FORA V even renamed itself the "FORA-Communist" for a while), and did not initially grasp the important differences between syndicalism and Bolshevism.[70] That key figures like Ivon Jones considered themselves to be "convinced" Bolsheviks at this time is not to be doubted, but it hardly followed that this reflected an "unerring accuracy" or "Marxist-Leninist science".

9.2. "Preparing for action": the revolutionary mood of 1918-1921

The enthusiasm in The International Socialist League caused by the Russian Revolution and the increasing international unrest was reinforced by the continuing wave of strike action and protest within South Africa itself. High levels of inflation continued to be an important factor in the unrest, but this was compounded by declining rates of economic growth from 1920 onwards, leading to rising unemployment and growing employer resistance to wage demands. Trade unionism was heading towards a peak, with the South African Industrial Federation at its height and other bodies growing rapidly, and the mood of workers, and, most notably, White workers, was militant.

Skilled White workers, having rebuilt their unions during the First World War, waged a number of battles in the post-war period. In mid-1918, the South African Industrial Federation renegotiated the September 1916 agreement between artisans and the Transvaal Chamber of Mines, winning a "war bonus", support for a scheme at union-run co-operative stores (meant to reduce prices),[71] with the "war bonus later changed into a sliding cost-of-living-allowance.[72] The bitterness arising from 1913 and 1914, and the ongoing fear of substitution by unfree African labour, remained a potent factor,[73] and a wave of unofficial actions took place on the mines, in which the Works Committees played an important role.

White workers also went on strike in the construction industry and at the foundries on the Witwatersrand soon after the end of the war.[74] The tramways, owned by municipalities in all major centres except Cape Town and East London,[75] were another zone of conflict. Strikes on the Pretoria trams in 1919 were matched by a series of five strikes on the Durban tramways, including a nine-week action in 1921, and a major strike by tramway workers in East London in 1920.[76] Recovering from a disastrous strike in 1916, the Cape Town tramway workers formed an interracial union in 1918, which won a strike in 1919, and a second victory the following year.[77]

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[69] *The International*, 1 March 1918, "The Call of the Bolsheviks- League Manifesto"
[70] Thorpe, 1989, *op cit.*, p. 116
[71] Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., pp. 60-64
[72] See Johnstone, 1976, *op cit*., p. 98 table 5
[73] Hessian, 1957, *op cit.,* pp. 4-5
[74] Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., pp. 355-361; Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., p. 88-90
[75] Giffard, 1984, *op cit.*, p. 3
[76] Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., pp. 361-368; Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., pp. 79-84
[77] Giffard, 1984, *op cit*., pp. 7-10

Other sections also moved into action. In October 1920 Indian tobacco workers struck in Durban, and were supported by a solidarity strike by Indian railway workers. In December 1920, the South African Society of Bank Officials, formed in 1916, organised a successful half-day strike,[78] apparently a first for clerical workers. In early 1921, there was a ten-week strike in the Cape Town furniture industry,[79] involving both Coloured and White workers.

On the Witwatersrand, anti-capitalist sentiment often overlapped with White Labourism. The South African Industrial Federation resolved in May 1920 in favour of the nationalisation of the mines, plus a statutory Status Quo Agreement, while a mass meeting of the unemployed in October, chaired by South African Mine Workers' Union officials, resolved that "we, the workers of the Witwatersrand, do hereby most emphatically protest against the continuation of the system of capitalism … which can, at a moment's notice, throw our comrades out of work".[80] As the *International* noted, however, few of those present probably included the African workers amongst "our comrades", and fewer yet had a clear idea of socialism.[81]

Alongside this sort of radicalism there was another trend. In the printing and newspaper industry a National Industrial Council was established as a permanent conciliation forum. This continued the wartime trend towards conciliation forums and reflected the strength of the skilled print workers. By the 1960s, there had been "an unbroken period of nearly 40 years" without a single "dispute in the printing and newspaper industry which the parties" had "been unable to compose around the table".[82]

The possibility of an interracial movement seemed increasingly real to the syndicalists as 1919 wore on. Firstly, there had been the founding of syndicalist unions in Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg over the previous two years, plus the contemporary and exciting move to form the Clothing Workers' Industrial Union in Kimberley (which spread to Johannesburg in June 1919), the formation of the Horse Drivers' Union later that year, the new emergence of the Industrial Workers of Africa in Cape Town, and the rapid growth of the Indian Workers' Industrial Union.

Secondly, White labour was showing a serious interest in the syndicalists at the time. The International Socialist League had Solly Sachs in the Reef Shop Assistants Union, and Mason and Tyler of the Building Workers' Industrial Union, and Andrews was a well-known and respected figure. Andrews' work in promoting the shopstewards' movement seemed to be bearing some fruit in metals and mining, and the Pretoria branch of the International Socialist League held an open-air meeting at the Church Square during the Pretoria tramway strike in February 1919 (its first public meeting); it apparently attracted 4,000 people.[83]

At the same time, the Industrial Socialist League in Cape Town had Frank Glass in the Tailors' Union, F. Lopes as president of the Tramway Workers' Union, and A.Z. Berman as treasurer of the Cape Federation of Labour Unions. The Cape syndicalists were, moreover, able to pass resolutions in favour of industrial

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[78] Isra San, 14 January 1921, "A Johannesburg Letter", *The International*; Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., pp. 75-8
[79] Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., p. 78
[80] *The International*, 22 October 1920, "The Unemployed"; Johnstone, 1976, *op cit*., pp. 126-7
[81] *The International*, 29 October 1920, "Unemployment"
[82] Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., pp. 84-5
[83] *The International*, 21 February 1919, "The Pretoria Strikes"

unionism, the abolition of capitalism, and affiliation to the Profintern at the 1920 and 1921 congresses of the Cape Federation of Labour Unions.

Moreover, the International Socialist League, previously ostracised, was permitted to join the White trade unions' procession and rally in 1919 on May Day in Johannesburg. Marching behind the unions with its own band, and followed by the banner of the Industrial Socialist League, the International Socialist League claimed to make up half of the procession,[84] indicating an unexpected degree of passive support amongst White workers.[85] The organisation's speakers – Andrews, Dunbar, Kessler, R. Rodger and Tinker – outlined the "industrial organisation necessary for the purposes of the revolutionary movement",[86] and put forward a resolution that the workers must organise industrially at the point of production to "take and hold the means of life" across lines of "Craft, Race or Sex".[87]

On the other hand, the problem of violent disruption by White hooligans raised its head again. Meetings in Johannesburg in April and May 1919 were successively disrupted, with war veterans associated with organisations such as the "Comrades of the Great War" particularly prominent. In line with the previous experience, International Socialist League members were arrested for the disturbances, with at least one also assaulted at the police station.[88] In a particularly serious incident, a woman member was hospitalised in late April.[89] A spate of similar attacks was also directed against the Industrial Socialist League in Cape Town at this time.[90]

By late 1918, many in the International Socialist League were of the view that revolution was a real prospect in the immediate future, and that it was vital that the organisation step up propaganda and foster interracial labour unity.[91] The Industrial Socialist League clearly held a similar view. On the other hand, the SDF – a shadow of its former self and quite overshadowed by the Industrial Socialist League – seems to have been less optimistic about developments. It was not particularly active, and the anarchist Harrison's abstract approach remained the keynote. Its work consisted mainly of the usual round of public meetings, leaflets,[92] and sales of the *International.*

Two unusual labour actions at this time certainly suggested that *soviets* might be on the agenda, but underlined the difficulties of mobilising South Africa's fractured working class. In March 1919, workers at the Johannesburg power station struck against a decision by municipal council to retrench a number of employees, and also demanded an apology and the resignation of the councillor who had moved the

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[84] *The International*, 2 May 1919, "The Workers' Rally: May Day Demonstration"
[85] See Ivon Jones, [29 March 1921] 1981, *op cit*., p. 56, speaking of the support attracted by the International Socialist League: "It has a large circle of passive supporters, as evidenced by the number that follow its banner in the May Day procession, in which the trade unions cooperate".
[86] *The International*, 2 May 1919, "The Workers' Rally: May Day Demonstration"
[87] *The International*, 25 April 1919, "League Notes"
[88] *The International*, 2 May 1919, "The Black Hundreds at Work"; *The International*, 9 May 1919, "Massacring Women and Children" and "Barking up the Wrong Tree"
[89] *The International*, 9 May 1919
[90] Manuel Lopes, 23 May 1919, "Cape Notes", *The International*
[91] *The International*, 29 Nov 1918, "'Preparing for Action'"; *The International*, 6 December 1918, "League Notes"
[92] For example, Social Democratic Federation, 26 November 1920, "Open letter to H.R.H. the Governor-General", *The International*

retrenchments.[93] It was resolved to establish a Board of Control of administer the municipal workshops and services. The Board of Control was duly elected, and included among its number Glendon, formerly of the IWW but no longer linked to the radical left, and Bain, in what would prove his last great revolt, for he passed away that year. It occupied the council chamber where, headed by Bain and joined by the SA Labour Party councillors, it ran the light, power and tram services for several days. Andrews, Dunbar and Tyler also made an appearance, calling on the workers to form *soviets* and get "all workers, regardless of colour" involved.[94]

On the other hand, there was no attempt to involve workers of colour, and leading strikers made it clear that they would "stand by the community" in the event of "any Native trouble".[95] Many strikers were actively hostile to the African pass protests taking place at the time (discussed in Section 8.5). and were involved in several assaults on protestors, and the attack on S.P. Bunting outside the courthouse. Nor was there any clear intention of actually keeping power. When the strikers' demands were won, the Johannesburg Board of Control was closed and replaced by a permanent conciliation board to "prevent any further resort to direct action".[96] A five-week strike by mechanics from the Town Engineers' Department in March 1920 won wage increases and two weeks' annual paid leave,[97] but did not try to emulate the 1919 actions, nor did a similar strike by Cape Town's municipal mechanics in 1921.[98]

There was, however, a sequel to the Board of Control incident at the Durban municipality in 1920.[99] Protests against the apparent victimisation of the assistant town clerk, a member of the Durban Municipal Employees' Society, led to a strike by White municipal workers on 5 January 1920, including clerical staff and tramway workers. The aims were moderate, and centred on the formation of a Joint Board to resolve industrial disputes, but the methods were not. The strike committee, which included in its number Haynes of the local Social Democratic Party, briefly established a Board of Control to run the municipal services. As in Johannesburg the previous year, the strike was settled with the formation of a permanent conciliation board.

The formation of the Johannesburg Board of Control raised important questions, and was the subject of an important exchange between S.P. Bunting and Ivon Jones in the columns of the *International.*[100] S.P. Bunting congratulated the workers for having "grasped the idea" that the "old fashioned strike" was being superseded by "the movement for Workers Councils destined not merely to 'control' industry and public institutions but to take them over from the present private owners or bourgeois

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[93] On these developments, see Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., pp. 373-387; Hyslop, 2004, *op cit*., pp. 279-293; Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., pp. 63-4
[94] Hyslop, 2004, *op cit*., pp. 286-287
[95] Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit*., p. 83; also see S.P. Bunting, 4 April 1919, "The White Soviet and the Red Herring", *The International*
[96] Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., p. 64
[97] Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., pp. 373 –387; Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., p. 75
[98] On this strike, see Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., pp. 78-9
[99] Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., pp. 387-397; Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., pp. 65-74
[100] S.P. Bunting, 4 April 1919, "The White Soviet and the Red Herring", *The International*; David Ivon Jones, 11 April 1919, "The White Workers' 'Burden,'" *The International.* The two articles are also reproduced in Hirson, 1988a, *op cit*., pp. 108-114

public bodies and work them in the interest of the working class".[101] This movement was the part of the "necessary dictatorship of the proletariat".

Smarting from his manhandling outside the courthouse, S.P. Bunting was nonetheless very critical of the Board of Control, and denied that it was a *soviet.*[102] It was only a temporary institution, with limited aims, and the "very word 'Board' suggests all-powerful directors, not communists". The movement only involved a fraction of the White workers, and did not even attempt to draw in the "masses, the underdogs of the Bantu race who far outnumber the whites in municipal employ":

> Where, for instance, on this Board, were any delegates of the Sanitary Boys whose demands for 1s. a day nearly a year ago was at the time and has ever since been haughtily ignored by the whites? … no workers' movement or revolution is worth the bones of a single champion which ignores or excludes the vast mass of the workers of this country, the most flagrantly oppressed victims of the most glaring form of capitalist exploitation, the exploitation of the black races and their labour by white capital …
>
> The outstanding characteristic of the capitalist system in South Africa being its native labour, the outstanding movement of the country must clearly be the movement of its native labourers. And as it is only labour, organised and solid, that can break up capitalism … all prejudices, all homage to middle-class respectability or newspaper condemnation … must be sunk in order to achieve that organisation and solidarity of South African Labour.

S.P. Bunting went on to suggest massive land redistribution to, and self-determination for, African rural societies, the promotion of "Communist agriculture", and the abolition of the cheap labour system. Whether this implied returning Africans to the countryside[103] can be debated: the key point to note is the stress on an interracial labour movement and self-management.

Ivon Jones responded from Pietermaritzburg, where he had gone to recuperate from tuberculosis, and where he was facing charges arising out of the "Bolsheviks are Coming" incident, as detailed in Section 6.10. Ivon Jones felt that S.P. Bunting was altogether too dismissive of the White workers, who were well organised, had an established militant tradition and were in a very powerful position due to their concentration in the skilled trades.[104]

In this situation, argued Ivon Jones, it was certainly possible for the White workers to set up the preliminary structure of workers' rule, which he characterised as the "political dictatorship for the proletariat". However, it could not get the new social order moving without the involvement of the Africans: without the co-operation of the whole proletariat "*within twenty-four hours* … the revolution fails". However, "fact" will fall in line with "theory", for the White workers would act as the "engine of revolution", helping

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[101] S.P. Bunting, 4 April 1919, "The White Soviet and the Red Herring", *The International*
[102] S.P. Bunting, 4 April 1919, "The White Soviet and the Red Herring", *The International*
[103] As claimed by Hirson, 1988a, *op cit*., p. 108
[104] David Ivon Jones, 11 April 1919, "The White Workers' 'Burden,'" *The International*, emphasis in the original

spark the move of the "big mass" into action, just as the small urban working class in Russia galvanised the peasant masses.

The debate certainly revealed, as several writers have noted,[105] something of the relative importance the two men attached to work amongst African and White workers, but it would be a mistake to see the debate as representing a neatly polarised set of positions, or to reduce the debate to a discussion of the merits of White workers. Both men came from the local syndicalist tradition, with its stress on interracial labour unity and refusal to focus on any one racial group. Further, they were responding to the same situation – the contrast between a militant White working class, dominated by racial prejudice, and a vast African working class, for the large part still unorganised, and doing so from the same perspective: the need for the One Big Union and the idea that *soviets* were a form of revolutionary union. It was precisely the latter belief that led to the interest in the Board of Control.

Perhaps the single most important feature of the debate was that both men pointed the need to focus limited energies on specific layers of the working class, but that no decision was ever taken on this issue. Besides indicating a rejection of the "the false idea of Unity which sneers at either section of the proletariat" as "anti-proletarian in the below zero direction",[106] it also reflected the International Socialist League's tendency not to develop a medium-term strategy – a clear programme of action that made conscious, if difficult, choices between different options.

The problem, in short, was not that the International Socialist League was deeply divided by a fierce "inner-party struggle" between opponents of "recognition of the black worker" and "enthusiastic nigrophiles",[107] but that organisation never really decided where to focus its energies. It was certainly governed by a strict internationalism: neither Ivon Jones nor S.P. Bunting advocated a narrow "nigrophilism", while Andrews – misrepresented by Eddie Roux as indifferent to workers of colour – wanted to "organise *all* workers by industry, irrespective of race or colour".[108] The principle was laudable, but it needed to concretely manifest itself in a clear programme of action that could consistently and doggedly concentrate limited resources on particular campaigns. Instead, the International Socialist League continually tended to a vague policy of trying to recruit every worker, everywhere, and all the time.

The problem of the divided working class continued to be as intractable as ever. In May 1919, there were strikes by African mineworkers at collieries at Burnside, in Natal and at Witbank, and at the Messina Mine,[109] and African strikers at the Tweefontein colliery at Witbank were prosecuted.[110] Some coalminers launched an abortive "African Union of Natives of the Province of Mozambique", probably influenced by the "cauldron of ideas then stirring on the Rand", including the activities of the International Socialist League.[111] July 1919 saw the great strike by railway workers at Durban, followed by further strikes in Witbank in later

[105] Hirson, 1988a, *op cit*., p. 108; Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit*., 83
[106] David Ivon Jones, 11 April 1919, "The White Worker's 'Burden'", *The International*
[107] Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit*., pp. 74-75, 84
[108] William H. Andrews, 14 February 1918, "White and Black Labour in South Africa", *The Call*; also see William H. Andrews, 16 February 1918, "South African Socialism and the War"
[109] *The International*, 6 June 1919, "Labour Notes"
[110] Alexander, 2001, *op cit*., pp. 520-521
[111] Alexander, 2001, *op cit*., p. 521

months, and then strikes by Africans on the Witwatersrand mines in December 1919 and January 1920. The wage question was central, with African wages on the mines – measured by ore processed – rising only 9 percent from 1913 to 1920 despite high inflation, in contrast to a rise in equivalent White wages of 57 percent.[112]

The single most dramatic example of rising African labour activism was a general strike in February 1920 on the mines of the Witwatersrand, which raised a demand for ten-shillings-a-day:[113] driven by inflation, it was inspired by the memory of the African mineworkers' strikes of 1913, 1916 and 1918, the stores boycott of 1918 and the successes of contemporary strikes by Whites.[114] Beginning with a strike at one compound at the East Rand Proprietary Mines on Tuesday, February 17, it swept across the Witwatersrand, bringing out a record 46,000 out on strike on Monday, February 23, and involving 71,000 workers at one point or another – just under half the total African labour force on the mines – by its end on Saturday, February 28.[115]

Affecting twenty-one of a total of thirty-five mines, the African mineworkers' strike of 1920 was, in relative terms, about twice as large as the 1946 African mineworkers' strike[116] and the largest single African mineworkers strike until the 1980s. It was not organised through a trade union but through workers' networks and quasi-traditional organisations:[117] there was, the Native Affairs Department remarked, a "marked degree of organisation", "considerable cohesion among the different native tribes, with the exception perhaps of British Basutos [i.e. men from Lesotho] who in certain cases have held aloof".[118] It was also noted that the "strikers have adopted modern methods including a system of picketing which has been sufficiently complete to prevent numerous peaceable inclined and satisfied natives from going to work".

The strike was not a success, in large part because management was not willing to make concessions, having already taken a decision to raise wages in December 1920,[119] the Native Recruiting Corporation advising mine managers to inform workers of the increases.[120] (These increases might be seen as partly a response to the African unrest on the Witwatersrand, but many mine managers either failed to notify the workers of the new rates, or simply did not grant them.)[121]

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[112] Hessian, 1957, *op cit*., p. 11; on the rising cost of White mine labour, also see Johnstone, 1976, *op cit*., pp. 94-105, also pp. 98-9 table 4 and p. 100 table 5
[113] Alexander, 2001, *op cit*., p. 521
[114] Bonner, 1979, *op cit*., pp. 273-274, 276-7
[115] Bonner, 1979, *op cit*., pp. 273-274
[116] As noted by Bonner, 1979, *op cit*., p. 274. The Native Affairs Department stated that the 1946 strike involved 73,557 out of 287,376 workers, and affected 21 out of 47 Witwatersrand mines: cited in Moodie, 1986, *op cit*., pp. 28-29
[117] Bonner, 1979, *op cit*., p. 284
[118] "Notice to the Press by the Native Affairs Department", February 1920, in Native Recruiting Corporation file, "Native Strike February 1920", TEBA archives, Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit/ University of Johannesburg
[119] See "Notice to the Press by the Native Affairs Department", February 1920, and C.W.V. (Charles W. Villiers, the Chairman of the in Native Recruiting Corporation), 1 March 1920, "Memorandum to Members of the Board of Management", both in Native Recruiting Corporation file, "Native Strike February 1920", TEBA archives, Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit/ University of Johannesburg
[120] Charles W. Villiers, 9 February 1920, Circular Letter: Secret and Confidential, to all Mine Managers, in Native Recruiting Corporation file, "Native Strike February 1920", TEBA archives, Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit/ University of Johannesburg
[121] Bonner, 1979, *op cit*., p. 278

State repression was also on hand: there were clashes with police at several compounds, and around eight mineworkers were killed.[122] Scabbing by White workers took its toll, too. As with the 1919 Johannesburg municipal strike, White workers were quite capable of combining militant traditions with active hostility towards Africans. Fearful of any potential threat to the job colour bar,[123] White underground miners rallied to a call by the South African Mine Workers' Union executive to continue working during this strike, and undertook the necessary unskilled work to keep the mines working.[124] A crowd of Whites, armed with guns and other weapons, attacked a South African Native National Congress meeting at Vrededorp called in support of the strikers.[125]

Rather than pay the strike "scant attention",[126] the syndicalists tried to intervene, but with only limited effect. The Industrial Socialist League condemned the White miners for scabbing on the Africans,[127] but the Cape base of the organisation obviously meant its appeals had little impact. The *International* appealed for solidarity with the Africans, and campaigned with a leaflet called "Don't Scab". This was written by S.P. Bunting, and distributed by sympathetic White workers at several mines in an endeavour to stop the scabbing. It was directed towards White workers, and made the standard arguments for interracial labour unity:[128]

> White workers! Do you hear the new army of labour coming? The Native workers are beginning to wake up. They are finding out that they are slaves to the big capitalists. Food and clothing are costing more, but their wages remain the same, down at the pig level of existence.
>
> But they want to rise. Why not? They want better housing and better clothes, better education and a higher standard of life.
>
> They have seen the white workers are getting more and more wages to meet the rising cost of living. They have noted that our power is due to organisation and they are following suit. They are uniting in a new Army of Labour.
>
> White workers! Do not repel them! The Native workers cannot rise without raising the whole standard of existence for all … They are putting aside sticks and assegais and are learning how to withhold their labour unitedly with folded arms. They are learning to win the respect of white people by peaceful picketing and organisation. They are falling in line with the trade union movement of the whole world.

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[122] Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit*., pp. 132-3
[123] Bonner, 1979, *op cit*., p. 283
[124] Hirson, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 184
[125] Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit*., p. 87
[126] Drew, editor, 1996a, editorial notes, *op cit*., p. 17
[127] *The Bolshevik*, March 1920, "Trades Union Notes"
[128] The leaflet is reproduced in Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit.*, pp. 133-4; Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit.*, p. 88-9

> It is an insult to the trade union movement to bring in troops when any workers go on strike, as if they are unreasoning savages … Do not allow yourselves to be enrolled as Special Constables against native strikers. It is an insult to your own Labour movement.
>
> White workers! On which side are you? When the Native workers are on strike we are all thrown idle. Thus they prove that all sections of Labour are interdependent; white and black solidarity will win! … Be on the side of labour, even Native labour, against our common capitalist masters …
>
> Therefore, DON'T SCAB! DON'T SHOOT! …

The leaflet cost the International Socialist League any chance of participating effectively in the March 1920 general elections. It was issued at a time when it was running five candidates: Andrews, Barendrecht, S.P. Bunting, and Tyler on the Witwatersrand, and F. Hicks in Kimberley.[129] Stressing that elections were merely a means of making propaganda, the International Socialist League set out to distribute 150,000 leaflets on inflation, "Bolshevism", *soviets* and the need for an interracial labour movement.[130] Its election manifesto was typical of its syndicalist position: "We make use of the present parliamentary election as in previous elections, to proclaim the Soviet OR INDUSTRIAL UNION principle AS THE ONLY HOPE OF THE WORKERS".[131]

There is, it should be noted, no evidence to support the notion that S.P. Bunting somehow imposed the "Don't Scab" leaflet upon a reluctant International Socialist League,[132] another example of the "S.P. Bunting/Ivon Jones myth". The view that S.P. Bunting was one of several isolated "nigrophiles" in an International Socialist League that largely was disinterested in (or hostile to) workers of colour[133] ignores the fact that the arguments in the "Don't Scab" leaflet were commonplace in the organisation's propaganda (including the election manifesto of 1920), and fails to appreciate the extent to which it placed principle before popularity and political advantage.

The International Socialist League's principled position on the 1920 African mineworkers' strike was entirely consistent with its election manifesto (issued in January 1920), which called for "the triumph of organised Labour irrespective of race, colour, or creed".[134] It was also underlined by the fact that the "Don't Scab" leaflet was distributed despite the fact that open support for the African strikers was bound to cost votes.

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[129] Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, pp. 105-6
[130] Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., pp. 245-6
[131] *The International*, 23 January 1920, "League Manifesto"
[132] Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 99; also cf. Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit.*, pp. 133-4; Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit.*, p. 88-9
[133] Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit*., p. 84
[134] *The International*, 23 January 1920, "League Manifesto"

Reprinted in the mainstream press, doubtless with an eye on embarrassing the International Socialist League in the elections, the "Don't Scab" leaflet was "publicly condemned" by the executive of the South African Mine Workers' Union.[135] It "fell upon deaf ears",[136] and the International Socialist League's failure to win any seats – Andrews had the highest poll, a mere seventy-eight votes – was partly attributed by the organisation to "resentment" of the leaflet.[137] Two supporters of the International Socialist League who distributed the leaflet at the mineshafts were also arrested, although the cases fell apart,[138] and the men and several others had life made sufficiently unpleasant by their co-workers that they resigned.

In contrast, the SA Labour Party had recovered in the general elections, winning 19 seats.[139] It even approached the International Socialist League with an eye on unity in late 1920, but the talks that ensued were, predictably, fruitless as the League continued to view the party as reformist and racialist and refused to change its own positions.[140] Throughout 1920, the syndicalists refused to moderate their views for the White public, and it certainly should not be assumed from the participation in the 1920 elections that the International Socialist League now focused on White labour. It ran Pettersen as a candidate for the Natal Provincial Council in 1920.[141] He performed fairly well, winning a good deal of support amongst Indian voters, but did not win a seat. [142] (Norrie, now a town councillor, threw his Social Democratic Party's support behind the SA Labour Party.)[143] Soon afterwards, Andrews and Ivon Jones sent down to help the Indian tobacco workers' strike, as noted in Section 7.6.

More significant was the absence of a syndicalist leaflet direct to the *African* mineworkers in 1920. This was partly the result of the current condition of the Industrial Workers of Africa in Johannesburg. Still active in mid-1920 and headed by Thibedi, [144] it seems to have become a small African radical circle, rather than a thriving union. The rightward shift of the Transvaal Native Congress at the time played a role, as it closed an important channel into African communities on the Witwatersrand. The South African Native National Congress' May 1920 Queenstown conference would see a decisive victory for the traditional conservative nationalists, despite the efforts of men like Cetiwe and Kraai, as discussed in Section 8.7.

The local syndicalists' tendency to lack a medium-term strategy also played a role, for there was little ongoing work within the Transvaal Native Congress, follow-up with the African mineworkers drawn into the abortive 1918 general strike, or signs of a campaign to make contact with the African strikers in 1920.

Another sign of the lack of a medium-term strategy was around the issue of consolidating the syndicalist bloc of unions that had emerged in the late 1910s. The early syndicalist unions in South Africa were remarkably multi-racial and occupationally diverse, as compared to the mainstream unions with their racial segregation and craft basis, but lacked a key strength of the latter: a union centre. They were not

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[135] Ivon Jones, 29 March 1921] 1981, *op cit*., p. 53
[136] Eddie Roux [1964] 1978, *op cit.*, p. 134,
[137] Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, pp. 105-6; Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., p. 246
[138] Ivon Jones, [29 March 1921] 1981, *op cit*., p. 53
[139] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., p. 250-1; Thomas, 1963, *op cit*., pp. 96, 100-101
[140] *The International*, 26 November 1920
[141] *The International*, 10 December 1920, "The I.S.L. in Durban",
[142] Mouton, 1987, *op cit*., pp. 29-33
[143] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, p. 250
[144] Wickens, 1974a, *op cit.*, p. 395, note 27

linked together in a federation, nor were they coordinated with one another in other ways, and the problem went beyond simply linking unions together, however: the Industrial Workers of Africa in Cape Town was not closely linked to the section in Johannesburg. Hard choices about where to place limited resources were avoided; the lack of a clear programme of action that directed energies meant that the syndicalist unions remained fragmented and disconnected from one another.

9.3. Contesting the meaning of "Bolshevism": the syndicalist Communist Party, the Communist Propaganda Group, and the founding of the CPSA

In 1920, the Comintern received two separate applications for affiliation from South Africa. The Industrial Socialist League sent one and the International Socialist League another, subsequently dispatching Ivon Jones himself to Europe in May 1920 to make contact with the Bolsheviks.[145] Ivon Jones went to Moscow, where he attended Comintern meetings, and he lived out the short remaining span of his life in Russia. Another "Comrade N. Gershaw" arrived in Moscow in June 1920, where he became a translator.[146] Barlin and a J. den Bekken also went to Moscow to attend the third congress of the Comintern in 1921,[147] while S.P. Bunting visited the Soviet Union in 1922.

The two applications from South Africa were not the result of a mix-up, but reflected a sharpening division and rivalry amongst local radicals over the politics to be adopted by a local Communist Party. While there was widespread enthusiasm for the formation of such a Party, it was complicated by a central division: the question was that of participation in elections, which remained "a sore point with many comrades".[148]

None of the major groups involved in moves towards a CPSA – the Industrial Socialist League, the International Socialist League and the SDF – regarded legislative elections as the means to make a revolution, placing their emphasis on popular action, education and organisation. It was the contribution that elections could make to these processes that was disputed.

The two main positions that were propounded at this time – and which would form the poles of debate and division – were the rival versions of syndicalism associated with the Chicago IWW and the Detroit IWW. This basic division was not new, and was exemplified by divisions between the local IWW and Socialist Labour Party back in 1910. Other anarchists and socialists gravitated towards one or the other position – Harrison, for example, supported the use of legislative elections for propaganda – and it was only towards the end of 1920 that actual Bolshevik politics began to play a serious role in local debates.

The division had existed throughout the 1910s, but was fairly muted in the early years of the International Socialist League, which was formally committed to the De Leonist position but included a significant anti-electoral group. Opposition to elections had surfaced on several occasions, with a group centred on Dunbar repudiating all "political action".[149] Besides veterans of the local IWW, the anti-electoral

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[145] Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit*., p. 89
[146] *The International*, 31 December 1920, "A Letter from Moscow"
[147] *The International*, 7 January 1921, "News from Comrade S. Barlin"; *The International*, 28 January 1921, "News from D. Ivon Jones Barlin"; *The International*, 30 December 1921, "Message from Soviet Russia"
[148] *The International*, 26 July 1918, "League Notes", reporting on a public meeting on the topic "As to Politics""
[149] Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, pp. 106-7

current within in the International Socialist League included other members, notably a majority of the Yiddish-Speaking Branch. A minority of De Leonists, including R. MacLean of the old Socialist Labour Party, moved to the anti-electoral position; most did not.

At first the division within the International Socialist League was a replay of the divisions of 1910, often involving many of the same personalities.[150] This was, for example, the case when the question of elections arose at the organisation's annual conferences in 1917 and 1918. Later in 1918 the issue arose again,[151] with Dunbar and his circle heartened by the formation of the Industrial Socialist League on a Chicago IWW platform. Even then, however, the division remained quite muted, probably because the International Socialist League did not make elections a central activity: "running candidates for public bodies will be only one of our methods, and not perhaps the most important one".[152]

The founding of the Comintern was met with enthusiasm, as was its call for the forming of Communist Parties worldwide. There had already been attempts by South African radicals to establish contact with the Bolsheviks, notably by the International Socialist League: Andrews had met Maxim Livitnov, the unofficial Soviet representative in Britain, when abroad, M.Y. Volberg, an International Socialist League member, and veteran of the 1905 Russian Revolution, had carried a package of materials to Moscow in 1919, and the International Socialist league had tried to contact the Comintern via the Workers' Socialist Federation and the Socialist Labour Party in Britain.[153]

It was in 1919 that the division over the question of elections began to harden. The mood of revolutionary optimism amongst local radicals gave the debate a new urgency and a fresh relevance, as it obviously seemed that a failure to correctly apply "Bolshevism" could result in the failure of South Africa's impending revolution. The call to found Communist parties also played a role, as no local faction wanted to be bound to a Party platform with which they disagreed, particularly given that each regarded its views as "Bolshevik from A to Z".[154]

The division now took the form of a growing distance between the International Socialist League and the Industrial Socialist League, and a serious split within the International Socialist League. Relations between the Industrial Socialist League and the International Socialist League had initially been very cordial, despite their different positions on the question of parliamentary politics. The *International* covered the foundation of the Industrial Socialist League favourably,[155] and carried regular "Cape Notes" by that organisation until the *Bolshevik* was launched as a separate paper. The 1919 annual conference of the International Socialist League heard that the Management Committee was in "constant touch" with the Cape

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[150] Johns is incorrect to suggest that International Socialist League members from the old IWW and Socialist Labour Party an opposition to "participation in elections", for the two syndicalists tendencies differed on precisely this issue: *contra*. Johns, 1976, *op cit*., p. 376

[151] See, for example, *The International*, 9 August 1918, "League Notes"; *The International*, 23 August 1918, "League Notes"

[152] David Ivon Jones, 1 October 1915, "The Parting of the Ways", *The International*

[153] Johns, 1976, *op cit*., pp. 375, 380-381

[154] Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 10

[155] *The International*, 5 July 1918, "Cape Notes"

group, described as a body "very much on the lines of the I.S.L.", whose literature it also sold.[156] Even after the *Bolshevik* was set up in 1919, the Industrial Socialist League offered subscriptions to the *International*,[157] while in June 1919, the International Socialist League donated £5 from its Defence Fund to the aid the publishers of the *Bolshevist* then on trial.[158]

In November 1918, Tinker resigned from the Management Committee of the International Socialist League over the question of electoral action.[159] He was replaced by Andrews, but remained a member of the International Socialist League. At the next annual conference, the anti-electoral faction moved for a withdrawal from elections, but was defeated by 22 votes to 5. Unlike the situation in previous years, however, the issue did not fade away this time. Dunbar and his supporters soon set up a Johannesburg branch of the Industrial Socialist League, in a move that was regarded as a direct challenge to the International Socialist League in its stronghold.

The Management Committee, headed by Andrews, responded by expelling Dunbar and R. MacLean for their role, and forbade dual membership in the Industrial Socialist League and the International Socialist League.[160] Relations between the two organisations deteriorated quickly, and personal relations soured: Dunbar made rather personal attacks on Andrews and S.P. Bunting, and Andrews responded in kind, and the *Bolshevik* became stridently critical of the *International*.

Then, at the International Socialist League's fifth conference in January 1920, the Yiddish-Speaking Branch proposed the deletion of electoral action from the platform one last time. The Yiddish-Speaking Branch lost the vote by 28 to 2, and walked out, in accordance with a pre-conference resolution.[161] This was a serious blow, given the size and importance of the branch, and probably accounted for many of the financial difficulties faced by the International Socialist League Press at the time.[162]

The organisational landscape now became visibly polarised between the two variants of IWW politics. The majority of the Yiddish-Speaking Branch joined Dunbar and MacLean in the Industrial Socialist League's Johannesburg group.[163] The group subsequently renamed itself the "Communist League", which was a branch of the Industrial Socialist League.[164] In October 1920, the Industrial Socialist League was renamed the Communist Party of South Africa, with a platform that retained the anti-electoral principle, while stressing the need for interracial and revolutionary industrial unions, sometimes described as *soviets*. Leading figures included Dunbar, Frank Glass, Joe Pick and Manuel Lopes. In other words, the first organisation in Africa to adopt the title of "Communist Party" was a *syndicalist* body with a platform largely

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[156] *The International*, 10 January 1919, "1919 Annual Conference"
[157] *The Bolshevik*, December 1919
[158] *The International*, 13 June 1919
[159] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 206
[160] Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 106
[161] Johns, 1995, *op cit.*, pp. 106-7
[162] These financial difficulties are mentioned by Eddie Roux, who largely attributes the situation to declining revolutionary enthusiasm amongst local Jews, but the International Socialist league's loss of large numbers of Jewish activists over the electoral issue was probably decisive: *contra.* Eddie Roux, [1944] 1995, *op cit*., p. 87
[163] Mantzaris, 1988, *op cit.*, pp. 170-171
[164] Johns, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 109-111

based on that of the Chicago IWW, and Dunbar, known for years as an "anti-political and anti-S.P. agitator", was probably the single most important of its militants.[165]

The 1920 split reflected the "shake-out of Socialists" that "began to take place" over "the question of principles and tactics".[166] However, while "both sides invoked the example of the Bolsheviks in justification of their positions",[167] it is essential to recognise that both sides "invoked" Bolshevism to defend *pre-existing* positions in a longstanding dispute amongst local radicals that corresponded to the two rival IWWs. It was not a division between a Marxist (or "leftwing socialist") International Socialist League and a syndicalist Industrial Socialist League,[168] but a division between two rival *syndicalist* approaches. Nor was it a divide over racial questions, as Johns has suggested,[169] for both groups maintained a keen interest in building an interracial and egalitarian union movement and socialist future. The local debates paralleled those taking amongst "militant left-wing socialists in Europe and North America",[170] but insofar as debates in America and Europe also raised questions around the relationship between Bolshevism, syndicalism and parliamentary activity.

It was precisely because the prime movers towards the formation of the local Communist Party were mainly drawn from the local anarchist and syndicalist milieu (rather than from a "Communist nucleus" of "true socialists")[171] and were typically profoundly ignorant of Leninist doctrine (rather than bathed in the "light of Marxist-Leninist science")[172] that such developments took place. In other words, a dispute amongst radicals, structured by a division amongst syndicalists, was framed as a debate over the meaning of Bolshevism. The International Socialist League's decision to stand five candidates in the 1920 general elections – the organisation's greatest electoral foray in years – should be seen in the context of the deepening divide, as should the two rival South African applications sent to the Comintern in early 1920.

While this was happening, the Comintern became increasingly open about its positions. If its founding congress had been vague, the second congress, held in June 1920, explicitly aimed to "put an end to all syndicalist prejudices" and highlight the vanguard Party and the seizure of State power.[173] Delegates were given copies of Lenin's *"Left-wing" Communism: an infantile disorder*, which included polemics against the Chicago IWW,[174] and Trotsky's "Terrorism and Communism: a reply to Karl Kautsky", which argued that "socialism" meant "authoritarian leadership ... centralised distribution of the labour force ... the workers' State … entitled to send any worker wherever his labour may be needed".[175]

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[165] Archibald Crawford, 16 February 1912, "The IWW's Augean [sic] Stable", *The Voice of Labour*
[166] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 206
[167] Johns, 1995, *op cit*., p. 104
[168] *Contra*. Johns, 1976, *op cit*., pp. 375-7
[169] Johns wrote that the International Socialist League had to "share the socialist arena with a small but vocal [grouping] which criticised not only its commitment to electoral politics but also its willingness to devote particular attention to black workers: Johns, 1976, *op cit*., p. 377
[170] Johns, 1976, *op cit*., p. 371
[171] Dadoo, 1981, *op cit*., p. xv
[172] Dedication on frontispiece of Harmel, 1971, *op cit.*
[173] Thorpe, 1989, *op cit.*, pp. 125-6, 128
[174] Lenin, [1920] 1975c, *op cit*.
[175] Quoted in Thorpe, 1989, *op cit.*, pp. 128, 132

The second Comintern congress established the Profintern in order to challenge the unions linked to the defunct Labour and Socialist International, and to attract the syndicalist unions.[176] It was, however, made clear that the Profintern was to be subject to the Comintern, and that the unions were to be led by Communist Parties. The first Profintern meeting, carefully controlled by the Bolsheviks, was nonetheless stormy as most syndicalist delegates baulked at Bolshevik views.[177]

The June 1920 Comintern congress also developed "21 Conditions of Admission", which set out a clear model for Communist Parties everywhere.[178] The Party must be based on "democratic centralisation" and "iron discipline" under the direct control of the "Central Committee", itself subject to a "centralised" Comintern in the Soviet Union. There was to be only one affiliate per country, suitably Bolshevik in outlook, and dedicated to winning "all the responsible posts in the labour movement (party organisation, editors, labour unions, parliamentary faction, co-operatives, municipality, etc.)", and to making "systematic propaganda" in the armed forces, rural districts, and "co-operatives and other labour organisations", with an eye to establishing its dictatorship.

It was only in late 1920 that the first signs of a clearer appreciation of Bolshevism appeared in the local socialist movement, and it was difficult to break with older traditions. The *International* carried an increasing number of statements from the Comintern, which played an important role in clarifying perspectives, although a great many articles were unreconstructed examples of the older De Leonist approach. Thus, in late October the *International* first published the "21 Conditions",[179] but a week later carried a lengthy article on the need to build the "Industrial Republic of Labour" through revolutionary unions,[180] followed by articles in November and December stressing workshop committees as the basis for "full control of industry by the workers".[181] In January 1921, Andrews was speaking of the need to reorganise the unions for "revolutionary mass action, with the ultimate object of taking over the means of production and organising the world-wide Soviet Republic".[182]

Finally, influenced by Comintern appeals for unity and the formation of a single Communist Party in every country, and moves towards the formation of the CPGB, the International Socialist League invited interested individuals, local socialist groups and African and Coloured nationalists, to attend its January 1921 annual conference.[183] The proposed conference agenda centred on three main items: workers of colour, the rising Afrikaner nationalist movement, and socialist unity, and was preceded by a statement in the *International* claiming agreement with Comintern principles.

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[176] Thorpe, 1989, *op cit.*, pp. 132-3
[177] Thorpe, 1989, *op cit.*, p. 134-141
[178] "The Twenty-One Points- Conditions of Admission to the Communist International", as adopted at the Second Comintern congress in 1920 and appended to the constitution of the Communist Party of South Africa by its founding conference in 1921, reproduced in Brian Bunting, editor, 1981, *op cit.*, pp. 58-62. All quotes are from this document.
[179] *The International*, 15 October 1920, "Conditions for Admission to the Third International"
[180] Clarence Hotson, 22 October 1920, "Socialism vs. Freakishness", *The International*
[181] *The International*, 12 November 1920, "City Deep Strike: an ultimatum"; *The International*, 19 November 1920, "Unauthorised Strikes Condemned: an ultimatum"; *The International*, 17 December 1920, "Workers' Shop Committees vs. Bosses' Committees"
[182] *The International*, 21 January 1921, "I.S.L. Sunday Propaganda"
[183] Johns, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 103-4, 112-115

The 1920 syndicalist Communist Party was invited, but did not reply, nor did the small Social Democratic Party in Durban. The SDF was interested, as was a new Marxian Club in Durban,[184] which seems to have been a study group on Marxist economics formed in August 1919 as a split off the tiny Social Democratic Party.[185] The Poalei Zion also responded positively. The Poalei Zion was shaped by *Bundist* traditions, although it is not clear whether it supplanted the *Bund* sections established in Cape and on the Witwatersrand in earlier years. Since its emergence in the 1910s, it had developed friendly relations with the major syndicalist groups, attending Andrews' send-off to Stockholm in Johannesburg on 5 August 1917,[186] establishing fraternal relations with the Yiddish-Speaking Branch,[187] and joining the Industrial Socialist League and SDF in commemorating the Russian Revolution in Cape Town.[188]

The 1921 International Socialist League conference included representatives from the Industrial Workers of Africa's Johannesburg section, the Indian Workers' Industrial Union, the Marxian Club and the Poalei Zion, and a number of individual SA Labour Party members and White trade unionists.[189] By this time, the Poalei Zion had itself become embroiled in the split amongst the anarchists and syndicalists, with Joe Pick of the Industrial Socialist League recruiting most of its Cape Town members in late 1920.[190] The SDF did not attend, although it supported moves towards socialist unity. It was at this point – a scant six months before the final foundation of the CPSA – that the imprint of the Comintern on local socialist thinking first became apparent. On the eve of the conference, the *International* carried a statement on socialist unity that was clearly influenced by the Comintern's "21 Conditions", and this statement was adopted at the conference.[191]

However, unity remained contentious. The syndicalist Communist Party sent Dunbar to the conference to demand the deletion of electoral action from the International Socialist League programme,[192] and withdrew when he was unsuccessful. A five-person Unity Committee was established, including Andrews, S.P. Bunting and A. Goldman of the International Socialist League, to develop a constitution for a united socialist grouping, but did not have an impact in Cape Town.[193] An independent initiative by an E.J. Brown of the International Socialist League – expelled from the Belgian Congo in July 1920 for union activities amongst White miners – was more successful in starting discussions between the 1920 syndicalist Communist Party and the SDF. He also managed to draw in the small Constitutional Socialist League, which

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[184] Marxian Club, 17 December 1920, "Marxian Club Statement (Durban): to be considered at the Annual Conference January 2nd", *The International*
[185] Johns, 1976, *op cit*., p. 371; Johns, 1995, *op cit*., p. 113
[186] *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 14 December 1918, "South African Socialists: South Africa and the Inter-Allied Socialist Conference"
[187] Mantzaris, 1988, *op cit.*
[188] See, for example, Manuel Lopes, 29 November 1918, "Cape Notes", *The International*
[189] Johns, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 112-115
[190] Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 8; cf. Johns, 1995, *op cit*., p. 115
[191] Also see Johns, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 114-115
[192] Johns, 1995, *op cit*., p. 114
[193] Johns, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 115-116

evolved from the pro-war SDF breakaway in 1914: influenced by Guild Socialism, it developed a number of proposed parliamentary bills designed to usher in socialism peacefully.[194]

Following a split in the 1920 syndicalist Communist Party, and the withdrawal of the Constitutional Socialist League, a United Communist Party was formed in Cape Town in March 1921. It included a number of unaffiliated socialists, the SDF and a large section of the syndicalist Communist Party, and accepted the "21 Conditions".[195] Subsequently, many in the 1920 syndicalist Communist Party came to believe that obstructing unity on the basis of opposing electoral action undermined the Communist cause, and on April 1 the organisation decided to join the United Communist Party.

The United Communist Party explicitly adopted a Statist approach: "the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local in order that this machinery, including those [armed] forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation".[196] Here, too, was a clear break with the Chicago IWW tradition, with its stress on replacing the State with One Big Union, as well as De Leonism, with its view that the State would be abolished on the day of the "general lockout of the capitalist class": "the political State will have been shed, and society will *simultaneously* appear in its new administrative garb".[197]

At the same time, the Unity Committee of the International Socialist League organised a meeting to draft a constitution for a united socialist party for Easter Sunday, 27 March 1921, in Johannesburg.[198] It invited the 1920 syndicalist Communist Party, Poalei Zion (the Jewish Socialist Society), the Marxian Club, the Durban Social Democratic Party and the SDF to each send two delegates. Harrison attended for the new United Communist Party, and it is interesting to note that it was the self-identified anarchist who proposed the new party be based on "unqualified acceptance" of the "21 Points" and affiliation to the Comintern. The proposal, slightly amended, was carried, although the Social Democratic Party later repudiated it.[199]

With the shifts in the International Socialist League, the formation of the United Communist Party in Cape Town, and the Easter unity conference, the way was now clear for the formation of an official CPSA on the basis of the "21 Conditions". The drive for unity, and a fear of disrupting the progress made thus far, helps explains why the International Socialist League called for a boycott of the early general elections called in February 1921, which were centred on Afrikaner nationalist demands for secession. The boycott avoided raising the principle of participating in elections, although the principle of standing candidates in elections remained in place: in Durban three nominally independent candidates, headed by Pettersen, were put forward,[200] and won a dismal 140 votes in total.[201] Presented as independents,[202] the candidates could be supported by the International Socialist League without raising the contentious electoral issue.

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[194] Harrison, n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 50, 154-155; Johns, 1976, *op cit*., pp. 387-388, also p. 388 note 51; *The International*, 24 September 1920, "'A Partnership and £1,000 per Annum for You': the latest in propaganda leaflets"
[195] Johns, 1995, *op cit*., p. 114-116
[196] Quoted in Johns, 1995, *op cit*., p. 116
[197] De Leon, 1905, *op cit.*, p. 24
[198] Johns, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 117-123
[199] Johns, 1976, *op cit*., pp. 391-4
[200] *The International*, 10 December 1920, "Durban Notes"; *The International*, 21 January 1921, "Durban Notes"
[201] Mouton, 1987, *op cit*., pp. 29-33; Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, p. 250

The question of relations with Afrikaner nationalism was also avoided by the boycott approach. The National Party had become the single largest party in parliament in 1920, and Hertzog had even expressed some support for Bolshevism.[203] The rise of Afrikaner nationalism certainly caught the attention of the International Socialist League. It generally remained hostile to the movement, calling on Afrikaner workers and *bywoners* to join an interracial socialist movement,[204] but the issue had been tabled at the organisation's January 1921 congress. S.P. Bunting had suggested a qualified support for the demand for secession, but the majority regarded such a position as altogether too close to the Afrikaner nationalists, and S.P. Bunting's proposal was defeated.[205]

The decision to run candidates in Durban alone was not really a coincidence: Afrikaner nationalism was not a factor in Natal, with its large White English population, and Durban candidates could avoid the secession issue. The SA Labour Party, on the other hand, stressed its loyalty to the Empire, and alienated many Afrikaners: "To these workers the Labour Party is [now] anathema, for it has by its beating of the Jingo drum violated their legitimate national sentiments".[206] Despite securing the allegiance of one independent candidate, its parliamentary representation collapsed to nine seats.[207] The National Party increased its seats, but a merger between the South African Party and the Unionist Party allowed Smuts to form a government with 79 seats.

There was one more important split to come. On the 21st April 1921 there was a short-lived Cape breakaway from the United Communist Party, called the Communist Propaganda Group: it had five members, including Frank Glass, Joe Pick and Davidoff,[208] and continued to oppose legislative elections, a "hangover from the strong syndicalist tendency of the pre-war [*sic*] days".[209] Dunbar and others in Johannesburg, clearly unhappy with the unity framework of Easter 1921, soon established contact.[210]

Soon afterwards, the Bulhoek massacre took place. Since Passover in April 1920, members of a peaceful millenarian African sect called the Israelites had gathered at Ntabelanga, an African area at Bulhoek at south Queenstown in the Cape Province. Following a local prophet called Enoch Mgijima, they awaited the end of the world, while busying themselves with the establishment of a self-sufficient village, which had around 3,000 "Israelites" by May 1921. Following several eviction attempts, Smuts sent in 800 policemen

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[202] *The International*, 21 January 1921, "The Union Assembly Elections: how to vote"
[203] See Johns, 1976, *op cit*., p. 375 note 11
[204] *The International*, 3 October 1920, "To the Bijwoners and Afrikaner Workers"
[205] Johns, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 103-104
[206] Ivon Jones, [29 March 1921] 1981, *op cit*., p. 47
[207] Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit*., p. 250-1; Thomas, 1963, *op cit*., pp. 96, 100-101
[208] Johns, 1976, *op cit*., p. 389 note 56. In his research on the group in the 1960s, Johns was able to make use of a record book kept by the group, which he located in a collection held by Abraham Samuel Rochlin in Johannesburg: this included many of the papers of Frank Glass. While the Rochlin collection has subsequently been relocated to the special collections section of Concordia University, in Montréal, the documents pertaining the Communist Propaganda Group seem to have disappeared: Sheridan Johns, personal communication, 29 July 2006. See also Sheridan Johns, 2004, "The Rochlin Collection: out of South into Quebec – and to your desktop soon?", paper presented at "Archives: a key to African history in the 20th century" conference, Moscow, September 15-17
[209] Hirson, 1988b, *op cit*., p. 29
[210] Johns, 1976, *op cit*., p. 392 note 63. According to Johns, the Dunbar group sometimes called itself the Communist Party: Johns, 1976, "The Birth of the Communist Party of South Africa", The International Journal of African Historical Studies, vol.9, no. 3, p. 376 pp. 392, 398 note 75

and soldiers on May 24 – Empire Day and Smuts' birthday – and 183 people were killed, 100 wounded, and 150 arrested. Mgijima and another leader got six years' hard labour, and others sentences ranged from twelve to eighteen months' hard labour.[211]

The events shocked a wide range of African opinion, and the South African Native National Congress and the ICU both provided financial aid to the accused. While many were critical of the sect's beliefs, Msimang of the ICU suggested that the problem arose from the cheap labour system. The Israelites had refused to work in neighbouring White-owned farms; had they provided cheap or free labour, no massacre would have taken place.[212]

The radical left also joined in the protests. Frank Glass wrote a statement for the Communist Propaganda League.[213] This condemned the Bulhoek massacre as an "act of unprecedented and diabolical savagery by the Capitalist government of South Africa".[214] Despite noting the religious millenarianism of the Israelites, Frank Glass described the movement as the "Commune of Bulhoek", and "Bolshevism in practice", a "wholly successful experiment in Communism", and an attempt to resist wage labour:[215]

> The first practical demonstration of the success of Communism in South Africa has been destroyed, but the IDEA of Communism still remains, and CANNOT BE DESTROYED. The seed of Communism has been sown at Bulhoek, and has aroused the fierce hatred of the master-class of South Africa, who have attempted to kill it with the utmost ferocity … the memory of the Bulhoek Commune will shine in the hearts of the native proletariat of South Africa, oppressed and downtrodden as they are in every corner of this vast continent … and it will in some measure spur them on to unite with their white fellow-slaves …

There were, however, important flaws in the analysis: the implicit analogy with the Paris Commune was flimsy; there was a silence on the religious aspects of the movement, and the "communalism of the sect had nothing in common with the communism Glass professed".[216]

The United CPSA also issued a leaflet: co-written by William Dryburgh and Harrison, it resulted in Harrison, William Dryburgh, and D.L Dryburgh and William Green of the SDF being arrested for criminal slander for having described Colonel Theo. G. Truter, who led the attack, as a "hired murderer".[217] Truter was the same Commissioner of Police who dispersed the 1913 general strike rally at the Johannesburg

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[211] Edgar, 1988, *op cit*., pp. 33-4
[212] Quoted in Edgar, 1988, *op cit*., pp. 35-6
[213] Communist Propaganda League (Frank Glass), [1921] 1991, "The Commune of Bulhoek", reprinted in *Searchlight South Africa*, vol.2, no. 2, with editorial notes by Baruch Hirson. Copies were clearly sent abroad: for example, it appeared as Frank Glass, 9 July 1921, "Maintaining the Flag of Empire", *The Workers' Dreadnought*. All references are to the *Searchlight South* Africa edition, cited as Communist Propaganda League, [1921] 1991, *op cit*.
[214] Communist Propaganda League (Frank Glass), [1921] 1991, *op cit*., p. 65
[215] Communist Propaganda League (Frank Glass), [1921] 1991, *op cit*., p. 67
[216] Communist Propaganda League (Frank Glass), [1921] 1991, *op cit*., editorial comments p. 65
[217] Communist Propaganda League (Frank Glass), [1921] 1991, *op cit*., editorial comments by Hirson, p. 65. The leaflet can be found Harrison, n.d., *op cit*., p. 76, and an account of the trial on pp. 76-80

Market Square.[218] The charges against the authors were dropped, as the criminal law was no longer in force, but the other two were fined.[219] The Communist Propaganda Group held joint meetings with the United CPSA on the Bulhoek issue, and this helped to lay the basis for the Group to rejoin the United Communist Party around 24 June 1921.[220]

The CPSA was formed at a unity conference held in Cape Town on 30 July 1921, at the end of a three-day conference. It adopted a manifesto drafted by the Unity Committee, a constitution and rules,[221] and identified itself with the Comintern:[222]

> The 21 Points of the Third International were unanimously accepted by the Congress as the basis of Unity, and the following resolution was passed (the delegates standing and singing 'The Internationale'):-
>
> That this Congress of delegates hereby constitutes the Communist Party of South Africa (South African Section of the Communist International), and resolves to apply forthwith to the Communist International for recognition.

Its manifesto was quite vague, speaking of the centrality of the class struggle, and the need for "all South African workers, black and white, to join in promoting the *overthrow of the capitalist system and outlawry of the capitalist class*, and *the establishment of a Commonwealth of Workers* throughout the World".[223] The entry of African workers, "cheap docile labour", into the revolutionary movement "is the most deadly blow South Africa can deal to world capitalism".[224]

There were fourteen delegates present, all White, representing the International Socialist League and the United Communist Party, which incorporated the 1920 syndicalist Communist Party and the Communist Propaganda Group. Joe Pick and Frank were both United Communist Party delegates. The Poalei Zion (the Jewish Socialist Society) and the Marxian Club did not send delegates, but stated their willingness to join. The Social Democratic Party was a minor but notable absence: objecting to the "21 Conditions", it lingered on in the 1920s, with A.L. Clark and Norrie holding talks on Sunday nights at the Town Gardens,

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[218] Campbell and Munro, 1913, *op cit*., pp. 10-11
[219] Communist Propaganda League (Frank Glass), [1921] 1991, *op cit*., editorial comments p. 65
[220] Hirson, 1988b, *op cit*., p. 29; Johns, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 123-4
[221] Communist Party of South Africa, [1921a] 1981, "Constitution and Rules of the Communist Party of South Africa as adopted at the congress held in Cape Town on July 30-31 and August 1, 1921", in Brian Bunting, editor, 1981, *op cit*., pp. 57-8
[222] Frank Glass, 27 August 1921, "South African Communist Party", *The Workers' Dreadnought*
[223] Communist Party of South Africa, [1921b] 1981, "Manifesto of the Communist Party of South Africa adopted at the Cape Town conference held on July 30-31 and August 1, 1921", in Brian Bunting, editor, 1981, *op cit*., pp. 62-65, emphasis in original
[224] Communist Party of South Africa, [1921b] 1981, *op cit.*, p. 64. I cannot agree with Drew's view that the reference to "cheap docile labour" demonstrated continuing "white labour chauvinism": Drew, editor, 1996a, *op cit*., p. 17. This is partly because I view the pre-CPSA tradition as radically internationalist, and partly because the phrase "cheap docile labour" should be located in the context of a manifesto that stressed "working among the submissive *helot races whose enlightenment and organisation the ruling class dreads above all*": Communist Party of South Africa, [1921b] 1981, *op cit.*, p. 64, emphasis in the original

but did not attract younger recruits. [225] It suffered a serious blow when Norrie retired from speaking in the mid-1920s, leaving the Social Democratic Party in the hands of the elderly Clark, who spent much of his time as a town councillor.

Following the 1921 congress the CPSA held a meeting in the Cape Town City Hall, which attracted around two thousand people: Andrews, S.P. Bunting, Frank Glass and Harrison were speakers, a "successful initiation".[226] The Party probably numbered around three hundred members,[227] and was heavily drawn from the old anarchist and syndicalist milieu. Tyler was the first chair, Andrews was secretary (a full-time position), and S.P. Bunting was chair, and a number of other International Socialist League veterans sat in the central executive, the most notable of whom was Rabb of the old Socialist Labour Party.[228] Another International Socialist League veteran on the executive was Rebecca Bunting (née Nolotwitz), a Jewish immigrant from East Europe who had married S.P. Bunting in December 1916.[229]

Other stalwarts of the local left also joined. Greene of Pietermariztburg joined, as did Haynes. Harrison served as the Cape provincial representative, now describing himself as a "Marxian International Socialist".[230] Frank Glass became secretary of the Cape Town branch, and was subsequently a member of the executive as well as a CPSA organiser, and the organisation's business manager.[231] Despite indicating he might oppose the new Party,[232] Dunbar joined and became one of the CPSA's main speakers in the early 1920s.[233] In the meantime, a small group – notably Eddie Roux, son of the old De Leonist Philip Roux and Solly Sachs – became involved in the Young Communist League, which was inspired by the example of the old Socialist Sunday Schools and similar Leagues in other countries.[234]

Ivon Jones remained in the Soviet Union, a Comintern official, and died in 1924, despite treatment at Yalta. By this time, this syndicalist stalwart had become an orthodox Bolshevik and master of sectarian polemic. He wrote regular articles fro the *International*, the Comintern's *Communist International* and the CPGB's *Communist Review*, providing insightful commentary on South Africa and Africa,[235] as well as interesting engagements with broader programmatic questions,[236] but his views on the course of the Russian Revolution were crude and altogether uncritical.[237]

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[225] Gitsham and Trembath, 1926, *op cit*., pp. 164-5, 172-173
[226] Harrison, n.d., *op cit*., pp. 71-72
[227] Johns, 1995, *op cit*., p. 126
[228] Johns, 1995, *op cit*., p. 125
[229] Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit*., p81
[230] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit*., pp. 79, 102
[231] Hirson, 1988b, *op cit*., pp. 29-30
[232] Johns, 1976, *op cit*., p. 393
[233] T.G. Truter, Commissioner of Police, 25 October 1924, "Re: Communism in the Union of South Africa", letter to the Secretary for Justice, Pretoria, in Department of Justice file, JUS 268 1/387/13, National Archives, Pretoria
[234] Eddie Roux, with Win Roux, 1970, *op cit*., pp. 19-20
[235] For example, David Ivon Jones, September 1922, "American Imperialism and the Negro", *Communist Review*, vol.3, no. 5, Communist Party of Great Britain, London
[236] David Ivon Jones, August 1922, "Bolshevism and Church Property", *Communist Review*, vol.3, no. 4, Communist Party of Great Britain, London
[237] For example, *The International*, 30 December 1921, "Glimpses of New Russia: no.3. – The cleansing of the Party", which unreservedly praised the Bolshevik policy of purges of dissidents by the Central Committee.

Ivon Jones' 1921 analysis of anarchism and syndicalism is a fair example.[238] Peppered with suitable quotes from Bukharin and Lenin, it dismissed anarchism and syndicalism as petty bourgeois and counter-revolutionary: the "left menace to the Revolution", the "paradise of the petty bourgeoisie", "the ideology of the disgruntled bourgeois, squeezed out in the race for profits".[239] The Marxist dictum that syndicalist unions were somehow petty bourgeois, "anti-capitalist … but in reality not pro-proletarian" (in fact, "counter-revolutionary") was accepted on faith.[240]

This former syndicalist ended up uncritically defending repression that represented everything he had opposed in South Africa, including the Bolshevik jailing of anarchists and the crushing of the 1921 Kronstadt Rebellion: the latter, which called for new elections to the *soviets*, free trade unionism, and the release of left-wing political prisoners, was dismissed as "counter-revolution, in the camp of the White Guard".[241] There was nothing unusual about Ivon Jones' political evolution, for such was the prestige of Lenin and the Soviet Union that many liberals, social democrats and revolutionaries became increasingly unwilling to hear the slightest criticisms of the Bolshevik dictatorship. The socialist world was starting to change, and the uncritical defence of the Russian regime and its successors was at the heart of the process.

9.4. Ruptures: the early CPSA, the focus on White labour and the whitening of the left

There was, however, a notable feature of the new Party: a virtual absence of people of colour, with the notable exception of Thibedi, a founder member. For the writers in the tradition of the Communist school, and those influenced by these texts, there was nothing particularly odd about this situation: the pre-CPSA left was presented as generally indifferent to workers of colour (if not wracked with racial prejudices), and it was only in 1924, and, far more decisively, in 1928 that the situation began to change. For the Communist school, "the national oppression of the majority of people in our country was not really very worthy of consideration" to the early groups,[242] and it was only with the link to the Comintern, and "the inspiration of Lenin's ideas",[243] that the socialist movement merged into the struggle for national liberation in "one mighty river".[244]

However, this line of argument is not very satisfactory. This thesis has shown that contacts between the socialist movement and workers of colour dated back to the efforts of the SDF in Cape Town in the first decade of the twentieth century, that local anarchists and syndicalists developed a systematic critique of "the national oppression of the majority of people in our country", and that the late 1910s saw not only the establishment of a number of syndicalist unions amongst Africans, Coloureds and Indians in several major centres, and the recruitment of activists from these unions as members or as "comrades in our

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[238] David Ivon Jones, November 1921, "The Solidarity of Anarchism and the Fight against the Left", *Communist Review*, vol.1, no. 2, Communist Party of Great Britain, London
[239] Ivon Jones, November 1921, *op cit*., pp. 30, 32
[240] Ivon Jones, November 1921, *op cit*., p. 33
[241] Ivon Jones, November 1921, *op cit*., pp. 30, 33
[242] Cronin, 1991, *op cit.*, p.12
[243] Harmel, 1971, *op cit*., p. 42
[244] Forman, 3 July 1958, quoted in Forman and Odendaal, 1992, *op cit.*, p. xxiv; cf. also Brian Bunting, 1975, *op cit.*, p. 186; Harmel, 1971, *op cit.*, pp. 86, 87-9, 93-4, 96-7; Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, p. 609; Jack Simons, [1977-1979] 2001, *op cit*., p. 183, also p. 153

propaganda",[245] but also syndicalist influences within the African and Coloured nationalist groups and independent unions like the early ICU.

The local syndicalist movement, taken as a whole, was certainly multi-racial in composition, yet the syndicalist unions were not present in the events in 1921 that led to the formation of the new Party, and most activists of colour recruited to the syndicalist organisations were also absent. Given this situation, the general absence of Africans, Coloureds and Indians from the CPSA must be explained, rather than assumed.

The explanation lies partly in the realm of political economy. Organisations like the International Socialist League and the Industrial Socialist League were unable to reach the mass of African workers on the mines, and they also tended to ignore the commercial farming sector, itself very difficult to organise. As a result, the syndicalist unions established in the late 1910s were generally not based in the central export sectors, but in urban manufacturing and services; the closest links to the export sectors were the initiatives on the Cape Town and Durban docks. (The Industrial Workers of Africa in Johannesburg was a slightly different case, organised as a general union with a membership drawn largely from the multi-racial slums of Johannesburg).[246]

Local manufacturing was very marginal before 1914, but had subsequently grown rapidly as a result of the import substitution forced from wartime disruptions, and continued to expand in the post-war boom, as discussed in Section 7.1. and the start of Chapter 8. However, the boom came to an abrupt end in 1920: the resumption of normal trade in the post-war period proved devastating,[247] and it was combined with turmoil in the mining industry where gold prices fell sharply to create rising unemployment and a wave of plant closures. The fragility of local manufacturing, and the fact that the syndicalist unions were largely based amongst unskilled and semi-skilled workers of colour, made these unions were vulnerable, and they do not seem to have survived the economic crisis.

The Industrial Workers of Africa faced somewhat different challenges. It seems likely that the union was no longer functioning as an independent body at the time of the CPSA launch. The Cape section, based amongst dockworkers, had a firm foundation that the other syndicalist unions lacked. However, as noted in Section 8.7., it seems to have merged into the ICU during the general process of amalgamating general unions amongst workers of colour that took place in 1920 and 1921. The Johannesburg section, a general union with a small membership, faced a different problem: general unions have the advantage of drawing together workers from a large number of small employers – that is, they are often able to succeed where industrial unions struggle – but tend to be powerful only to the extent that they can organise on a scale sufficient to take coordinated action against a large number of these employers. It seems probable that the Johannesburg section did not manage to organise on this scale, and, consequently day-to-day union work – the lifeblood of a syndicalist union – was denied it. This would certainly undermine its long-term prospects.

This helps explain why the syndicalist unions did not affiliate to the CPSA, but it does not explain why individual activists from these unions – and, specifically, activists previously enrolled in the International

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[245] *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 7 August 1920, letter from Manuel Lopes
[246] Membership list in Department of Justice, JD 3/527/17, *op cit.*
[247] Nicol, 1984, *op cit*., pp. 55-61, 71-73, 91-2

Socialist League, with a trade union background – also did not join the Party. The other factor that must be taken into account was a fateful decision by the early CPSA to focus on White workers.

The Comintern paid little attention to South Africa until the late 1920s, and the early CPSA was largely left to its own devices. Aiming to follow suitably Bolshevik policies, and deeply interested in the British situation, the CPSA – unlike the International Socialist League[248] – accepted Lenin's advice that the CPGB seek affiliation to the British Labour Party, to South Africa.[249]

Lenin proposed an electoral alliance between Communists and the British Labour Party,[250] subsequently modified into a Comintern directive that that the CPGB seek affiliation to Labour as an independent body, like the Fabian Society, the Independent Labour Party and the former British Socialist Party. If affiliation were accepted, the CPGB would have direct access to the rank-and-file; if rejected, it would expose the politics of the Labour leadership; in either case there would be a vigorous debate on Bolshevism within the Labour Party.[251] From 1920 and 1924, the CPGB applied for affiliation at least five times,[252] and it's arguable that the applications, plus the increasingly active role of CPGB members in the British Labour Party, won a wide hearing for Bolshevism.[253]

The CPGB approach was influential elsewhere, notably in the case of the small Communist Party of Australia,[254] which dissolved into the Australian Labour Party for a time.[255] It was applied fairly mechanically to South Africa, where it was interpreted to mean a drive for affiliation to the SA Labour Party, symbolised by the relocation of CPSA headquarters to the Johannesburg Trades Hall in Johannesburg, where the International Socialist League had once been driven out.[256] The continuing militancy of White labour, which remained the majority of the union movement, combined with the weakness and fragility of other sectors of organised labour, seemed to provide a strong justification for pursuing links with the SA Labour Party.

However, the CPSA's policy was carried out at the expense of other work amongst other sectors, and, increasingly, at the cost of principles. Given the racially exclusive character of the SA Labour Party, a narrow focus on that party implied a narrow focus on White labour, which was only a small sector of South Africa's multi-racial and multinational working class. The SA Labour Party was hardly a mass party along the lines of the British and the Australian Labour Parties, and its segregationist approach made it scarcely likely that it could provide the means to reach the great mass of local workers of colour.

One result was that the early CPSA generally ignored trade unions like the ICU, which showed, even at this early stage, glimmers of an anti-capitalist politics influenced by syndicalism. Another was that the Party lost existing connections with activists of colour: if it retained some credibility amongst workers of

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[248] Lenin's advice was explicitly rejected at the January 1921 socialist unity meeting in Johannesburg: Johns, 1976, *op cit*., p. 386
[249] This policy was regularly mentioned in *The International*, which carried CPGB materials: see, for instance, W.M. Paul, 30 December 1921, "Are we Realists? – II", *The International*
[250] Lenin, [1920] 1975, *op cit*., p
[251] Duncan, 1978, *op cit.*
[252] Duncan, 1978, *op cit.*
[253] Duncan, 1978, *op cit*.
[254] Hirson, 1988b, *op cit*., p. 31
[255] *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 4 August 1923, "Our View"
[256] Eddie Roux, [1944] 1991, *op cit*., p. 90

colour for its association with the earlier activities of the International Socialist League,[257] it certainly had no real relevance to these workers. Indeed, leading Party figures became convinced that White workers would lead the South African revolution.

This was compounded by a tendency to downplay policies that would offend SA Labour Party activists and White trade unionists, a tendency that often overshadowed the CPSA's explicit commitment to an interracial labour movement, and led to compromises on issues of principle and prejudiced statements. A notable example was provided by an article in the *International* in 1922: "Fellow worker, ask yourself, am I really for the whites as whites – landlords, magnates, profiteers, parasites, exploiters and all – and am I rather not for the workers as workers – white brown, yellow, black and all – and against the capitalists as capitalists – THE ONLY REAL BLACK MEN?"[258] The Young Communist League was wracked by disputes over the advisability of recruiting African members – a large section felt this would antagonise White workers – leading to severe criticism from the Comintern.[259]

Andrews was identified with this tendency to focus on White workers to the exclusion of the Africans, leading S.P. Bunting to write, despairingly, to Rebecca Bunting in 1923:[260]

> Well, as to coming back, one thing I am decided, namely to come back [to the Party leadership] if Andrews does not decide at once to go away. That he says will depend on circumstances. He says if the conference goes in for a black man policy he will have nothing to do with the party. The whole matter is completely boycotted here on the ground that 'we have got a hold on the trade unionists now and must nurse them'; but really in Andrews himself it seems to me that the colour prejudice is just as strong as in them.
>
> I have seen little sign of these new members, but there are said to be new branches at Jeppes and Springs, but they will not come to meetings at the Trades Hall (I expect that they are told it is all Jews here) and the Chairman of the Springs branch is also a member of the Labour Party, as well as being Mayor of Springs! …
>
> Well, it is not a question of precise methods of propaganda but a complete ignoring of all except white propaganda about white matters only, and the phraseology and psychology about blacks and coloured [*sic*] is hardly to be distinguished from that of the Trade unionists. That is what Communism in S Africa has come to. The SA Labour Party at Durban was more liberal …

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[257] Johns, 1976, *op cit*., p. 399
[258] *The International*, 27 January 1922, "'White South Africa': two voices"
[259] The Young Communist International, a Comintern section, sent a lengthy letter on the subject: Executive Committee of the Young Communist International, 11 October 1924, letter to the National Executive of the Young Communist League of South Africa, copy in Department of Justice file, JUS 268 1/387/13, part 3, National Archives, Pretoria
[260] S.P. Bunting, [letter of 21 April 1923] 1996a, in Brian Bunting, editor, 1996a, *op cit*., pp. 48-9

> Barlin says that Andrews is thinking of Parliamentary elections, but what is the use of standing on a white labour policy programme?

Several key points follow from this discussion. Most importantly, the early period of the CPSA, characterised by a narrow focus on White labour, involved a profound *rupture* on the question of race, a break with the traditions of the syndicalist period, a *retreat* from the forthright opposition to job colour bars and White Labourism. Ivon Jones even suggested, from Yalta, that the CPSA temporarily dissolve, penetrate the White unions, and organise around a journal that would also champion African workers.[261] Formal proposals to join the SA Labour Party were narrowly defeated at the CPSA conferences in 1923 and 1924, but the focus on that party remained until 1924.

This involved a retreat from the International Socialist League's forthright opposition to job colour bars and White Labourism, and abandoning work amongst African, Coloured, and Indian workers. It is not surprising that the early CPSA was unable to attract activists from the old syndicalist movement like Cetiwe, Gomas, Kraai, Peinaar and Sigamoney. Cetiwe and Kraai were drawn into the Cape Native Congress and the ICU; Gomas and Peinaar joined the ICU; Sigamoney went to Britain in December 1922 to study as an Anglican pastor, returning to work for St. Anthony's Indian Mission in Johannesburg from 1927.[262] The absence of people of colour from the early CPSA should be understood, then, not as continuity with the pre-CPSA past, but as a *break* with an established and relatively successful interracial approach, a break that saw a rapid whitening of the radical left.

Secondly, these changes were associated with the shift to Bolshevism, at least insofar as it was an attempt to apply Lenin's advice to the CPGB: it would be quite unfair to suggest that early CPSA policy was in line with Comintern policy on national and colonial questions. Nonetheless, it follows that, contrary to the Communist school narrative of CPSA history as a series of triumphs on the racial question with the "fraternal assistance of the world Communist movement and the inspiration of Lenin's ideas",[263] the early policies of the CPSA were a step *backwards* from the interracial policy and practice of the local anarchists and syndicalists. It was not the anarchists and syndicalists of South Africa, then, but its early Bolsheviks, which found "the national oppression of the majority of people in our country … not really very worthy of consideration".[264]

Thirdly, this break with the past was recognised at the time by the veterans, a point that underscores the problems already noted with the "S.P. Bunting/Ivon Jones myth". S.P. Bunting himself regarded early CPSA policy as a definite change: "our old policy of liberation to the native worker (since 1915) has been dropped", and the *International* "closed to anything that might offend white prejudice".[265] Likewise, Harrison agreed that there had been a shift from the older position, "a tendency to specialise on

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[261] Hirson, 1988b, *op cit*., pp. 30-31
[262] Desai, Padayachee, Reddy and Vahed, 2002, *op cit.*, pp. 59-61; Mantzaris, 1983, *op cit.*, p. 84
[263] Harmel, 1971, *op cit*., p. 42
[264] Cronin, 1991, *op cit.*, p.12
[265] S.P. Bunting, [letter of 2 May 1923] 1996a, in Brian Bunting, editor, 1996a, *op cit.*, p. 59, emphasis added

the Natives".[266] These points are not only at odds the notion that the pre-CPSA left involved an "unwilling mass of white followers" dragged along by isolated if "enthusiastic nigrophiles",[267] but also with the suggestion that the early CPSA's narrow focus on White labour was inherited from groups like the International Socialist League.

It was at the December 1924 CPSA congress that the focus on White labour was overturned, the key roles being played by Eddie Roux, the son of Philip R. Roux of the Socialist Labour Party and International Socialist League, and S.P. Bunting, who was Eddie Roux's mentor. Eddie Roux became involved in radical politics in 1921, when he helped form the Young Communist League as the youth wing of the CPSA. Solly Sachs was another prominent member of the Young Communist League. After a political battle, Eddie Roux and S.P. Bunting were able to win the Party to paying greater attention to workers of colour.

Over the next few years, the CPSA set out to recruit African members and work in trade unions like the ICU. An important step was the establishment of a Party night school in the Ferreirastown slum in Johannesburg in 1925, run by Thibedi: it was, for a while, the "one means of contact" between the mainly White Communists, and Africans.[268] A similar initiative took place in Durban, where Pettersen remained closely connected with the CPSA, providing the premises for the local CPSA offices and night school.[269] It was Pettersen who recruited Johannes Nkosi, destined to become the Party's first African martyr: Nkosi had been involved in the 1919 anti-pass protests in Johannesburg, and had served as an ICU organiser; he joined the CPSA in 1926, becoming its Durban organiser in 1929.[270] In 1926, the CPSA elected a multi-racial central committee – apparently its first – with Thibedi on the executive.[271] By 1928, the CPSA claimed 1,750 members, of whom 1,600 were Africans.[272]

Both Andrews and Frank Glass withdrew from leadership positions in the CPSA, ostensibly to focus on trade union work. Frank Glass became secretary of the Witwatersrand Tailors' Association, apparently a union outside the South African industrial Federation,[273] and seems to have briefly joined the SA Labour Party.[274] Eddie Roux later claimed Frank Glass gave a newspaper interview at the time, stating that Africans could not appreciate the "noble ideals" of Communism.[275] There is, however, no record of the supposed interview,[276] and Frank Glass became increasingly involved in the ICU, rising to provincial secretary of the union in the western Cape. In January 1927, he married Fanny Klennerman, who had moved from the SA

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[266] Harrison saw the 1910s and the late 1920s as periods when there was ... a tendency to specialise on the Natives, whom we began to get into our ranks": Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit*., p. 98
[267] Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit*., p. 84
[268] Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit*., p. 202
[269] Mouton, 1987, *op cit*., pp. 34-6
[270] "Nkosi, Johannes", in Verwey, editor, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 204-6; Albert Nzula, 9 January 1931, "Editorial", *Umsebenzi: the South African worker*
[271] Commissioner of Police, confidential report to the Secretary for Justice, 1 February 1926, "Re: Communism in South Africa", in Department of Justice files, JUS 268 1/387/13, National Archives, Pretoria
[272] Brian Bunting, editor, 1981, *op cit*., editorial notes, p. 80
[273] See, for example, *The International*, 22 December 1922, "Tailors Compelled to Jon the S.A.I.F."
[274] Hirson, 1988b, *op cit*., p. 32
[275] Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit.*, p. 106
[276] Hirson, 1988b, *op cit.*, p. 32

Labour Party into the CPSA, organising a South African Woman Workers Union, and ran literacy classes in the ICU.[277]

Recruitment of Africans through night schools, trade union activism amongst workers of colour, and an increasing stress on the question of political rights: these were new directions for the *CPSA*, but *paralleled* the efforts of the anarchists and syndicalists of the late 1910s and in many ways represented a *revival* of the approaches developed in earlier years, rather than an entirely new departure. Likewise, the changing racial composition of the CPSA echoed the changes in the composition of the local anarchist and syndicalist movement from 1917 onwards.

9.5. Echoes of syndicalism: the early CPSA, syndicalism, and Council Communism

The CPSA was Bolshevik in outlook, and doing its best to follow Comintern policy. However, the Party's official history, by Michael Harmel ("A. Lerumo"), admitted that "syndicalist concepts remained within the Communist Party for many years after its foundation; echoes of their approach and phraseology appear in many documents and journals".[278] This continuity could be seen in many spheres, with De Leon's writings and formulations particularly prominent. Eddie Roux, for instance, recalled clashing with Philip Roux in 1922 or 1923 over the latter's growing political inactivity: "I quoted De Leon and Lenin against my father".[279]

The same was true of the early CPSA press. In December 1921, Gibson (now resident in Britain) could write that revolution required "industrial organisation on a revolutionary basis", plus organising a "revolutionary body to control the political machine".[280] A year later, writers in the *International* could still speak of a "party organised on class conscious lines" providing the "shield behind which the workers' industrial republic can be organised and built",[281] and of labour acquiring "political power" through "industrial organisation".[282]

This should not be too surprising, as old habits died hard, and the CPSA was hardly the only Party where anarchist and syndicalist influences lingered. For example, Arthur Cook, one of the main CPGB leaders amongst the miners, retained his older syndicalist convictions until his death in 1931, despite serving on the CPGB's steering board.[283] It was precisely because the methods of Bolshevism were unfamiliar to many activists in many countries – even those from political socialist traditions – that such continuities existed. In Britain, as in South Africa, the move towards a Communist Party involved anarchists and syndicalists, such as the Glasgow Anarchist group (renamed the Glasgow Communist Group in 1920), the Socialist Labour Party and activists from the Shop Stewards' and Workers' Committee Movement.[284] It also drew in groups that included a syndicalist grouping – such as the South Wales Socialist Society, a mixed group similar to

[277] Hirson, 1988b, *op cit.*, pp. 32-5
[278] Harmel, 1971, *op cit.*
[279] Eddie Roux, with Win Roux, 1970, *op cit*., p. 26
[280] J.M. Gibson, 16 December 1921, "Social Insolvency", *The International*
[281] *The International*, 10 November 1922, "Red or Yellow?"
[282] *The International*, 22 December 1922, "Labour Victories and Fascisti"
[283] See Davies 1987, *op cit.*, pp. 188, 190-191
[284] See Duncan, 1978, *op cit*.; Shipway, 1988, *op cit*., pp. 9-15

Cape Town's SDF – or which had a platform similar to that of syndicalism – notably the Workers Socialist Federation, centred on London.

The British case bears further discussion as it provides an illuminating comparison with the South African developments, and because close connections – generally not widely recognised – between the anti-parliamentary currents in the two countries. It is important to note, firstly, that the British left, unlike that in South Africa, had a well-established and influential classical Marxist current when negotiations to form the CPGB began. This was centred on the British Socialist Party, perhaps the largest single group on the British left and an affiliate of the British Labour Party,[285] and it gave the disputes over the platform of the future Party distinctive features.

In South Africa, the existing divisions *within* a largely anarchist and syndicalist milieu over legislative elections provided the main stumbling block for Communist unity. In Britain, however, the major division was not the question of elections (this was an issue on which even the Glasgow Communist Group was willing to compromise),[286] but the issue of the British Labour Party. The British Socialist Party favoured a continued policy of affiliation, but most other groups opposed any association with a formation characterised as reformist, treacherous and militarist.

The division was, in many ways, a division *between* those influenced by anarchism and syndicalism, and the classical Marxists, rather than the division *amongst* anarchists and syndicalists that could be seen in South Africa, and had important organisational consequences. The CPGB was formed in August 1920 at a Communist Unity Convention, which was dominated by the British Socialist Party, supported by a section of the De Leonists. On the other side, the Socialist Labour Party majority, having called for "new ideas and conceptions" after 1917,[287] soon reverted to its traditional De Leonism.[288]

The Glasgow Communist Group formed an Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation in Easter 1921,[289] while a separate Communist Labour Party – drawn mainly from the Shop Stewards' and Workers' Committee Movement in Scotland – was established on a platform hostile to the British Labour Party and electoral participation.[290] Pankhurst's Workers' Socialist Federation – introduced in Section 7.7. – also initially stayed out of the CPGB, objecting to participation in elections and work with the British Labour Party. In June 1919 it changed its name to the "Communist Party", instructing all branches to sever ties with the British Labour Party,[291] and in 1920 it merged with a number of smaller groups to form the Communist Party (British Section of the Third International) on an anti-parliamentary platform.[292]

By 1920, then, there were five groups in Britain claiming the title of Communist Party. It is here that another contrast with the situation of the early CPSA becomes evident. The Comintern generally ignored

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[285] Duncan, 1978, *op cit.*
[286] Shipway, 1988, *op cit*., pp. 10-11
[287] *The Socialist*, 2 January 1919, "1919"
[288] John Henderson, March 1923, "Moscow and the S.L.P.", *The Socialist*
[289] Shipway, 1988, *op cit*., pp. 14-15
[290] Duncan, 1978, *op cit.*; Shipway, 1988, *op cit*., pp. 9-15, 65-79
[291] *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 14 June 1919, "The Communist Party"
[292] See, for its programme, *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 3 July 1920, "Communist Party (British Section of the Third International): provisional resolutions towards a programme"



Figure thirty-four: The anti-parliamentary *Workers' Dreadnought* was a rallying point for CPSA members who clung to the ideals of the IWW. Here the "General Strike" is "The Hand that Shakes the World"

Source: *The Workers' Dreadnought,* 24 April 1920

South Africa before the late 1920s, and played little role in local disputes: indeed, it initially recognised the application of the 1920 syndicalist Communist Party, rather than the application of the International Socialist League.[293] This was the context that led the CPSA to commit itself to its costly focus on White Labour.

Britain, on the other hand, received a good deal of attention, and Lenin intervened directly in the debates, supporting the CPGB position and arguing that Communists must use elections to expose social democracy and the parliamentary system:[294]

> If we are the party of the revolutionary *class*, and if we want the *masses* to follow us … we must, first, help Henderson or Snowden [British Labour leaders] to beat Lloyd George and Churchill (or, rather, compel the former to beat the latter, because the former *are afraid of victory*!); second, we must help the majority of the working class to be convinced by their own experience that we are right, i.e., that the Hendersons and Snowdens are absolutely good for nothing, that they are petty-bourgeois and treacherous by nature, and that their bankruptcy is inevitable …

It was, he insisted, Bolshevik policy to use every possible platform and opportunity to spread Bolshevik views.[295] Subsequently most self-identified Communist groups, as well as a substantial section of the Socialist Labour Party, joined the CPGB in January 1921 on the basis of the "21 Points". While the British Socialist Party provided many leading CPGB figures, a number of syndicalists-turned-Bolsheviks were also prominent, including Gallagher, Mann, and William Paul of the Socialist Labour Party. (Despite being appointed the official Bolshevik Consul for Britain in 1918, MacLean did not join – for reasons that remain hotly debated.)[296]

The Workers' Socialist Federation/Communist Party (British Section of the Third International) bears further discussion, for this organisation played an important role in the South African left. Aiming at a "World Federation of Workers' Industrial Republics",[297] and viewing electoral politics as corrupting and as leading ordinary people to place their fate in the State and leaders,[298] it had obvious similarities with the views of the Industrial Socialist League and subsequent 1920 Communist Party in South Africa. By 1920 the Pankhurst group and the Dunbar circle began to correspond, forming a relationship that would persist long after the formation of the CPGB and CPSA.

The May 1920 issue of the *Bolshevik* carried an article by Sylvia Pankhurst,[299] and in August 1920, a letter from Manuel Lopes congratulated the *Workers' Dreadnought* on the "splendid matter published" and

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[293] Johns, 1995, *op cit*., p. 110 footnote 22
[294] Lenin, [1920] 1975c, *op cit*., p 344, emphasis in the original
[295] Lenin, [1920] 1975c, *op cit*., pp. 314-328
[296] Nan Milton stresses the political issues – see Milton, 1978a, *op cit*., pp. 16-20 – but MacLean's growing paranoia doubtless also played a role. MacLean's key articles on the CPGB issue include MacLean, [December 1920] 1978, *op cit*. and John MacLean, [30 January 1921] 1978, "Open Letter to Lenin", in Milton, 1978b, *op cit.*
[297] *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 11 January 1919, "Workers' Socialist Federation"
[298] Shipway, 1988, *op cit.*, pp. 18-25
[299] M. Walt, 12 June 1920, "May Day in Cape Town", *The Workers' Dreadnought*

"especially its firm attitude on the matter of Parliamentary action".[300] Lopes criticised the Comintern for its support of parliamentary activity: the Industrial Socialist League was "not impressed in the least", and criticised the Comintern for not leaving the issue to a representative congress. When the syndicalist Communist Party was formed in October 1920, it maintained these links. In March 1921, Frank Glass sent fraternal greetings to Sylvia Pankhurst, then in jail,[301] and, soon afterwards, the *Workers' Dreadnought* carried the Communist Propaganda League's statement on the Bulhoek massacre.[302]

By this time the Pankhurst group had a position almost identical to the South African dissidents. It advocated "workshop committees which will prepare the way for workers' control of industry and of the nation through Soviets",[303] and then the General Workers' Union of Germany[304] as a model for a British "revolutionary Workers' Union",[305] "One Revolutionary Union of Workers in all industries",[306] a "Revolutionary Industrial Union".[307] Its February 1922 programme called for "Soviets or workers' councils in branches of production, distribution and administration, in order that the workers may seize and maintain control", and "One Revolutionary Union".[308] The *Workers' Dreadnought* adopted the slogan "One Big Union", and launched an abortive All-Workers Revolutionary Union of Workshop Committees.[309]

This affinity with syndicalism helps explain why veterans of South Africa's Industrial Socialist League and 1920 syndicalist Communist Party continued to identify with the Pankhurst group. When the CPSA was formed in July 1921, those who remained firmly opposed to parliamentary activity continued to propagate their views in the new Party and also used the *Workers' Dreadnought* as a platform. Vermont joined the CPSA in 1921,[310] but continued to advocate revolutionary unionism and an anti-parliamentary position. Dunbar stated that he would never compromise on "his version of communism":[311] having joined the CPSA, he soon donated money to the Dreadnought Development Fund,[312] and subsequently identified himself with the "Fourth International" of the Council Communists.[313]

Vermont, Dunbar and a B. Kreel from the East Rand wrote articles in the *Workers' Dreadnought*, advocating a syndicalist position along the lines of the 1920 syndicalist Communist Party. They also

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[300] *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 7 August 1920, letter from Manuel Lopes
[301] Frank Glass, 26 March 1921, "Greetings from South Africa", *The Workers' Dreadnought*
[302] Communist Propaganda League (Frank Glass), [1921] 1991, "The Commune of Bulhoek", reprinted in *Searchlight South Africa*, vol.2, no. 2, with editorial notes by Baruch Hirson. Copies were clearly sent abroad: for example, it appeared as Frank Glass, 9 July 1921, "Maintaining the Flag of Empire", *The Workers' Dreadnought*. All references are to the *Searchlight South* Africa edition, cited as Communist Propaganda League, [1921] 1991, *op cit*.
[303] *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 21 February 1920, "Towards a Communist Party"
[304] *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 5 November 1921, "German One Big Revolutionary Union"; also see *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 1 April 1922, p. 44
[305] *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 12 November 1921, "Anti-Strike Legislation"
[306] *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 12 November 1921, editorial reply to 'Wobbly,' 12 November 1921, "The Third or Fourth", in the same issue
[307] *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 11 February 1922, "Industrial Propaganda"
[308] Quoted in Shipway, 1988, *op cit*., p. 92
[309] Shipway, 1988, *op cit*., pp. 15-18, 92-99; see *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 23 September 1922, "Draft Constitution for the All-Workers Revolutionary Union of Workshop Committees"; also *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 8 September 1923, "What is the A.W.R.U.?"
[310] Isaac Vermont, 24 June 1922, "From South Africa", *The Workers' Dreadnought*
[311] See Johns, 1976, *op cit*., p. 392
[312] For example, *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 27 August 1921, p. 4; *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 26 May 1923, p. 8
[313] Andrew B. Dunbar, 17 March 1923, "Correspondence", *The Workers' Dreadnought*

distributed the paper locally, and it was sold at early CPSA events. In May 1923, for example, Vermont was prosecuted for selling the paper at an unemployed demonstration at the Parade in Cape Town, where he was a speaker, and sold the paper "Sunday after Sunday".[314] He was charged under an 1838 ordinance forbidding trade on Sundays, but the real concern of the authorities was indicated by the testimony of detectives that the paper "aims at destroying the Parliamentary system of government by revolution and force, and is circulated amongst both Europeans and non-Europeans throughout the Union".[315] Vermont was fined 10 shillings – the fine was paid on the spot by a collection made amongst the large crowd present – in a judgement he believed to be directed at the CPSA

Vermont used the pages of the *Workers' Dreadnought* to advocate the formation on the Witwatersrand of an "All-Workers Industrial Union, not led by selected or appointed leaders from the top, but based on workshop councils, which shall secure control in industry and transport",[316] "based on the Workers Committees, irrespective of colour and creed".[317] It was necessary to leave behind the "bourgeois Parliamentary and municipal elections, the Labour Party, and the Trade Unions. .[318] "Shop committees, job control, and organisation along the lines of Industrial Unionism are the stepping-stones to the Communist Republic".[319]

Dunbar condemned parliamentary activity, suggested the mainstream trade unions were "Capitalist machines pure and simple", and argued that the "Capitalist State must die out before we have Communism".[320] Kreel condemned "old-fashioned trade unionism" and "antagonism between the white and coloured workers", and favoured "a new type of organisation formed of workers' committees in every industry and acting on their direct initiative".[321] He advocated "One Revolutionary Industrial Union", with an "All-Workers' Union of South Africa and Rhodesia, organised on industrial lines",[322] "one big union of all workers, regardless of colour or race",[323] of "black and white, employed and unemployed alike".[324] In late 1921, Dunbar wrote an article predicting a crisis in the South African Industrial Federation and a "big upheaval presently",[325] while other articles by South Africans painted a picture of the sufferings of African and White workers, and specifically condemned segregation and other forms of official racial discrimination.[326]

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[314] Isaac Vermont, 5 May 1923, "South African News", *The Workers' Dreadnought*
[315] Isaac Vermont, 23 May 1923, "Correspondence", *The Workers' Dreadnought*
[316] Isaac Vermont, 25 November 1922, "Execution of Rand Strikers", *The Workers' Dreadnought*
[317] Isaac Vermont, 31 March 1923, "South African News", *The Workers' Dreadnought*
[318] Isaac Vermont, 25 November 1922, "Execution of Rand Strikers", *The Workers' Dreadnought*
[319] Isaac Vermont, 17 March 1923, "South African News", *The Workers' Dreadnought*
[320] Andrew B. Dunbar, 17 March 1923, "Correspondence", *The Workers' Dreadnought*
[321] B. Kreel, 29 July 1922, "The Rand Industrial Revolution", *The Workers' Dreadnought*
[322] B. Kreel, 30 December 1922, "On the Rand", *The Workers' Dreadnought*
[323] B. Kreel, 30 September 1922, "On the Rand"
[324] B. Kreel, 8 September 1923, "Starvation in South Africa", *The Workers' Dreadnought*
[325] This is included in *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 31 December 1921, "International Notes"
[326] For example, *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 14 April 1923, "South African News", probably written by Vermont; Isaac Vermont, 25 August 1923, "Correspondence", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; B. Kreel, 11 August 1923, "South African News", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; B. Kreel, 8 September 1923, "Starvation in South Africa", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; B. Kreel, 29 September 1923, "South African News", *The Workers' Dreadnought*

Despite the official Bolshevism of the early CPSA, then, it is clear that there was some space for organised factional activity. It is not altogether clear exactly how the anti-parliamentary faction was organised,[327] but it is clear that the situation was quite different to that in Britain, where the early CPGB quickly clamped down on dissident views.[328] The Pankhurst group tried to work within the CPGB,[329] but was expelled in September 1921,[330] and reorganised as the Communist Workers' Party (Fourth International),[331] a name that identified the body with the emerging Council Communist tradition, centred on Hermann Gorter, Anton Pannekoek and Otto Rühle.

Council Communism was a libertarian type of Marxism that emerged in the early 1920s, rejected Leninism, the Soviet Union and the Comintern, and advocated a federation of self-managed workers' councils: "There – the dictatorship of leaders; here – the dictatorship of the masses!"[332] In November 1920, a Communist Workers' Party of Germany was formed, and in 1921 Gorter called for a "Fourth" Communist Workers' International in opposition to the Comintern. The *Workers' Dreadnought* followed these developments with excitement, criticising Lenin,[333] publicising the "Fourth International" programme[334] and rejecting CPGB positions.[335] It shared Gorter's view that the Soviet Union manipulated the Comintern and

[327] There were, for example, occasional mentions of a "Revolutionary Communist Workers' Party", open to all workers, "regardless of race, labour and creed", but it was not clear whether this body actually existed, and whether, if it did, it existed outside the CPSA: see Isaac Vermont, 25 November 1922, "Execution of Rand Strikers", *The Workers' Dreadnought*. Dunbar spoke of "joint meetings" by those who supported the Comintern and the "Fourth International" in 1922 and 1923, but it is not clear whether he meant there were separate parties: Andrew B. Dunbar, 17 March 1923, "Correspondence", *The Workers' Dreadnought*. There were no reports of an open split, and Vermont often identified himself with the CPSA: for example, Isaac Vermont, 24 June 1922, "From South Africa", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; Isaac Vermont, 23 June 1923, "From South Africa", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; Isaac Vermont, 6 January 1923, "On the Rand", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; Isaac Vermont, 23 May 1923, "Correspondence", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; Isaac Vermont, 27 October 1923, "South African News", *The Workers' Dreadnought.* Dunbar, prosecuted after the Rand Revolt, described himself as one of the "Communists" on trial: he did not draw a distinction between himself and men like Andrews. See Andrew B. Dunbar, 3 March 1923, "On the Rand. Death Sentences Expected", *The Workers' Dreadnought.* He was listed as a CPSA speaker by detectives in 1924: T.G. Truter, Commissioner of Police, 25 October 1924, "Re: Communism in the Union of South Africa", letter to the Secretary for Justice, Pretoria, in Department of Justice file, JUS 268 1/387/13, National Archives, Pretoria. During the Rand Revolt Dunbar identified himself as one of the "Communists" facing prosecution.

[328] Andrew B. Dunbar, 3 March 1923, "On the Rand. Death Sentences Expected", *The Workers' Dreadnought*

[329] Shipway, 1988, *op cit*., pp. 13-16; also see Sylvia Pankhurst, 13 August 1921, "Zinoviev to the Comintern: a 'left' wing view", *The Workers' Dreadnought*

[330] Sylvia Pankhurst, 17 September 1921, "Freedom of Discussion", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; Sylvia Pankhurst, 17 February 1923, "Our View", *The Workers' Dreadnought*

[331] Shipway, 1988, *op cit*., pp. 15-18

[332] An early manifesto by the "local group in Frankfurt am Main", circa. 1920, *The Split in the Communist Party of Germany (the Spartacus League),* as quoted in Lenin, [1920] 1975c, *op cit*., p. 307

[333] For example: Hermann Gorter, 26 July 1920, "Opportunism and Dogmatism", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; Hermann Gorter, 24 July 1920, "Dogmatism and Opportunism", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; Hermann Gorter, 25 September 1920, "An Open Letter to Comrade Lenin", *The Workers' Dreadnought*

[334] For example, The Communist labour Party of Germany, 29 January 1921, "A Manifesto of the German Anti-Parliamentarians: to the proletariat of the world", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; also see *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 27 August 1921, "A New International"; Hermann Gorter, 22 October 1921, "Why We need the Fourth Communist Workers' International", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 8 October 1921, "Communist Workers Party"; *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 8 October 1921, "The New Communist Workers' International"

[335] For example, *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 26 August 1922, "Lamentable Folly"

practiced State-capitalism,[336] printed criticisms of Bolshevism by anarchists, syndicalists,[337] and Russian dissidents,[338] and repeatedly condemned the ongoing Soviet repression of the left.[339]

Although the trade union question might seem to sharply distinguish Council Communism from syndicalism, there were, in fact, many affinities. If many Council Communists dismissed trade unions as reformist,[340] many supported *revolutionary* unions: the Communist Workers' Party of Germany launched a 200,000 strong "General Workers' Union of Germany", with Rühle leading a breakaway "General Workers' Union of Germany – United Organisation".[341] If these unions openly rejected syndicalism,[342] their views were scarcely to be distinguished from those of Bakunin's heirs.[343]

The differences in the South African and British situations are partly to be explained by the fact that the Comintern largely ignored the CPSA until the late 1920s, while it intervened directly in the CPGB from an early stage. This enabled syndicalist influences to linger, and made it possible for anti-parliamentary views to be openly promoted well after July 1921. The link to the *Workers' Dreadnought*, and the relatively open character of the early CPSA, also seem to have provided a channel for an early critique of the Soviet Union and Leninism, with Dunbar attacking the "dictatorship of Moscow" as early as 1921.[344] This situation persisted for years, with Dunbar a regular orator at CPSA meetings in Johannesburg until at least 1929, where he addressed weekly open-air meetings alongside figures like Andrews, S.P. Bunting, Frank Glass,

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[336] Shipway, 1988, *op cit*., pp. 42-9; An early statement of this position is *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 1 October 1921, "The Grip of Capitalism in Russia"

[337] *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 4 March 1922, "The Russian Revolution and the Communist Party"; *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 25 March 1922, "The Russian Revolution and the Communist Party"; Augustine Souchy, 2 September 1922, "Machno and his Bands", *The Workers' Dreadnought*. Also see, *inter alia*, Peter Kropotkin, 24 December 1921, "Revolutionary Essays", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; Peter Kropotkin, 7 January 1922, "Revolutionary Essays", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; Peter Kropotkin, 18 March 1922, "The Wage System", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; Peter Kropotkin, 29 April 1922, "All Things Belong to All", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; Peter Kropotkin, 3 June 1922, "The Breakdown of our Industrial System", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; Peter Kropotkin, 18 August 1923, "The Breakup of the State", *The Workers' Dreadnought*;

[338] For example, Alexandra Kollantai, 22 April 1922, "Russian Workers v. Soviet Government", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; Alexandra Kollantai, 10 June 1922, "Workers' Opposition", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; Alexandra Kollantai, 1 July 1922, "Workers' Opposition", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; Alexandra Kollantai, 12 August 1922, "Workers' Opposition", *The Workers' Dreadnought*. Besides Kollantai's "Workers' Opposition", it also carried materials from the "Russian Workers' Opposition", linked to the Communist Workers' Party of Germany: *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 15 July 1922, "An Appeal from the Russian Workers' Opposition"; *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 3 June 1922, "The Workers' Opposition in Russia"; *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 17 June 1922, "Russian Workers' Opposition Joins Fourth International"; *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 17 November 1923, "From the Fourth International"; also see Sylvia Pankhurst, 26 August 1922, "The Outlook", *The Workers' Dreadnought*

[339] *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 4 February 1922, "The Reaction in Russia"; *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 1 December 1923, "From Russia: revolutionaries imprisoned"; *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 30 December 1922, "Received for Review"

[340] Shipway, 1987, *op cit*., pp. 105-8

[341] Shipway, 1987, *op cit*., pp. 108, 121; Shipway, 1988, *op cit*., pp. 93-4

[342] The programme and rules of the General Workers' Union of Germany specifically rejected syndicalism, "especially its unhistoric method of thinking, its petty-bourgeois attitude towards the necessities of the lass-struggle, its veiled rejection of the political struggle, the separate political organisation, and the dictatorship of the proletariat": *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 5 November 1921, "German One Big Revolutionary Union"

[343] For example, the Communist Workers' Party of Germany argued that *soviets* would emerge out of revolutionary unions: *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 17 December 1921, "The Main Questions of Revolutionary Tactics". Unsurprisingly, Rühle's union almost merged with the German syndicalist FAUD, formed in 1919: Thorpe, 1989, *op cit.*, pp. 244, 316-7, note 69

[344] Ivon Jones, [29 March 1921] 1981, *op cit*., p. 55

Eddie Roux and Thibedi.[345] Dunbar's views seem to have remained unchanged: in 1929, for example, he used the CPSA platform to claim that S.P. Bunting and other CPSA leaders standing in the upcoming elections were only interested in winning lucrative seats.[346]

These points show that the early CPSA was a far more complex body than generally believed, something that the literature's focus on the struggle between Andrews and S.P. Bunting over the question of African workers has tended to obscure. It is also worth noting that the South African situation had some parallels with developments elsewhere, where many anarchists and syndicalists increasingly distanced themselves from Bolshevism. Like the Dunbar group, practically all the remaining syndicalist unions were denouncing the Profintern by 1922, with a large number from Europe and Latin America forming the syndicalist International Workers' Association that year. The General Workers' Union of Germany – United Organisation also applied for membership, but relations with the FAUD proved an insuperable obstacle.[347] There was one obvious absence from the syndicalist international: while the Chilean IWW affiliated, the other remaining IWW union, the Chicago IWW, did not, despite open strong opposition to the Profintern.

9.6. Echoes of syndicalism: the CPSA, the Council of Action and the Rand Revolt

Within a year of its formation, the CPSA was caught up in the events of the Rand Revolt. . In December 1921, the South African Industrial Federation was involved in negotiations with the Chamber of Mines' gold and coal sections as well as employers bodies in electricity, metals and the motor trade.[348] The gold mines were faced with a rise in the cost of producing gold, from 17-shillings-and-eleven-pence per ton of gold-bearing ore to 24-shillings-and-eleven pence in 1921, which was blamed, albeit simplistically, on the nominal increases in White wages of 57 percent from 1913 to 1920, African wages having only risen 9 percent in the same period.[349]

The wartime willingness of the Chamber of Mines to accommodate and conciliate White labour – an approach strongly supported by sections of the labour movement, to the disgust of the *International*, as noted in Section 6.4. – fell away as the contradiction between profitability and the position of White workers came to the fore. The Chamber of Mines sought to remove the post-war cost-of-living-allowance, cut wages

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[345] See, for example, *The International*, 24 November 1922, "The Eleventh Hour: monster protest meeting"; T.G. Truter, Commissioner of Police, 25 October 1924, "Re: Communism in the Union of South Africa", letter to the Secretary for Justice, Pretoria, in Department of Justice file, JUS 268 1/387/13, National Archives, Pretoria; Deputy Commissioner, Divisional C.I. Officer, Witwatersrand Division, Criminal Investigation Department, Marshall Square, confidential report dated 12 February 1929, in Department of Justice file, JUS 3/1064/ 18 part 5, National Archives, Pretoria

[346] See, for example, Deputy Commissioner, Divisional C.I. Officer, Witwatersrand Division, Criminal Investigation Department, Marshall Square, confidential report dated 8 March 1929, in JUS 3/1064/ 18 part 5, National Archives, Pretoria

[347] See Thorpe, 1989, *op cit.*, pp. 244, 316-7, note 69

[348] This discussion of the events of leading up to the Rand Revolt draws on Hessian, 1957, *op cit*., pp. 6-12; Johnstone, 1976, *op cit*., pp. 76-132 and Krikler, 2005, *op cit*., pp. 21-49, 52-3, except where otherwise specified. Figures are directly attributed to the sources used.

[349] Hessian, 1957, *op cit*., p. 11; on the rising cost of White mine labour, also see Johnstone, 1976, *op cit*., pp. 94-105, also pp. 98-9 table 4 and p. 100 table 5. The total wage bill for White employees on the mines may have been almost twice that for the far more numerous African workforce: Jeremy Krikler, 1999, "The Commandos: the army of White labour in South Africa", *Past and Present*, no. 163, pp. 204-5

for underground contract workers and revise the Status Quo Agreement in order to replace 2,000 White workers with Africans. While negotiations were taking place, the Chamber of Mines gave unilateral notice of its intention to terminate existing wage agreements and to end the Status Quo Agreement on 31 January 1922. The other employers followed the Chamber of Mines' hard-line stance towards union negotiators, and issued a series of ultimatums of their own.

The attempt to replace White with African labour on the mines – not, of course, at White wages, and at an intensified pace of work, with extended tasks and hours, the philanthropic pretensions of the mineworkers notwithstanding – was bound to cause major conflicts. The proposed retrenchments on the mines were directed at semi-skilled workers, largely Afrikaners, with a militant tradition of unofficial action and Works Committees. The structural insecurity of the White workers and the fear of unemployment in a slowing economy blended with bitterness and resentment towards the Randlords, strident Afrikaner nationalism and White Labourism, and racial hatreds and fears to produce an explosive mixture.[350]

On the night of 31 December 1921, a trade union conference was held that decided by ballot for a strike against the Chamber of Mines' gold section, the Engineers and Iron Founders' Association, the Victoria Falls and Transvaal Power Company, and the South Africa Motor Traders' Association. There were 22,000 union members employed in the affected sectors – including members of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, the Boilermakers' Society, the Building Workers' Industrial Union, the Engine Drivers' and Firemen's' Association, the Ironmoulders' Union and the South African Mine Workers' Union – and 13,500 voted to strike, with 1,336 opposed.[351]

The strike started on the Monday, 9 January 1922. In the meantime, there was a strike by 800 White mineworkers at the collieries at Witbank against an attempt to cut wages by 17 percent due to the falling international coal price, which was criticised by the CPSA for failing to mobilise the African workers.[352] The strike on the gold mines was largely in the hands of local strike committees, linked together by a Central Strike Committee, which was (in theory) accountable to the Augmented Executive of the South African Industrial Federation. In mid-February, the State and the mine owners tried to resume production using scab labour with police protection, and violent clashes started.

By this stage many strikers were organised into *commando* structures, headed by an Afrikaner miner, "General" Piet Erasmus.[353] Bain and Mason had mooted the idea of striker *commandos* in the 1914 general strike, but it was only in 1922 that this took place.[354] While the ill-armed *commandos* were predominantly male, there were also female units, and groups of women played a prominent role in violent

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[350] Hessian, 1957, *op cit*., pp. 13-30
[351] Hessian, 1957, *op cit*., p. 8
[352] See Hessian, 1957, *op cit*., p. 10 note 3; *The International*, 30 December 1921, "The Grand Assault"
[353] Jeremy Krikler, 1996, "Women, Violence and the Rand Revolt of 1922", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol.22, no. 3, p. 351. The strikers' militia is discussed in depth in Krikler, 1999, *op cit*., which stresses the interethnic character of the *commandos*, the impact of the First World War on White labour traditions in South Africa, and the novelty of the use of *commandos* by strikers, rather than by the ruling class as had happened in 1913. Commandos could be up to 1,000-storng, as was the case in Fordsburg, and it is possible that the *commandos* involved up to 15,000 people in total: Krikler, 1999, *op cit*., pp. 211-214
[354] Herd, 1966, *op cit*., p. 24

confrontations with strike-breakers, police and soldiers.[355] In many cases, the *commandos* demonstrated a feature more commonly associated with the anarchist and syndicalist militias of the time: the rank-and-file elected their officers.[356] Many figures encountered in earlier pages were prominent: Andrews was a noted orator, as was Haynes; Waterston headed the Brakpan *commando*; S.P. Bunting did not speak at rallies, but moved around selling the *International*; Colonel Truter was in charge of police.

A "wave of Messianism swept the Rand":[357]

> In every centre, the focus of life was the workers' rostrum, from which there poured nightly a spate of wrath, compounded of hatred, spites, disappointments, empty dreams, ambitions – the noble and the infamous. The mob had, as if by a whirlwind, been lifted from the swamps to the heights, and it was ready to challenge Life and Fate … Keys and motifs collided jarringly.
>
> 'The Government is supporting the British capitalists who took our land from us' …
>
> 'There must be a dividing line in the statute book, so that we can know where black labour ends and white labour begins.'
>
> 'Fight till you drop … the Sinn Feiners of Ireland, the Sammies of Calcutta and the Bolsheviks of Petrograd have shown us how to do it.'

Several strikers were shot dead at the end of February, the "temper of the militants became palpably revolutionary", and the Witwatersrand was flooded with police and soldiers.[358] Early in March, the mine owners refused further negotiations, and the strike on the mines was transformed into a general strike. A number of unions did not join, notably the South African Typographical Union, which was bound by agreements made in the industry's National Industrial Council. There was some dissent: one Typographical Union member, at least, called for a "Press Soviet, so that the printers could control all news items that they considered had no justification in fact".[359]

The general strike was followed by a massive rally in Johannesburg, and then an armed rising on the morning of Friday, 10 March 1922. By this time the South African Industrial Federation leadership had lost control of the situation, with effective control passing to militant Afrikaner nationalists and White Labourites, and to the Council of Action, which worked alongside leading CPSA members like Andrews. "Most, if not all, of the trade union leaders had been superseded, in fact, if not on paper".[360]

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[355] See Krikler, 1996, *op cit*., pp. 349-372 for an illuminating and captivating discussion of this neglected topic.
[356] Krikler, 2005, *op cit*., pp. 66-67
[357] Sachs, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 104-105
[358] Krikler, 1996, *op cit*., p. 349
[359] Reported in L.A. Motler, 18 March 1922, "South African Labour Struggle", *The Workers' Dreadnought*
[360] Boydell, n.d., *op cit*., p. 196

The strike had been exclusively confined to Whites, and many Africans continued working: remarkably, as Krikler notes, they were not regarded as "scabs", that label – and the violent reprisals with which it associated in the Rand Revolt – being confined to Whites who continued working.[361] There were rising racial tensions and rumours of an African rising, and in March a series of racial clashes, including *commando* attacks on Africans, took place. These generally took place around the mines or racially mixed working class districts, and were condemned by the Council of Action, the CPSA and the South African Industrial Federation. The naked racial prejudice of many strikers played an important role – the South African Mine Workers' Union had warned, for example, that higher wages for Africans would lead "many white girls … into marriage with coloured people"[362] – as did a wave of rumours about an African rebellion. The racial attacks led both the African Political Organisation and the ICU to condemn the Rand Revolt, and support the government.

Smuts repeated his performance of 1913 and 1914, declaring martial law and using armed troops, including the rural *commandos*, as well as artillery and aerial bombardment – the South African Air Force was formed in 1921 – against working class districts rising, followed by the passage of an Indemnity Act. The strike was called off on March 16 amongst a wave of hysteria about a supposed Bolshevik plot, heavily coloured with anti-Semitism. Smuts played an important role in fostering this hysteria, and also found time to blame the "poison" of syndicalism.[363] Overall, 43 soldiers, 86 policemen and 81 civilians died, and 133 soldiers, 86 policemen and 315 civilians were wounded.[364]

A detailed account of these events falls outside the scope of this thesis:[365] our concern here is to draw some preliminary conclusions about the role of syndicalism in the Rand Revolt. This is a complicated matter, for the Revolt was a complicated event. Shot through with moments of proletarian grandeur and tragedy, it must seen within the context of "the eight years that shook the world" from 1916 to 1923, but was also marked by the struggle for the colour bar. There was overt racial prejudice, but also a rhetoric invoking the "ideology of class war", the "classic symbols of socialism" and a genuine popular anti-capitalism that claimed South Africa for the White *working class*.[366] Popular Afrikaner radicalism, plus Afrikaner nationalism itself, socialist ideas and class politics and White racial prejudice all played their role, coexisting and intermingling.[367] Krikler has also drawn attention to other important aspects, notably the impact of the

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[361] Krikler, 2005, *op cit*., p. 133
[362] Quoted in Krikler, 1996, *op cit*., p. 350
[363] Speaking in parliament, Smuts stated: "Die leerstellings van die Sindikaliste het soos gif op die Afrikaners gewerk and die aktiwiteite van die Nasionale Party het die posisie vererger" ("The teachings of the Syndicalists had acted like poison on the Afrikaners, and the activities of the National Party had aggravated the situation"): quoted in Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., p. 460
[364] See Wessel P. Visser, 2001, *op cit.*, pp. 21-2; also see Herd, 1966, *op cit*., pp, 161-162, 183 Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., pp. 125-126
[365] These events are discussed in a number of works, including Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 230-283; Grobler 1968, *op cit*., pp. 398-462; Herd, 1974, *op cit.;* Hessian, 1957, *op cit*.; Gitsham and Trembath, 1926, *op cit*., pp. 47-52; Baruch Hirson, 1993f, "The General Strike of 1922", *Searchlight South Africa*, vol.3, no. 3; Johns, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 129-143; Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., pp. 91-158. Some eyewitness material can be found in Boydell, n.d., *op cit*., pp. 190-207; Sachs, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 101-124. Jeremy Krikler's research provides the most important recent study of these events: Krikler, 2005, *op cit.*
[366] Krikler, 1999, *op cit*., pp. 206-208
[367] See Krikler, 2005, *op cit*., pp. 103-129

First World War on the political culture of White workers, and the way in which wartime experiences were combined with the traditions of the Afrikaner rural militia and unionism in the *commandos*, a "quintessentially South African army of white labour".[368]

An examination of the role of syndicalism in the Rand Revolt is useful, both because it sheds light on an important (but generally neglected) component of the ideological influences on the strike, and because it is also part of the larger story of anarchism and syndicalism in southern Africa. Many previous studies have highlighted the role of factors such as Afrikaner nationalism and White Labourism,[369] but the role of syndicalism in the Rand Revolt has not been addressed properly addressed, with some writers assuming that the radical socialists involved in the Revolt were all Bolsheviks.[370]

A more intriguing line of thought is, however, discernable in at least one of the core texts of the "Communist school": Cope drew attention to some syndicalist influences, notably on men like Fisher and Spendiff, the key figures in the Council of Action, but tended to focus on Andrews, whose role in the events he (like Grobler) greatly exaggerated.[371] Johns, following Cope, made passing references to the role of anarcho-syndicalism and "Marxist-syndicalism",[372] but did not explore this influence.

Krikler's impressive study of the Rand Revolt specifically identifies Fisher, who was to prove the mover behind the shift to insurrection, as a revolutionary syndicalist.[373] He does not, however, explore Fisher's syndicalism or its place in the South African radical tradition, or closely examine the politics of the Council of Action with which Fisher, described by Krikler as a "revolutionary" and "class warrior" of "extreme views", was associated.[374] Citing the present author, Krikler stressed interracial working class politics of groups like the International Socialist League, but did not link this to syndicalism. [375]

Nonetheless, it is clear that there were syndicalist elements in the revolt, that these elements were rooted in the syndicalist traditions of the 1910s, and that an understanding of these elements can contribute to understanding the Rand Revolt. The single most important syndicalist component was provided by the Council of Action, which effectively assumed control of the Rand Revolt in its final days. As discussed in Section 7.7., the roots of the Council of Action could be traced back to the International Socialist League's attempt to foster an independent shopstewards' movement along the lines of the Shop Stewards' and Workers' Committee Movement in Britain. Although the International Socialist League did not play much of a direct role in the shopstewards' structures that emerged, with many shaped by Afrikaner nationalism and

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[368] Krikler, 1996, *op cit.*, p. 351, and Krikler, 2005, *op cit.*, pp. 50-77. The strikers' militia is also discussed in depth Krikler, 1999, *op cit*., which stresses the interethnic character of the *commandos* and the novelty of the use of *commandos* by strikers as a means of armed self-defence against a violent State apparatus. Commandos could be up to 1,000-storng, as was the case in Fordsburg, and it is possible that the *commandos* involved up to 15,000 people in total: Krikler, 1999, *op cit*., pp. 211-214

[369] See, for example, Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 230-283; Herd, 1974, *op cit.;* Hessian, 1957, *op cit*.; Gitsham and Trembath, 1926, *op cit*., pp. 47-52; Hirson, 1993f, *op cit*.; Johns, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 129-143; Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., pp. 91-158

[370] For example, Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., pp. 434-5

[371] See Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit*., pp. 244-245; cf. Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., pp. 434-5

[372] Johns, 1995, *op cit*., p. 141 note 13

[373] Krikler, 2005, *op cit*., p. 114

[374] Krikler, 2005, *op cit*., pp. 43, 113-115, 159-160, 172-181, 216, 230-232, 238, 280-286

[375] Krikler, 2005, *op cit*., pp.110, 199, 180, 330 note 36

White Labourism, there was a radical current in the Works Committees on the mines that adopted a position that can only be described as syndicalist.

Its key figures included Fisher, Shaw and Spendiff, "desperate men – men who would stop at nothing".[376] Andrews regarded Fisher and Spendiff as anarcho-syndicalists, a judgement shared by writers like Johns:[377] "fiery opponents of capitalism", prepared to die for their class": their "general aim … was that the workers should somehow gain control of the mines and run them themselves".[378] Crawford considered them "professed extremists and direct actionists".[379] Fisher was born in Durham, England in 1891, and arrived in Cape Town in 1912 at the age of 20.[380] He moved to the Witwatersrand, became involved in trade unions, was a member of the South African Industrial Federation from 1914 onwards, a "stocky, fairly ordinary-looking mineworker".[381]

In 1920, Fisher and Shaw were involved in the Works Committees and headed a lightening strike at City Deep towards the end of the year, which was condemned by Crawford and other South African Industrial Federation leaders.[382] Fisher was secretary of the strike committee at City Deep, and Shaw the chair. Fisher was subsequently elected secretary of the South African Mine Workers' Union at the end of 1920 – ousting the former syndicalist, now moderate, Brown[383] – but his "short period in office was marked by serious clashes with the executive of the SAMWU as a result of his preference for direct action rather than reconciliation councils and negotiations as a means of solving industrial disputes".[384] Alleged irregularities in the ballot were eventually used to force him to resign.

In January 1921, Fisher and Shaw organised a strike at the Consolidated Langlaagte mine, which spread to ten mines by February 7. The executive of the South African Mine Workers' Union condemned the strike, established a Committee of Enquiry and meted out fines and suspensions to eleven union members. Fisher was given a £50 fine and a three-year suspension, as was Shaw; Spendiff got a one-year suspension; eight others, including J. Wordingham, were also fined or suspended; A. McDermid received a £15 fine and two-year suspension, and F.W. Pate, a £40 fine.[385]

The radicals refused to recognise the decisions, and formed the Council of Action at the Johannesburg City Hall on Monday, 24 July 1921 – a week before the formation of the CPSA in Cape Town. It drew in "most of the members" of the South African Mine Workers' Union penalised by the decision of the Committee of Enquiry, "together with other comrades who are conscious of the weakness of our Union".[386]

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[376] Boydell, n.d., *op cit*., p. 196
[377] Johns, 1995, *op cit*., p. 141 note 13
[378] Cope, [? 1943] n.d., *op cit*., p. 251
[379] Quoted in Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., p. 112
[380] "Fisher, Percy", in Verwey, editor, 1995, *op cit.*, pp. 72-74
[381] Herd, 1966, *op cit*., p. 69
[382] *The International*, 12 November 1920, "City Deep Strike: an ultimatum"; *The International*, 19 November 1920, "Unauthorised Strikes Condemned: an ultimatum"
[383] *The International*, 7 January 2921, "The Mine Workers' Union: change of officials"
[384] "Fisher, Percy", in Verwey, editor, 1995, *op cit.*, p. 72
[385] *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 18 February 1922, "Council of Action: the impossibility of 'boring from within'"
[386] F.W. Pate and A. McDermid, 18 February 1922, "Manifesto of the Mineworkers", *Workers' Dreadnought*



Figure thirty-five: Syndicalism and insurrection: Council of Action radicals influenced by syndicalism, like Percy Fisher and H. Spendiff, played a central role in the Rand Revolt. The two men – marked by arrows – are being carried shoulder-high in 1922

Source: Henry R. Pike, 1988, *A History of Communism in South Africa*, Christian Mission International, Germiston, second edition, p. 130

Its manifesto, signed by McDermid and Pate, was clearly within the syndicalist tradition – it contained more than "traces of the old syndicalist outlook"[387] – and linked the Council of Action back to the radical current in the Works Committees.

It started by criticising the leadership of the South African Mine Workers' Union, and described the aim of the Council of Action as a united industrial union for the mining industry, based on "rank and file control".[388] Explicitly inspired by the Shop Stewards' and Workers' Committee Movement in Britain, the Council of Action intended to "work within and without the official Trade Union movement, with the object of abolishing Capitalism and establishing control of industry by the worker for the worker". The next section echoed the 1908 *Preamble* of the IWW:

> The Council of Action, as an indutrial [*sic*] body, claims that the purpose of production, distribution and exchange, under Capitalism, is to serve class interests. Under this system of

[387] Cf. Cope, n.d., *op cit.*, p. 225
[388] *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 18 February 1922, "Council of Action: the impossibility of 'boring from within'"

> society, the working class is dependent upon the capitalist class, because the latter owns and controls the means of production, distribution and exchange, and thus the two classes have nothing in common.
>
> From this opposition of class interests there arises an antagonism which manifests itself in the class struggle … To achieve such power over the resources of life, the working class must organise along class lines to bring about the overthrow of Capitalism, and its class function is the act of Industrial Control. Only by bringing about working class control can the workers eliminate Capitalism and free themselves from wage-slavery. Therefore we stand for class-consciousness, education, organisation, and the direct industrial power of Labour …
>
> Industrial Unionism stands for the departmental and co-ordinated organisation of the workers, with the avowed object of wresting the economic power out of the hands of the capitalist class … By organising in revolutionary industrial units within each industry, and throughout all the industries, the class-conscious working class are preparing that form of power which will be required to carry out the proper organisation of production during the transition period.

The manifesto concluded with the "cardinal points in the education of the class-conscious workers":

> Firstly, the class struggle; secondly, the science of revolution; thirdly, the economic and political needs of the Industrial Republic. To provide such knowledge, the principles of Marxism must be taught. Hence, the education work of the Council of Action shall be to advance the foregoing principles.

Six months later, Fisher and Spendiff were to be found at the very heart of the Rand Revolt, facilitated by the fact that the Council of Action was "operating as a vanguard of a rank-and-file movement among the miners".[389] Fisher became a famous figure: he was probably the man who inspired and directed the armed rising.[390] He was a good speaker, an excellent organiser who was usually assisted by Spendiff, and enjoyed "tremendous authority" (but was not above threatening dissenters with a revolver or a *sjambok*).[391] The Council of Action programme remained the abolition of capitalism and "the establishment of the control of industry by the worker, for the worker".[392] In public meetings, Fisher spoke of the need for armed self-defence, distributed a tract called "How to Smash Martial Law", and even stated that, if all else

[389] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit*., p. 244
[390] Herd, 1966, *op cit*., pp. 74-6
[391] Herd, 1966, *op cit*., pp. 71, 74
[392] Quoted in Herd, 1966, *op cit*., p. 70

failed, strikers should set up secret organisations on the lines of the "Russian anarchists" to "blot people out".[393]

Close connections developed with a section of the CPSA. Shaw, a veteran of the International Socialist League, was a member of the CPSA, but Fisher and Spendiff were not. To judge from the *International*, the latter were barely known to the organisation well into 1921.[394] During the Rand Revolt, however, the Council of Action held a number of meetings at the CPSA offices at the Trades Hall, and closer connections were developed between Andrews, imprisoned in the Fort alongside Fisher, McDermid, Shaw, Spendiff and Wordingham (who were imprisoned from February 8-22). There was also common ground: each organisation stressed the class struggle and direct action, condemned the racial clashes, and tried to reconcile defence of the job colour bar with socialist rhetoric,[395] and Fisher and Spendiff actively intervened on several occasions to stop attacks on Africans by strikers.[396] (The CPSA in Johannesburg greatly underestimated the racial factor, although the Cape elements like Frank Glass seem to have had a more realistic outlook.)[397]

In early March, the Council of Action established a six-person "Committee of Action", including Andrews, Fisher, Mason, Wordingham, Shaw and Spendiff. This group tried to take control of the strike and pushed through the resolution for a general strike in early March. Fisher and Shaw used a team of despatch riders to try to direct events,[398] and tried (without much success) to get control of the *commandos*.[399] At one point Fisher flirted with the idea of setting up a provisional republican government that would take over the mines, as proposed by Waterston; the "generals" – generally Afrikaner nationalists – seem have to followed their own counsel.[400] Hertzog condemned the "anarchists" and "Bolsheviks" who sought to fish in troubled waters.[401] After the armed rising was launched, martial law was declared and the Fisher took charge of the *commandos* in downtown Johannesburg; the Trades Hall was raided by State forces. Fisher and Spendiff vowed that "they were going to take their places behind the barricades, and that whatever the outcome of the struggle, they would not be taken alive".[402]

It must be stressed, however, that if radicals helped lead the Rand Revolt, it was the traditional politics of the White working class – Afrikaner nationalism and White Labourism – that dominated the great masses.[403] While the CPSA was prominent, it certainly did not control or direct the Council of Action, as the

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[393] Cited in Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., p. 440
[394] For example, *The International*, 12 November 1920, "City Deep Strike: an ultimatum"; *The International*, 19 November 1920, "Unauthorised Strikes Condemned: an ultimatum"; *The International*, 7 January 2921, "The Mine Workers' Union: change of officials"
[395] Even the Simons admitted that the CPSA wanted the general strike to be extended to Africans, and opposed the job colour bar "in principle" as part of a "persistent and vehement rejection of racial discrimination": Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.*, pp. 292, 294, 298, 299
[396] Hirson, 1993f, *op cit*., p. 87; Johns, 1995, *op cit*., p. 135; Eddie Roux, [1944] 1993, *op cit*., p. 93
[397] Hirson, 1993f, *op cit*., p. 85
[398] Krikler, 1999, *op cit*., p. 224
[399] Johns, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 138-139
[400] Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, pp. 239-240, 271-273; Herd, 1966, *op cit*., pp. 34-36, 72-75
[401] Grobler, 1968, *op cit*., pp. 458-9
[402] Sachs, 1973, *op cit*., p. 105
[403] Cf. Herd, 1966, *op cit.*, p. 20: "1922 has been widely termed a Red revolt. This is quite inaccurate. It could be more properly labelled a Nationalist revolt"

government later claimed,[404] a view shared by Cope, who generally inflated Andrews' role.[405] Party militants "acted not as coordinated revolutionary plotters, but as militant left-wing socialist individuals who tried through several, sometimes uncoordinated, methods to deflect the strike into ideologically correct channels".[406]

These "militant left-wing socialist individuals" included a number who were strongly influenced by anarchism and syndicalism. Some articles in the *International* took a Bolshevik line, stressing the need for a revolutionary State,[407] but others spoke of "workers' control … of administration of industry"[408] and the transformation of strike committees into *soviets* and the occupation of "all mines, factories and workshops by the workers engaged therein".[409] Shaw, member of the Council of Action and the CPSA, retained his reputation as a supporter of an anti-electoral syndicalism, "a stalwart direct actionist and pure and simple industrialist".[410] Sarah Neppe – an elderly Jewish anarchist and CPSA member from Russia, who had been friends with the American anarchists Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman – provides one example.[411] At "five feet in height and in Slavonic garb", she sang from the speakers' platforms during the Rand Revolt in Johannesburg:

> Her face had all the lineaments of a peasant woman, and was wrinkled with age. Her voice, tremulous and quavering, was hopelessly lost in the immensity of the night. Enough, you would think, to set in motion a wave of derisive laughter that would sweep her away. But such was the mood of aspiration which had seized everyone, that the thousands bared their heads and stood in reverent silence while Sarah sang her song of freedom. Five foot Rachel, leading the Paris mob in 1848 in the singing of the Marseille, did not do better.

Local radicals associated with the *Workers' Dreadnought* also played a role in 1922. L.A. Motler, a British anarchist[412] who wrote a regular column for the *Workers' Dreadnought*, lived in South Africa at the time and wrote articles about the Rand Revolt.[413] He contacted the secretary of the South African

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[404] Cited in Pike, 1988, *op cit.*, p. 127

[405] Cope claimed, for example, that Andrews' encounter with "the younger members" of the Council of Action in prison led many to embrace "many of the fundamental teachings of Marxism and Leninism": Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit*., p. 251. Also see Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit*., pp. 244-245. There is little evidence for such claims.

[406] Johns, 1995, *op cit*., p. 142

[407] *The International*, 3 March 1922, "The Appeal to Force"

[408] *The International*, 27 January 1922, "To the Rand Strikers: Communist greetings"

[409] V. Danchin, 3 February 1922, "The Communist Party and the Crisis", *The International;* also see S.C. Logan, 3 February 1922, "A Board of Control, *The International*

[410] *The International*, 19 February 1922, "Anti-Political Politicians"; also quoted in Cope [? 1943] n.d., *op cit*., p. 240

[411] Sachs, 1973, *op cit*., p. 105, also see pp. 1234-5

[412] He was author of two pamphlets at the end of 1919, issued by the Anarchist Propaganda Group, entitled *Anarchist Communism in Plain English* and *The New Anarchism*: see *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 3 January 1920, "'The New Anarchism'"

[413] See L.A. Motler, 11 March 1922, "South African Labour Struggle", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; L.A. Motler, 18 March 1922, "South African Labour Struggle", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; L.A. Motler, 25 March 1922, "South African Labour Struggle", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; L.A. Motler, 25 March 1922, "White Terror on the Rand", *The Workers' Dreadnought*. It is not clear when he arrived in South Africa, but he was present in the early phase of the strike, returning to England some time in March: see L.A. Motler, 11 March 1922, "South African Labour Struggle",

Typographical Union, urging the establishment of a strike bulletin, and also visited the Trades Hall in Johannesburg,[414] but does not seem to have been otherwise involved. His isolation from the events was underlined by his insistence that there had been no armed rising in March: this was simply government propaganda.[415]

Motler's claims differed from the reports the *Workers' Dreadnought* received from sympathetic South African militants. A "miner at Brakpan" joined the local *commando*, and reported on "monster meetings" and the solidarity of the strikers in mid-February.[416] A "comrade on the Rand" suggested that the Rand Revolt had provided a "good opportunity" for the "class-struggle men" to "clarify the outlook" of the strikers in what was, ultimately a "heroic fight".[417] The writer regretted, however, the stress on the colour bar, for this made the strike into "a strike against the black worker". Kreel – judging from his style a good candidate for the identity of the "miner at Brakpan" and the "comrade on the Rand" – wrote an analysis that praised the Council of Action, and hoped that "talk" on the Rand about establishing "industrial unionism" along *commando*-style structures would bear fruit.[418]

Regular reports from Vermont in Cape Town also kept readers informed of the repression and unemployment that followed the Rand Revolt.[419] Vermont considered Smuts "the Satan servant … of South African Mammon", a man who ought to be ousted by an "All-Workers Revolutionary Industrial Union".[420] Kreel, likewise, wanted an "All-Workers Industrial Revolutionary Union of Workshop Committees" to replace the South African Mine Workers' Union, with its "inherent weakness", which would give "the verdict … on Capitalist existence as a whole".[421] The present State was "directly or indirectly, the exploiter, speculator, and profit-maker", and it was futile to get involved in "Constitutional assemblies". None of the South African radicals believed that a revolution had really been possible – a view that Pankhurst shared, writing "there

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The Workers' Dreadnought; Sylvia Pankhurst, 18 March 1922, "The Labour War. The South African Strike", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; L.A. Motler, 25 March 1922, "White Terror on the Rand", *The Workers' Dreadnought*

[414] L.A. Motler, 18 March 1922, "South African Labour Struggle", *The Workers' Dreadnought*

[415] L.A. Motler, 25 March 1922, "South African Labour Struggle", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; L.A. Motler, 25 March 1922, "White Terror on the Rand", *The Workers' Dreadnought*

[416] *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 25 March 1922, "From a South African Striker"

[417] "A Comrade on the Rand", 16 September 1922", South Africa To-Day", *The Workers' Dreadnought*

[418] B. Kreel, 29 July 1922, "The Rand Industrial Revolution", *The Workers' Dreadnought*

[419] "Comrade J.V., of Cape Town", 6 May 1922, "Rand Strike Inquiry", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; Isaac Vermont, 24 June 1922", From South Africa", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; Isaac Vermont, 26 August 1922, "How the Rand Strikers are Tried", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; Isaac Vermont, 23 September 1922, "Labour Fakirs and South African Miners", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; Isaac Vermont, 21 October 1922, "The Rand Treason Courts: the crippling cost of defence", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; Isaac Vermont, 4 November 1922, "Rand Striker's Death Sentence", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; Isaac Vermont, 25 November 1922, "Execution of Rand Strikers", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; Isaac Vermont, 30 December 1922", On the Rand", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; Isaac Vermont, 6 January 1923, "On the Rand", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; Isaac Vermont, 13 January 1923, "On the Rand", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; Isaac Vermont, 20 January 1923, "From the Rand", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; Isaac Vermont, 27 January 1923, "On the Rand", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; Isaac Vermont, 24 February 1923, "Rand News", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; Isaac Vermont, 15 September 1923, "South African News", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; Isaac Vermont, 1 December 1923, "South African News", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; Isaac Vermont, 16 February 1924, "South African News", *The Workers' Dreadnought*;

[420] Isaac Vermont, 25 November 1922, "Execution of Rand Strikers", *The Workers' Dreadnought*

[421] B. Kreel, 30 December 1922, "On the Rand", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; also see B. Kreel, 30 September 1922, "On the Rand"

could be no revolution, because there was no revolutionary spirit" – but they shared the view that the Rand Revolt was an important moment in the global class war.

The Council of Action came to a bloody end in March 1922. Andrews, Mason and Shaw were arrested at the Trades Hall on the first day of the rising, but Fisher and Spendiff fought in the trenches in Johannesburg around Fordsburg, where the Market Buildings provided the new headquarters. The Fordsburg base was crushed by aeroplanes, bombardment and troops, and the two men committed suicide at their headquarters, the last post to fall.[422]

Subsequently 853 of the 4,692 people arrested were tried on various charges of murder, high treason and transgression of martial law regulations, with fifteen people condemned to death, and four eventually executed.[423] An innocuous Harry Shaw was convicted of high treason (one of 62 thus convicted) and sentenced to hard labour,[424] apparently confused with Ernie Shaw of the Council of Action. Andrews and S.P. Bunting had been jailed during the Rand Revolt, and in its aftermath a number of CPSA members, including Dunbar, were prosecuted.[425] The Witwatersrand was kept under martial law for many months in 1922, and the *International* was suppressed during this time, and when it reappeared, it was a biweekly.

There was a spirited campaign for clemency by the South African unions, the CPSA, the SA Labour Party and sections of the Afrikaner nationalist movement, which was aided by Tom Mann of the CPGB, who arrived in South Africa. The International Workers' Association and the Comintern[426] both condemned the repression, and the Comintern also published sympathetic accounts like S.P. Bunting's *The Rand Revolt: causes and effects*[427] and Ivon Jones' "The Workers Revolt in South Africa".[428] The American IWW also reported sympathetically, although it forthrightly condemned the job colour bar and racial attacks.[429] Unions in Southern Rhodesia and Mozambique also sent letters of protest.[430]

Judge MacFie, now retired, made an unexpected appearance as head of the Strikers' Legal Defence Committee, while Haynes was part of a group of three who chained themselves to railings in parliament in

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[422] Many people continued to believe that the pair were executed by State forces: see Cope [? 1943] n.d., op *cit*., p. 278; Herd, 1966, *op cit*., pp. 159-160; Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., p. 124

[423] See Wessel P. Visser, 2001, "The South African Labour Movement's Responses to Declarations of Martial Law, 1913-1922", paper presented at the War and Society in Africa Conference, South African Military Academy, Saldanha Bay, 12-14 September, pp. 21-2; also see Herd, 1966, *op cit*., pp, 161-162, 183 Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., pp. 125-126

[424] Herd, 1966, *op cit.*, pp. 196-197; Walker and Weinbren, 1961, *op cit*., p. 156

[425] Andrew B. Dunbar, 3 March 1923, "On the Rand. Death Sentences Expected", *The Workers' Dreadnought*

[426] Comintern, [1923] 1981, "Comintern Protest against Executions, published in *The International,* January 5, 1923", in Brian Bunting, editor, 1981, *op cit*., p. 69

[427] As noted by S.P. Bunting, 1923, *The Rand Revolt: causes and effects*, typescript with annotations, in the R.K. Cope Papers, held in the Historical Papers, A953, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand, p. 1

[428] David Ivon Jones, October 1922, "The Workers Revolt in South Africa", *Communist International*

[429] For example, *Industrial Solidarity*, 18 March 1922, "Class War Rages in South Africa"; *Industrial Solidarity*, 25 March 1922; *Industrial Solidarity*, 1 April 1922, "South Africa's Great Gold Mining Strike"; *Industrial Solidarity*, 8 April 1922, "Causes of the Great South African Strike"; *Industrial Worker*, 11 February 1922; *Industrial Worker*, 25 February 1922, "South African Strike Nears Serious Crisis"; *Industrial Worker*, 18 March 1922, "Bloody Massacres of Workingmen in South Africa"; *Industrial Worker*, 25 March 1922, "South African Revolt Declared Over" and "Throws off the Mask"

[430] *The International*, 22 December 1922, "It Moves" and "Portuguese Workers Protest"

1923 as a protest.[431] S.A. "Taffy" Long, one of three men executed in November 1922, gave an enormously moving statement to the court, which sums up something of the times:[432]

> Only a few years back I lay drenched in water and soaked in blood in the trenches of Flanders … We left for the front with the politicians' words still ringing in our ears … What has our generation known except slaughter, strife and more slaughter? I lay a whole night on the battlefield before they picked me up …
>
> Yes – we were heroes then. But what did we find when we came back from the hell of war? I have listened to fine words about the dignity of the law. What do the mine owners care about our homes and the dignity of our lives? If they thought they could grind an ounce of gold from the Union Jack they would put it through the mills of their mines.

The Rand Revolt was utterly defeated. The jobs on the mines were lost, wages fell and the White labour movement, built up through decades of bitter struggle, never truly recovered.[433] Dunbar might have hoped that this would clear the ground for a revolutionary union movement,[434] but the mood was, instead, one of widespread demoralisation, Kreel noting that the "appeal of awakened workers to the toilers of all classes and races to join in one revolutionary union have been disregarded".[435] Appeals by the Dunbar group for the Mine Workers' Union to be opened to all races, and to fight the cheap labour system in order to end the ruinous competition amongst workers,[436] generally fell on deaf ears, despite tentative discussions about the union establishing a "native section".[437] Moderate unionists like Crawford were in control, and advocated the emergence of a "new unionism" that would be "of a character which conduces to the smooth running of industry and the peace and good order of the community".[438] One important consequence, however, was that Smuts was ousted in the 1924 general elections by an unlikely "Pact" between the National Party and the South African Labour Party, supported by the CPSA as preferable to Smuts' "capitalist gang".[439]

Vermont[440] and Dunbar were critical of this sort of thinking, believing that "it makes no difference what Government you get in".[441] In one way he was right: while the Pact government amnestied prisoners serving terms for the Rand Revolt, it did not reverse the massive defeat on the mines. There was a huge decline in strike activity: between 1923 and 1929 there were 44 strikes involving 16,540 workers, as

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[431] Isaac Vermont, 21 July 1923, "South Africa and the Unemployed", *The Workers' Dreadnought*
[432] Quoted in Sachs, 1973, *op cit*., p. 118
[433] See, for example, Krikler, 2005, *op cit*., pp. 291-292
[434] Andrew B. Dunbar, 3 March 1923, "On the Rand. Death Sentences Expected", *The Workers' Dreadnought*
[435] B. Kreel, 11 August 1923, "South African News", *The Workers' Dreadnought*
[436] Isaac Vermont, 15 October 1923, "South African News", *The Workers' Dreadnought*
[437] Isaac Vermont, 27 October 1923, "South African News", *The Workers' Dreadnought*
[438] Quoted in Nicol, 1984, *op cit*., p.106
[439] Communist Party of South Africa, [16 May 1924] 1981, "Communist Party, S.A., Election Manifesto", in Brian Bunting, editor, 1981, *op cit*., p. 77-80. For an early statement of this approach, see V. Danchin, 10 November 1922, "The Communist Party and the Labour-Nationalist Alliance", *The International*
[440] Isaac Vermont, 31 March 1923, "South African News", *The Workers' Dreadnought*
[441] Andrew B. Dunbar, 29 September 1923, "Correspondence", *The Workers' Dreadnought*

compared to 205 strikes, involving 175,664 workers, for the period 1916 to 1922. [442] The reported membership of the unions fell from a height of 135,000 in 1920 to 82,000 in 1923, with the South African Industrial Federation collapsing from a height of 60,000 to 2,000 members.[443]

However, Dunbar was also incorrect, for there were substantial changes in State policy. Prior to the elections, Smuts had tabled an Industrial Conciliation Bill, which was passed in an amended form by the Pact government. Strikes were illegal unless a lengthy arbitration procedure was followed, union representatives were drawn into legally binding wage contracts, shopstewards were excluded from the negotiations, and agriculture, public services and "pass-bearing Natives" were not covered. The 1925 Wage Act enabled statutory wage determinations, the 1926 Mines and Works Amendment Act reinstituted legal job colour bars in mining, and the subsequent "civilised labour policy" by State departments was designed to create sheltered employment for poor Whites.

The mid-1920s also saw a major shift in the structure of South African capitalism. The period from the 1880s to the mid-1920s was characterised by an open economy, centred on agro-mineral export industries. Paralleling contemporary developments in Latin America,[444] and anticipating later developments in Southern Rhodesia,[445] the local State combined a growing control over labour movements with a deliberate "developmentalist" policy, centred on import-substitution industrialisation and State corporations.[446] A reconstituted Board of Trade and Industry, and a 1925 Customs Tariff Act established trade controls, and the Iron and Steel Corporation, or ISCOR – the first major parastatal not based in public utilities – was formed in 1928. The rise of State intervention was matched by shifts in the private sector, where the Anglo-American Corporation, a local conglomerate formed in 1917, broke the domination of foreign mining houses and then established a central position in manufacturing.

The Pact government's policy of import-substitution-industrialisation and systematic State intervention in the economy would begin to draw the era of the "first globalisation" to a close in South Africa. South Africa's economy grew rapidly – from 1916 and 1941, industry grew faster than in Australia, Canada or New Zealand- [447] and manufacturing overtook mining as working class in manufacturing. These changes would reshape the social landscape in South Africa, reducing the dependence of White workers on the mines and taking the first steps towards resolving the poor White question, while bureaucratising the White labour movement and helping legitimate the State apparatus. The changing conditions helped ensure that White labour did not repeat its insurrectionary performances of 1913 and 1922.

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[442] Simons, 1984, *op cit.*, p. 333
[443] Simons, p. 321
[444] See, for example, Kathryn Sikkink, 1991, *Ideas and Institutions: developmentalism in Brazil and Argentina*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca
[445] See Patrick Bond, 1998, *Uneven Zimbabwe: a study of finance, development and underdevelopment*, Africa World Press; Ian Phimister, 1988, *An Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe, 1890-1948: capital accumulation and class struggle*, Longman, London, New York
[446] For details, see *inter alia*, Francis L. Coleman, editor, 1983, *Economic History of South Africa*, HAUM, Pretoria; Freund, 1989, *op cit.*; Tom Kemp, 1978, *Historical Patterns Of Industrialisation*, Longman, London; Sampie Terreblanche and Nicoli Natrass, 1990, "A Periodisation of the Political Economy from 1910", in Nicoli Natrass and Elizabeth Arlington, editors, 1990, *The Political Economy of South Africa*, Oxford University Press, Cape Town
[447] Freund, 1989, *op cit*., p. 107 note 10

9.7. Echoes of syndicalism: the ICU in South Africa, South West Africa, and the Rhodesias

In the second half of the 1920s it was the ICU that would play the central role in labour militancy. Despite the promise of the 1920 Bloemfontein congress, it was basically a Cape union before 1923, and absorbed the Cape Industrial Workers of Africa sometime in 1921. The ICU was, from an early stage, vastly larger than the South African Native National Congress. That year, however, it made a significant breakthrough into Bloemfontein, followed by the formation of sections in the Transvaal and Natal in 1924. It became overwhelmingly African in composition, and found a deep reservoir of support in the countryside. In the towns, the ICU was mainly a union of urban African and Coloured workers, with very few migrants in its ranks.[448] In the countryside, it found tens of thousands of supporters amongst labour tenants and sharecroppers who were feeling the proletarianising effects of the 1913 Land Act.

From 1925 the ICU exploded across the countryside, and by 1927 its membership had soared to perhaps a quarter of a million. In many rural areas, it assumed a millenarian character, with thousands of supporters believing that the ICU would return the farms to the Africans on Christmas Day 1927.[449] The ICU also recruited amongst the African elite in town and country, including a number of African chiefs, and it was the educated African elite that provided most of its leaders. The largest political movement amongst Africans until the 1950s,[450] and probably the largest union as well, the ICU was unique in South African labour history as the only union to ever have a mass rural base.

It was in the ICU that the third echo of syndicalism in South Africa in the 1920s is to be found. A range of ideologies influenced the ICU, its discourse including elements of conservative African nationalism, Garveyism, religious millenarianism, and socialism. Discussions of the politics of the ICU have examined this complex mixture in some detail, but have not examined the role of syndicalism in the union, although at least two authors have spoken, in passing, of the ICU's IWW influences[451] and "millenarian syndicalism".[452]

Helen Bradford's study of the ICU, for example, noted "socialist" influences from Industrial Workers of Africa veterans and CPSA activists,[453] but tended to assume socialism equalled the CPSA equalled classical Marxism. Given what I have argued about the Industrial Workers of Africa and the early CPSA, however, the picture was almost certainly more complex. Couzens argued for a "transatlantic connection" between African politics and black America, as figures like Booker T. Washington, Du Bois and Garvey had an important local influence.[454] Given that the IWW impressed men like Du Bois, and directly influenced others like Owen, Randolph and McKay,[455] it might be supposed that this "transatlantic connection" included at least some syndicalist elements. Furthermore, the IWW had a demonstrable local impact on African politics through

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[448] Wickens, 1974b, *op cit*., p. 29
[449] Coka, 1991, *op cit.,* p. 31
[450] Bonner, n.d. (2), *op cit.*, p. 25
[451] Sheridan W. Johns, 1970, *op cit.*, in Rothberg and Mazrui, *op cit.*, pp. 706, 706 note 14
[452] Bonner, n.d. (2), *op cit.*, p. 25
[453] Bradford, 1987, *op cit*., pp. 78, 114, 116, 143, 306 note 76
[454] Couzens, 1982, *op cit.*, in Marks and Rathbone, 1982, editors, *op cit*.
[455] Foner, 1974, *op cit*., 159; Claude McKay, 31 January 1920, "Socialism and the Negro", *The Workers' Dreadnought*; Pawa, 1975, *op cit*.; Spero and Harris, 1931, *op cit.,* pp. 391-2

organisations like the Industrial Socialist League, the International Socialist League and the Industrial Workers of Africa.

A closer examination of the ICU shows that IWW-style syndicalism was certainly a component of the ICU's mishmash of politics. The One Big Union idea was evident at the 1920 Bloemfontein labour conference, which aimed at "one great union of all skilled and unskilled workers of South Africa, south of the Zambezi",[456] and the January 1923 ICU conference resolved on a national campaign to get Africans "to organise themselves into One Big Union".[457]

Kadalie's speeches, as colourful and flamboyant as the man himself, sometimes struck syndicalist notes. Accused of fostering racial antagonism, Kadalie would cite the 1925 ICU preamble.[458] Asked about the aims of the union, he would argue, "If the natives merely stopped work all the industries would be at a standstill in a minute".[459] The workers had to learn the "desirability of the industrial weapon", and "they would cause revolution once the entire Free State natives were organised".[460] "Workers throughout the world are forming themselves into bodies and taking as their motto that employers must be controlled by the workers".[461] While the 1919 constitution of the ICU was based upon that of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers,[462] and a subsequent amendment added that the union wanted "industrial action on constitutional lines". [463] the revised ICU constitution of 1925 incorporated a preamble based upon the 1908 IWW *Preamble*:[464]

> Whereas the interest of the workers and those of the employers are opposed to each other, the former living by selling their labour, receiving for it only part of the wealth they produce; and the latter living by exploiting the labour of the workers, depriving the workers of a part of the product of their labour in the form of profit, no peace can be between the two classes, a struggle must always obtain about the division of the products of human labour, until the workers through their industrial organisations take from the capitalist class the means of production, to be owned and controlled by the workers for the benefit of all, instead of for the profit of a few. Under such a system, he who does not work, neither shall he eat … This is the goal for which the ICU strives along with all other organised workers throughout the world.

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[456] Wickens, 1974a, *op cit.*, p. 400
[457] Quoted in Wickens, 1974b, *op cit*., p. 28
[458] Bradford, 1987, *op cit*., pp. 114-115
[459] Quoted in Bonner, n.d. (2), *op cit.*, p. 25
[460] Report of private informer on 1926 ANC congress, appended to report by A.J. du Plessis to Divisional Criminal Investigations Officer, Bloemfontein, in Department of Justice file, JUS 915 1/18/26 part 1, National Archives, Pretoria
[461] Quoted in Beinart and Bundy, 1987, *op cit*., p. 281
[462] Quoted in Wickens, 1974b, *op cit*, p. 27
[463] Quoted in Wickens, 1974b, *op cit.*, p. 27
[464] "Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of Africa, [1925] 1972, "Revised Constitution of the ICU", in Karis and Carter, 1972, *op cit*., pp. 325-326

At the 1926 ICU conference Kadalie spoke of the need for a single well-organised union of the workers of all races, and argued that the ICU should aim to organise the African workers to "assist in abolishing the Capitalist Class, who were in reality only a small body but owned practically everything", and other speakers called for a general strike.[465] Even Champion, generally more conservative than Kadalie, was sometimes caught up by these ideas. His 1927 pamphlet, *The Truth about the ICU*, for example, stated that the ICU was "an industrial organisation" that aimed at "industrial and political democracy by and through the emancipation … of the African worker".[466] While the ICU preamble ("which we frankly admit could be better worded") was alarming to some, it merely aimed at "true co-operation" and a "co-operative commonwealth", "nothing more and nothing less".[467] In 1926, Kadalie could attribute the explosive growth of the organisation to its resistance to the ruling class:[468]

> The consolidation of our forces was inevitable, and at the opening of the current year, 1926, one witnessed a campaign to organise all African labour into ONE BIG UNION becoming a reality. What brought about this yearning among the proletariat? It was no other than the infamous Smithfield declarations [a 1925 speech by Hertzog that laid out the racial policy of the Pact] in which it was said that the black women and men of the proletariat should remain forever as "hewers of wood and drawers of water".'

At this time the ICU seems to have seriously flirted with a general strike against discriminatory legislation. The ICU's James S. Thaele stated at the annual ANC conference in 1925 that he looked forward to the "fateful day" of a general strike against the pass laws, and hoped the ANC would participate.[469] Kadalie and Thaele attended the 1926 ANC conference, which did, indeed, resolve on a general strike against the passage of a number of discriminatory new Bills being promoted by Hertzog. Kadalie told a mass meeting after the conference that their message to government was: "we will give you a damned good lesson, by putting a stop to all your railways, mines and harbours and domestic services; then you may do without us".[470] The ICU executive then resolved to call the strike.[471] However, the conservative majority in the ANC soon backtracked, and the 1926 ICU congress also agreed that the union was not yet strong

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[465] Divisional Criminal Investigations Officer, Witwatersrand Division, 1 May 1926, confidential report to Deputy Commissioner, South African Police, Witwatersrand Division, Johannesburg, in Department of Justice file, JUS 915 1/18/26 part 2, National Archives, Pretoria

[466] Allison W.G. Champion, 1927, *The Truth About the ICU*, the Roberts Printing Works for the African Workers' Club, Durban, p. 5. A copy is held in the folder Industrial and Commercial Workers Union" in the IWW Collection, Collections of Archives of Labour and Urban Affairs, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit. I would like to thank William LeFevre for helping me locate this folder, and for sending me a copy.

[467] Champion, 1927, *op cit*., pp. 6-7

[468] Quoted in Johns, 1970, *op cit*., p. 717

[469] Divisional Criminal Investigations Officer, Witwatersrand Division, 25 April 1925, letter to Deputy Commissioner, South African Police, Witwatersrand Division, on annual congress of the ANC, Johannesburg, in Department of Justice file, JUS 268 1/387/13, National Archives, Pretoria

[470] Report of private informer on 1926 ANC congress, appended to report by A.J. du Plessis to Divisional Criminal Investigations Officer, Bloemfontein, in Department of Justice file, JUS 915 1/18/26 part 1, National Archives, Pretoria

[471] Report of private informer on 1926 ANC congress, appended to report by A.J. du Plessis to Divisional Criminal Investigations Officer, Bloemfontein, in Department of Justice file, JUS 915 1/18/26 part 1, National Archives, Pretoria

enough to organise a general strike.[472] The 1927 ICU congress again returned to the theme of a general strike that "would paralyse South Africa as not a native would work".[473]

Contemporaries also noted syndicalist influences in the ICU at the time. Sampson of the SA Labour Party, for example, told parliament in 1927 that:[474]

> It is a curious thing that the natives, many of them just emerging from barbarism should have adopted as their model in forming a union one of the most extreme and revolutionary types of union that exists in the world. I refer to the syndicalist union. It is open to all irrespective of occupation, is of the IWW type, a general union … It is more political than industrial and on its present basis the white trade unions may never find contact.

Albert Nzula, the first African general-secretary of the CPSA, who studied in the Soviet Union in 1931 and served as a Comintern functionary, agreed: while he initially dismissed the ICU as a reformist union,[475] he later spoke of the ICU's "pronounced anarcho-syndicalist tendencies".[476]

There can be little doubt that the talk about a general strike fed directly into the belief that the ICU would somehow transfer White-owned farms to African workers and tenants that swept the rural areas in 1927 – this was a belief widely held by rural ICU officials and members.[477] What William Beinart and Colin Bundy called the "'insurrectionary' approach of the ICU", its "sweeping promises of imminent deliverance",[478] should, then, be understood against a vision and language that invoked "One Big Union" and a cataclysmic general strike, which was derived from syndicalism.

A sign of this influence was the fact that the ICU saw itself as simultaneously engaged in economic *and* political struggles: its general distance from the ANC was, in part, derived from the syndicalist view that the union itself could fight around political issues, and that such issues were by no means the exclusive province of a political party. This break with "economism" was central to the politics of the ICU, and it found its roots in syndicalism. It is sometimes argued that the ICU was wracked by tensions as a "changing, but

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[472] Divisional Criminal Investigations Officer, Witwatersrand Division, 1 May 1926, confidential report to Deputy Commissioner, South African Police, Witwatersrand Division, Johannesburg, in Department of Justice file, JUS 915 1/18/26 part 2, National Archives, Pretoria

[473] Quoted in Bonner, n.d. (1), *op cit.*, p. 25

[474] H.W. Sampson, House of Assembly, cited in Davies, 1979, *op cit.,* pp. 235-6, note 52

[475] Nzula, Potekhin and Zusmanovich [1933] 1979, *op cit.*, pp. 119, 122, 126, 210

[476] Albert Nzula, [1935] 1979, "The Struggles of the Negro Toilers in South Africa", reproduced as appendix A in Nzula, Potekhin and Zusmanovich [1933] 1979, *op cit.*, p. 206. This was published posthumously, for Nzula died in 1934 after contracting pneumonia while lying unconscious on a frozen Moscow street. Trotskyist lore maintains that Soviet officials killed him for supposedly criticising the Soviet Union: for an example, see Paul Trewhela, 1988, "The Death of Albert Nzula and the Silence of George Padmore", *Searchlight South Africa*, vol.1, no. 1. On the other hand, Eddie Roux maintained, less romantically, that Nzula was an alcoholic, and probably just passed out on the freezing street: Eddie Roux and Win Roux, 1970, *op cit*., p. 152. In introducing the first English edition of *The Working Class Movement and Forced Labour in Negro Africa*, co-authored by Nzula with Soviet scholars, Robin Cohen argued the evidence for murder was rather thin: Robin Cohen, [1933] 1979, *op cit*., pp. 15-16, also editorial comments on p. 177 note 9 of Nzula, Potekhin and Zusmanovich [1933] 1979, *op cit*. For more biographical information, see "Nzula, Albert", in Verwey, editor, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 208-209, and Skota, editor and compiler, [? 1930] n.d, *op cit*., p. 136

[477] Coka, [1936] 1991, *op cit*., p. 31

[478] Beinart and Bundy, 1987, *op cit*., p. 280

permanently unstable, combination of trade union, political pressure group, and mass movement".[479] What characterised the ICU – and what it shared with syndicalism more generally – was a refusal to imagine trade unionism narrowly: the distinction between union, political body and mass movement was meaningless to it. "Man, we thought were getting our country back from Kadalie!", an old man recalled many years later.[480]

The politics of the ICU cannot, therefore, be understood unless the influence of syndicalism in South Africa – an impact that persisted after the formation of the CPSA – is taken seriously. It is also significant that these syndicalist themes can often be traced back to the syndicalist organisations of the 1910s or to the lingering syndicalism of the 1920s. As discussed in Section 8.6., when the ICU emerged in Cape Town it had ongoing contact with syndicalists from the Industrial Socialist League and the Cape section of the Industrial Workers of Africa. Police reported that Kadalie was in contact with the radicals, "in constant negotiations and communications, and conducting propaganda with them, identifying himself with the revolutionary movement",[481] and the early appearance of syndicalist themes in ICU discourse suggests that these contacts had an impact. The possibility of contact with the IWW's Marine Transport Workers' Industrial Union, which had a branch at the Cape Town docks in 1920,[482] should also not be discounted.

While the early CPSA failed to maintain links with activists of colour from the early syndicalist unions, many of the key figures ended up in the ICU. The Cape section of the Industrial Workers of Africa merged into the ICU sometime in 1920 or 1921, and Gomas and Peinaar of the Clothing Workers' Industrial Union also joined the ICU. Lingering syndicalist influences played a role. Gomas, who became a full-time ICU organiser in 1923, had "read Marx only perfunctorily", remained "schooled in the tradition" of the International Socialist League, advocated "scientific industrial" principles in the ICU and remained sympathetic to the vision of One Big Union long after the ICU was a spent force.[483]

Although the mainstream ANC leadership quickly backtracked from the decision to call a general strike in 1926, it is worth noting that both Mabaso and Mvabaza – who had been part of the Transvaal Native Congress section associated with the Industrial Workers of Africa in the late 1910s – continued to promote the idea on the Witwatersrand.[484] The lingering syndicalism in the early CPSA also had an impact on the ICU: according to Eddie Roux, it was a "Cape Marxist" who added the IWW *Preamble* into the 1925 ICU constitution.[485] Finally, sections of the ICU were in indirect contact with the American IWW: N.J. Mcunu

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[479] Johns, 1970, *op cit.*, pp. 753-754
[480] Quoted in Luli Callinicos, 1987, *Working Life: townships and popular culture on the Rand, 1886-1940*, Ravan Press, Braamfontein, p. 110
[481] Quoted in Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit*., p. 4
[482] Hartmut Rubner, personal communication, 1 May 1998, in my possession
[483] Musson, 1989, *op cit.*, pp. 30, 31, 49, 106, 116-126, 132-8
[484] H.E. Liefeld, Department of Native Affairs, Germiston, 30 April 1926, letter to Director of Native Labour on "Rumoured Strike of Natives on the Witwatersrand", in Government Native Labour Bureau file, GNLB 367 71/26/48; Director of Native Labour, 21 April 1926, letter to Secretary for Native Affairs on "Rumoured Strike of Natives on the Witwatersrand", in Government Native Labour Bureau file, GNLB 367 71/26/48
[485] Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit.*, p. 400; Johns, 1970, *op cit*., p. 706, note 14

of Durban, for example, wrote to the IWW in 1928 and 1929, requesting financial aid, and sent copies of *The Truth about the ICU* and the CPSA's *South African Worker*.[486]

The syndicalist influence on the ICU had important implications for the southern African region, for the ICU spread into South West Africa in 1920, Southern Rhodesia in 1927, and Northern Rhodesia in 1931. As the ICU flowed along the human rivers of labour that crisscrossed southern Africa, it carried syndicalist themes into other countries, themes that should be noted when studying the other ICUs. The ICU pioneered labour unionism in South West Africa – a country where "[a]ttempts to organise trade unions amongst black workers have generally been few and short-lived"[487] – and it was Jimmy La Guma of Cape Town who played the key role. Although radicalised by participation in the SDF's 1906 unemployed movement, he was "seized" with "wanderlust" and migrated to South West Africa in 1907 or 1908,[488] as the German colonial authorities started to recruit thousands of African and Coloured workers at Cape Town, promising high pay.[489]

Many were employed at Lüderitz, a small port town established in 1883, which had an economy centred on nearby diamond mines and the fishing industry, worked by free foreign workers, including South Africans, and unfree migrants from the interior.[490] Jimmy La Guma was contracted to a German cattle farmer, then the railways, where he lived in a grim work colony, followed by a stint on the diamond fields.[491] As early as 1910, the South African workers were organising strikes and go-slows in response to bad conditions and disputes over wages, deductions, and methods of payment in South West Africa,[492] and strike action surged after South Africa took control of the territory.[493]

In 1918, Jimmy La Guma organised a strike by South Africans and local Africans at the diamond fields.[494] This was fed by growing disenchantment with the South African occupation, which had failed to keep its promises to create a fairer dispensation than the Germans.[495] The franchise was restricted to the Whites, a situation the *International* described as "obviously absurd and unjust; they are only a handful of the population, and belong to the conquering races".[496] The strike was broken, and Jimmy La Guma was blacklisted on the diamond fields for his leading role in the strike, ending up as a medical orderly and tugboat worker in Lüderitz, and was arrested during an anti-pass campaign by local Coloureds.

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[486] Folder on Industrial and Commercial Workers Union, in IWW Collection, held in Collections of Archives of Labour and Urban Affairs, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit. I would like to thank William LeFevre for helping me locate this item.
[487] Robert Gordon, 1978, "Some Organisational Aspects of Labour Protest amongst Contract Workers in Namibia", *South African Labour Bulletin*, vol.4, no. 1 and 2, double issue, p. 116
[488] La Guma, [1964] 1997, *op cit*., pp. 17-21
[489] Beinart, 1981, *op cit*.; Beinart, 1987, *op cit*., especially pp. 167-170, 178-9; Moorson, 1978, *op cit*.
[490] Tony Emmett, 1986, "Popular Resistance in Namibia, 1920-1925", in Tom Lodge, editor, *Resistance and Ideology in Settler Societies*, Southern African Studies vol.4, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, p. 21, 23-24, 31-32
[491] La Guma, [1964] 1997, *op cit*., pp. 17-21
[492] Beinart, 1987, *op cit*., pp. 180-3
[493] Moorsom, 1978, *op cit*., p. 111
[494] La Guma, [1964] 1997, *op cit*., pp. 17-21
[495] Emmett, 1986, *op cit.*, pp. 8-15; Keith Gottschalk, 1978, "South African Labour Policy in Namibia 1915-1975", *South African Labour Bulletin*, vol.4, no. 1 and 2, double issue; Peter H. Katjavivi, 1988, *A History of Resistance in Namibia*, James Currey, London, Organisation of African Unity: Inter-African Cultural Fund, Addis Ababa, UNESCO Press, Paris, pp. 17-19; La Guma, [1964] 1997, *op cit*., pp. 17-21
[496] William H. Andrews, 14 February 1918, "White and Black Labour in South Africa", *The Call*

Upon hearing of the December 1919 Cape Town dockers' strike Jimmy La Guma got in touch with Kadalie, set up an ICU branch at Lüderitz in December 1920, which was a mainly a Coloured union,[497] although its president, John de Clue was an Afro-Caribbean.[498] The administration was alarmed that the "movement of well-educated Coloureds would spread" to the local Africans,[499] C.N. Manning, the Secretary of Native Affairs, appealed for the "question of control or prohibition" to be "dealt with without delay".[500] Moves were made by the administration to restrict the ICU to the Lüderitz townships and to the "educated class", and to isolate the union from South Africa.[501] It kept in touch with South Africa through the ICU press, letters to Kadalie, and its ideas were similar to those of the main ICU.[502]

Jimmy La Guma considered himself a socialist by this stage, although his version of "socialism" is difficult to pinpoint.[503] In 1921, he returned to Cape Town at Kadalie's request, to help organise the ICU,[504] playing an important role in reviving the organisation in Port Elizabeth after the 1920 massacre and subsequently becoming assistant general secretary of the ICU and manager of its paper, the *Workers' Herald.* It was Jimmy La Guma who recruited Gomas to the ICU.

Longstanding fears of British South Africa Company officials that "one big Union" would appear in the north seemed set be realised when a group from Southern Rhodesia requested support at the 1927 ICU conference.[505] Kadalie retained a deep interest in Southern Rhodesia, given his experiences there,[506] and the conference gave the task to an educated Nyasa (also from the north of that country), Robert Sambo. Sambo established the ICU at the Bulawayo location, with the help of another countryman, John Mphamba.[507] In March 1927, the union claimed 155 members and seemed to be growing rapidly, but Sambo was deported.[508]

Kadalie, describing the deportation as an action "in the best traditions of a capitalists' democracy", dispatched Masotsha Ndhlovu – a Southern Rhodesian worker previously employed in South Africa – to form the ICU *yase* Rhodesia at Bulawayo.[509] Ndhlovu, as secretary, and Job Matabasi Dumbutjena, the vice-chair, "travelled extensively, addressing meetings all along the [migrant] labour route", forming a branch at

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[497] La Guma, [1964] 1997, *op cit*., pp. 21-3
[498] Emmett, 1986, *op cit*., p. 21
[499] Emmett, 1986, *op cit*., p. 32; Peltola, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 77-8
[500] Quoted in Peltola, 1995, *op cit*., p. 78
[501] Emmett, 1986, *op cit*., p. 32
[502] Emmett, 1986, *op cit.*, pp. 21-22, 32, 37
[503] See La Guma, 1997, *op cit*., pp. 18, 24-9
[504] See La Guma, [1964] 1997, *op cit*., pp. 23-9
[505] Phimister, 1988, *op cit*., p. 189; Ian Phimister and Charles van Onselen, 1997, "The Labour Movement in Zimbabwe: 1900-1945", in Raftopolous and Phimister, editors*, op cit.,* p. 39; Van Onlselen, 1976, *op cit*., p. 210
[506] Ranger, 1970, *op cit*., p.p. 150
[507] Ranger, 1970, *op cit*., p. 151
[508] To which country he was deported is not entirely clear. Phimister, Ranger and van Onselen suggest South Africa, but Richard Parry claims that it was to Nyasaland. See Parry, 1999, *op cit.*, in Brian Raftopolous and Tsuneo Yoshikuni, editors, *Sites of Struggle: essays in Zimbabwe's urban history*, Weaver Press, Harare, p. 80; Phimister, 1988, *op cit*., p. 158; Ranger, 1970, *op cit*., p. 151; van Onlselen, 1976, *op cit*., p. 210
[509] Parry, 1999, *op cit*., p. 81; Phimister, 1988, *op cit*., p. 158; Ranger, 1970, *op cit*., p. 152; Van Onlselen, 1976, *op cit*., pp. 210-1

Salisbury in 1929, and a further eleven over the next two years.[510] While an attempt to organise the mining compounds failed, the rural African reserves provided a large reservoir of support.[511]

Like the ICU in South Africa, the ICU *yase* Rhodesia offered Africans "an organisation and an ideology which consciously directed itself at black *workers*".[512] Although the "explicit aims and objectives of the I.C.U. often tended to remain hidden or difficult to detect amidst a number of diverse and confused ideological strands, some of which were lost on the mass of the industrial workers",[513] there were many blistering attacks on capitalism, class exploitation and the racial order.

According to Ndhlovu: "We native people do not depend on crops anymore but we remain in town and earn wages – we are the workers in the mines and farms and railways".[514] According to a speaker in Salisbury, "The ICU is for proletarian people", "We are the proletarian people".[515] The ICU *yase* Rhodesia sometimes saw Whites in general as the enemy, but sometimes focusssed on the "capitalist class … the capitalists" who kept power by means of the government and the missionaries.[516] This was "why we say let us organise" in one union regardless of ethnic background or place of origin.[517] "You must not think that angels will come to the Europeans and tell them to give you more wages", "we must agitate" and the ICU must "organise from one end of the country to the other and make the Government wake up".[518] Like the ICU in the south, though, the union had a loose structure and strategy, and was not involved in the strikes by African miners that took place in the late 1920s, such as a huge strike at Shamva mine in 1928.

In the meantime, the ICU appeared in Northern Rhodesia, and networks of migrants – educated Nyasas were again prominent – played a key role. It "would have been surprising if some contacts between the northern labour force and more politically active southern workers did not exist".[519] From the early 1920s the authorities were "painfully aware" that migrants returning from South Africa and Southern Rhodesia brought subversive ideas, and lamented their exposure to "advanced ideas from the type of natives who recently sent a deputation to Moscow".[520]

Around 1924 police intercepted letters between Kadalie and his uncle Isaac Clements Muwamba, a Nyasa resident in Lusaka, the administrative capital, revealing that he was regularly receiving copies of the *Workers' Herald* and the *Messenger*.[521] Clements Muwamba and Sam K.K. Mwase of Livingston, another Nyasa, "seem to have imbibed the proletarian ideas of Clements Kadalie and his Industrial and Commercial

[510] Phimister, 1988, *op cit*., p. 158; Van Onlselen, 1976, *op cit*., pp. 211-2
[511] Phimister, 1988, *op cit*., pp. 200-203; Parry, 1999, *op cit.*, pp. 83-4; Phimister and van Onselen, 1997, *op cit*., pp. 25-8; van Onselen, 1976, *op cit*., pp. 212, 214-218
[512] Van Onlselen, 1976, *op cit*., p. 211, emphasis in the original. Cf. also Phimister and van Onselen, 1997, *op cit*., p. 20
[513] Van Onselen, 1976, *op cit*., p. 214
[514] Quoted in Phimister, 1988, *op cit*., p. 159; van Onselen, 1976, *op cit*., p. 211
[515] Quoted in Ranger, 1970, *op cit*., pp. 164-5
[516] Quoted in Ranger, 1970, *op cit*., pp. 159, 164
[517] Quoted in van Onselen, 1976, *op cit*., p. 212
[518] Quoted in Ranger, 1970, *op cit*., p. 159
[519] Berger, 1974, *op cit*., p. 94
[520] Quoted in Meebelo, 1986, *op cit.*, pp. 46-7
[521] Meebelo, 1986, *op cit.*, p. 47

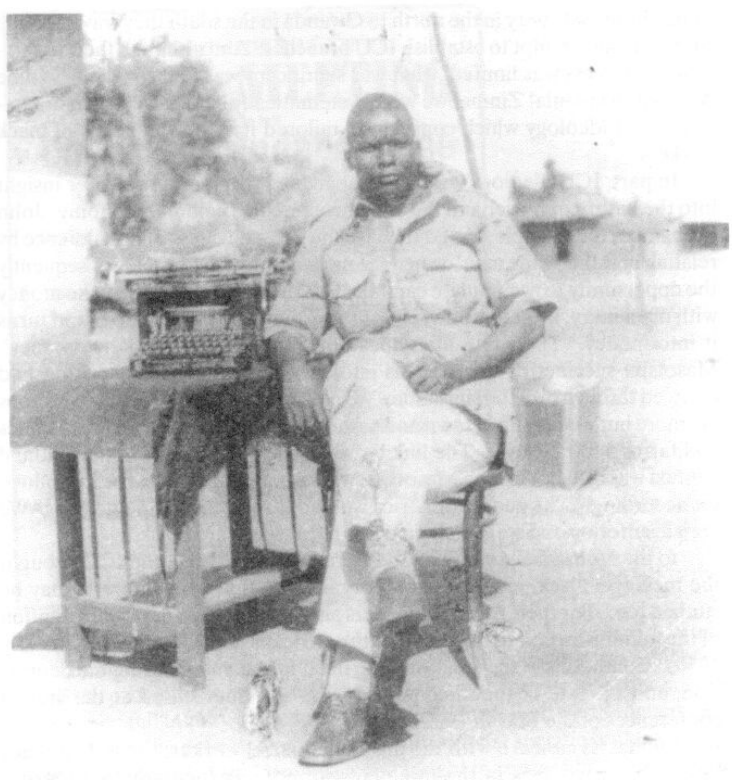

Figure thirty-six: Masotsha Ndhlovu, general secretary of the ICU *yase* Rhodesia, at Bulawayo in 1930

Source: Brian Raftopoulous and Ian Phimister, editors, 1997, *Keep on Knocking: a history of the labour movement in Zimbabwe, 1900-97*, Baobab Books, Harare, for the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, p. 19

Workers Union" although neither "made any attempt to form a truly Workers' organisation along the lines of Kadalie's union".[522] In early 1932, an educated African, Joseph Kazembe, "made some effort … to form a branch of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union in Livingstone",[523] the capital. Kazembe had recently been deported back to Northern Rhodesia from South Africa.[524] Something of Kazembe's outlook may be judged from a speech in 1932 during a strike in Ndola, where he stated that "all white men were liars" and that "the comfort enjoyed by the Europeans" was "procured at the expense of the exploitation of the natives".[525]

Radical ideological currents continued to flow from South Africa into the Rhodesias through African populations. In Southern Rhodesia, the CPSA's *Umsebenzi* "circulated amongst a tiny audience of black schoolteachers and workers" in the early 1930s, and a man called Malikongwa Shoko used CPSA material in

[522] Meebelo, 1986, *op cit.*, p. 52
[523] Quoted in Meebelo, 1986, *op cit.*, pp. 52. Also see Meebelo, 1986, *op cit.*, pp. 101, 161
[524] Henry Meebelo suggests that Kazembe founded the local ICU in 1932. However, his main source of data on Kazembe's efforts is dated 13 January 1932, and conveys a strong impression that these efforts had been taking ongoing for a while: cf. Meebelo, 1986, *op cit.*, p. 52, note 29 and Meebelo, 1986, *op cit.*, pp. 81, 161
[525] Meebelo, 1986, *op cit.*, p. 53

his teaching.[526] The colonial government in Northern Rhodesia was alarmed by the appearance of African trade union agitators from South Africa, including one John Meshack Chamalula, graduate of a CPSA course on trade unionism.[527] If White immigrants helped connect South Africa to the "glorious period" of anarchism and syndicalism elsewhere, African and Coloured migrants helped syndicalist ideas flow northwards from South Africa. And the transnational ICU is usefully seen as part of the history of the "glorious period".

9.8. The end of an era

These echoes of syndicalism in southern Africa were stilled in the late 1920s, as a number of separate processes took place. The South African ICU imploded in the late 1920s. Syndicalist influences notwithstanding, the union was always controlled by a few powerful and charismatic leaders like Champion and Kadalie, and was characterised by large-scale financial corruption. These problems were already evident in 1925 (the revised constitution was an attempt to get the finances in order),[528] but innumerable "union secretaries enjoyed joy-rides in cars, lived fast and ran up and down the countryside" on the basis of ICU levies and collections.[529] Many were from the African elite: Kadalie himself noted that young men, "particularly teachers", "flocked to the ICU, where they occupied remunerative positions in various branch offices" at salaries well above those earned at the chalkboard.[530]

Despite a commitment to industrial unionism, the ICU did not organise its members by industry, or by workplace, and it was rare for the ICU to have shop floor-based structures. It was organised as a general union based in communities in the townships and rural towns, but it did not undertake community-based strikes or protests. As the ICU surged across the countryside, matters became even worse, as the union recruited anyone willing to pay dues, including African chiefs and shopkeepers. The ICU had only held three strikes by 1928, including the 1919 Cape Town strike. There was little scope for initiatives from below: members generally participated in the ICU as audiences at rallies, or as financial supporters for ICU court cases and co-operative schemes.

The problem was, in large part, a political one: the ICU lacked clear policy and strategy. ICU ideology was always an unstable and contradictory mixture, which included everything from Garveyism, to conservative African nationalism, to Zulu ethnic mobilisation, to liberalism. In 1924, Kadalie backed the Pact's election, while the 1925 ICU constitution placed the radical preamble alongside clauses enabling "such commercial enterprises as may be deemed necessary" for "the progress of the Organisation".[531] *The Truth about the ICU* added that the union followed "the teachings of Christ", looked "to Great Britain to see that justice is done" and advocated "better feeling" between the classes.[532] Nothing better exemplifies these contradictions than Kadalie's actions in mobilise African and Coloured voters to vote for Hertzog, and the

[526] Phimister, 1988, *op cit*., p. 198
[527] Berger, 1974, *op cit*., p. 94
[528] See Wickens, 1974b, *op cit*., pp. 30-32
[529] Coka, [1936] 1991, *op cit.*, pp. 36-7
[530] Kadalie, 1970, *op cit*., p. 145
[531] Quoted in Wickens, 1974b, *op cit*., p. 29
[532] Champion, 1927, *op cit*., pp. 6, 9, 13, 25

tendency of the union to vacillate in the late 1920s between calls for a general strike and court cases and cooperative schemes.

An implosion was, perhaps, inevitable. Having spoken of a general strike against the pass laws, the ICU spent its money and time on a test case designed to stop official harassment of Kadalie. When the CPSA led a campaign to clean up the union, Kadalie purged CPSA members in 1926, costing it senior figures like the organiser Gomas, the national secretary Jimmy La Guma, and the financial secretary E.J. Kahile, leading to the CPSA forming the rival Federation of Non-European Trade Unions (FNETU) in 1927, headed by Jimmy La Guma and Thibedi.[533] The corruption issue and lack of action became a major problem, and a growing number of ICU meetings broke up in chaos.

Kadalie tried to rescue the situation with the aid of British unions, developing a new ICU constitution and bringing a liberal Scottish trade unionist, William Ballinger, to South Africa as an advisor. However, Kadalie soon quarrelled with Ballinger, in no small part because Ballinger queried Kadalie's extravagant expenditure. The ICU was bankrupt by the start of 1928, Champion was implicated in a major financial scandal,[534] and Champion and Kadalie fell out. By 1929, Ballinger controlled the original ICU, Kadalie an "Independent ICU", while Champion had his own ICU *yase* Natal.[535]

The ICU, then, may have been influenced by syndicalism, but it lacked the key ingredients of a successful syndicalist union: democratic structures, worker education and self-activity, direct action, class politics and a clear strategy. To the extent that the literature criticises the ICU for its multi-class nature, internal autocracy and mismanagement, and failure to mobilise its members, its failure could be seen as due to the fact that it was insufficiently syndicalist.[536] In the late 1920s, the ICU was subject to massive repression: the police, empowered by the Native Affairs Administration Act passed in 1927 and a subsequent Criminal Amendment Act, clamped down. White mobs attacked ICU halls, and White farmers evicted thousands of ICU members from White farms.[537] "Everything depended on the leaders, and they gave no lead",[538] and ICU splinters headed for oblivion.

The South West African ICU, meanwhile, had become defunct. While it managed to send a delegate to the 1923 ICU conference in Cape Town,[539] and managed to establish a new branch in Keetmanshoop in

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[533] Eddie Roux [1944] 1993, *op cit.,* pp. 117
[534] Webster, 1974, *op cit*., p. 11
[535] For Champion's version of events, see Allison W.G. Champion, 1929, *Mehlomadala: my experiences in the ICU*, Durban, copy at University of Cape Town library; Allison W.G. Champion and Stanley Trapido, [1964] 1974, "An Interview with Mr. A.W.G. Champion", *South African Labour Bulletin*, vol.1, no. 6/7, double issue; Allison W.G. Champion, 1982, *The Views of Mahlathi: writings of A.W.G. Champion*, *a black South African*, introduction by R.R.R. Dhlomo, edited by M.W. Swanson, University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, Killie Campbell Africana Library, Durban
[536] A point by Nicole Ulrich: see also Nicole Ulrich, 1997, "Voices of the Oppressed? The nature of African leaders and their political organisations on the Witwatersrand, 1918- 1930", History Honours paper, Department of History, University of the Witwatersrand
[537] See Beinart and Bundy, 1987, *op cit*., pp. 314-318; Bradford, 1987, *op cit*., chapters 5 and 6; "Champion, Allison Wessels George", in Verwey, editor, 1995, *op cit.*, pp. 40-3; Hemson, 1979, *op cit*., pp. 207-224; S.M. Ndlovu, 2000, "Johannes Nkosi and the Communist Party of South Africa: images of 'Blood River' and King Dingane in the late 1920s–1930", *History and Theory*, vol.39, no. 4; Roth, 1999, *op cit*., p, 479-480; Skota, editor and compiler, n.d. [1966], *op cit*., pp. 84-6
[538] Coka, [1936] 1991, *op cit.*, pp. 37

1924, it collapsed soon afterwards.[540] The Southern Rhodesian ICU peaked around 1930, but collapsed by 1935 for many of the same reasons as the South African body. It had, however, made a deep impression, and was revived in the 1940s as the Reformed ICU.[541] It was headed by Charles Mzingeli, the key figure in the old Salisbury ICU, who tried to link up with the left wing of White labour and also wrote for the CPSA's *Inkululeko* and the *Guardian*.[542]

The Northern Rhodesian ICU was always a fragile body, in part because it was based in Livingstone, rather than one of the major industrial centres. Many African workers also, apparently, showed a definite disinterest in the ICU's "political trade-unionism",[543] A series of African strikes in Northern Rhodesia, which lacked industrial relations machinery for Africans,[544] culminated in a great "thunderclap" in 1935 when an African general strike spread across the copper mines, with six mineworkers shot dead.[545] Kazembe was prominent in the strike leadership at the Roan Antelope Mine: arrested, he was described by the colonial Governor as a lieutenant of Kadalie,[546] but the ICU itself played no role in the strike.

If the collapse of the ICU stilled one of the echoes of syndicalism, changes in the CPSA in the late 1920s also helped create a decisive rupture with the past. In 1928 the Comintern imposed a two-stage theory of revolutionary change on all Parties in colonial and semi-colonial countries, and, despite objections by the CPSA majority, the Party redefined its goal as "[a]n Independent South African Native Republic as a stage towards the Workers' and Peasants' Republic, guaranteeing protection and complete equality towards all national minorities".[547]

This was an important break with the politics of the syndicalist period – which linked class struggle and national liberation through the One Big Union – and the early CPSA, which stressed the struggle against capitalism as the immediate goal. According to the new formulation, the "Native Republic" – later renamed the "National Democracy" – was a stage that must precede socialism: it would create a non-racial capitalism, and this stage must be completed before socialism could be seriously contemplated.

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[539] Wickens, 1974b, *op cit*., p. 28

[540] Emmett, 1986, *op cit*., pp. 6-7, 33; Ruth First, 1963**,** *South West Africa***,** Harmondsworth, Penguin, p. 196; Katjavivi, 1988, *op cit*., pp.20; Kiljunen, 1981, *op cit*., pp. 147-8; Moorsom, 1978, *op cit*., p. 111; Peltola, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 78-9

[541] See Phimister, 1988, *op cit*., pp. 266 *et seq*.; Phimister and van Onselen, 1997, *op cit*., pp. 45-53; Raftopolous, 1997, *op cit.*, pp. 55-72; Ranger, 1970, *op cit*., p. 167-169

[542] Phimister, 1988, *op cit*., pp. 267-8; Raftopolous, 1997, *op cit*., p. 61-68, 75-78; also see Brian Raftopolous, 1999, "Nationalism and Labour in Salisbury, 1953-1965", in Raftopolous and Yoshikuni, editors, *op cit.*, pp. 133-6; Ranger, 1970, *op cit*., p. 168-9

[543] Berger, 1974, *op cit.*, pp. 93-4

[544] Reginald J.B. Moore, 1939, "Labour Conditions in Northern Rhodesia", *Journal of the Royal African Society*, vol.38, no. 153, p. 438

[545] Meebelo, 1986, *op cit.*, p. 59

[546] Berger, 1974, *op cit*., p. 94; Ian Henderson, 1975, "Early African Leadership: the Copperbelt disturbances of 1935 and 1940", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol.2, no. 1; Perrings, 1979, *op cit*.; Meebelo, 1986, *op cit.*, pp. 68-83, 92-96;

[547] Quoted from Communist Party of South Africa, [1 January 1929] 1981, "Programme of the Communist Party of South Africa adopted at the seventh annual congress of the Party on 1 January, 1929", in Brian Bunting, editor, 1981, *op cit.*, p. 104. The full text of the 1928 Comintern resolution, "The South African Question", appeared in the Comintern journal, *Communist International*: Executive Committee of the Communist International, 15 December 1928, "The South African Question", *Communist International*. It is also reproduced as "Resolution on the 'The South African Question' adopted by the Executive Committee of the Communist International following the Sixth Comintern Congress " in Brian Bunting, editor, 1981, *op cit.* It also appears as "The South African Question" in Harmel, 1971, *op cit.*

The adoption of the two-stage policy coincided with the onset of the Comintern's "New Line" period. The New Line was "third period" of Comintern policy, and lasted from 1928 to 1935: it stressed the need to "Bolshevise" Communist Parties by purging unreliable elements and ending all co-operation with non-Communist forces.[548] In the South African case, this meant breaking all ties with bodies like the ANC, ICU and trade unions outside of Party control, and expelling any member who disputed Party policy, practice and rules.

A series of purges took place, based on a wide variety of often quite spurious charges, Party membership fell from a claimed 3,000 members in 1929 to 150 in 1933,[549] and the crippled organisation lost much of the influence it had developed in the 1920s. Almost all veterans of the pre-CPSA period were expelled. Andrews – a key figure in the South African Trades and Labour Council, a successor to the South African Industrial Federation – was expelled for failing to follow Party directives and for sharing a platform with trade unionists and South African Labour Party speakers at a May Day rally.[550] Tyler of the Building Workers' Industrial Union was expelled for pursuing an "individual line" in union work. S.P. Bunting was expelled for alleged racial chauvinism, and for sharing a platform with ANC and ICU speakers.[551]

Opposition to the "Native Republic" approach provided grounds for other expulsions. Manuel Lopes, secretary of the Cape Town CPSA, was expelled for this reason in 1931.[552] Harrison, who had previously been suspended for six months for violating the 21 Points,[553] was expelled for considering the "Native Republic" a "ridiculous" slogan imposed by a "Russian dictatorship".[554] Others opposed to the "Native Republic" were expelled on various pretexts: Thibedi, for instance, was accused of misappropriating FNETU funds and expelled, while Pick was driven out for failing to sell enough copies of *Umsebenzi*.[555] Loyalty was not necessarily a defence. Jimmy La Guma and Johnny Gomas joined the CPSA in Cape Town in 1925, following meetings with Buirski and Pick during an international sailors' strike, and Gomas soon became Cape provincial secretary.[556] While both men supported the "Native Republic" line, Jimmy La Guma was expelled twice: first, for disobeying a Party directive, and, second, for criticising a Party leader,[557] with Gomas signing his second expulsion order.

The CPSA was rebuilt in the mid-1930s and, again, changing Comintern decisions were vital. In 1935, the Comintern shifted from New Line sectarianism to the Popular Front policy, which stressed forming the broadest possible alliances against fascism, including work with anarchists, liberals, and the "progressive" bourgeoisie (Trotskyists were not, however, acceptable).[558] The Comintern sent George Hardy

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[548] Drew, editor, 1996a, *op cit.,* editorial comment, p. 108
[549] Drew, editor, 1996a, *op cit.*, editorial comment, p. 23
[550] See, for example, Eddie Roux [1944] 1993, *op cit.,* pp. 156-8
[551] Eddie Roux [1944] 1993, *op cit.,* pp. 156-164, 167-8
[552] Manuel Lopes, n.d., "The 'Friends of the Soviet Union': a letter from M. Lopes to Bill Andrews, 1931", reprinted in *Searchlight South Africa*, vol.3, no. 3, with editorial notes by Baruch Hirson
[553] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit*., pp. 79, 102
[554] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit*., p. 103
[555] The Pick case is cited in Cronin, [? 1991] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 20
[556] See La Guma, [1964] 1997, *op cit*., pp. 26-8
[557] La Guma, [1964] 1997, *op cit*., pp. 56-7
[558] Tony Karon, 1985, "Fascism, War and National Liberation: the Comintern and the united front in South Africa 1928-1939", unpublished mimeo, provides an especially good discussion of these developments.

to South Africa from 1936 to 1938 to assist the CPSA. This had a certain irony, for Hardy – now a zealous Comintern representative – was a former general-secretary of the United States IWW.[559] After leaving South Africa Hardy went to fight in the Spanish Civil War where he was killed "defending our democratic principles" against fascism.[560]

The drive to rebuild the Parties and to end their isolation saw strenuous efforts in South Africa to win back (suitable) members lost in the purges. Andrews was won back, politically rehabilitated as Party leader from 1938 to 1950, and honoured by the W.H Andrews Biography Fund, a "Bust Fund", Cope's *Comrade Bill* and a W.H Andrews Memorial Fund. Jimmy La Guma came back, and became a member of the Central Committee in 1948.[561] S.P. Bunting fared less well: he had not been drawn back into the Party by the time of his death in 1936, and only officially rehabilitated in 1989. The CPSA's Popular Front period was characterised by attempts to build links with White labour, and with African, Coloured and Indian nationalists.

No traces of anarchism and syndicalism can be discerned in the CPSA that was rebuilt in the Popular Front period. The veterans of the syndicalist period who had remained in the Party throughout the New Line period, like Gomas, or who returned to the Party after 1935, like Andrews, were now solidly cast in the Bolshevik mould. Slavish obedience to the Comintern and the Soviet Union was firmly in place, and the two-stage theory was accepted, but interpreted in different ways: there was some debate over whether the approach, conceded to be correct in principle, still applied in the 1940s, and, if so, whether Afrikaner nationalism was part of the "national-democratic" movement, and whether the CPSA should lead the first stage of the struggle, or leave that role to African or Afrikaner nationalists.[562]

Nationalism became a key element of CPSA discourse. It was no longer regarded as a rival to socialism, as had been the case in earlier years, and Moses Kotane, the CPSA general-secretary from 1939

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[559] Hardy wrote a compelling autobiography: George Hardy, 1956, *Those Stormy Years: memories of the fight for freedom on five continents*, Lawrence and Wishart, London. He was the third Comintern emissary sent to South Africa, being preceded by Paul Merker from the German Communist Party in 1929, and Eugene Dennis in 1932: Dennis was later general secretary of the Communist Party of the United States of America. On the envoys, see Karon, 1985, *op cit*., pp. 8-9. Of Hardy's zealotry, the Simons comment that Hardy "suspected a Trotskyist in every left-wing critic of communist policy": Jack and Ray Simons, [1969] 1983, *op cit.,* p. 496. Hardy wrote a scathing indictment of the Belgian Congo during his syndicalist period, following a visit: George Hardy, January 1917, "Blacks and Whites in the Congo", *International Socialist Review*, vol.XVII

[560] Photo of George Hardy, with notes by W.H. Andrews on back, folder 10, W.H. Andrews Papers, Mayibuye Centre, University of the Western Cape

[561] La Guma, [1964] 1997, *op cit*., pp. 68-70, 73-5

[562] These issues are not at all obvious. A sense of the complexities involved can be gleaned from the Party press. In January 1941, for example, Harry Snichter of the CPSA proposed "A People's Programme" based on a focus on a struggle against "imperialism", and for a "bourgeois democratic republic", rather than a strictly socialist strategy, in the CPSA review *Freedom/ Vryheid*. In the March issue, a wide range of responses appeared: a comrade "G" defended Snichter's two-stage view because "the colonial proletariat" was too "undeveloped", and advocating alliance with nationalists; the Cape District Committee was split, the majority arguing for the "immediate aim" of abolishing capitalism under Party leadership, stating that an alliance with a national bourgeoisie against imperialism was correct in principle but inappropriate for South African circumstances; the East London Group advocated a Soviet Republic on principle. See Harry Snichter, January 1941, "A People's Programme", *Freedom/ Vryheid*, Communist Party of South Africa; "G", March 1941, "Short-Term Programme: a critique on [sic] comrade Snichter's 'Peoples [sic] Programme", *Freedom/ Vryheid*, Communist Party of South Africa; Cape District Committee, March 1941, "The Cape District Committee and the People's Programme", in *ibid*.; East London Group, March 1941, "Comments on 'A People's Programme", in *ibid.*

to 1978, could baldly state that "'I am first an African and then a Communist".[563] It is telling that Kotane's overt nationalism was praised by the Party in later years: it was a "way of fitting Marxist-Leninist doctrine into the African national tradition" and of making it clear that "one could be both a good communist and a good nationalist".[564] Gomas moved to an increasingly anti-White position, becoming an Africanist in the late 1940s,[565] yet remains remembered by the Communist school as a Party "builder, an old and loyal member".[566]

These examples can only be understood if it is recognised that the post-1928 Party regarded nationalism as historically progressive – a racist Gomas was a still a progressive *because* he was also nationalist – with national liberation seen as the task of *nationalists*, and as something *separate* to socialism. The possibility of a class politics that subsumed national liberation within a larger socialist struggle, based on class struggle – a possibility raised by syndicalist groups like the International Socialist League – was lost. This was a profound break with the politics of the pre-CPSA left – and, indeed, much of the early history of the CPSA itself. It would culminate in the Party becoming a junior partner of African nationalism in South Africa from the 1950s, as debates over the two-stage theory solidified around the view that the ANC would lead the "national-democratic" struggle, aided by the Party, with socialism deferred to a vague future, as a secondary goal.

If the echoes of syndicalism in the CPSA were stilled after 1928, the CPSA veterans purged from Party, and who remained unreconciled after 1935, also did not provide a basis for the survival of the local anarchist and syndicalist tradition. Some moved to the right, some became inactive, some retained sympathy for the CPSA, but stayed outside its fold, and others formed the nucleus of the local Trotskyist movement. Pettersen remained closely connected to the Durban CPSA in the 1920s, providing premises for its offices and night school, and maintaining contact with the ICU.[567] Pettersen also recruited Johannes Nkosi – a veteran of the 1919 anti-pass protests in Johannesburg and an ICU organiser – to the CPSA in 1926, Nkosi becoming the Party's Durban organiser in 1929.[568]

As the ICU imploded in Durban, thousands of former supporters flocked to the local CPSA, making the city the "storm centre" of African protest. [569] Nkosi was himself killed by police at a CPSA anti-pass protest in Durban on 16 December 1930,[570] the Party's first African martyr. On the other hand, Pettersen was deeply disillusioned by the "Native Republic" slogan and the purges of the New Line period, and also became increasingly racially prejudiced, blaming Indians for his many failed election campaigns.[571] In 1932, he reinvented himself as an independent standing on an anti-Indian platform, winning a municipal and then

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[563] Quoted in South African Communist Party, 1986, *op cit.,* p. 6
[564] South African Communist Party, 1986, *op cit.,* p. 6
[565] Musson, 1989, *op cit*., pp. 106, 116-126, 132-8
[566] Ray (Simons) Alexander, 1991, *op cit*., pp. 80-1
[567] Mouton, 1987, *op cit*., pp. 34-6
[568] "Nkosi, Johannes", in Verwey, editor, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 204-6; Albert Nzula, 9 January 1931, "Editorial", *Umsebenzi: the South African worker*
[569] Hemson, 1979, *op cit*., p. 228; also see Ndlovu, *op cit.*
[570] "Nkosi, Johannes", in Verwey, editor, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 204-6; Albert Nzula, 9 January 1931, "Editorial", *Umsebenzi: the South African worker*
[571] Mouton, 1987, *op cit*., pp. 36-46

a provincial seat in 1943. Finally, he was elected to the Senate with National Party backing in 1948, where he helped pass that party's Suppression of Communism Act, [572] a strange political epitaph for a onetime syndicalist and Bolshevik

Harrison, on the other hand, withdrew from politics altogether. Although he still believed in the "social ownership and control of industry", he was unhappy with the CPSA's political style and strategy,[573] not to mention increasingly cynical about the popular classes. The illiterate poor Whites were "incapable of knowing anything of the science of industry or a cultured form of social life or any form of administration", the Africans "have a long way to go" before socialism was possible, and the educated middle class was far in advance of both.[574] He had, in any event, come to enjoying a "moderate condition of affluence", deciding that since "[o]ne must either be a master or a slave in the industrial world of the capitalist system", it would be better to choose "the position of master".[575] He remained friends with Berman, who became a mild town councillor in Cape Town, an SA Labour Party supporter, and author of a book on "municipal socialism".[576]

Solly Sachs, in contrast, remained outside the CPSA but continued to be a Party supporter and sympathiser. One of the key CPSA trade unionists, active in the multi-racial Garment Workers' Union (successor to the Witwatersrand Tailors' Association), he was expelled for holding a union picnic on May Day 1931. While the CPSA changed tack in 1935, Solly Sachs – a fervent supporter of the Soviet Union and the Comintern – found it easier to conduct his trade union work outside the Party,[577]and was probably "the pre-eminent left-wing trade unionist" of the 1930s and early 1940s.[578] He was very interested in winning White workers to socialism, and to this end established a short-lived Independent Labour Party in the early 1940s, followed by an unsuccessful Socialist Party,[579] and later joined the SA Labour Party, becoming its treasurer. By this stage, the SA Labour Party was in decline, and had begun to drastically revise its views: its 1941 conference advocated the abolition of a several racially discriminatory laws and the extension of legal union rights to Africans.[580]

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[572] "Een van due kenmerke van Pettersen se termyn in die Provinsiale Raad was sy anti-Indiëruitsprake" (One of the characteristics of Pettersen's term in the Provincial Council were his anti- Indian speeches): Mouton, 1987, *op cit*., p. 41

[573] See also Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit*., pp. 72, 144-145

[574] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit*., pp. xix, 22-23, 56, 105-110, 115-6, 122, 144-145

[575] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit*., p. 10

[576] Harrison, n.d., *op cit.*, p. 68; also see Drew, 2002, *op cit*., p. 65

[577] "Sachs, Emil Solomon (Solly)", in Verwey, editor, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 221-222

[578] Alexander, 2000, *op cit*., p. 35, Sachs wrote an account of his trade union work: Solly Sachs, 1957, *Garment Workers in Action*, Eagle Press, Johannesburg

[579] See Leslie Witz, 1987, "A Case of Schizophrenia: the rise and fall of the Independent Labour Party", in Bozzoli, editor, 1988, *op cit.*

[580] There were "definite limits to the SALP's radicalism" in the 1940s, but it was certainly "more sympathetic to African interests than the policies of the larger parties" which dominated parliament: Alexander, 2000, *op cit*., pp. 88-89. It had both a radical and a moderate left, the latter epitomised by Reverend S.F. Miles Cadman, a parliamentarian and author of the party booklet, *Socialism for South Africa*. This advocated a fairly sweeping welfare State that would provide "equal opportunity" for the "Coloured, Asiatic and Native peoples who form the immense majority of our population", as well as labour reforms, sharp wage increases and a comprehensive State education system. It stopped short, however, of universal suffrage. See S.F. Miles Cadman, 1942, *Socialism for South Africa*, The Rustica Press, Cape Town, Wynberg, second impression, pp. 94-99. In "its last days", the SA Labour Party "switched almost completely to the positive and racially liberalistic aspects of its principles": Thomas, 1963, *op cit*., pp. 8-9

Finally, other purged CPSA veterans provided the nucleus of local Trotskyism. Frank Glass, who seems to have been sympathetic to Trotskyism as early as 1928, was expelled from the Party in 1931.[581] He remained close friends with the Lopes brothers, who now ran a restaurant – by law, it had to seat Africans and Whites in separate sections[582] – and who moved towards Trotskyism and helped establish the Lenin Club in Cape Town.[583] Pick also moved towards Trotskyism, and wrote to the International Left Opposition.[584] Thibedi, who had been active in the FNETU and – in co-operation with S.P. Bunting, an early attempt to form an African mineworkers union – also moved towards a Trotskyist position after his expulsion. He organised a small, all-African, Trotskyist group in Johannesburg called the Communist League of Africa (initially the Communist Party of Africa), and produced a paper called *Maraphanga*, and corresponded with Trotsky,[585] but the group was short-lived. Thibedi later joined the Workers International League of Baruch Hirson, which played a role in CNETU, [586] but was his views were now "narrowly nationalist, and, after being accused of chauvinism, he was expelled" and "melted back into … anonymity".[587]

Along with Fanny Klennerman – his wife, subsequently estranged – Frank Glass ran a small radical bookshop in Johannesburg. In 1930, he left South Africa on a remarkable political odyssey, living in China where he wrote as Li Fu-Jen and John Liang, and served on the executive of the (Trotskyist) Communist League of China, later going to the United States, where he died in 1988.[588] Meanwhile Klennerman took over the bookshop, and renamed it the Vanguard Booksellers. Hirson recalled that it "became a centre for all students seeking works on fascism, on Russia, Spain and China, and on the coming world war":[589]

> It was there, in cramped premises … that Marxists rubbed shoulders with trade unionists; students with activists; radicals rubbed shoulders with liberals; rationalists confronted scientists; and those behind the counter (many of them associated with the left) assisted in the search for the latest works on contemporary events, or provided their own critical assessments of the works on hand. It was more than a shop – it was forum for informed political ideas, and also for the latest currents in philosophy, literature and art.

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[581] Hirson, 1988b, *op cit*., pp. 35-7
[582] Mantzaris, 1995, *op cit.*, pp. 7-10
[583] Hirson, 1988b, *op cit*., p. 36
[584] Joe Pick, 22 September 1932, letter to international secretariat of the Left Opposition, in the Trotsky Papers, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, folder 1217
[585] Hirson, 1988b, *op cit*., pp. 35-7. The correspondence may be found in the Trotsky Papers, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, folder 1217
[586] The group ran a Progressive Trade Union Group in CNETU that tried to challenge the CPSA. For more information on the Workers' International League, see, in addition to Hirson, 1993b, *op cit*., and Hunter, 1993, *op cit*., Alexander, 2000, *op cit*., chapters 6 and 7, and Hirson's autobiography, Hirson, 1995a, *op cit.*, pp. 139-205
[587] Hirson, 1993b, *op cit*., p. 85
[588] See Hirson, 1988b, *op cit*. A photo of Glass at a meeting of the Provisional Central Committee of the Communist League of China in winter 1936 may be found in "Permanent Revolution vs. the 'Anti-Imperialist United Front': the Origins of Chinese Trotskyism", summer 1997, *Spartacist*, no. 53, English edition, p. 29. One of his Chinese articles was reprinted in an anthology of Chinese Trotskyism: Frank Glass, "The Communist League of China", in *Revolutionary History*, 1990, vol.2, no. 4, special on "The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution"
[589] Hirson, 1988b, *op cit.*, p. 37

Besides the key works of the Trotskyist tradition (largely unavailable in South Africa), it also carried anarchist classics such as Bakunin's *God and the State*, Alexander Berkman's *ABC of Anarchism*, and *The Crushing of the Russian Revolution*, as well as her *Anarchism: what it really stands for* by Emma Goldman.[590] Hirson also met Luke Messina – the police spy who retracted his testimony during the 1918 trial of nationalists and syndicalists – at an ANC meeting: "a man entered and there was silence while he walked to a chair. 'We greet Luke Messina', said Dr Xuma, and the audience stood and applauded". [591]

The local Trotskyist tradition had only a handful of adherents in the 1930s and was, of course, within the ambit of political socialism; its politics, both internationally and locally, were not so very different from the conceptions of the Comintern.[592] The purges of the New Line period did not break the hold of political socialism in South Africa, but, rather, fractured Leninism. The CPSA's international solidarity work in the Popular Front period did little to break this hold. When popular action stopped an attempted fascist coup in Spain in 1936 – an uprising led by the anarcho-syndicalist CNT, which proved a prelude to a sweeping social revolution across the country[593] – the CPSA, like liberals and radicals elsewhere, saw only "a struggle between a liberal republic that was valiantly and with popular support trying to defend a democratic parliamentary state against authoritarian generals".[594]

The CPSA organised a large campaign in support of Spain's faltering Popular Front government,[595] deploying arguments in line with current Comintern policy,[596] and ignored the Spanish Revolution – a revolution that the Spanish Communist Party strongly opposed. The CPSA front, the "Friends of the Spanish Republic", raised funds to send an ambulance to Spain, and the CPSA helped ensure the 1937 May Day rally in Cape Town resoled to support the "heroic struggle of the government of the united front in Spain against

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[590] I base this claim on the fact that editions of anarchist works are contained in the Fanny Klennerman Papers, alongside a number of Trotskyist pamphlets, on the eclectic and diverse character of the bookshop, and on the dating of the anarchist materials. Several were certainly unavailable in the syndicalist heyday of the 1910s – Alexander Berkman, 1942, *ABC of Anarchism*, Freedom Press, London and Emma Goldman, 1922, *The Crushing of the Russian Revolution*, Freedom Press, London – and there is no sign that others that *were* available at that time – for example, Emma Goldman, 1916, *Anarchism: what it really stands for*, Mother Earth Publishing Association, New York – were locally distributed at that time. These three pamphlets, plus an undated edition of Bakunin's *God and the State*, may be found in the Fanny Klennerman Papers, Historical Papers, A2301, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand

[591] Hirson, 1995a, *op cit.*, pp. 181-2

[592] These groups generally used the idea of "permanent revolution" to criticise the two-stage conception: this maintains that in conditions of "late" capitalist development, the historic tasks of the bourgeoisie fall to the working class, which, emboldened by this role, proceeds to the socialist stage. According to Trotsky, the "temporary revolutionary hegemony" of the first stage becomes the "*prologue* to a socialist dictatorship": Trotsky, [1905] 1972, "Our Differences", in Leon Trotsky, *1905*, Vintage, New York, p. 317, my emphasis. Trotsky himself told local groups to support the "Native Republic" slogan, and their formulations in the 1930s were often indistinguishable from CPSA policies: see Drew, 2002, *op cit.*, pp.145-148; Baruch Hirson, 1993b, "The Trotskyist Groups in South Africa, 1932-1948", *Searchlight South Africa*, vol.3, no. 2, special supplement "The Trotskyists of South Africa, 1932-1948", pp. 75, 77, 79, 87-8, 92

[593] "If the October Revolution of the Petrograd workers was the finest result of Marx's wing of the old First International, the Barcelona insurrection of July 1936 was the best work of Bakunin's": Paul Trewhela, 1988, "George Padmore: a critique. Pan-Africanism or Marxism?" in *Searchlight South Africa*, vol.1, no. 1, p. 51

[594] Bookchin, 1994, *op cit*., pp. 4-6

[595] The campaign is discussed in Karon, 1985, *op cit*., p. 32

[596] For example, W.H. Andrews, November 1937, "Non-Intervention and Spain", draft article in folder 8.1., W.H. Andrews Papers, Mayibuye Centre, University of the Western Cape

the invasion of Fascist and Nazi barbarians".[597] There was some interest in African communities in "the Negroes fighting in the Government forces [*sic*] in Spain",[598] but the CPSA did not send volunteers to join the fighting,[599] although Jimmy La Guma "was not amused by his teenage son's abortive attempt" to join the International Brigades in 1938.[600] In Britain, the Spanish Revolution gave anarchism "a new lease of life";[601] in South Africa, the developments in Spain were used to rebuild the CPSA.

In 1925, the Port and Railway Employees Association of Lourenço Marques organised a major strike on the railways , but the strike was crushed in early 1926 when the railway service was militarised, strikers evicted from their homes, hundreds were fired, and many key figures were deported, and *O Emancipador*, the union's paper, was banned. Tinker of the CPSA was in Lourenço Marques at the time, and got involved, appealing for cross-racial labour unity, but he was imprisoned and deported.[602] Faustino da Silva, the only known Mozambican unionist to proclaim himself a Communist, and known to have been in touch with the CPSA,[603] was also exiled to South Africa, where he seems to have linked up with the Party. The unprecedented scale of repression was a "shocking example for all workers in the city", effectively ending all labour action until the 1930s.[604] It paralleled the use of troops to break a strike by White railwaymen in Angola in 1923, and was a foretaste of things to come under the fascist dictatorship established in Portugal in 1926.

9.9. In conclusion: the fall of anarchism and syndicalism in South Africa

And so, we come to the end of the story of anarchism and syndicalism in South Africa, indeed, in southern Africa, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. An important current, involved in labour struggles, in articulating a vision of interracial working class politics, with an influence on trade unionists and nationalists, and a pioneering role in organising amongst Africa, Indian and Coloured workers, it was a powerful force in its time. Forgotten, obscured and misunderstood, it is a history that is only now being recovered.

Not just an internationalist current, but very much part of an international movement, the movement provides the southern African chapter of the larger story of the "glorious period" of anarchism and syndicalism, a story that, too, has often been neglected. This, however, is a story of great importance in understanding the history of labour and the left in southern Africa, and it suggests many points that are of relevance to labour history more generally. It is to these larger implications that I turn in the next, final, chapter.

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[597] Community Resources Information Centre, 1985, *May Day: hlanganani basebenzi*, Community Resources Information Centre, Johannesburg, pp. 36-7
[598] *The Bantu World*, 12 June 1937, "Negroes in Spain". I would like to thank Nicole Ulrich for drawing this report to my attention.
[599] Karon, 1985, *op cit*., p. 32
[600] Adhikari, 1977, *op cit*., p. 7
[601] Woodcock, 1975, *op cit*., pp. 427-8
[602] Divisional Criminal Investigations Officer, Witwatersrand Division, 5 July 1926, confidential report to Deputy Commissioner, South African Police, Witwatersrand Division, Johannesburg, in Department of Justice file, JUS 915 1/18/26 part 3, National Archives, Pretoria
[603] Capela, 1981, *op cit.*, pp. 20-37
[604] Penvenne, 1984, *op cit*., pp. 273-4, 278

Chapter 10

Some conclusions: Anarchism, syndicalism and labour history

In this concluding chapter, I will recapitulate my key findings in some detail, and then move on to draw out some broader points that follow, and are relevant to the study of working class movements more generally. The primary aim of this study has been to examine the influence of anarchism and syndicalism on labour and left in South Africa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The central claim made in this thesis is that anarchism and syndicalism played an important role in labour and the left in South Africa in the first two decades of the twentieth century. The "glorious period" of anarchism and syndicalism washed across South Africa, and flowed from it across southern Africa.

In this first part of this chapter, I make the case that anarchism and syndicalism were an important influence on the left in South Africa by 1910, were the dominant current on the left in the 1910s, pioneered interracial socialist organisation, formed the first African trade union in South Africa, the Industrial Workers of Africa, on a syndicalist basis, in 1917, organised a number of other syndicalist unions amongst workers of colour at this time, had an influence on sections of the African and Coloured nationalist groups, and that their influence continued into the 1920s in the Rand Revolt, the early CPSA, and the ICU. Without denying that most of the politically active African and Coloured intelligentsia in this period remained wedded to conservative nationalism, I argue that a large group was for a time influenced by socialist ideas – and, specifically, those of the anarchist and syndicalist tradition.

Likewise, I argue that anarchism and syndicalism played a central role in pioneering socialism amongst people of colour in South Africa, that the first generation of these activists was powerfully shaped by anarchist and syndicalist influence, and that the development of a socialist tradition in South Africa opposed to racial discrimination and prejudice must also be dated to the period of anarchist and syndicalist influence. Moreover, through the ICU, which spread into South West Africa, Northern Rhodesia and Southern Rhodesia, anarchism and syndicalism had an impact on the larger southern African region. If anarchism and syndicalism were a minority current in the working class of South Africa and southern Africa, except, perhaps, in diluted form through the ICU, they were, nonetheless, a significant current, able to influence sections of the working class, engage in ideological and social struggles, and lay the basis for later socialist activism.

In the second part of this chapter, I draw out some of the broader implications of this study. I argue, in the first instance, for moving beyond the old "radical"/"liberal" debate in South African studies by adopting a more flexible form of class analysis that takes consciousness, ideology, and the State power

seriously. In the second instance, I suggest that while it is necessary to examine the changing meanings of racial identities, it is important not to assume any neat link between a particular racial identity and a particular type of politics: in this respect, "whiteness studies", which generally conflates White identities and claims for racial privilege, is too crude a tool for the task of understanding race. Likewise, I argue, it is important not to conflate struggles for national liberation with nationalism: nationalism is only one of a number of possible responses to national oppression (syndicalism, for instance, is another), and its influence must, therefore, be explained, not assumed. Finally, I argue that labour history, and African history, needs to take transnational processes more seriously, and can also benefit from a greater awareness of the historical role of anarchism and syndicalism.

10.1. Bringing anarchism and syndicalism back into southern African history: an introduction

The first local anarchist activity in South Africa dates back to the early work of Henry Glasse in Port Elizabeth. The Indian-born anarchist was linked to the anarchist *Freedom* group in London, founded by Kropotkin in 1886. He distributed their publications locally, translated important anarchist works from French to English while living in South Africa, and formed a local Socialist Club in Port Elizabeth, to whom he gave "an exposition of Socialism from the Anarchist or Libertarian Standpoint".[1] A number of foreign anarchists passed through South Africa in the 1890s, and there were a few reports of anarchists in the first decade of the twentieth century, including the deportation of two reputed anarchists from the Transvaal in 1904 in connection with an alleged plot against Lord Milner, British governor of the Transvaal.[2]

A more significant development was the formation, that year, of the SDF in Cape Town by the "Philosophical Anarchist" Harrison.[3] This group, which had substantial popular influence, always had a very real anarchist and syndicalist presence (unlike the contemporary body of the same name in Britain). Harrison also founded the Pretoria Socialist Society in 1911, also a mixed group with some anarchist presence, but generally a distinctly more conservative group than the SDF in the Cape. The SDF was interested in strikes and demonstrations, although its main focus was propaganda. It was involved in strike support, in publishing, briefly, a monthly called the *Cape Socialist* – the first socialist newspaper in twentieth-century South Africa – and even in running soup kitchens, and a socialist choir.

The SDF was largely White in composition, based amongst waged artisans, but it made specific efforts to recruit Coloureds, particularly in the District Six area, organised multi-racial demonstrations of the unemployed in 1906, and developed something of a Coloured support base. In 1906, it also organised an interracial General Workers Union, open to all, regardless of craft, colour or gender. On several occasions, the SDF ran candidates for the town council and the Cape Provincial Council in districts with a large Coloured vote: this usually meant going up against Abdurrahman of the African Political Organisation, who sat on both

[1] Henry Glasse, 1900, *op cit*.
[2] "'Natal Mercury,' Durban: with reference to the deportation from the Transvaal of three men supposed to be Anarchists", IRD 706/1904, vol.29, Natal Archives, Pietermaritzburg
[3] Wilfred H. Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *Memoirs of a Socialist in South Africa 1903–47*, Stewart Printing, Cape Town, with introduction by Tommy Boydell, p. 119. The reference details for the introduction are as follows: T. Boydell, [? 1947] n.d., "Foreword", to Harrison, Wilfred H., [? 1947] n.d., *Memoirs of a Socialist in South Africa 1903–47*, Stewart Printing, Cape Town

bodies. Results were closer than might be expected: in a 1916 municipal election, in a mainly working class Coloured area, Harrison got 212 votes, as against Abdurrahman's 543.[4] These forays were seen as ways of spreading socialist ideas, even if the results were limited.[5] In District Six, Harrison found "there, as amongst most of the Coloured races of the world, that the antipathy to the white man and his administration is very deep".[6]

The zenith of anarchism and syndicalism in South Africa was the 1910s, when syndicalism was the dominant influence amongst revolutionary socialists. A tour in 1910 by the British syndicalist Tom Mann provided an important impetus, and the IWW and a Socialist Labour Party were formed in Johannesburg later that year. The key figures in the local Socialist Labour Party included Rabb, Israelstam, Jock Campbell, John Campbell, Gibson, Tyler, Reid and Philip R. Roux; the key figures in the local IWW were Dunbar and Glynn. Even at this early stage, the centrality of the British connection to the local anarchist and syndicalist tradition was clear: the ideas of the IWW, including its De Leonist faction, generally arrived via the Clydeside, rather than from Detroit. On the other hand, the anarchist and syndicalist tradition in the Netherlands – where syndicalism had dominated the NAS,, for a while the "most active and influential organisation amongst the Dutch trade unions"[7] – had no discernable influence.

These groups were drawn from the network around the main socialist paper of the time, the weekly *Voice of Labour.* The editor of the *Voice of Labour*, Crawford,, was influenced by syndicalism, even if his views must be judged as, overall, more in line with those of to political socialism. The same was true of the paper's owner, Mary Fitzgerald. From late 1910, however, the paper came under the control of a syndicalist editor, known only as "Proletarian" and advocated his view that the only solution for South Africa was "an organisation of wage-workers, black and white, male and female, young and old" which would proclaim "a universal general strike preparatory to seizing and running the interests of South Africa, for the benefit of *workers* to the exclusion of *parasites*".[8] From the start, the local IWW had been a trade union, open to workers of all races – something quite unheard of in South Africa – but it was based mainly amongst White tramway workers of Johannesburg. It also set up sections in Durban and Pretoria. The Socialist Labour Party, for its part, was more of a propaganda body. From late 1912, these groups fell apart, and an attempt to form a United Socialist Party was stillborn. The *Voice of Labour* also closed.

A violent general strike broke out amongst White workers in mid-1913, which "shook the country like nothing had done since the Boer War".[9] Prominent capitalists and politicians blamed the strike – and its abortive successor in January 1914 – on a "Syndicalist Conspiracy".[10] but there is no real evidence for this view. However, there definitely *was* an important syndicalist current in the 1913 and 1914 general strikes, in

[4] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit*., p. 24
[5] Harrison would later complain that "my views of a future Socialist paradise seemed too much of a heavenly jump from their present state of depravity": Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit*., p. 24
[6] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit*., pp. 22-23
[7] Woodcock, 1975, *op cit*., pp. 412-3
[8] "Proletarian", 27 October 1911, "The Problem of Coloured Labour", *The Voice of Labour*, emphasis in original
[9] Boydell, n.d., *op cit*., p. 66
[10] Smuts, 4 February and 5 February 1914, *op cit*., columns 62-124, also reprinted as Smuts, 1914, *op cit.*

the sense that a number of people in the trade unions and in the SA Labour Party were influenced by syndicalism to varying degrees at the time.

This current existed at three levels. First, there was a wave of "syndicalist talk"[11] in the labour movement that seems to have emerged independently of the older organised syndicalist movement. For instance, the western Witwatersrand, or West Rand, organiser of the Transvaal Miners' Association, W.J. Carbis, stated that the "Trades Hall" was "the government".[12] Second, there were the leading figures in the strikes, including Crawford and Mary Fitzgerald (and, on occasion, people like Bain and Robert Waterston, linked to the White Labour tradition), who showed definite syndicalist influences at the time, without necessarily being thorough-going syndicalists. Thirdly, there were the committed syndicalists like Boyd, John Campbell, Marais (probably the same person as "Proletarian" from the *Voice of Labour*), Munro and F. Murray, who were also active, mainly in trying to promote syndicalist ideas; Harrison was jailed for an inflammatory statements.

The syndicalist current of 1913 and 1914 was an important factor in labour politics, but it is also necessary to note that this current was not co-ordinated or coherent, its activities were sporadic, and its impact was quite limited. There was no organised anarchist or syndicalist organisation or press on the Witwatersrand at the time, and Afrikaner nationalism and White Labourism were the main forces in the politics of the White working class at the time. In many ways, the labour turbulence of 1913 and 1914 saw local anarchist and syndicalist influence at something of a low point, with the SDF, isolated in the Cape, unable to provide an organised anarchist or syndicalist intervention.

The dramatic events of 1913 and 1914, in which State repression was unleashed on an unprecedented scale – around twenty-five protestors were shot dead by troops in 1913, and the 1914 strike was suppressed with martial law – radicalised a whole layer of trade unionists and SA Labour Party activists. The new radicals included Mason of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, Forrester Brown of the Transvaal Miners' Association, and S.P. Bunting, Andrews, and Ivon Jones of the SA Labour Party. Andrews was one of the seven party representatives in parliament, having been elected in a 1912 by-election in Germiston, as well as chair of the party; S.P. Bunting and Brown were party members of the Transvaal Provincial Council; Ivon Jones was party secretary.

When the First World War broke out on 4 August 1914, the new radicals were able to get the SA Labour Party to briefly oppose the war, which they regarded as "a capitalists' war for markets to take surplus produce and for Dominions to supply raw material and cheap labour".[13] The radicals formed a War on War League that year, which was soon joined by veterans of the old IWW and Socialist Labour Party, including Dunbar, Jock Campbell, John Campbell, Gibson, Tyler, Reid and Philip R. Roux. Andrews, S.P. Bunting and Ivon Jones were all leading figures in the SA Labour Party, but they were quite out of step with the ordinary membership, which was caught up in the growing war hysteria. In July 1915 the anti-war policy was decisively defeated.

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[11] Katz, 1976, *op cit.*, pp. 466-7
[12] Katz, 1976, *op cit.*, pp. 466-7
[13] *The War on War Gazette*, 3 October 1914, "The League in Battle"

The War on War League transformed itself into an International Socialist League within the South African Labour Party, but withdrew in September 1915, and reorganised itself as a separate body, the International Socialist League. The International Socialist League established branches across the country, but was strongest in the Witwatersrand, and published the weekly *International*. It included the IWW and Socialist Labour Party men who had joined the War on War League, and these men exercised an influence out of all proportion to their numbers. The war issue remained important to the new organisation, but quickly became just one element aspect of a broader socialist class politics.

From the start of 1916 the International Socialist League was a syndicalist organisation, and a far larger and more influential one than any of its predecessors. In 1917, it reiterated the stance taken in 1916, declaring that its object was "To propagate the principles of International Socialism, Industrial Unionism and Anti-Militarism, and to maintain and strengthen International Working class organisation".[14] The International Socialist League worked closely with the SDF, with whom it enjoyed a fraternal relationship. It did not take sides when a split in the SDF saw the emergence of a syndicalist Industrial Socialist League: until the latter launched a monthly called the *Bolshevik*, reports from both groups appeared in the *International*. The only significant exceptions to the syndicalist trend were a short-lived United Socialist Party founded on the Witwatersrand in 1912, which nonetheless included many syndicalist members, the small Social Democratic Party in Durban, which was quite unusual in that it advocated an orthodox programme of political socialism, and the Poalei Zion, also known as the Jewish Socialist Society. The latter was shaped by the Marxist traditions of the Jewish *Bund* (Yiddish for "union") of Eastern Europe,[15] but most of its Cape Town members were won over to the Industrial Socialist League in late 1920.

10.2. White unions and "black Bolsheviks": race, nationalism, and syndicalism

A continuous theme in the local anarchist and syndicalist tradition, from Henry Glasse onwards, through the SDF, IWW, Socialist Labour Party, International Socialist League and Industrial Socialist League was a stress on internationalism, and an opposition to racial prejudice and discrimination quite remarkable in a country wracked by such deep divisions. It consistently opposed official discrimination, popular racism, the exclusivist policies of the local unions and SA Labour Party, and the nationalism of Africans, Coloureds and Indians, as well as Afrikaner nationalism. These were regarded as dividing the broad working class, preventing what most regarded as the ultimate solution: the class-conscious and interracial movement.

The local anarchist and syndicalist tradition was internationalist, not nationalist; it favoured class politics and class struggle, rather than racial strife and warfare; it advocated the unity of the popular classes across racial lines, rather than the unity of different classes within racial groups; it was against the State, rather than centred on the view that the State was (or should be) the representative of the nations. Therefore, it was in favour of a revolutionary popular movement that was simultaneously anti-nationalist, anti-capitalist, anti-racist and anti-State.

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[14] *The International*, 19 January 1917, "The Second Annual Conference"
[15] Johns, 1995, *op cit*., p. 113

Local anarchists and syndicalists developed an important analysis of the South African social formation and the links between racial hierarchy and the capitalist order. These arguments were pioneered in the writings of Henry Glasse, Dunbar and others in the *Voice of Labour*, and were developed in a fairly sophisticated fashion in the *International* and the *Bolshevik.* Above all, it was argued that racial prejudice – like those of craft, gender, and nationalism– divided the working class, thereby weakening the immediate struggles of *all* workers. The only real beneficiaries of prejudice, from this perspective, were the employers.

Furthermore, it was argued, official racial discrimination, including the pass laws and the general lack of African rights, provided capitalists with an endless supply of cheap and unfree labour. This increased profit dramatically, undermined trade unionism, and allowed capitalists to continually erode the conditions of the relatively privileged White workers. The racial prejudices that divided workers, and the racial laws that oppressed African, Coloured, and Indian workers were the results of a capitalist system and State that aimed to weaken resistance and create and maintain a cheap, unfree labour system.

The anarchists and syndicalists specifically denied that the solution put forward by White Labourism to this situation – policies of segregation and racially-based job reservation – could do anything other than play into the hands of the Randlords. These policies would, they insisted, prove unworkable, as the wave of capitalist development would always overcome such flimsy breakwaters. They were unjust as they discriminated against the great mass of the working class, on altogether spurious and hateful racial lines. Finally, they simply divided the working class all over again. No category of workers, Whites included, could benefit from White Labourism.

The real solution, the great majority of local anarchists and syndicalists generally argued (there was an inconsequential violent fringe opposed to all immediate struggles in favour of immediate armed revolution), was a broad mass struggle to fight against the *system* of cheap labour itself, on a platform of *common* struggle for *equal* conditions for all workers. This required *all* workers to oppose racial prejudice and divisions, and *all* workers to fight against the system of official discrimination that underpinned the cheap labour system. For the great majority of local anarchists and syndicalists, thus required a revolutionary union movement.

Contrary to a common caricature, which maintains that syndicalists ignore political questions and State power, local anarchists and syndicalists stressed the role of the One Big Union in championing *both* economic and political freedom. According to an early piece in the *International*:[16]

> If an effective working-class revolt depends on the purchase of adequate armaments, then the working class can resign itself to slavery. If an effective working class revolt depends on securing mere parliamentary representation, it can with equal resignation say good-bye to emancipation ... Both activities betray the workers, and lead them eventually in despair to death on the barricades.

[16] *The International*, 5 May 1916, "What's Wrong With Ireland"

> The workers' only weapon are [*sic*] their labour ... All ... activities should have this one design, how to give the workers greater control of industry ... With greater and greater insistence comes … the need for men to forego the cushion and slipper of parliamentary ease, and recognise the Industrial Union as the root of all the activities of Labour, whether political, social or otherwise.
>
> The key to social regeneration ... to the new Socialist Commonwealth ... is to be found in the organisation of a class conscious proletariat within the Industrial Union.

This approach was consistent with a broader syndicalist rejection of a neat distinction between the "economic" action, undertaken by unions, and "political" action, reserved for parties. The struggle against unjust laws and capitalist exploitation must involve, the *International* argued, "the one weapon the ruling class fear– the [industrial] organisation of the native workers".[17] "Many holy men, perhaps the editor of the 'Abantu-Batho' among them, will hold up horrified hands at the thought of the natives organising".[18] Yet it was only through such methods that unjust laws could be abolished: [19]

> Once organised, these workers can bust-up any tyrannical law. Unorganised, these laws are iron bands. Organise industrially, they become worth no more than the paper rags they are written on.

The ultimate consequence of this policy of combining class struggles and democratic struggles around racial oppression – the antithesis of "economism" – would be the social revolution and a socialist South Africa: as the *Bolshevik* stated, with "One union for all the workers in each industry, and One Big Union for the entire working class", it would be possible to "banish for ever the tyranny of greed from the land of gold".[20]

However, there were *two* main approaches to building such a movement.[21] One, exemplified by the local IWW and Socialist Labour Party, was basically abstract in character. It opposed popular prejudice, and official discrimination, but failed to take a crucial step: combining this *principled* opposition to racial oppression with active and specific efforts to *mobilise* African, Coloured, and Indian workers around their class and national concerns.

The other was a more activist approach, one that developed *strategies* that moved from analysis and principle to recruit and organise African, Coloured, and Indian workers. This was exemplified by the moments in the history of the SDF, and, more consistently, by the work of the International Socialist League and the Industrial Socialist League, which sought to organise One Big Union as the weapon against both

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[17] *The International*, 5 April 1918
[18] *The International*, 19 October 1917, "The Pass Laws: organise for their abolition".
[19] *The International*, 19 October 1917, "The Pass Laws: organise for their abolition".
[20] *The Bolshevik*, December 1919, "'Efficiency Dope'"
[21] I develop this argument in Lucien van der Walt, 2004b, "Reflections on Race and Anarchism in South Africa, 1904-2004", *Perspectives on Anarchist Theory*, vol.8, no. 1

class domination and national oppression. This was a far cry from the combination of "abstract proletarian internationalism" with a "de facto segregationist position" of which these groups have sometimes been accused. [22]

Arguments for an interracial, and revolutionary, trade unionism were raised directly within the White trade unions on a consistent basis during the late 1910s, but with limited success. Prominent International Socialist League activists in the White unions in the late 1910s included Andrews in the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, Solly Sachs of the Reef Shop Assistants Union (brother of Bernard Sachs), and Tyler of the Building Workers' Industrial Union. In the Cape, this was paralleled by members of the Industrial Socialist League in Cape Town: Frank Glass in the Tailors' Union, Berman, who was treasurer of the Cape Federation of Labour Unions, and F. Lopes, president of the Tramway Workers' Union.

The general efforts of the International Socialist League to reform the Witwatersrand unions, through an abortive "Solidarity Committee" within the South African Industrial Federation, and later through fostering an independent shopstewards' movement under Andrews' leadership – an approached directly modelled on the syndicalist-influenced Shop Stewards' and Workers' Committee Movement in Britain – must be judged something of a failure as an attempt to create a revolutionary union movement amongst White workers. Like many individual radicals in larger movements, Andrews, Solly Sachs, Tyler, Frank Glass, Berman and F. Lopes found that their hard work was appreciated by the membership, but that their radical views were not, and found themselves constrained by the less militant views of the broad membership. They struggled on, however, avoiding the apostasy of Brown, who ended up an orthodox White Labourite.

An independent shopstewards' movement did emerge in metals and mining, and on the Pretoria railway yard, partly through the efforts of Andrews, but the syndicalists played little role in shaping the politics of the movement, which typically ignored African workers, and sometimes struggled for the job colour bar. The activists of the Industrial Socialist League were rather more successful than their counterparts on the Witwatersrand. At the 1920 and 1921 conferences of the Cape Federation of Labour Unions, which had been formed 1913, the Industrial Socialist League was able to win the passage of resolutions committing the Federation, at least nominally, to socialism, industrial unions, and interracial unionism. The Building Workers' Industrial Union, formed in June 1916 out of a number of White craft unions, was characterised by syndicalist policy but a segregationist practice. Influenced by Tyler, its platform was strongly influenced by syndicalism,[23] but outside of Cape Town and Port Elizabeth members reportedly barred skilled Coloured workers from construction sites,[24] and no branches organised Africans.

From 1917 onwards, local anarchists and syndicalists associated with the International Socialist League and the Industrial Socialist League began to directly organise African, Coloured, and Indian workers into syndicalist unions, reviving the older project of forming independent unions. This was partly the result of a signal lack of progress in opening up the mainstream trade unions to all workers, partly an attractive venture as the field was not so controlled by large union federations and a Labour Party, and, perhaps most

[22] Jonathon Grossman, 1985, "Class Relations and the Communist party of South Africa, 1921-1950", PhD thesis, University of Warwick, pp. 35-36
[23] Quoted in Gitsham and Trembath, 1926, *op cit*., p. 71
[24] *The International*, 31 January 1919; Peltola, 1995, *op cit*., p. 88; Jack and Ray Simons, [1969], 1983, *op cit.*, p. 228

importantly, a consequence of the anarchists' and syndicalists' opposition to racial prejudice and discrimination, and the dominant strategy of forming One Big Union.

These activities took place in the context of increasing contacts between the International Socialist League, the Transvaal Native Congress and the African Political Organisation in the Transvaal – contacts developed from early 1916 onwards. They were also situated within a whole wave of industrial unrest, protests, strikes and trade unionism amongst workers of all races that had swept across the country from 1918. Foremost amongst these syndicalist unions was the Industrial Workers of Africa in Johannesburg and Cape Town: this was the first union for African workers in South Africa and, it seems in British colonial Africa, and modelled on the IWW. Also important was the Clothing Workers' Industrial Union, with branches in Durban, Kimberley, and Johannesburg, the Durban Indian Workers Industrial Union, which organised workers in a range of sectors, and the Horse Drivers' Union in Kimberley. In addition to these unions, all organised by the International Socialist League, a Sweet and Jam Workers' Industrial Union was organised in Cape Town by the Industrial Socialist League. The Industrial Socialist League also developed links with the Industrial Workers of Africa in Cape Town, with the newly formed ICU, both of which were based on the docks, and with visiting IWW sailors from abroad, which maintained offices on the waterfront.

These activities, combined with the anarchists and syndicalists' ongoing opposition to prejudice and discrimination, changed the social composition of the local movement. The founders of that movement, and many of its key ideologues, were initially drawn from the White working class, immigrants connected to the fountainheads of revolutionary activity in the British Empire and elsewhere. Connections with anarchist and syndicalist traditions in Australia, Britain, the United States, and eastern Europe, were of particular importance, and it was these immigrants, above all, who acted as the conduits of the "glorious period" of anarchism and syndicalism.

Three groups were particularly noticeable parts of ethnic mixture that comprised the White radicals who joined the local anarchist and syndicalist movement: the most important were English, East European Jewish and Scottish immigrants, most of whom were skilled workers. Afrikaners and poor Whites were almost entirely absent from socialist circles, and Dutch immigrants and influences never played more than a marginal role, despite the existence of a strong anarchist and syndicalist current in that country from the 1890s to early 1910s.

Before the mid-1910s, the local anarchist and syndicalist movement was almost entirely White, although it had some influence amongst workers of colour – for example, the SDF organised an interracial unemployment movement in 1906. Subsequently – and specifically through the syndicalist unions formed amongst workers of colour – a whole layer of African, Coloured and Indian activists were recruited to the syndicalist movement. A number joined the International Socialist League. They included Cetiwe, Kraai and Thibedi, who joined the International Socialist League, and who were was active in the Industrial Workers of Africa from 1918, Gomas and Pienaar, who joined the Clothing Workers' Industrial Union and then the International Socialist League, and Sigamoney and Moodley of the Indian Workers Industrial Union. The Industrial Workers of Africa generated a layer of African activists who championed struggle against capitalism, direct action, and syndicalist organisation: foremost amongst these were men like Cetiwe and

Kraai. In the meantime, the Industrial Socialist league was able to obtain "the services of a few coloured and Malay comrades in our propaganda … amongst the coloured and native workers … work … which directly undermines capitalism in South Africa".[25]

If, then, we look at the local anarchist and syndicalist movement in South Africa *as a whole* – including the political groups like the International Socialist League and Industrial Socialist League, as well as the syndicalist *unions* on the Witwatersrand and in Cape Town, Durban, and Kimberley, and the Industrial Workers of Africa – it is quite clear that the movement as a whole was rapidly shifting towards a far more racially representative composition than it had at the time of the IWW and Socialist Labour Party.

In turn, the opposition to racism, and the commitment to trade unionism for all workers, won the local anarchists and syndicalists increasing respect amongst sections of the African Political Organisation and the South African Native National Congress in the Transvaal and Cape, leading to a brief period of syndicalist influence in both bodies in the late 1910s. The work of the International Socialist League's Solidarity Committee, and the formation of the Industrial Workers of Africa, impressed members of the Transvaal section of the African Political Organisation, and several joint activities, including meetings and publications, followed. This leftward shift by the African Political Organisation was not matched in the Cape, however, where the organisation remained conservative.

By early 1918, there were several important developments. First, ongoing contacts between activists in the Transvaal Native Congress and the International Socialist League, dating back to 1916, had created cordial relations between the two organisations, leading up to co-operation around the attempted African general strike of July 1918. Despite the antipathy of groups like the International Socialist League to nationalism – which described the nationalist leaders as "native attorneys and parsons", the "native property owner" with interests "completely alien to the great mass of the Native proletariat"[26] – the local anarchists and syndicalists showed themselves willing to work with the nationalists on specific issues, such as the general strike movement. Contrary to the view that links between socialists and nationalists only developed in South Africa from the late 1920s onwards, such links had emerged approximately ten years earlier.

Secondly, a radical layer, overlapping with the leadership of the Industrial Workers of Africa, had emerged *within* the Transvaal Native Congress (and, subsequently, the Cape Native Congress) itself. It included a syndicalist bloc, made up of men like Cetiwe, Kraai, and Thibedi, and centred ideas of working class organisation, direct action and a struggle against capitalism. Addressing a meeting of African workers in May 1918, Cetiwe stated:[27]

> We are here for Organisation, so that as soon as all of your fellow workers are organised, then we can see what we can do to abolish the Capitalist-System. We are here for the salvation of the workers. We are here to organise and to fight for our rights and benefits.

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[25] *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 7 August 1920, letter from Manuel Lopes
[26] *The International*, 19 October 1917, "'Beware of Labour Cranks'"; *The International*, 19 October 1917, "The Pass Laws: organise for their abolition"; *The International*, 14 June 1918, "Black Crawfords"
[27] Unlabelled report by detective, May 1918 (full date illegible), in Department of Justice file, "The ISL and Coloured Workers", JD 3/527/17, National Archives, Pretoria, hereafter referred to as Department of Justice, JD 3/527/17, *op cit.*

This was something radically new. Leading South African Native National Congress figures like Plaatje were, obviously, sympathetic to the plight of the African worker, but they placed their faith in a strategy of appeals and lobbies and a fair deal under capitalism. Cetiwe, Kraai, and Thibedi, by contrast, were placing *their* faith in the class organisation of "fellow workers", direct action for "rights and benefits", and the final "salvation of the workers" through the overthrow of the "Capitalist System".

This was a heady brew in any circumstances, but it is particularly striking in the South African context. Contrary to the commonplace view that a nationalist outlook was the natural, necessary and inevitable outlook of the African workers and middle class, a group had emerged within the South African Native National Congress itself, within six years of its founding, that advocated a libertarian form of *socialism*. The economic pressures and political climate of the post-war period certainly provided, as Philip Bonner noted, the *context* for the radicalisation of a wide layer in the Transvaal Native Congress leadership,[28] but it was the ideas of *syndicalism* that provided the political *content* of that radicalisation. Within a Transvaal Native Congress characterised by a stress on moderation, the syndicalist bloc advocated trade unionism and strike action and socialism.

The noticeable influence of the syndicalists within the South African Native National Congress in the 1918 to 1920 period can only be understood against the backdrop of a third important development. The strength of the emergent syndicalist bloc within the Transvaal Native Congress was reinforced by the movement of a section of the more mainstream Transvaal leadership – represented by Mvabaza and Letanka of *AbantuBatho*, as well as Ngojo – towards the left.

These moderates tended to move between the traditional conservatism of the Congress, and more militant approaches. In 1918 and 1919, they not only provided allies for the syndicalist bloc, but were also influenced by syndicalism. Despite an initial distrust of the International Socialist League, *Abantu Batho* was openly promoting the Industrial Workers of Africa by early 1918:[29]

> People outside Johannesburg are not aware that there is an organisation of workers which is trying to organise itself called the Industrial Workers of Africa. It has been found that the whole country, its money and wealth, is made by labour, but all for nothing.
>
> One feels ashamed to see the sons of men going down into the bowels of the earth digging gold and diamonds and coal, yet only get three pounds per month. These men have found out that it is necessary to start an organisation which is known as the Industrial Workers of Africa.

The syndicalist bloc, and the moderates aligned with (and influenced by) the syndicalists were able to pose a serious, although unsuccessful, challenge to the dominant conservatives, represented by men like

[28] Bonner, 1982, *op cit.,* pp. 302-3
[29] Quoted in *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 20 April 1918, "From South Africa"

Plaatje. The "black Bolsheviks [sic] of Johannesburg", he complained in 1918, were the result of the lamentable "spread among our people of the Johannesburg Socialists' propaganda".[30] Their "concord and determination" was "perfectly astounding": they "spoke almost in unison, in short sentences, nearly every one of which began and ended with the word 'strike'".

The attempt of these "black Bolsheviks" to take control of the August 1918 executive conference of the South African Native National Congress was, Plaatje added, narrowly averted. This was a serious exaggeration: the conservative group remained very strong in the Transvaal, and the "black Bolsheviks" were a relatively small faction within the South African Native National Congress as a whole. Nonetheless, the very fact that such a group had emerged was something new, was something socialist, underlines just how "perfectly astounding" a development had taken place. On the one hand, a syndicalist group that advocated a national liberation struggle that went far beyond *nationalism* had emerged; on the other, it was able to influence, for a time, many moderates.

The syndicalists were by no means defeated in 1918, as Plaatje hoped. The Industrial Workers of Africa revived after the 1918 trial. Something of the dynamics within the broader South African Native National Congress at this time can be seen through an examination of the Transvaal section's 1919 anti-pass campaign on the Transvaal Native Congress campaign on the Witwatersrand. On the one hand, Cetiwe and Kraai played a leading role in the campaign, while men like Letanka and Mvabaza, influenced by the syndicalists, were also prominent. On the other, the protests also opened with a rally in front of the main Pass Office in Johannesburg involved singing "Rule Britannia", three cheers for "the King", the Governor-general and the American president.[31]

The anti-pass campaign spread around the Witwatersrand, and around 700 arrests took place. At this point, the Transvaal Native Congress called off the campaign in exchange for an amnesty for protestors, and a promise of an investigation into African grievances.[32] The decision to call off the campaign, despite any serious concessions by the authorities, is partly attributable to the domination of conservatives in the overall South African Native National Congress leadership, but also signified a rightward shift by many moderates previously linked to the syndicalists.

Cetiwe and Kraai subsequently left for Cape Town, leaving the Transvaal section of the Industrial Workers of Africa in the hands of Thibedi. The pair, still members of the International Socialist League, stayed in Ndabeni and organised an Industrial Workers of Africa section on the docks amongst African workers. They also joined the Cape Native Congress in the township, building links between that body and the union. Using the Congress as a platform for their own views, they appeared at the May 1920 Queenstown national congress of the South African Native National Congress to demand – unsuccessfully – a commitment to a general strike if certain wage demands were not met. Meanwhile, Thibedi ran the Industrial Workers of Africa in Johannesburg.

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[30] Sol Plaatje, [3 August 1918] 1996, "Letter to the General Secretary, De Beers, 3 August 1918", in Willan, editor, 1996, *op cit.*, p. 237
[31] Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit.*, p. 118
[32] Bonner, 1982, *op cit.,* pp. 302-3

That Cetiwe and Kraai were able to use the Cape Native Congress as a vehicle for their ideas suggests they had a real influence in that body, perhaps similar to that established in the Transvaal Native Congress in 1918 and 1919. However, such perspectives were decisively defeated in the South African Native National Congress in 1920. The conservative nationalists rallied, winning decisive control of the organisation. Renamed the ANC in 1923, it would spend most of the 1920s and 1930s as an inoffensive and fairly invisible body, intent on forging an alliance between the educated elite and the chiefs (and overshadowed by the CPSA and ICU).

At the end of 1919, the Industrial Workers of Africa in Cape Town co-operated with the ICU in an important strike on the docks – a strike supported by the Industrial Socialist League as well as a section of White workers. The local union was subsequently involved in an attempt in 1920 to bring together the emerging African unions of Bloemfontein, Port Elizabeth and Cape Town in Bloemfontein. Although the key figures in that congress were nationalists, and the ICU leader, Clements Kadalie, the Bloemfontein congress showed apparent syndicalist influences. Kadalie later claimed "we had the 'One Big Union Movement' in view",[33] and the meeting resolved to "form one great union of skilled and unskilled workers of South Africa, south of the Zambesi", "to bring together all classes of labour, skilled and unskilled, in every sphere of life whatsoever", but also to "endeavour to settle differences" with employers by "amicable and conciliatory means".[34] Since such views cannot be entirely attributed to the efforts of men like Cetiwe and Kraai, it would seem that – as was the case with White workers in 1913 and 1914 – syndicalist ideas were emerged partly independently of the organised syndicalist movement, with an influence on a section of Africans and Coloureds. It was the ICU that managed to take control of such moves towards unity, eventually incorporating the Industrial Workers of Africa, and showing an increasing syndicalist influence.

10.3. Ruptures and continuities: anarchism, syndicalism, and the rise of the CPSA

A striking feature of the anarchist and syndicalist milieu discussed so far was its fairly fragmented character. While the early syndicalist unions in South Africa were remarkably multi-racial and occupationally diverse, as compared to the mainstream unions with their racial segregation and craft basis, they lacked a key strength of the latter: a union centre. The South African syndicalist unions of the latter half of the 1910s were not, for instance, linked together in a federation, nor were they co-ordinated with one another in other ways. The problem went beyond simply linking unions together, however: the Industrial Workers of Africa in Cape Town was not closely linked to the section in Johannesburg.

This reflected a broader weakness, a tendency to lack a clear and consistent programme of action, which could foster unity in action around clear activities and targets, that is, a medium-term strategy to underpin the longer-term drive for One Big Union. There is nothing intrinsically anarchist or syndicalist about this sort of problem – Bakunin himself had placed a great deal of emphasis on medium-term strategy, forming a tightly-organised and secretive International Alliance of Social Democracy, better known as the

[33] Kadalie in 1923, as quoted in Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., p. 97
[34] Quoted in Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 145-146

"Alliance", in order to contest the First International – but it was certainly a real limitation of the South African movement.

It might be supposed that the formation of the CPSA in 1921 would change this, but such was not the case. Local anarchists and syndicalists played a central role in forming the CPSA from 1919 onwards – a process with many parallels in other countries, where the early Parties often drew mainly on libertarian socialists. The International Socialist League dominated the leadership of the new Party, established in July 1921, the *International* became the CPSA journal, its press was given to the Party, and the organisation's offices were initially the main Party offices.

Most other local revolutionary socialists, including the great majority of anarchists and syndicalists, and the great majority of the SDF and the Industrial Socialist League, joined the new CPSA. However, the formation of the CPSA was a difficult process, and in no way corresponds to the triumphalist narrative of the Communist school. From 1917 onwards, the local anarchists and syndicalists had insisted on regarding the Bolshevik regime in Russia through the lenses of their own ideology, projecting upon it their deepest hopes, and regarding it as a *syndicalist* movement in power. This illusion was exemplified by the Industrial Socialist League's journal title, the *Bolshevik*, and was also expressed in the tendency of divisions amongst the syndicalists – particularly on the question of using State elections – to be fought out in terms of which approach was the more truly "Bolshevik", notwithstanding the profound local ignorance of Bolshevism, and the fact that neither side was actually truly Bolshevik in the first place.

Both the Industrial Socialist League and the International Socialist League had applied to join the Comintern in early 1920, but it would be a mistake to assume that this meant either organisation understood Bolshevism. Throughout 1919 and 1920, the two bodies became increasingly estranged: the longstanding divide between the Chicago IWW approach, identified with the Industrial Socialist League and a vociferous faction in the International Socialist League, and the De Leonist approach of the Detroit IWW, identified with the official platform of the International Socialist League, flared up. This division – centred on the use of electoral means to promote the One Big Union – preceded the Russian Revolution by many years, but was hardened in the period of revolutionary optimism that swept socialists in South Africa after 1917: each faction wished its policies to predominate in any future Communist Party, and each justified its version of syndicalism by reference to Bolshevism.

By 1920, Dunbar helped set up an Industrial Socialist League branch in Johannesburg, and was expelled from the International Socialist League as a result. A major split on the question of elections took place at the January 1920 conference of the International Socialist League, leading to a large breakaway group joining the Industrial Socialist League. Both the Industrial Socialist League and the International Socialist League had applied to join the Comintern in early 1920, and the Industrial Socialist League renamed itself the Communist Party of South Africa. This was the first organisation called the Communist Party in all of Africa, but it was based on a platform shaped by the Chicago IWW approach, and headed by Dunbar. It was not the same organisation as the CPSA launched in 1921.

It was only towards the end of 1920 that signs of the adoption of genuinely Bolshevik politics became evident. The International Socialist League was increasingly influenced by the "21 Conditions of

Admission" spelt out by the Comintern, and adopted a new platform at its January 1921 congress, while a United Communist Party was formed in Cape Town on a similar basis two months later, incorporating the SDF and a large section of the syndicalist Communist Party of South Africa. Despite further splits and realignments – such as a short-lived Cape breakaway called the Communist Propaganda Group, which included Frank Glass, Joe Pick and S.H. Davidoff, that maintained the positions of the syndicalist 1920 Communist Party – the official CPSA was formed July 1921 in Cape Town in line with Bolshevik principles.

The CPSA benefited greatly from the connection with the International Socialist League, which provided a large number of members, important early leaders – including Andrews, S.P. Bunting and Ivon Jones, both one-time editors of the *International*; Ivon Jones was sent to the Comintern in Moscow in 1920, where he died in 1924 – as well as the *International* and its press machinery. It quickly established itself as the largest socialist organisation in the country, a pre-eminent position it would hold for most of the century.

There were, however, *both* ruptures *and* continuities in the new Party. The belated adoption of a Bolshevik approach was a serious break with the past, rather than the culmination of an existing orientation towards Leninism. Unlike the syndicalist 1920 Communist Party, the CPSA was fundamentally and officially Bolshevik in outlook, and did its very best to follow Comintern policies. Rather than assume, like most of the literature, that the move from the International Socialist League to a Bolshevik CPSA was the natural next step for local radicals, this study stresses that the move was a radical *departure* from past practice. Given the strength of the local anarchist and syndicalist tradition, the formation of the CPSA was by no means the obvious outcome of the politics of the pre-CPSA socialist tradition.

However, while there were ruptures, there were also *continuities*. While the formation of the CPSA marked the start of the eclipse of libertarian socialist perspectives by political forms of socialism, the process was a slow and painful one, and only completed at the end of the 1920s. One such continuity was the lingering syndicalism that marked the early years of the Party. The Party's official history admits: "Syndicalist concepts remained within the Communist Party for many years after its foundation; echoes of their approach and phraseology appear in many documents and journals".[35] Within the Party, an organised faction, centred on Dunbar, continued to champion the approach of the 1920 syndicalist Communist Party. It linked up with Sylvia Pankhurst and the Workers' Socialist Federation, British anti-parliamentary Communists who held views very close to those of Chicago IWW and who later identified with Council Communism. Dunbar and his circle corresponded with the British group, wrote for its *Workers' Dreadnought*, and despite the official Bolshevism of the CPSA, the *Workers' Dreadnought* was sold alongside the *International* at many early Party events.

There were also echoes of syndicalism amongst both African and White workers in the 1920s *outside* the CPSA. The independent shopstewards' movement on the mines, which had been shaped by the International Socialist League, was generally dominated by White Labourism and Afrikaner nationalism, but there was a radical current in favour of class politics and socialism. This was subsequently linked to a split in the South African Mine Workers' Union, leading to an independent Council of Action being launched at the Johannesburg City Hall on 24 July 1921, with a platform based on syndicalism. These developments showed

[35] Harmel, 1971, *op cit.*

that echoes of syndicalism could be found amongst White workers outside of organisations like the International Socialist league and its unions.

The key figures in the Council of Action were Fisher, Shaw and. Spendiff. Shaw had been a member of the International Socialist League, and also joined the CPSA, but Fisher and Spendiff seem to have stayed outside both bodies. Fisher and Spendiff should be regarded as basically syndicalist in outlook: "fiery opponents of capitalism", they were "prepared to die for their class", and their "general aim … was that the workers should somehow gain control of the mines and run them themselves".[36] The manifesto of the Council of Action was also clearly located within the syndicalist tradition:[37]

> To achieve such power over the resources of life, the working class must organise along class lines to bring about the overthrow of Capitalism, and its class function is the act of Industrial Control. Only by bringing about working class control can the workers eliminate Capitalism and free themselves from wage-slavery… Industrial Unionism stands for the … avowed object of wresting the economic power out of the hands of the capitalist class … a Republic of Industrial Workers.

Syndicalism also had echoes in the ICU. Restructured several times after 1919, the ICU had absorbed the Cape section of the Industrial Workers of Africa by 1921. The ICU was, from an early stage, vastly larger than the South African Native National Congress. It claimed 100,000 members in South Africa in 1927, but its actual membership has been estimated at anything from 100,000 to 250,000.[38] This made it the largest political movement amongst Africans until the 1950s,[39] and probably the largest trade union for workers of colour until that time as well: the CPSA-linked CNETU, formed in 1941, was probably a bit smaller, although better organised.

Much of this growth was the result of a massive expansion from the mid-1920s onwards, as the ICU struck a chord amongst farm tenants feeling the effects of 1913 Land Act, either in the form of evictions, or in the form of being coerced to move from sharecropping into labour tenancy. In many districts, the ICU came to be seen as a movement that would return land to Africans through a general strike, and has been dubbed a form of "millenarian syndicalism".[40] Besides labour tenants, the ICU recruited heavily amongst the African elite – and even recruited a number of African chiefs.

It attracted to its ranks some of the most important of the African and Coloured activists previously associated with the local syndicalist unions, including Cetiwe, Gomas and Kraai (with the exception of

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[36] Cope, [? 1943] n.d., *op cit*., p. 251
[37] F.W. Pate and A. McDermid, 18 February 1922, "Manifesto of the Mineworkers", *Workers' Dreadnought*
[38] The actual figures are in some dispute, not least because the ICU kept very poor records. The figures cited here are from Bradford, 1987, *op cit.,* p. 2. T.D. Mweli Skota gave a "rumoured" figure of 100,000: Skota, editor and compiler, [? 1930] n.d, *op cit*., p. 429. David Hemson gives a figure of 200,000 in 1928: David Hemson, 1979, "Class Consciousness and Migrant Workers: dockworkers of Durban", PhD thesis, Warwick University, p. 198
[39] Bonner, P L n.d. (2) "Division and Unity in the Struggle: African Politics on the Witwatersrand in. the 1920s", mimeo, University of the Witwatersrand, p. 25.
[40] Bonner, n.d. (2), p. 25; Philip Bonner, n.d. (1), *op cit.*, p. 11

Thibedi, none of the activists of colour from the old syndicalist milieu seem to have joined the CPSA). The 1925 ICU constitution was modelled on the *Preamble* of the IWW, its leaders invoked the imagery of the One Big Union, and the vision of a cataclysmic general strike was an important part of ICU discourse. These syndicalist themes were, it must be stressed, only *part* of a broad melange of ICU discourse, which also included conservative African nationalism, Garveyism, and religious millenarianism; they were at odds, moreover, with the generally undemocratic, and often corrupt, internal regime of the ICU; no claim is being made that the ICU was dominated by syndicalism. Nonetheless, syndicalist influences were real, and they had consequences.

This suggests two important shifts in the manner in which the ICU has been studied. First, the literature has previously indicated – mainly with reference to the impact of Garveyism – that the ICU was shaped by a "transatlantic connection"[41] to black America. This thesis suggests that *another* transatlantic connection was also important: a connection to working class America, and, specifically, to the interracial *syndicalist* tradition represented by the IWW. Secondly, to the extent that the literature has noted the impact of socialist ideas on the ICU, it has stressed the role of the CPSA, assumed to represent clear Marxist politics. However, given that the ICU had very definite syndicalist influences – as did the early CPSA, which was not the model of a Bolshevik party – any examination of the impact of socialism in the ICU must also consider the impact of syndicalism.

The signs of a lingering syndicalism in the ICU, of continuity with the libertarian past, were partly embodied in activists from the old syndicalist unions, or activists in the CPSA influenced by syndicalism. There are, for instance, indications that it was, indeed, a CPSA activist who wrote the ICU's 1925 Constitution:[42] otherwise inexplicable, this data is easily explained when the ongoing influence of syndicalist ideas in that Party are noted. Meanwhile, Gomas, who had "read Marx only perfunctorily", remained "schooled in the tradition" of the International Socialist League and advocated "scientific industrial" principles in the ICU.[43] Although he later rejoined the CPSA, he would remain sympathetic to the vision of One Big Union long after the ICU was a spent force.[44]

10.4. Transnational influences, migration and the class character of anarchism and syndicalism in southern Africa

Earlier sections of this chapter have drawn attention to the importance of transnational connections in understanding the history and politics of southern Africa. It should be evident by now that *transnational* connections in no sense necessarily imply an *internationalist* approach: the spread of White Labourism from Australia into South Africa and from South Africa northwards, the impact of African nationalists from South Africa in Southern Rhodesia, and the international diffusion of Garveyism all bear witness to this point.

What was striking about the anarchist and syndicalist influences in southern Africa was precisely the fact that they were *both* internationalist *and* shaped by transnational dynamics. The centrality of the British

[41] Couzens, 1982, *op cit.*
[42] Eddie Roux, [1964] 1978, *op cit.*, p. 400; Johns, 1970, *op cit.*, p. 706, footnote 14
[43] Musson, 1989, *op cit.*, pp. 30, 31, 49
[44] Musson, 1989, *op cit*., pp. 106, 116-126, 132-8

connection to the local left was closely related to large-scale White working class migration between Britain to South Africa, and the fact of ongoing links between radicals in the two countries. It was, for example, to the Socialist Labour Party in Britain, a party based mainly in Scotland that published the *Socialist*, that local De Leonists looked, not to the parent Socialist Labour Party headquartered in Detroit, with its *Weekly People*. Scotland was not only one of the three European countries most affected by emigration in the late nineteenth century, but was particularly important as a source of skilled industrial workers to South Africa.[45]

Likewise, it was African migration within southern Africa – both of unskilled migrants and of educated Africans, notably from northern Nyasaland – that enabled the diffusion of the ICU throughout the region, and, with it, syndicalist influences and the ideas of the IWW. The ICU's key figure, Kadalie, was a Nyasa migrant who had worked as a clerk in both Southern Rhodesia and South Africa. Although he could not speak any local African languages, he was an impressive orator, and played a central role in the growth of the ICU in South Africa. When, in late 1921, an ICU section was formed in Lüderitz in South West Africa, it was at the initiative of Jimmy La Guma, a Coloured migrant from Cape Town, who had been exposed to the SDF. Lüderitz, an isolated town that relied "almost exclusively on the diamond mines and the fishing industry",[46] employed a labour force of "foreign and migrant workers", the former mainly Africans and Coloureds from South Africa,[47] recruited at nearby Cape Town where recruiters found a unemployed men "with experience in military support work, dock labour, railway construction and transporting".[48] Jimmy La Guma returned to Cape Town in 1921 at Kadalie's request, to help organise the ICU,[49] becoming assistant general secretary and manager of its paper, the *Workers' Herald*.

While the ICU in South West Africa remained a largely Coloured body, the South African ICUm, which began mainly as a Coloured union, become overwhelmingly African by the mid-1920s (indeed, the largest popular movement amongst Africans until the 1950s, for "neither the ANC nor the Communist Party of South Africa could arouse the same enthusiasm and support as the ICU").[50] Then, from 1927 onwards, the ICU spread into the Rhodesias, and, again, transnational connections were key.

Kadalie was approached by a group of African workers from Southern Rhodesia, inspired by the union's activities and example, who requested the ICU extend its activities northwards.[51] The 1927 ICU conference quickly resolved to support the request and Kadalie delegated the task to another educated Nyasa, Robert Sambo. Sambo established an ICU group in the location at Bulawayo, with the help of another Nyasa, John Mphamba.[52] While the union was doing well within months, Sambo was soon deported , and his role taken up in 1928 by Ndhlovu – a Southern Rhodesian worker who had been in South Africa for ten

[45] Hyslop, 2004, *op cit*., pp. 78-79
[46] Emmett, 1986, *op cit*., pp. 23-24
[47] Emmett, 1986, *op cit*., pp. 23-24
[48] Beinart, 1987, *op cit*., pp. 169, 178-9; the quotation is from p. 169
[49] See La Guma, [1964] 1997, *op cit*., pp. 23-9
[50] Mia Roth, 1999, "Clements Kadalie, 1896-1954", in *They Shaped our Century: the most influential South Africans of the twentieth century*, Human and Rousseau, Cape Town, Johannesburg, Pretoria, pp. 477
[51] Van Onlselen, 1976, *op cit*., p. 210
[52] Ranger, 1970, *op cit*., p. 151

years, where he seems to have been inspired by the ICU.[53] He organised the ICU *yase* Rhodesia in the Bulawayo location in June 1928,[54] helped spread the union across the country over the following years. In the meantime, it was formally linked to the South African ICU, being expected to transfer 20 percent of its income to the parent body.[55]

While the ICU *yase* Rhodesia declined due to economic and political conditions, the Reformed ICU formed in Salisbury in 1946 "dominated the political life of the Salisbury African townships until the rise of the radical nationalist movement some ten years later".[56] Mzingeli, the key figure in the Reformed ICU was a correspondent for the CPSA's *Inkululeko* and *Guardian*, although his views were generally quite moderate.[57] In the meantime, the ICU appeared in Northern Rhodesia where it "would have been surprising if some contacts between the northern labour force and more politically active southern workers did not exist".[58] There were contacts with the ICU in South Africa dating from the early 1920s, partly through Kadalie's family network.[59] The authorities had begun to be "painfully aware" that migrants who had worked in South Africa and Southern Rhodesia returned with subversive ideas from the "type of natives who recently sent a deputation to Moscow",[60] and in 1931 Kazembe launched the ICU in Livingston".[61] He had recently been deported from South Africa.[62]

It is precisely the general absence of similar connections with the Netherlands that helps explain why there were no discernable Dutch influences on southern African anarchism and syndicalism. Although Dutch anarchists and syndicalists often wrote about South Africa (and the Afrikaner elite maintained close intellectual connections with the Netherlands), the lack of any notable Dutch working class immigration to South Africa provides the main explanation for the lack of any notable Dutch anarchist and syndicalist influences. The IWW, not the NAS, consequently provided the model for South Africa, while it was figures like Mann and De Leon, rather than Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis, the doyen of Dutch anarchism, that had the biggest impact.

The reference to Mann directs attention to another important way in which transnational factors shaped the story of local anarchism and syndicalism. International visits and global odysseys played an absolutely crucial role in making local anarchism and syndicalism part of the larger anarchist and syndicalist milieu of the "glorious period". While there were no major local figures that toured South Africa, weaving

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[53] Van Onlselen, 1976, *op cit*., pp. 210-1
[54] Phimister, 1988, *op cit*., p. 158
[55] See Ranger, 1970, *op cit*., pp. 155, 163
[56] Ranger, 1970, *op cit*., p. 168-9. Brian Raftopolous gives its name as the "Revived Industrial and Commercial Union": see Raftopolous, 1997, "*op cit.*, p. 62
[57] Raftopolous, 1997, *op cit*., p. 61; also see Brian Raftopolous, 1999, "Nationalism and Labour in Salisbury, 1953-1965", in Raftopolous and Yoshikuni, editors, *op cit.*, pp. 133-6
[58] Berger, 1974, *op cit*., p. 94
[59] Meebelo, 1986, *op cit.*, p. 47
[60] Quoted in Meebelo, 1986, *op cit.*, pp. 46-7
[61] Quoted in Meebelo, 1986, *op cit.*, pp. 52. Also see Meebelo, 1986, *op cit.*, pp. 101, 161
[62] Henry Meebelo suggests that Kazembe founded the local ICU in 1932. However, his main source of data on Kazembe's efforts is dated 13 January 1932, and conveys a strong impression that these efforts had been taking ongoing for a while: cf. Meebelo, 1986, *op cit.*, p. 52, note 29 and Meebelo, 1986, *op cit.*, pp. 81, 161

together the various anarchist and syndicalist initiatives, there were certainly numerous tours to and from South Africa that helped stitch the local movement into the international one.

Mann's visit to South Africa in 1910 en route from Australia to Britain (which was followed by a study tour to the French CGT) played an enormous role in galvanising local libertarians. Glynn arrived in South Africa as a British trooper during the Anglo-Boer War, left the country for New Zealand in 1907, where he joined the local Socialist Labour Party and then moved to a Chicago IWW position, before returning to South Africa in 1910 where he was active in the IWW. Following a major strike in 1911, he ended up in Australia, editing the Australian IWW paper *Direct Action*. Crawford left South Africa in 1910 for a thirteen-month tour of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United States and Germany where he met a wide range of anarchists, Marxists and syndicalists.

Having set up the SDF in Cape Town, Harrison visited England in 1911, where he conveyed the "fraternal greetings" of the Cape Town SDF to the Social Democratic Party, and "linked up" with the *Freedom* group,[63] before returning to form the Pretoria Socialist Society. Andrews visited Britain in 1917 and 1918 on behalf of the International Socialist League. Here he met members of the local IWW, the British Socialist Party and visited the Socialist labour Party in Glasgow (where he was struck by an "atmosphere … reminiscent of the I.S.L., Johannesburg").[64] However, it was the Clyde Workers Committee that excited his "particular admiration" and "desire to organise the South African workers on similar lines",[65] and he swept the International Socialist League up with his enthusiasm upon his return. He was soon appointed a full-time industrial organiser to foster a local shopstewards' movement.

Finally, two more points about the social composition of the anarchist and syndicalist tradition in South Africa bear noting. First, like the early labour movement in those countries, the anarchist and syndicalist tradition in South Africa from the 1880s into the 1910s was very much an urban movement. That is to say, for the greatest time, anarchism and syndicalism in both countries might have been influential in urban circles, but was almost entirely absent form the countryside, home to the great majority of the population in both countries. The rise of the ICU in South Africa in the 1920s changed the situation somewhat. While the echoes of syndicalism in the CPSA and the South African Mine Workers' Union in this period retained this urban character, the explosive growth of the South African ICU from the mid-1920s onwards reflected its spread amongst farm tenants and rural Africans threatened by the accelerating imposition of the measures of the 1913 Land Act. It is worth reflecting, then, that the largest movement in South Africa – indeed, all of southern Africa – with a demonstrable syndicalist influence was, in fact, a rural movement. On the other hand, however, the ICU in South West Africa, Southern Rhodesia and Northern Rhodesia was, again, largely urban, centred on Lüderitz, Bulawayo, Salisbury, Lusaka and Livingston (although there were certainly rural linkages in Southern Rhodesia).

Second, the anarchist and syndicalist movement in South Africa from the 1880s into the 1910s was, above all, a working class movement. For many years, writers on anarchism and syndicalism have

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[63] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit*., pp. 32, 38, 119-120
[64] Bill Andrews, 16 November 1917, "Notes from Comrade Andrews", *The International*
[65] Cope, [? 1943] n.d., *op cit.*, p. 191-2; 1995, *op cit.*, pp. 68-9

uncritically accepted the Marxist thesis that anarchism and syndicalism represented a revolt by the classes doomed by modernity, a reactionary "petty bourgeois" movement of ruined artisans and peasants",[66] and an irrational and utopian secular religion.[67] Even the standard general histories of anarchism and syndicalism have imbibed this notion, claiming anarchism "drew its support mainly from those social classes that were out of tune with the dominant historical trend", "thrust aside by … industrial progress",[68] "threatened" by "industry and mechanisation",[69] for its views were "all contrary to the development of large-scale industry and of mass production and consumption".[70]

Such claims are not, in fact, strongly supported by the data presented in these general histories, and have been brought into question by recent work that has shown that syndicalism was largely based amongst casual and seasonal labourers, such as construction workers, dockers, farm workers, and gas workers, and the workers affected by the second industrial revolution of the 1890s, such as mass production factory workers, miners, and railway workers.[71] In Peru, to give another example, anarchism and syndicalism were mainly based amongst "semi-skilled factory workers who championed collective, pragmatic action", and also developed links with the rural proletariat, particularly the labourers on the cotton and sugar estates in Chancay.[72]

The same seems true of South Africa up until the 1920s, where the movement was not only multi-racial, but also basically proletarian. Its key supporters included radicalised skilled White workers, mainly of British origin (such as Andrews, a fitter, Dunbar, a blacksmith, and Harrison, a carpenter), semi-skilled and unskilled African, Coloured and Indian workers in manufacturing and services, such as those who joined the syndicalist unions, with the leading figures in these unions often relatively well-educated workers (such as Cetiwe, a picture framers' assistant, and Kraai, a sometime foreman and deliveryman), or skilled workers (such as Gomas or Pienaar, both tailors). Professionals, such as S.P. Bunting (a lawyer), or Sigamoney and Thibedi (school teachers) were rather more rare. Unlike the situation in countries such as the Netherlands, or Russia, or France or Peru – where a significant section of the intelligentsia was influenced by anarchism or syndicalism, not least of which were figures like Kropotkin, Elisée Reclus and Nieuwenhuis – the movement in South Africa drew heavily upon working class intellectuals and ideologues, and had very little impact on African or White intellectuals more generally.

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[66] G.M., Stekloff, 1928, *op cit.* pp. 312; E. Yaroslavsky, [? 1937], *History of Anarchism in Russia*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, pp. 26, 28, 41, 68-9

[67] Eric Hobsbawm, 1971, *Primitive Rebels: studies in archaic forms of social movement in the 19th and 20th centuries*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, third edition; Eric Hobsbawm, 1999, "Primitive Revolutionaries", and "The Spanish Background", in his *Revolutionaries*, Abacus, London

[68] George Woodcock, 1975, *Anarchism: a history of libertarian ideas and movements*, Penguin, new edition with postscript, pp. 444-5

[69] Roderick Kedward, 1971, *The Anarchists: the men who shocked an era*, Library of the Twentieth Century, London, New York, pp. 24-6

[70] James Joll, 1964, *op cit.*, p. 277

[71] Van der Linden and Thorpe, 1990a, *op cit.,* pp. 7-12. Also see Larry Peterson, 1983, "The One Big Union in International Perspective: revolutionary industrial unionism, 1900-1925", in James E. Cronin and Carmen Sirianni, editors, 1983, *Work, Community and Power: the experiences of labour in Europe and America, 1900-1925*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, pp. 68-75

[72] Hirsch, 1997, *op cit*., pp. 13, 15, 27, 30, 34, 47, 59, 169

The rise of the ICU modified the situation somewhat, of course, because in the South African ICU drew in farm tenants (as well as the African elite). Given that the ICU's appeal to the rural population was tied to the hope that it would halt the 1913 Land Act, there is some support, in this case, for the Marxist claim that syndicalism was a revolt by doomed classes. On the other hand, however, the ICU was not consistently syndicalist, nor was its discourse crudely anti-modern. The ICU in other countries also drew heavily upon elite strata: in South West Africa it was increasingly regarded by officials as a "movement of well-educated Coloureds";[73] in Southern Rhodesia, an organising drive in the Matabeleland reserves saw the ICU link up with African chiefs, [74] while the ICU in town could raise questions of class exploitation while advocating small businesses;[75] the Northern Rhodesian ICU drew heavily upon educated Africans.

Finally, it should be noted that the anarchist and syndicalist traditions in southern Africa were never very powerful within the export sectors that dominated the local economies. The local syndicalist unions, including the unions amongst workers of colour, were centred on the urban service and manufacturing economy; they were absent from the mines and the commercial farms. The closest links to the export sectors were the initiatives on the Cape Town and Durban docks. However, local manufacturing was a tender plant at the time: marginal before 1914, it grew quickly due to wartime disruptions and the post-war boom, but was seriously disrupted by resumption of normal trade in the post-war period. Normal trade, plus falling gold prices, led to a major local recession, rising unemployment and factory closures. The syndicalist unions were in a fragile part of the economy, and they do not seem to have survived the economic crisis that started in 1920. Mining, at the heart of the southern African political economy, was left unscathed by the "glorious period".

10.5. Class politics, race and the South African left: rethinking local socialist history with reference to the forgotten period of anarchism and syndicalism

In the standard accounts of the history of the left in South Africa, it is usually claimed that the left failed to consider the question of race before 1924, when the CPSA decided to focus a great deal of its attention on African labour. By implication, the pre-CPSA groups either failed to consider the racial question, or pandered to White Labourism.

In this thesis, however, I have advanced two criticisms of this story. The first has been indicated above: the anarchists and syndicalists of the pre-CPSA period developed a radical class politics that was, at once, against racism and against capitalism, and sought to merge the struggle against the two through the medium of the One Big Union. The pre-CPSA groups had developed a consistent opposition to racial prejudice and discrimination, advocated an interracial and revolutionary workers' movement, and pioneered trade unionism and socialism amongst African, Coloured, and Indian workers.

It was the socialist movement, not the nationalists, that pioneered interracial political mobilisation and organisation in South Africa, and that championed it most consistently throughout the twentieth

[73] Emmett, 1986, *op cit*., p. 32; Peltola, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 77-8
[74] Phimister, 1988, *op cit.*, pp. 201-203
[75] See, for example, the verbatim speeches of 29 June 1929 in Bulawayo location reproduced in Ranger, 1970, *op cit*., pp. 153-156

century. The socialists were not, of course, homogeneous, and they were not all equally radical or consistent. Nonetheless, the interracial tradition, dating back to the first decade of the twentieth century, and the SDF in Cape Town, and an important theme in the CPSA, was distinctive. While the CPSA was increasingly influenced by nationalism in the 1930s – a development even more marked in its successor, the underground SACP formed in 1953 after the original Party was dissolved in 1950 prior to the passage of the Suppression of Communism Act – it was not a nationalist group. From the 1920s to the 1960s, the Party was the only major political group to promote an interracial membership and policy.

In the face of White Labourism, on the one hand, and various brands of nationalism, on the other, socialists consistently advocated equal rights and universal suffrage, and did so well before the African, Coloured and Indian nationalist groups. It was only in the 1950s that a structured alliance was formed between these groups, in the form of a "Congress Alliance" that drew together the ANC, the SAIC, the Coloured People's Congress, and the (White) Congress of Democrats.

The second criticism is the argument that the broader break in overall political perspective represented by the move from anarchism and syndicalism to Bolshevism – a process slow and complicated, but nonetheless real – was paralleled by a profound *break* in socialist approaches to the question of race. The early CPSA was distinguished by its focus on White workers (not, however, by an acceptance of White Labourism), and by an *abandonment* of the earlier work amongst African, Coloured, and Indian workers.

A number of veterans of the pre-CPSA period did not join the new Party. Some White members of the International Socialist League, such as Gabriel Weinstock, joined the SA Labour Party instead. Perhaps far more importantly, none of the African, Coloured and Indian activists recruited in the 1910s, besides Thibedi, joined the new Party, and the syndicalist unions amongst workers of colour were not involved in the final moves to establish the CPSA in 1921, nor did any affiliate to the new Party.

This situation was partly the result of the larger structural conditions: the recession that started in 1920 devastated local manufacturing, and the syndicalist unions do not seem to have survived. The situation was, however, also political. While the CPSA remained explicitly committed to an interracial movement, its overall orientation at this time was towards White labour. The Comintern itself paid little attention to South Africa until the late 1920s, and the young CPSA, looking for guidance, mechanically applied Lenin's advice that the official CPGB secure affiliation to the British Labour Party, to South Africa.

This was interpreted to mean that the CPSA should try to affiliate to the SA Labour Party: while a formal proposal to join the SA Labour Party was narrowly defeated in 1923 and 1924, the Party retreated from the International Socialist League's forthright opposition to job colour bars and White Labourism, and the abandoning of work amongst African, Coloured, and Indian workers. . The links with the syndicalist unions were lost; no attention was paid to the ICU. S.P. Bunting lamented in 1923 that "our *old* policy of liberation to the native worker (since 1915) has been dropped", and the *International* "closed to anything that might offend white prejudice".[76] Cetiwe and Kraai were drawn into the Cape Native Congress and the ICU, and remained outside the Party. Gomas and Peinaar joined the ICU. Sigamoney went to Britain for

[76] S.P. Bunting, [letter of 2 May 1923] 1996a, in Brian Bunting, editor, 1996a, *op cit.,* p. 59, emphasis added

clerical training in 1922, returning to become an Anglican pastor in Johannesburg in 1927, and a well-known sportsman.

The difficulties of this focus on White labour were shown in 1922, less than a year after the foundation of the Party. A strike amongst White miners, which began in January, developed into a general strike and an armed general insurrection across the Witwatersrand by March. On the one hand, the Rand Revolt was, without a doubt, a great class struggle, and it challenged the power of the State. On the other hand, it centred on the issue of plans to replace White with African labour, was confined to Whites, was fought under the banner of "Workers of the World Unite and Fight for a White South Africa" and demands for job reservation, was increasingly influenced by Afrikaner nationalists, and was the scene of serious racial clashes in its final days.

The Rand Revolt was suppressed with martial law, armed troops, and aerial bombing, and the strike was called off on March 16. After the strike ended, 4,692 persons were arrested, 853 were tried on various charges of murder, high treason and transgression of martial law regulations, and fifteen people were condemned to death, with four actually executed.[77] Overall, 43 soldiers, 86 policemen and 81 civilians died, and 133 soldiers, 86 policemen and 315 civilians were wounded during the Rand Revolt. Several CPSA members died in the Revolt, a number were subsequently jailed, including Andrews and S.P. Bunting, and the *International* was suppressed in the aftermath.

The role of the CPSA in the Rand Revolt was mixed. The CPSA generally opposed the racist elements of the strike – it is a common myth that the Party supported the "Fight for a White South Africa" slogan – but its statements at the time were characterised by a determination not to "offend white prejudice". On the other hand, the enthusiasm of some CPSA members for the Rand Revolt undoubtedly reflected a lingering syndicalist outlook among sections of the Party. The Council of Action, assisted by Andrews and other CPSA members, played an important role in the Rand Revolt, opposing racial clashes and advocating class war.

It would have been extremely difficult for any overtly revolutionary socialist group at the time to have stood aside from those dramatic events, particularly a group focused on White labour like the early CPSA. The Rand Revolt must also be seen within the context of the global climate of labour unrest, and the response of militants to the uprising must also be understood within the context of the hopes of that period.

During the "eight years that shook the world" from 1916 to 1923, there was a global wave of working class unrest, colonial revolts and revolutionary outbreaks. The central event was the Russian Revolution of 1917, but it was only the most dramatic event in a revolutionary period that started with the Easter Rising by nationalists and syndicalists, and the revolutionary strikes in Mexico, moved through anarchist and syndicalist revolts in Argentina, Brazil, Italy, Portugal, Spain and the Ukraine, *soviet* uprisings in Bulgaria, Finland, Germany, and Hungary, and large-scale colonial insurgencies in countries such as China, the Czech lands, Egypt, Ireland and Korea. While truly revolutionary conditions did not develop in Britain or France, there were huge strike waves, a rapid growth in unionisation, and widespread popular radicalism.

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[77] See Wessel P. Visser, 2001b, *The South African Labour Movement's Responses to Declarations of Martial Law, 1913-1922*, paper presented at the War and Society in Africa Conference, South African Military Academy, Saldanha Bay, 12-14 September, pp. 21-2

In this situation, it is not surprising to learn that the American IWW condemned the demand for job colour bar and the racial clashes, while supporting the workers' struggle as a moment in the larger class war.[78] Both the Comintern and the new syndicalist international, the International Workers' Association, formed at the end of 1922, gave qualified support to the strikers, while condemning the racial attacks. When S.P. Bunting wrote the official CPSA pamphlet on the events, entitled *Red Revolt*, it was translated into Russian and published by the Comintern.[79] At the time, then, the Rand Revolt was seen as a complex movement within a larger era of working class insurgency, a movement with both positive and negative features, rather than simply reduced to its racialist aspects.

Syndicalism also echoed in the ICU in the 1920s. Restructured several times, the ICU absorbed the Industrial Workers of Africa by 1921. It attracted to its ranks some of the most important of the African and Coloured activists previously associated with the local syndicalist unions, including Cetiwe, Gomas and Kraai. This was not very surprising, given the CPSA's retreat from work amongst African, Coloured, and Indian workers, and indicates the importance of noting socialist influences in the ICU well before the Party took an interest in that body.

The 1925 ICU constitution was modelled on the *Preamble* of the IWW, its leaders invoked the imagery of the One Big Union, and the vision of a cataclysmic general strike that would redistribute wealth to the African poor assumed millenarian proportions by the 1927. These syndicalist themes were, it must be stressed, only part of a broad melange of ICU discourse, which also included liberalism, African nationalism and religious millenarianism; they were at odds, moreover, with the generally undemocratic, and often corrupt, internal regime of the ICU

The ICU has been described as the largest political movement based amongst Africans in South Africa in the first half of the twentieth century, greatly overshadowing the ANC, the SAIC and the CPSA. It was, from an early stage, vastly larger than the South African Native National Congress, which was fairly moribund throughout most of the 1920s and 1930s. The ICU claimed 100,000 members in South Africa in 1927, but its actual membership has been estimated at anything from 100,000 to 250,000.[80] The only union to come close to its size was the CPSA-linked CNETU, formed in 1941.[81] The ICU spread into neighbouring South West Africa (Namibia) in 1920, into Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) in 1927, and into Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) in 1931, following the human rivers of labour that connected the subcontinent.
Within the ICU in South Africa, echoes of syndicalism persisted throughout the 1920s, although they faded over time; in the ICU outside South Africa, the echoes were real but fainter, and became more muted the further the union expanded. In this sense, just as White immigrants helped connect South Africa to the

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[78] For example, *Industrial Solidarity*, 1 April 1922, "South Africa's Great Gold Mining Strike"; *Industrial Solidarity*, 8 April 1922, "Causes of the Great South African Strike"; *Industrial Worker*, 18 March 1922, "Bloody Massacres of Workingmen in South Africa"; *Industrial Worker*, 25 March 1922, "South African Revolt Declared Over" and "Throws off the Mask"1

[79] As noted by S.P. Bunting, 1923, *The Rand Revolt: causes and effects*, typescript with annotations, in the R.K. Cope Papers, held in the Historical Papers, A953, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand, p. 1

[80] The actual figures are in some dispute, not least because the ICU kept very poor records. The figures cited here are from Helen Bradford, 1987, *op cit.*, p. 2. T.D. Mweli Skota gave a "rumoured" figure of 100,000: Skota, editor and compiler, [? 1930] n.d, *op cit*., p. 429. David Hemson gives a figure of 200,000 in 1928: David Hemson, *op cit.*, p. 198

[81] Alexander, 2000, *op cit*., p. 80-85

"glorious period" of anarchism and syndicalism in the East and the West, African and Coloured migrants helped those ideas flow northwards from South Africa in the 1920s via the ICU, and the great wave of the "glorious period" had flowed into tropical Africa by the late 1920s.The signs of a lingering syndicalism in the ICU, of continuity with the libertarian past, were partly embodied in activists from the old syndicalist unions, like Gomas.

In the meantime, the CPSA was beginning to rethink its focus on White labour. The events of the Rand Revolt underlined the problems of a single-minded focus on White labour. The hold of White Labourism was unshaken by the events of 1922, the Party had been unable to stop the racial clashes, and the SA Labour Party showed no enthusiasm at the prospect of CPSA affiliation. The CPSA supported the 1924 electoral campaign of the SA Labour Party and the National Party on the grounds that it was a lesser evil than Smuts' "capitalist gang".[82] Rather than help break White workers with capitalism, however, the "Pact" government consolidated the hold of White Labourism through its reforms, and also brought White labour militancy to heel, increased repression against the CPSA, and also intensified official racial discrimination. The Pact government also began a systematic process of import-substitution-industrialisation and systematic State intervention in the economy that would begin to draw the era of the "first globalisation" to a close in South Africa.

At the 1924 congress of the CPSA, the policy of linking with the SA Labour Party was narrowly overturned, and a specific focus on African workers adopted as policy. From that period onwards, the CPSA set out to recruit Africans, and forge links with elements within the ANC. Work was also systematically undertaken in the ICU. The CPSA was able to win back activists of colour who had been associated with the pre-CPSA movement, and who were now active in the ICU. The most important were Gomas and Jimmy La Guma, founder of the ICU in South West Africa. Joined by other CPSA figures, like Thibedi and Frank Glass, they waged a campaign against the corruption and chaos that wracked the ICU. The CPSA was not able to win back other activists of colour who had gone into the ICU, such as Cetiwe and Kraai, nor was it able to win back those who had joined neither the CPSA nor the ICU, most notably Sigamoney, who became a churchman. By 1926, the campaign within the ICU was serious enough to result in a purge of CPSA members, who then went on to organise new unions under Party leadership.

It is important to stress, again, that while the 1924 turn to African labour was a break with the policies previously adopted by the *CPSA*, it was *a return* to the policies of the local *anarchist and syndicalist tradition*. The move in 1924 was not, in other words, the first time that local socialists paid attention to African workers, or an innovation, but a *reversion* to a core feature of the pre-CPSA period, a revolt against the Whitening of the left that had followed from CPSA policies of 1921 to 1924, against the *loss* of an interracial membership. As Harrison commented of the consequences of the 1924 Party conference, "there was *again* a tendency to specialise on the Natives, whom we began to get into our ranks".[83] In this sense, the formation of the CPSA had involved, at least from the perspective of building an interracial socialist

[82] Communist Party of South Africa, [16 May 1924] 1981, "Communist Party, S.A., Election Manifesto", in Brian Bunting, editor, 1981, *op cit*., p. 77-80
[83] Harrison, [? 1947] n.d., *op cit*., p. 98, my emphasis

movement, a step *backwards*, rather than the serious advance later Marxists would suggest, and the 1924 resolutions on work amongst Africans reflected a *return* to older policies.

Party work in the ICU, the formation of new unions under Party leadership, and the political campaigns of the late 1920s: these *paralleled* the efforts of the anarchists and syndicalists of the late 1910s, *reviving* the older approach, rather than innovating from nothing. The changing racial composition of the CPSA *echoed* the changes in the composition of the local anarchist and syndicalist movement from 1917 onwards. The use of the night school in Ferreirastown to attract and train African activists was a *replay* of the use of a night school to form the Industrial Workers of Africa back in 1917, and to recruit key figures such as Cetiwe and Kraai.

10.6. The final days of anarchism and syndicalism in southern Africa: the Rand Revolt, the ICU, and the "Native Republic" thesis

The final break with the old anarchist and syndicalist tradition in South Africa came at the end of the 1920s. Following the expulsion of CPSA members from the ICU in 1926, and subsequent corruption scandals and leadership splits, the organisation began to fall apart, and was a shadow of its former self within a few years. While syndicalist elements remained, they, like the organisation, were mere shadows of their former selves. The ICU had, meanwhile, died out in South West Africa, in serious decline in Southern Rhodesia in the 1930s, and existed only for a relatively brief period in Northern Rhodesia.

In the meantime, the Comintern began to take a greater interest in South Africa. From 1927 onwards it suggested that the CPSA must focus its immediate struggles on the creation of a democratic and non-racial South African nation-state, rather than on socialism as such. The 1928 Comintern congress made this approach official CPSA policy (despite the objections of CPSA delegates, as the Party majority, including S.P. Bunting and Thibedi, opposed the new approach), and in 1929 the CPSA defined its goal as "an Independent South African Native Republic as a stage towards the Workers' and Peasants' Republic, guaranteeing protection and complete equality towards all national minorities".[84] This approach was by no means unique to South Africa,for the Comintern imposed variants on Communist parties across what it called the colonial and semi-colonial world at this time, effectively replacing socialist revolution wiuth national independence as their goal. The inevitable effect was replacing class struggle for socialism with nationalist unity for sovereignty, and national struggle for class politics.[85]

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[84] Quoted from Communist Party of South Africa, [1 January 1929] 1981, "Programme of the Communist Party of South Africa adopted at the seventh annual congress of the Party on 1 January, 1929", in Brian Bunting, editor, 1981, *op cit.*, p. 104. The full text of the 1928 Comintern resolution, "The South African Question", appeared in the Comintern journal, *Communist International*: Executive Committee of the Communist International, 15 December 1928, "The South African Question", *Communist International*. It is also reproduced as "Resolution on the 'The South African Question' adopted by the Executive Committee of the Communist International following the Sixth Comintern Congress " in Brian Bunting, editor, 1981, *op cit.* It also appears as "The South African Question" in Harmel, 1971, *op cit.*

[85] Thus, the nationalist element of Marxism was maintained but mutated: prior to the Comintern, classical Marxism was associated with the nationalism of the industrial countries, such as Germany; with the Comintern, Marxism abandoned nationalism in the West in favour of Soviet nationalism and "third world" nationalism.

Based on a mechanical theory of historical progress the two-stage theory created a neat division between two supposed types of struggle – "national" struggle against imperialism and feudalism, and class struggle against capitalism – that denies the possibility of a revolutionary *class* struggle that *simultaneously* fights against imperialism, economic backwardness *and* capitalism.Whether the two-stage policy was *required* to attract African, Coloured, and Indian workers is debatable, for the anarchists and syndicalists of the 1910s, and the CPSA between 1924 and 1928 had shown that a socialist programme based on class politics could recruit substantial numbers *without* accommodating White racism. If the South African social order provided fertile grounds for a nationalist outlook amongst people of colour, it would be incorrect to state that this consciousness was natural, necessary or inevitable. It was, in part, the consequence of ideological and political *struggles*.

What is important for our analysis here is that the two-stage theory marked a major political break with an older socialist tradition – not the tradition of White chauvinism, as the Communist school claimed, but a tradition of syndicalist internationalism. The class politics of the pre-CPSA radicals, and, indeed, of much of the early history of the Party was lost, and overtly nationalist outlooks became accepted within the highest ranks of the Party itself. By the 1940s, for instance, Gomas was so nationalist and overtly anti-White that the CPSA suspended him from his official positions several years before its dissolution.[86] That Party leaders still considered Gomas a good Party "builder, an old and loyal member",[87] which underlines the extent to which the two-stage theory had blurred the distinction between socialist and nationalist outlooks. Even if a racist, Gomas was, from this perspective, progressive simply because he *was* a nationalist. From 1928 onwards, in short, socialism has been nothing but a vague future "stage" for the CPSA and SACP, the dominant organisations on the South African left; it has not been an immediate or a medium-term objective, and these organisations have deliberately steered clear of class politics in favour of nationalism.

The point, to reiterate, is that the two-stage approach was a profound *rupture* with the policies of the local anarchists and syndicalists of the pre-CPSA period, a break that was even sharper than that represented by the Party's focus on White labour in the early 1920s. There were simply no equivalents to the later ideas that divided social questions in South Africa into neat categories, phases and events; nor was there any notion that history had to move through a set of prescribed stages. For the anarchists and syndicalists that preceded the CPSA, racial prejudices amongst workers, and racial discrimination against African, Coloured, and Indian workers, were regarded as a consequence of the capitalist system and the State, and the struggle against both prejudice and discrimination was therefore seen as necessarily involving a *class struggle* against both the capitalist system and the State. Many instances of this outlook will be cited in due course, but a 1917 statement by the Industrial Workers of Africa, *Ba Sebetsi Ba Afrika*, provides a fair example of this line of thought:[88]

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[86] Musson, 1989, *op cit*., pp. 106, 116-126, 132-8
[87] Ray Simons, 1991, *op cit.*, pp. 80-1
[88] The title of the leaflet, *Ba Sebetsi Ba Afrika*, is sometimes given as "Listen, Workers, Listen!" A more accurate rendering is "To the Workers of Africa". It was issued in Sotho and Zulu translation, one version on each side in 1917. The translation used here is that provided by Wilfred Jali, a police spy who infiltrated the Industrial Workers of Africa, and was attached to report on meeting of 1 November 1917, Department of Justice, JD 3/527/17, *op cit.*

> Workers of the Bantu race: Why do you live in slavery? Why are you not free as other men are free? Why are you kicked and spat upon by your masters? Why must you carry a pass before you can move anywhere? And if you are found without one, why are you thrown into prison? Why do you toil hard for little money? And again thrown into prison if you refuse to work? Why do they herd you like cattle into compounds? WHY?
>
> Because you are the toilers of the earth. Because the masters want you to labour for their profit. Because they pay the Government and Police to keep you as slaves to toil for them. If it were not for the money they make from your labour, you would not be oppressed.

From this perspective, the struggle against racial discrimination and prejudice in South Africa required an independent *working class* movement, rather than cross-class nationalist alliances, and it centred on the *class struggle*, rather than a struggle between national groups. Indeed, the anarchists and syndicalists of the 1910s regarded the nationalism of groups like the African Political Organisation and the South African Native National Congress as fundamentally anti-revolutionary, as a positive *obstacle* to the struggle of the working class. Socialism was cast as the rival, not the ally, of nationalism. At most, these groups were to be *converted* to class politics and syndicalism; the notion that the task of socialists was to strengthen the nationalists to wage a national struggle was unthinkable.

Thus, at a second level, the class struggle, centred on the creation of the One Big Union, involved uniting workers *across* racial lines, combating popular prejudices, mobilising against discriminatory laws, and *overthrowing* class society. Rather than form a national movement of all classes, including a "national bourgeoisie", it would form a class movement across racial lines but against capitalism and the racial problems it created. To continue from the Industrial Workers of Africa leaflet: :[89]

> But mark: you are the mainstay of the country. You do all the work, you are the means of their living. That is why you are robbed of the fruits of your labour and robbed of your liberty as well.
>
> There is only one way of deliverance for you Bantu workers. Unite as workers. Unite: forget the things which divide you. Let there be no longer any talk of Basuto, Zulu, or Shangaan. You are all labourers; let Labour be your common bond.

Strikingly, this appeal is directed to *both* South African *and* foreign African workers: "Basuto" was a term that included workers from Lesotho, while "Shangaan" was a specific reference to Mozambican workers.

[89] The title of the leaflet, *Ba Sebetsi Ba Afrika*, is sometimes given as "Listen, Workers, Listen!" A more accurate rendering is "To the Workers of Africa". It was issued in Sotho and Zulu translation, one version on each side in 1917. The translation used here is that provided by Wilfred Jali, a police spy who infiltrated the Industrial Workers of Africa, and was attached to report on meeting of 1 November 1917, Department of Justice, JD 3/527/17, *op cit.*

At a third level, only a new social order, in a self-managed and stateless socialism, could resolve the fundamental problems of the modern world – the class inequality that was expressed in poverty, powerlessness, unemployment, and racial hatred. Unlike the "Native Republic", which would tackle the question of race, but leave in place a society of classes, this approach would remove both racial antagonism and class with a new order. Again, the Industrial Workers:

> Wake up! And open your ears. The sun has arisen, the day is breaking, for a long time you were asleep while the mill of the rich man was grinding and breaking the sweat of your work for nothing… You are strongly requested to come to the meeting of the workers to fight for your rights. Come and listen, to the sweet news, and deliver yourself from the bonds and chains of the capitalist. Unity is strength. The fight is great against the many passes that persecute you and against the low wages and misery of you existence.
>
> Workers of all lands unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains. You have a world to win.

The adoption of the two-stage theory coincided with the international onset of the "New Line", or "Class against Class", policy of the "third period" of the Comintern.[90] Lasting from 1928 to 1935, the New Line stressed the need to "Bolshevise" Communist Parties by purging unreliable elements and ending all co-operation with non-Communist forces, on the assumption that revolution was imminent. This, of course, created great problems for the CPSA, not least because it purged itself of the great majorityb of its members in order to better Bolshevise itself. CPSA membership fell from a claimed 3,000 members in 1929 to 150 in 1933,[91] with many veterans and trade unionists, both Africans and Whites, expelled for a wide range of supposed political and organisational infractions. Importantly, the purges removed many of the remaining veterans of the pre-CPSA period, breaking the remaining ties with the older period, and helping extirpate the lingering syndicalism of the 1920s. The political culture of the CPSA also became far more authoritarian: there was no longer amny space for factions such as the syndicalist group around Dunbar.

The New Line clearly ruled out any co-operation with nationalists, and in East Asia this contributed to a situation in which most Communist Parties claimed the right to lead *both* stages of the revolution.[92] The

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[90] Drew, editor, 1996a, *op cit.,* editorial comment, p. 108
[91] Drew, editor, 1996a, *op cit.*, editorial comment, p. 23
[92] The Maoist variant of the two-stage strategy was the most radical reading of this approach, stressing Communist Party leadership in the "national democratic revolution", on the grounds that the local bourgeoisie was too weak to achieve its own "historic" tasks. See Mao Zedong, [1939] 1990, "The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party", in Turok, editor, 1990b, *op cit*., and Mao Zedong, [1949] 1971, "On the People's Democratic Dictatorship: in commemoration of the twenty-eighth anniversary of the Communist Party of China", in Editorial Committee for Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Tsetung, 1971, editors, *Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Tsetung*, Foreign Languages Press. Some even held that the "stage of capitalist development" could be skipped: see Le Duan, [1970] 1990, "The Vietnamese Revolution: fundamental problems, essential tasks", in Turok, 1990b, editor, *op cit*., p. 103, emphasis in the original. I do not agree with the claim that "national democratic revolution" introduces a new stage of history, neither capitalist nor socialist, into Marxism: it is simply a restatement of the classical Marxist claim that capitalism is a precondition for socialism. *Contra*. Peter Hudson, 1986, "The Freedom Charter and the Theory of

CPSA was obviously too weak to aspire to such heights, and was only able to recover from 1935 when the Comintern instructed its membgers to adopt the Popular Front –broadest possible unity between Communists and democratic forces, including even anarchists, and pointed to a politics of alliances. The CPSA retained the two-stage outlook, but could now work with groups like the ANC. In subsequent years, the general tendency in the CPSA and SACP was that the African, Coloured and Indian nationalists were the key force in the first stage of the struggle. The older view that socialists should build an interracial working class movement capable of *challenging* the nationalists in the struggle against racial discrimination and prejudice had been supplanted by the view that the task was working within, and strengthening, the African, Coloured and Indian nationalist groups. By the 1950s, the Party was practuically indistinguishable from the antionaolists in its programme and outlook.

So, when the CPSA was rebuilt in the late 1930s, many veterans rejoined, but no traces of anarchism or syndicalism remained.[93] The political culture and ideological outlook of the Party was now firmly in the Bolshevik mould, and increasingly shaped by nationalism. Those who refused to be reconciled with the Party – and who were drawn from the pre-1921 layer – moved in many directions. Some moved to the right, or withdrew from politics, or pursued an independent path that remained sympathetic to the Party; others formed the nucleus of local Trotskyism, which was often not very different to the Party in culture and outlook. The purges of the New Line period did not lead to a reconstitution of a local anarchist or syndicalist tradition: rather, they fractured *Leninism* into official Communist and Trotskyist strands, confirming the overall dominance of political socialism. Coupled with the collapse of the ICU, the transformation of the CPSA meant the local anarchist and syndicalist thread had finally been broken. Libertarian socialism would only appear sporadically and briefly before the 1990s, and has yet to regain the influence wielded eight decades before – an influence that is still largely forgotten in both scholarly and popular perceptions.

10.7. Class, politics, and subjectivity

In the 1970s and 1980s, South African studies were dominated by the "liberal-radical" debate, centred on the question of whether the racial order in South Africa was conducive to capitalist development. The "radicals" stressed the advantages of segregation and apartheid to capitalism, while the "liberals" argued that racial discrimination and prejudice created major inefficiencies, such as a small local market, a shortage of skilled labour and unduly high wages for protected White labour.[94] The contending positions reflected somewhat different understandings of capitalism. The radicals, influenced by Marxism, stressed

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National Democratic Revolution", *Transformation*, no. 1; Derek Mosenthal, 1988, *op cit.*, pp. 35-36; Jonny Steinberg, 1995,*op cit.*, pp. 50-63, 66, 71-2pp. 50-63, 66, 71-2

[93] Some useful background shift from the New Line to the Popular Front is provided by Tony Karon, 1985, "Fascism, War and National Liberation: the Comintern and the united front in South Africa 1928-1939", unpublished mimeo

[94] For critical overviews of the debate, see *inter alia*, Belinda Bozzoli and Peter Delius, 1990, "Radical History and South African Society", *Radical History Review*, no. 46/7; Harrison M. Wright, 1977, *The Burden of the Present: the liberal-radical controversy over southern African history*, David Philips, Cape Town, Johannesburg, Rex Collings, London and Christopher Saunders, 1988, *The Making of the South African Past: major historians on race and class*, David Philips, Cape Town, Johannesburg.

class conflict and exploitation, while the liberals, influenced by neoclassical economics, tended to see capitalism as a system that tended towards perfect competition and generalised individual freedom.

In retrospect, the debate has come to be regarded as overly polarised, and as simplifying a complex set of issues. There was a tendency to rely on fairly reductionist and functionalist reasoning, with the radicals tending to treat the racial order as a simple reflection of the needs of capitalism, while the liberals characterised the racial order as an external imposition upon otherwise rational markets by reactionary regimes.[95] (The liberal position, which generally casts the Afrikaner and the White worker as the villain of the piece, often contained a heavy dose of White English chauvinism.)[96]

It is, however, possible to discern both "functional" and "dysfunctional" relations between the racial order and capital accumulation, and it is difficult to avoid concluding that both sides tended to simplify the situation (and the evidence), and to talk about different sectors of the economy (in an ahistorical manner). The farms and mines clearly befitted from a large supply of cheap and unfree African labour – it is extremely unlikely that gold mining would have been profitable without the existence of a large colonised population – but the more advanced sectors of the economy that arose, such as high-end manufacturing, were definitely penalised by the prevalence of unstable migrant labour, limited local demand, and the huge skills shortage that arose due to job reservation and inferior African education.[97]

A labour history perspective suggests additional limitations. The radicals assumed that the character of the State neatly reflected the imperatives of capitalism, while the liberals treated the State as a body captured by forces that undermined the natural development of the capitalist system. Neither view is altogether convincing. The liberals generally judged actually existing South African capitalism against an idealised model of capitalism, seen as a free market system, based on perfect competition between rational and self-interested individuals. From this perspective, politics and ideology are external to the market, and their intrusion is, by definition, destructive. This type of approach – prevalent in mainstream economics and economic liberalism more generally[98] – is deeply flawed, for it assumes as the norm a capitalism that never existed.

The radical position, on the other hand, tended to assume that all features of the racial order were neatly congruent with profitability, and therefore inevitable. This failed to account for features that did not self-evidently follow the imperatives of capital accumulation. The migrant labour system was a case in point. It is one thing to argue – and this argument is hard to deny – that the system of coerced and migrant

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[95] I remain deeply indebted to Deborah Posel's cutting commentary of two decades ago: see Deborah Posel, 1983, "Rethinking the 'Race- Class' Debate in South African Historiography", *Social Dynamics*, vol.9, no. 1

[96] For a particularly vulgar example, Donald Woods and Mike Bostock 1986, *Apartheid: a graphic guide*, New York, Henry Holt and Company

[97] See Terence C. Moll, 1991, "Did the Apartheid Economy 'Fail'?", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol.17, no. 4; Nicoli Natrass, 1991, "Controversies About Apartheid and Capitalism: an economic perspective", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol.17, no. 4

[98] See, *inter alia*, Amando Etzioni, 1988, *The Moral Dimension: towards a new economics*, Free Press, New York, London; Mark Granovetter, and Richard Swedberg, editors, 1992, *The Sociology of Economic Life*, Westview Press, Boulder, California; Robert Holton, 1992, *Economy and Society*, Routledge, London and New York

African labour provided the cheap labour and "exploitation colour bar"[99] that made the gold mines viable. It is quite another to suggest that unfree migrant African labour was simply the result of this cost imperative.

The radical view that migrant labour reduced labour costs – the African mineworkers' family supposedly generated its own subsistence in the countryside, enabling payment of a "bachelor" wage[100] – fails to account for the fact that the many rural areas were in a state of economic collapse as early as the 1920s, yet this system persisted in its classical form into the 1980s. Furthermore, migrant labour was phased out in the Copperbelt from the 1930s onwards, despite far more viable rural economies, and many collieries in South Africa experimented with stabilised African labour.[101]

Could it not be the case that the *belief* that the African mineworker could be paid a "bachelors' wage" provided a powerful ideological justification for low wages and support for the view, commonly held by mine owners, that African migrancy was a voluntary choice eagerly seized by many men? Such views corresponded neatly with the self-serving belief of employers in the region that Africans had a strong preference for leisure over money, and would "desert" as soon as a certain target was reached: this suggested that only low wages would ensure a consistent supply of African labour.[102]

The system of coerced migrant African labour had many features that could not be reduced to the provision of cheap labour, but which followed the logic of colonial conquest and racial domination: migrant labour and controls over movement and employment limited African urbanisation, were informed by the view that Africans were dangerous savages, and symbolised the subject status of Africans. Here, questions of domination, not neatly reducible to questions of capital accumulation, need to be taken into account. Finally, a case can be made – pointing to the fact that the African migrant labour system predated conquest and was often vigorously defended by the migrants themselves[103] – that the initiatives and actions of African workers themselves shaped the system. Many African workers, although by no means all,[104] held doggedly onto their rural homesteads and showed a "distinct unwillingness" to become permanent proletarians.[105]

This suggests the need to take State power, ideology and class struggles into account. If classes exist in objective terms – and while their conditions of existence impose limitations on their members' actions and outlooks – there is no simple translation of class position into class unity and consciousness. Ideas are absolutely central, and it is through discourses that humans live out the relations of domination

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[99] Frederick A. Johnstone, 1976, *Class, Race and Gold: a study of class relations and racial discrimination in South Africa*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, Henley and Boston, especially pp. 13-49

[100] Notably Harold Wolpe, 1972, "Capitalism and Cheap Labour Power in South Africa: from segregation to apartheid", *Economy and Society*, no. 1

[101] As stressed by Alexander, 2001, *op cit*., pp. 506-7, 523-5

[102] This has been described as the theory of "backward sloping labour supply functions": see Meebelo, 1986, *op cit*., p. 40

[103] See, for example, Peter Delius, 1996*, A Lion Amongst the Cattle: reconstruction and resistance in the Northern Transvaal*, Heinemann, Portsmouth, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, James Currey, Oxford

[104] See, for example, Alexander, 2001, *op cit*., p. 514 regarding the gold mines

[105] Harries, 1994, *op cit*., p. 222

and exploitation: they therefore have very real consequences, and are by no means mere products of an economic structure,[106] contrary to Marx's determinism.[107]

A transition from a class "in itself" with an objective existence, into a class "for itself", with a common goal and movement, is not due to the operations of the economy, as Engels and Marx claimed,[108] but is a profoundly ideological – and contingent – process whereby the oppressed class is *constituted* as a united force. If "[m]en make their own history", but do not "make it under circumstances chosen by themselves", as Marx suggested,[109] it is equally true that the manner in which people *interpret* those "circumstances" is crucial to how and why they make history.

An approach that takes class seriously without straying into reductionism or functionalism can more readily incorporate substantial parts of the radical analysis – without reproducing its flaws – than it can draw upon the liberal model. The radicals had a historical analysis of South African capitalism that took class relations seriously, and assumed that conflict and struggle were central to historical change. The radical approach, in sharp contrast to the liberal position, treated the economy as part of society, and society as unequal and conflictual, and is more readily included in a class analysis that takes discourse and domination seriously.

10.8. White Labourism, White workers, and "whiteness" studies

This point can be illustrated with reference to the material discussed in this thesis. The social system that developed in southern Africa in the late nineteenth century was one shaped by both class and race conflicts, and racial antagonisms left a deep imprint on consciousness in the region. However, race did not always trump class. Deep racial divisions in the working class were not always rigid and insurmountable, and common class interests could provide bonds of unity.

Multi-racial slums could be sites of race riots, but could also be areas of social integration – official efforts to segregate the White poor to avoid miscegenation cannot be understood otherwise – and there were many examples of multi-racial strikes and a range of unions with a multi-racial membership in the Cape and in manufacturing industry elsewhere in South Africa.[110] Sachs' Garment Worker' Union is the best known

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[106] A case can be made that class must be defined by reference to both its relationship to the means of production – and, thus, the exploitation that exists between classes – and to relations of domination and coercion – and, thus, to systems of State power, ideology and violence. Such considerations fall, however, outside the scope of this thesis.

[107] Cf. Karl Marx, K., [1859] 1971, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, edited by M. Dobb, pp. 20-21: "The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness".

[108] Marx and Engels, [1848] 1954, *op cit*., p. 38: "The advance of industry, whose involuntary promoter is the bourgeoisie, replaces the isolation of the labourers, due to competition, by their revolutionary combination, due to association".

[109] Karl Marx, [1852] 1969, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte", in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, 1969, *Selected Works*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, p. 360

[110] See Jon Lewis, 1978, "The New Unionism: industrialisation and industrial unions in South Africa, 1925-1930", in Eddie Webster, editor, 1978, *Essays in Southern African Labour History*, Ravan Press, Braamfontein and Jon Lewis, 1984, *Industrialisation and Trade Union Organisation in South Africa 1924-55: the rise and fall of the South African Trades and Labour Council*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, London, Melbourne, New Rochelle, New York, Sydney.

of these unions, but it was by no means the most impressive example of an important current in the labour movement.[111] Likewise, both the anarchists and syndicalists, and the later Communists – as this thesis has shown – were able to develop a relatively interracial socialist movement in the 1910s and 1920s.

In Southern Rhodesia, both the miners' union and the Labour Party were deeply divided over the racial question, the latter splitting in 1941 into an "exclusive white socialist" Labour Party and a "non-racial" Southern Rhodesian Labour Party that set out to organise an African wing.[112] Mzingeli of the Reformed ICU followed "through the trade union, working class solidarity potentialities of the ICU" to link up with progressive White labour and the African section of the Southern Rhodesian Labour Party,[113] as well as the CPSA.[114] On the other hand, the Northern Rhodesian Mine Workers' Union made an unsuccessful move in 1943 to form an African wing to forestall the emergence of independent African unions.[115]

This directs attention to the necessity of examining the *subjective* elements, the actual *experience*, the *politics* of the ways in which people understood and responded to the racialised capitalism of southern Africa. As Charles van Onselen stressed in his pioneering social history of the early Witwatersrand, it is necessary to move beyond the great categories – the races, the classes, the industrial revolution, the "Randlords" who dominated it all – and look at the actual *lived* experience of the world that emerged from 1886. It was vital, he stressed, to both examine "the emerging structures of the society", and to consider how the "processes of class struggle" shaped this new capitalist world, examining, in this respect, "both ruling-class initiative and subordinate-class expression".[116]

It is necessary, at this point, to emphasise that there was nothing inevitable about the emergence of specific political traditions in the South African, and southern African, context. White Labourism – as well as African, Coloured and Indian nationalism – were responses to the deep structure of the country and the region, but the adoption of these *particular* responses to the conflicts within that structure must be *explained* because these were not the only *possible* responses.

White workers were obviously faced by the very real threat of replacement by cheap and unfree African labour, which consistently earned far lower wages than Whites. Johnstone's radical analysis of South Africa made the important point that the job colour bar was a *defensive* response to the "exploitation colour bar" that generated extreme structural insecurity for relatively expensive White workers.[117] This analysis is

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[111] See Alexander, 2000, *op cit*.
[112] See Phimister, 1977, *op cit*., pp. 199-201; Terence O. Ranger, 1970, *The African Voice in Southern Rhodesia, 1898-1930*, Heinemann, London, Ibadan, East Africa Publishing House, Nairobi, pp. 168-9; see Brian Raftopolous, 1997, "The Labour Movement in Zimbabwe, 1945-1965", in Brian Raftopoulous and Ian Phimister, editors, 1997, *Keep on Knocking: a history of the labour movement in Zimbabwe, 1900-97*, Baobab Books, Harare, for the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, p. 72
[113] Ranger, 1970, *op cit*., p. 168-9; also see Phimister, 1988, *op cit*., pp. 267-8
[114] Raftopolous, 1997, *op cit*., p. 61; also see Raftopolous, 1999, *op cit.*, in Raftopolous and Yoshikuni, editors, *op cit.*, pp. 133-6
[115] Berger, 1974, *op cit*., p. 89
[116] Charles van Onselen, 1982, *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914*, Ravan Press, Braamfontein. This work was published simultaneously in two volumes – volume one was subtitled *New Babylon*, volume two, *New Nineveh*– which together forms a single whole. In this thesis, volume one will be referred to as van Onselen, 1982a, *op cit*., and volume two as van Onselen, 1982b, *op cit*. The quotes here are from van Onselen, 1982a, *op cit*., pp. xvi, 40
[117] Johnstone, 1976, *op cit.,* pp. 49-75

also relevant to southern Rhodesia[118] and Mozambique. However, the demand for the job colour bar was not the *inevitable* consequence of the exploitation colour bar, for a variety of responses were possible. As was the case elsewhere, the labour movement in South Africa has always been shaped by struggles between *exclusive* forms of organisation aimed at defending a particular layer, and an *inclusive* approach that strives to *equalise* the conditions of all layers of workers through a common struggle against the ruling class.

While the recent flurry of "Whiteness studies" has the inestimable merit of taking White labour and White consciousness seriously, it, too, has been crippled by a tendency to assume that White identity was inevitably bound to claims for racial privilege: indeed, that White identity is nothing but a means of claiming racial privileges.[119] This is simplistic and simply inaccurate, for it was (and is) perfectly possible to identify as White – even assert a White identity – without adopting a particular consciousness or ideological outlook, without necessarily making a claim to racial privilege, without, in fact, being either racially prejudiced or proposing racial discrimination.

There is no basis to conflate White identities in general with the very particular *politics* of making claims for racially based privileges for Whites. This, however, is precisely what David Roediger does when he asserts that "It is not merely that whiteness is oppressive and false; it is that whiteness is *nothing but* oppressive and false",[120] a claim made by so-called "new abolitionists" who consider the "abolition of whiteness" a progressive approach to struggles against racial discrimination and prejudice.

The sweeping assertions of the "new abolitionists" create an image of a monolithic White identity and politics that is just as essentialist and mythical as pan-Africanist claims for the existence of a universal black essence beyond class and history. People as diverse as the anarchist Parsons – who, like the South Africans, believed racial discrimination and prejudice undermined working class struggles – and the Marxist Lenin – whose theory of a European "labour aristocracy" benefiting from imperialism anticipated Roediger's theory of "Whiteskin privileges" – saw themselves as White, while opposing claims for special privileges for Whites.[121] Roediger's own research provides examples of labour movements – notably the syndicalist IWW – in which White identities were quite compatible with interracial practices and radically egalitarian goals.[122]

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[118] It has been, for example, applied to Southern Rhodesia: see Phimister, 1977, *op cit*., pp. 187, 198-9, 201

[119] This is, for example, the central theme of David Roediger: 1994, *Towards the Abolition of Whiteness: essays on race, politics and working class history*, Verso, London, New York

[120] Roediger, 1994, *op cit*., p. 13, emphasis in original

[121] Parsons fought on the Confederate side in the American Civil War, but his views changed dramatically after the war. He became an outspoken champion of the Radical Republican programme of enfranchising former slaves and providing them with land in the Reconstruction that followed the American Civil War, married a woman of colour, joined the anarchists, and championed interracial worker unity and social revolution. He considered himself White throughout. Yet from Reconstruction onwards "he continued to uphold the rights of coloured people, both in the South and in the North. See Paul Avrich, 1984, *The Haymarket Tragedy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, pp. 9-10, 13, 19. Lenin's works make a definite, if infrequent, distinction between the people of Europe, the "white race", and the "coloured races". However, Lenin's theory that a "parasitic" European "labour aristocracy" had emerged as a distinct "section" of the working class, "bribed" by the profits of imperialism – and thus, a direct threat to socialism – was distinctly similar to Roediger's views that White workers benefit from special privileges. See, for example, V.I. Lenin, [1917a] 1975a, "Imperialism: the highest stage of capitalism: a popular outline", in Lenin, 1975a, *op cit*., pp. 710-715

[122] For example, Roediger's discussion of the activities of the interracial union, the Brotherhood of Timber Workers – an IWW affiliate – in Louisiana and Texas in the early 1910s provides a wide range of data showing how (White) organisers not only contested White identities, but sought to promote the overarching class identity of the "fellow worker" in traditional racial hatreds. For example, according to Roediger, the key IWW activist in the Brotherhood,

In South Africa there have been many different currents amongst White workers, starting with the anarchists and syndicalists, who championed interracial unity to equalise the labour market to the exclusive traditions of White Labourism and Afrikaner nationalism. It is, in short, incorrect to claim that the "class interests" of White workers were "dependent" on "some degree of a job colour bar, a device incompatible with broader working class solidarity",[123] for there were other options.

This is clearly demonstrated by the White founders of anarchism and syndicalism in South Africa, who always regarded themselves as part of the White race, but who continually – and on the basis of an internationalist class politics – consistently rejected racial discrimination and racial prejudice. White identities are just as complex and contested as any other racial identities, and, to this extent, any argument that conflates White identity with a particular politics of "Whiteness" is fundamentally incorrect. It replaces crude Marxist economic determinism of class, with a crude identity politics of race. Even in South Africa, for example, White workers were far from homogeneous, being deeply divided ethnically, historically and politically. White Labourism itself, for example, was almost entirely a movement of English-speaking Whites, and never drew in any real number of Afrikaner workers.

It is, then, somewhat misleading to formulate the rise of White Labourism in the British Empire as "The Imperial Working Class makes itself 'White'".[124] The "imperial working class" of British workers in the Empire, linked by migration and cultural flows,[125] was never a single unit with a unified outlook or a shared politics, and White identity in no sense implied a common adherence to politics of claiming racial privileges for Whites.

If it was the case that many "imagined themselves as citizens of what might be called the Empire of Labour", which combined a "project of racial domination and class struggle" in "an imagination that was simultaneously British, proletarian, imperial, socialist and racist",[126] this "Empire of Labour" was only *one* outlook, *one* project, within a larger British working class diaspora and larger White working class in the British Empire. It existed alongside the nationalism of the Afrikaners, the Irish and the Quebecois – not to mention many Australians and Scots – as well the anti-colonial social democracy of the Independent Labour Party and Kier Hardie, and the radical labour internationalism of the anarchists and syndicalists of many countries.

Finally, the assumption that racial discrimination and prejudice benefits large numbers of workers – the claim that racial discrimination benefits racially defined segments of the working class, which lies at the heart of much "Whiteness studies" – is highly questionable. Racial divisions worsen the overall conditions of

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Covington Hall, distinguished between "White MEN" who joined the union, and the cowardly "White trash" who preferred to be "company suckers", and sought to appropriate elements of southern White history and experience for the Brotherhood, not going as far as to propose a secret "Clan of Toil" to wage class war. The same article also draws attention to ongoing struggles within the American labour movement over exclusive versus inclusive styles of unionism. See Roediger, 1994, *op cit*., pp. 127-180. These activities, whatever their limitations, are drawn from Roediger's own data, and can hardly be squared to his general thesis that "It is not merely that whiteness is oppressive and false; it is that whiteness is *nothing but* oppressive and false".

[123] An argument made by, for example, Phimister, 1977, *op cit*., p. 203

[124] For example, Hyslop, 1999, *op cit.*

[125] Hyslop, 2002, *op cit*., p. 3

[126] Hyslop, 2002, *op cit*., pp. 3-4

the working class by fragmenting resistance, disorganising labour movements and pitting workers against one another to benefit the ruling class.[127] It is impossible to understand the politics and struggles of the White working class in South Africa before 1924 *unless* the contradiction between the exploitation colour bar, premised on colonial domination and racial oppression, and the reproduction of the White working class is understood. Given these points, calls for the "abolition" of Whiteness have highly problematic implications for working class movements.[128]

10.9. Nationalism, national liberation, and class politics

Consequently, there is little basis for the claim made by Roediger and so-called "new abolitionists" that "Whiteness" must be "abolished" as a precondition for working class unity and socialism. White identities are not homogeneous, and there is no necessary link between "whiteness" and racial privileges. The view that "whiteness" is the central cause of racial discrimination and prejudice – which coincides with the claims of liberal South African scholarship – is tantamount to claiming that racial identity causes racial discrimination and prejudice, a gross simplification of the history of race and racial oppression. The role of subjectivity – of politics – in shaping understandings of the worlds of capitalism is crucial. A basic distinction must always be drawn between White identity(s) and particular ideological and union practices: White labour is not the same as White Labourism.

Likewise, it is important to always draw a clear distinction between the very *particular* politics of *nationalism* and struggles against national and racial oppression, that is, those struggles commonly seen as struggles for *national liberation*. African, Coloured and Indian nationalist groups, for example, all expressed very real grievances that were part of the capitalism of southern Africa. At the same time, Afrikaner nationalism raised unavoidable questions about South Africa, such the issue of imperial conquest, the fact

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[127] Al Szymanski tested the proposition that White workers in the United States gained from racial discrimination and prejudice. Comparing White workers, and workers of colour, in established that the narrower the gap between the wages of Whites and people of colour, the higher White earnings were relative to White earnings elsewhere, and that the larger the population of people of colour, the higher the inequality amongst Whites. This suggested that racial discrimination at work undermined the conditions of White workers, and that the existence of substantial groups of people facing racial discrimination of this sort impacted negatively on the White working class, but not the Whites of the middle and upper classes. Szymanski suggested that more intense racial discrimination led to lower White earnings because of its effects on the intermediate variable of working class solidarity, i.e., it undermined trade unionism, economically disadvantaging White workers. See Al Szymanski, 1976, "Racial Discrimination and White Gain", *American Sociological Review*, no. 41. Pekka Petlota – who does not, it should be stated, accept "the class theory of Marx" – conceded that in the United States, workers are divided "into ethnic groups, with mixed goals and very little organised cooperation, except in nationalistic and ethnic terms", and have "paid a heavy price for that", with consistently declining real wages despite steady economic growth. It is in this sense that Peter Alexander suggested that the victory of the apartheid government in 1948 was a defeat for *all* South African workers, in that fundamentally undermined the independence and power of the trade union movement. This is somewhat overstated – there are important differences between the situation in the United States and South Africa – but is an interesting point. See Alexander, 2000, *op cit*., pp. 123-6, and Pelota, 1995, *op cit*., p. 253, p. 257, n. 9

[128] Given that White workers form the majority in the advanced industrial countries, then, to argue that "White privilege" must be abolished is, in fact, to propose a strategy of demanding *worse* conditions for the majority of the working class in the heartland of capitalism. Given that racial identities cannot be voluntarily "abolished" – inasmuch as race is a broader and ascriptive system of identity – the "abolition" of any particular racial identity can only be an authoritarian action.

that the poor Whites who were overwhelmingly Afrikaners and the uncertain future of cultural and racial future of minorities in southern Africa.

However, both sets of nationalists – the nationalists of colour, and the White nationalists – approached these questions via a *nationalist* model, involving a politics of cross-class unity within a given nationality, a concomitant silence on the basic fact of capitalism, and a drive for State power. This inscribed particular outcomes on their histories: a tendency to reproduce, rather than transcend, racial and national divisions, to undermine a class politics and promote a Statist outlook, a consistent failure to confront capitalism as a central factor in the inequities of South Africa's history and social structure, and a Statist outlook.

Was *another* response possible? Was nationalism the only possibility in national liberation struggles, their natural and inevitable form? Many analysts have argued such a case. For Edward Said, for example, nationalism was "the mobilising force that coalesced into resistance against an alien and occupying empire on the part of peoples possessing a common history, religion and language".[129] Likewise Pekka Peltola asserts that it is "only natural" that nationalism would emerge as the primary response to colonialism, "given the intellectuals to formulate it".[130]

Yet matters were never quite as simple as that. National liberation struggles also involved an extremely wide range of elements. What "resistance" involved, required, and sought, whether or not "peoples" were the agents that fought the "empire", and whether the "empire" was the problem, whether not a "common history, religion and language" were the bases for solidarity and mobilisation, whether or not the problems with "empire" was that it was an "alien" force, what role "the intellectuals" would play in national liberation struggles, and what ideology they would actually help "formulate" – all of these were *questions* without self-evident answers.

The point is that the segregated approaches of African, Coloured and Indian nationalist groups – not to mention of White Labourism and Afrikaner nationalism – were by no means simply *imposed* by objective circumstances. They reflected particular political *responses* to circumstances, influenced by specific sets of interests and ways of seeing the world, and particular agendas. An interracial and anti-capitalist politics was undoubtedly difficult to achieve in South Africa, but was by no means a futile task. There is little doubt that African nationalism came to dominate the decolonisation process in Africa – including South Africa – after the Second World War, but admitting the power of nationalism in given circumstances is not the same as assuming that it was the inevitable, "natural" and necessary response to situations of conquest and discrimination.

Internationally, colonial and imperial domination has been met with large-scale responses ranging from millenarian religion (for example, the "Ghost Dance" amongst the Sioux in the United States in the late nineteenth century), to anarchism (for example, the Makhnovist movement in the Ukraine form 1918 to

[129] Edward Said, 1993, *Culture and Imperialism*, Vintage, London, p. 269
[130] Peltola, 1995, *op cit*., pp. 90-1

1921),[131] to Marxism (for example, Maoism in China), to religious fundamentalism (for example, the clerics who captured the Iranian Revolution of 1979). In South Africa, African responses to conquest were equally diverse, ranging from waves of religious millenarianism – the Israelite sect of the 1920s was only one example – to moderate demands for assimilation – the ratification of the discriminatory Union of South Act ended an era of African politics shaped by Booker T. Washington and the mid-Victorian vision of universal progress for "civilized men" – to the radicalism of the Africans drawn towards syndicalism and Trotskyism. Afrikaner workers may have tried to preserve a distinctive culture, and resist economic marginalisation, but they adopted a variety of positions "in relation to Afrikaner nationalism and ethnic mobilisation", which was seen as only one possible solution.[132] Krikler supplements this point, noting that the radicalism of many Afrikaners participating in the Rand Revolt was often at odds with Afrikaner nationalism, even when those Afrikaners stressed their ethnic identity.[133]

The South African anarchist and syndicalist approach to struggles for national liberation, centred on the view that One Big Union could emancipate workers of colour from *both* capitalist exploitation and domination, and the "tyrant laws"[134] of national oppression, provides a striking example of a non-nationalist – indeed, an overtly anti-nationalist – approach. The two-stage "Native Republic" thesis adopted by the CPSA in 1928, and the "permanent revolution" approach of the later Trotskyists, which diachronically separated national liberation and socialism into separate stages and strategic tasks, and disarticulate national liberation from any change in the relations of production. The first stage involves the transformation of capitalism, not its abolition; the task becomes replacing a bad capitalism with a good one, which would, somehow, lay the basis for a subsequent socialist transition.

In sharp contrast, groups like the International Socialist League *fused* the struggle against capitalism and national oppression into *one simultaneous stage*, centred on One Big Union that would unite the whole working class, and create a common society based upon libertarian socialism and self-management. Thus, "The whole of the fight against capitalism is a fight with the prejudices and capitalist-engendered aversions of the workers": "Conquer these and capitalism is conquered".[135] It was only through One Big Union that the working class could be united, only through a united working class that revolution was possible, and only through working class unity and struggle – including struggle against both racial discrimination and racial prejudices – that national oppression could be ended. With "[o]ne union for all the workers in each industry, and One Big Union for the entire working class", it would be possible to "banish for ever the tyranny of greed from the land of gold".[136] It was only through such methods that unjust laws could be abolished:[137]

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[131] The question of whether Ukrainian national liberation required a nation-state was a highly contentious issue as far back as the 1870s, with key figures in the liberation movement like Mikhailo Drahomanov arguing for an anarchist solution: see *inter alia* Serge Cipko, 1990, "Mikhail Bakunin and the National Question", *The Raven*, vol.3, no. 1, pp. 11-12 and John-Paul Himka, "Young Radicals and Independent Statehood: the idea of a Ukrainian nation-state, 1890-1895", *Slavic Review*, vol.41, no. 2

[132] Visser, 2003, *op cit*., p. 19

[133] Krikler, 2005, *op cit*., pp. 107-109

[134] *The International*, 7 December 1917, "International Socialism and the Native: no labour movement without the black proletariat"

[135] *The International*, 22 September 1916, "Disunity of Labour"

[136] *The Bolshevik*, December 1919, "'Efficiency Dope'"

> Once organised, these workers can bust-up any tyrannical law. Unorganised, these laws are iron bands. Organise industrially, they become worth no more than the paper rags they are written on.

The point here is not to assess the viability or correctness of this approach. It is to underline the broader point that national liberation should not be conflated with nationalism, and that nationalism should not be *naturalised* as the inevitable and essential response to national oppression; it is also emphasises that a syndicalist approach was in no sense a type of "economism", but one that posed a genuine alternative to the "Native Republic" approach.

Benedict Anderson may have been correct to describe the nation as an "imagined community" that emerged in modernity, but surely the nation was not the only community imaginable.[138] Nor was nationalism the only possible approach to national and colonial questions. To reject a nationalist approach – as the South African anarchists and syndicalists, like their counterparts internationally, including Bakunin himself, certainly did – did not imply that questions of national oppression were to be ignored, or treated as "momentary abstractions" that would "automatically disappear".[139] Nationalism was only one *possible* approach to the contradictions of colonial and postcolonial situations.

The influence of nationalism must, therefore, be *explained* rather than assumed: if, or when, nationalism comes to the fore in a broader movement for national liberation, this must be analysed, rather than assumed to be the normal situation;[140] the *relative* influence of nationalism must always be carefully *assessed*, not assumed or simply read off the fact of a national liberation struggle; it is incorrect to refer to *national liberation* struggles as *nationalist* struggles, for nationalism is only one strand in such struggles.

10.10. Transnational actors and processes in working class history

Labour history has very often been constructed within the paradigm of the nation-State, as a series of discrete *national* labour histories, centred on national working classes. A growing literature – itself partly inspired by the contemporary impact of "globalisation" – has started to question the use of the nation-State as the unit of analysis, with a "strong increase in the need to go beyond national boundaries" and avoid "methodological nationalism".[141] At one level, this involves growing attention to the importance of locating national developments within a broader context. At another level, it requires attention to the importance of

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[137] *The International*, 19 October 1917, "The Pass Laws: organise for their abolition".
[138] Benedict Anderson, 1983, *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism*, Verso, London
[139] Legassick, M., 1973, *op cit.*, p. 3, and note 1. Legassick is citing Simons, *op cit.*, p. 290. C.f. also Dixon, February 12 1997, *op cit.*
[140] I make this point in an earlier paper: Lucien van der Walt, 2001a, "Between Racial Capitalism and Revolutionary Socialism: revolutionary syndicalism, the national question and South African socialism, 1910-1928", paper presented at The Burden Of Race? "Whiteness" and "Blackness" In Modern South Africa conference, History Workshop and Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of the Witwatersrand, 5 to 8 July 2001
[141] Marcel van der Linden, 1999, "Transnationalising American Labour History", *The Journal of American History*, vol.86, no. 3, pp. 1080-1081

specifically transnational processes and connections such as immigration, international connections, organisations, ideological diffusions and solidarities, as well as identities that do not neatly fit into national borders.

The material presented in this thesis strongly reinforces the argument for the need to transnationalise labour history – something particularly pertinent for the period of the study. The evolution of local radicalism cannot be understood as an autonomous – or "nationally" bounded – development. It has to be seen as a process taking place within a larger process, the "first globalisation" in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, based upon large-scale flows of capital, commodities and labour in a relatively open international economy linked to rapidly improving communication and transportation systems and transnational political formations, like the British Empire.

Anarchism and syndicalism, for example, came into South Africa from abroad, and were carried by immigrants like Henry Glasse and Dunbar, and the distribution of overseas radical publications from sources such as Freedom Press, Charles H. Kerr, and the IWW and Socialist Labour Party presses. The diffusion of anarchist and syndicalist ideas and models across borders was crucial, and it is striking how quickly and how profoundly the 1908 IWW schism set the terms of debate amongst local radicals. Interestingly, however, De Leonism generally came to South Africa via the Socialist Labour Party in Scotland, rather than directly from Detroit – a factor that may help explain its relatively flexible and non-sectarian manifestation in South Africa, as compared to the dogmatism of the American parent body.

The circulation of activists was quite crucial, and showed that influences did not flow only in one direction. Writings by Henry Glasse were published in London, and showed that he still maintained the network he developed in the 1870s and 1880s. The Englishman Tom Mann's sojourn in Australia shifted his politics to syndicalism, and his visit to South Africa in 1910, *en route* to Britain and France, formed the immediate backdrop for the formation of the local IWW and Socialist Labour Party. IWW sailors, stopping off in Cape Town, later taught the Industrial Socialist League "to sing … quite a repertoire of the songs of labour".[142] In turn, example of the Durban Indian Workers' Industrial Union was picked up in India, where a "Lahore paper" asked "Is there no lesson for this to the working classes in India?"[143]

Crawford's international tour of 1910 and 1911 saw the South African-based activists forge links with a range of individuals and movements worldwide, and discover that the New Zealand Socialist Party had appropriated the name and logo design of the *Voice of Labour* for its official press organ.[144] Glynn left South Africa for Australia, where he became a key figure in that country's IWW, and worked alongside Peter Larkin, brother of Irish syndicalist Jim Larkin. Andrews' visit to Britain in 1918 and 1919 did a great deal to raise awareness on the left regarding the national question in South Africa, and also resulted in the International Socialist League systematically promoting the model of the shopstewards' movement from Scotland. Later, Ivon Jones' trip to the Soviet Union did a great deal to shift local radicalism towards Bolshevism.

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[142] Manuel Lopes, 24 January 1919, "Cape Notes", *The International*
[143] Cited in *The International*, 9 November 1917
[144] Archibald Crawford, 22 March 1912, "From the Watch Tower", *The Voice of Labour*

Such flows of people, as well as correspondence and press, helped link South African socialism into the "glorious period" of anarchism and syndicalism then taking place internationally. Further, if White immigrants helped connect South Africa to the "glorious period" of syndicalism in the East and the West, it was African and Coloured migrants helped those ideas flow northwards from South Africa in the 1920s via the ICU, and through men like Jimmy La Guma, Joseph Kazembe, Masotsha Ndhlovu and Robert Sambo. Ethnic networks played a role here, with Kazemebe, Ndhlovu and Sambo all forming part of a larger movement of educated men from northern Nyasaland through the subcontinent.

It is striking that both the Industrial Workers of Africa and the ICU explicitly aimed at organising across State boundaries. The Industrial Workers of Africa called for unity amongst "Basuto, Zulu," and "Shangaan."[145] "Basuto" was a term that included workers from Lesotho, while "Shangaan" was a specific reference to Mozambican workers. the 1920 Bloemfontein meeting that gave rise to the ICU explicitly aimed to organise a transnational union, "one great union of skilled and unskilled workers … south of the Zambesi":[146] the Zambezi does not border South Africa. If the influences of men like Booker T. Washington, Du Bois and Garvey were evidence of a "transatlantic connection" between local African activists to black America,[147] then the impact of the IWW on men like Cetiwe, Kraai and Champion was evidence of another.

If one envisages the political and social connections between African communities on the Atlantic seaboard as a "Black Atlantic",[148] then syndicalism was part of the world of the Black Atlantic. At the same time, of course, the IWW message was modified by the ICU, warning us against what Barbara Weinstein refers to as the "diffusion model of intellectual history" where ideas and theory originate in Europe (or, in the case of the broad anarchist tradition, Europe and both Americas), and flow into and circulate unchanged elsewhere.[149] They were appropriated and changed in many ways in the process, and one can readily appreciate that the ICU's mixture of syndicalist, nationalist and other ideas was not exactly what Bakunin had in mind.

Of course, such cross-border influences and linkages were by no means confined to the broad anarchist tradition. African nationalism, for example, was deeply influenced by black America, and the Indian National Congress of India was the template for the Natal Indian Congress and the South African Native National Congress. Early African nationalist groups in Southern Rhodesia were often directly modelled upon – and advised by – the ANC in South Africa.[150] White Labourism spread north from South Africa, following the channels carved out by the movement of White labour: in Southern Rhodesia, several Labour Parties and unions were formed on a colour bar platform, and in the 1930s the South African Mine Workers' Union extended its membership to both Rhodesias.

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[145] The title of the leaflet, *Ba Sebetsi Ba Afrika*, is sometimes given as "Listen, Workers, Listen!" A more accurate rendering is "To the Workers of Africa". It was issued in Sotho and Zulu translation, one version on each side in 1917. The translation used here is that provided by Wilfred Jali, a police spy who infiltrated the Industrial Workers of Africa, and was attached to report on meeting of 1 November 1917, Department of Justice, JD 3/527/17, *op cit.*

[146] Quoted in Wickens, 1973, *op cit*., pp. 145-146

[147] Couzens, 1982, *op cit.*

[148] Paul Gilroy, 2002, *The Black Atlantic: modernity and double consciousness*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge

[149] Barbara Weinstein, 2005, "History without a Cause? Grand narratives, world history, and the postcolonial dilemma", *International Review of Social History*, vol.50, part 1, pp. 85, 87

[150] Phimister, 1988, *op cit*., pp. 148-153; Ranger, 1970, *op cit.,* pp. 56-63

The fact of a mobile labour force that continually crossed borders linked people in different countries to one another, and the human rivers of labour provided an important channel through which activists, ideas and organisational models spread.[151] What was distinctive about the local anarchist and syndicalist tradition was that its objectively transnational character corresponded to a transnational *imagination* and identity. Ethnic networks played a role – whether in the form of Scottish activists who linked South Africa with syndicalism in Britain, or northern Nyasas who spread the ICU in southern Africa – and the conduits of labour and ideology in the region were bounded by nationality and race. Unlike the African nationalists, however, or the White Labourites, the anarchists and syndicalists aimed at an all-inclusive popular movement on a class basis, to be centred on One Big Union, which would play a key role in an international social revolution. Groups like the ANC structured their politics around racial identity – and, in many cases, around the narrow class claims of African elites – while White Labourites spoke of working class solidarity, but did not extend such solidarity beyond the threshold of the White race.

The anarchists and syndicalists, by contrast, were not just part of a transnational and international movement, but they were fiercely *internationalist*. Many global imaginations are possible in a transnational working class: the broad anarchist tradition was distinguished by its universalist and class-based vision. The lived reality of a transnational working class was incorporated into a worldview that – to cite Mann – "knew neither race nor colour, class nor creed", for they "were all one in the bonds of brotherhood".[152] Even in the ICU – influenced, as it was, by nationalism, syndicalism, and much else besides – this proletarian internationalism could come to the fore, as when the ICU in Southern Rhodesia praised White workers' demands for a Wage Board to set wages, and concluded that we "are going to fight for both peoples",[153] and even referred to the Labour Party as a body "similar in its aims and aspirations", suggesting the ICU would join the next big strike by Whites.[154] The Southern African case tends, therefore, to confirm the view that anarchism and syndicalism were international phenomena, linked by transnational diffusions of activists and ideas with immigration, cross-border activism and international labour processes all playing an important role.[155]

10.11. In conclusion: the relevance of anarchism and syndicalism to labour history and African history

A final, general, point follows from the discussion in this chapter, as well as from the broader findings of this thesis: anarchism and syndicalism must be taken seriously by scholars of labour history and African history. Joll was correct to chide historians for ignoring anarchism, which he attributed to "a whole way of looking at history" that holds that "it is the causes which triumph that alone should interest the

[151] I am focussing here on labour and political movements, but other ideas and models could obviously also spread through these channels: for example, the growth of Protestant Christianity among Africans in Mozambique was directly linked to the migrant labour system: see Harries, 1994, *op cit*. chapter 4
[152] Quoted Tsuzuki, 1991, *op cit.* , p. 169
[153] Quoted in Ranger, 1970, *op cit*., pp. 155-6
[154] Quoted in Ranger, 1970, *op cit*., pp. 162, 165
[155] Van der Linden, 1998, *op cit*., pp. 10-12

historian".[156] It does *not*, however, follow that the broad anarchist tradition never had moments of "triumph", or that it was "never more than a minority attraction",[157] a matter of little consequence to the history of socialism or labour, except in Spain, where it supposedly "became a mass movement … to an extent that it never did elsewhere".[158]

A growing body of literature has quietly overthrown this perspective, even if the overthrow has not been widely recognised. It is now clear that anarchism and syndicalism had an enormous impact on left-wing, labour and national liberation movements in East Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America, and the role of anarchism and syndicalism in parts of Africa and the Middle East is currently being rediscovered. Spanish exceptionalism is certainly no longer viable – even if it remains commonly assumed. While the Spanish CNT held the allegiance of only half the organised working class, anarchism and syndicalism dominated contemporary labour movements in countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, France, Portugal, Mexico, the Netherlands, Peru and Uruguay. It is hard to defend the view that anarchism and syndicalism were "never more than a minority attraction".

Spain had neither the only "mass movement", nor, indeed, the largest, if measured relative to the influence in the organised labour movement. Even in countries like Britain, significant syndicalist currents emerged, with a syndicalist faction even developing in the British Socialist Party, despite Hyman's best efforts.[159] There is little doubt that the broad anarchist tradition declined in the 1920s, particularly as a result of haemorrhaging to the new Communist Parties, but it does not follow that the shift was quick or easy: contrary to Hobsbawm's view that "Marxism was henceforth identified with actively revolutionary movements", with anarchism undergoing a "dramatic and uninterrupted decline",[160] many movements – notably in East Asia, but also in parts of Europe and Latin America – continued to exist – even grow – while many early Communist Parties retained anarchist and syndicalist influences.

Taking anarchism and syndicalism seriously opens up new vistas for the scholar: as my examination of the South African case shows, a recognition of the role of the broad anarchist tradition sheds new light on the early left and labour movement – including early unions amongst workers of colour – as well as revealing important aspects of the history of African and Coloured nationalism, the Rand Revolt and the ICU. The traditions of the Communist school, with its appropriation of local socialist history for the Party, have made it difficult to recognise important elements of the heritage of popular struggles in South Africa. The material on the Rhodesias and South West Africa suggests these points are relevant to African history, and labour history, more generally.

Finally, in a period in which classical Marxism is increasingly discredited, the broad anarchist tradition is undoubtedly of interest to substantial sections of the contemporary "anti-globalisation" movement. In this situation, to "recall anarchism, which Leninist Marxism suppressed", is, Arif Dirlik argues, to rethink the meaning and possibilities of the socialist tradition, and "recall the democratic ideals for which

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[156] Joll, 1964, *op cit.*, pp. 11-12
[157] Kedward, 1971, *op cit*., p. 120
[158] Joll, 1965, *op cit.*, p. 224; also see Breitbart, 1979, *op cit*., p.1; Marshall, 1994, *op cit*., p. 453
[159] Tsuzuki, 1991, *op cit.,* pp. 142-3
[160] Hobsbawm, 1993, *op cit.,* pp. 72-3

anarchism … served as a repository".[161] In rejecting the "frequent assumption that revolutionary Socialism is by and large covered by the term 'Marxism-Leninism'", it becomes possible to rediscover alternative, libertarian socialist traditions like anarchism, syndicalism and Council Communism,[162] and to encounter, in anarchism, an analytical model, centred on class, that voids the determinism and functionalism of classical Marxism.

[161] Dirlik, 1991, *op cit*., pp. 3-4, also see pp. 7-8
[162] Schechter, 1994, *op cit.,* pp. 1-2

APPENDICES

Document 1:

Preamble to the 1905 Constitution of the IWW, Chicago 1905

Source: Dubofksy, 1987, *op cit.*, appendix 2, pp. 159-160

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life.

Between these two classes a struggle must go on until all the toilers come together on the political, as well as on the industrial field, and take and hold that which they produce by their labour through an economic organisation of the working class without affiliation to any political party.

The rapid gathering of wealth and the centring of the management of industries into fewer and fewer hands make the trades unions unable to cope with the ever-growing power of the employing class, because the trades unions foster a state of things which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping defeat one another in wage wars. The trades unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers in the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers.

These sad conditions can be changed and the interests of the working class upheld only by an organisation formed in such a way that all its members in any one industry, or in all industries, if necessary, cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all.

Document 2:

Preamble **to the Constitution of the IWW, Chicago, 1908**

Source: Dubofksy, 1987, *op cit.*, appendix 2, pp. 159-160

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of the working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life.

Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organise as a class, take possession of the earth and the machinery of production and abolish the wage system.

We find that the centring of the management of the industries into fewer and fewer hands makes the trade unions unable to cope with the ever growing power of the employing class. The trades unions foster a state of affairs which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping defeat one another in wage wars. Moreover, the trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers.

These conditions can be changed and the interest of the working class upheld only by an organisation formed in such a way that all its members in any one industry, or in all industries if necessary, cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all.

Instead of the conservative motto, "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work", we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, "Abolition of the wage system".

It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organised, not only for every-day struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organising industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.

Document 3:

"Industrial Unionism in South Africa", IWW, Johannesburg, 1910

Source: Industrial Solidarity, 1 October 1910

The "Industrial Workers' Union" is an organisation recently formed in South Africa. It is a new link in the international chain that is forming the Industrial Workers of the World. From the "Voice of Labour", published at Johannesburg, we take the following, signed by "T. Glynn, General Secretary S.A. Industrial Workers' Union". It shows that they are getting on the right track down in the Southern Hemisphere:

A speaker at the Market Square last Sunday week, defined what he conceived to be the difference between the socialism of the industrial unionist and other socialists. His explanation was good enough so far as it went, but as it does not altogether cover my views on the matter I should like to give them here.

Industrial unionism is, in my opinion, only another name for constructive socialism. I believe that if every wage earner tomorrow, from the high salaried official to the lowest paid wage slave was converted to a belief in socialist economics the wage labour system would still continue, if the workers were not systematically organised inside of the industries so that order and method would prevail in mode of production and distribution.

And here rests the difference. The ordinary socialist aims solely at making converts to socialism, and there his work ends. Industrial unionism, on the other hand, aims not only at making the working class conscious of their common interests, but also at preparing them and educating them for intelligent co-operation when the time is ripe for the overthrow of the capitalist system. As the preamble of the Industrial Workers of the World truly says: "By organising industrially we are forming the structure of the new society in the shell of the old".

But apart from the ultimate goal which all class conscious workers have in view, the industrial unionist believes in accomplishing something for his class here and now. To those socialists who raise the cry of "palliatives", I would state that economic relief, won by organisation and agitation, can in no sense be described as palliating the present system.

Palliatives I look upon as those political sops from time to time thrown to the working class by bourgeois and parliaments in order to make them believe that the capitalist is the real benefactor, but which, experience has proved, leaves their position no better, if not worse, than before.

In this category may be placed all the "reforms" placed on the statute book with the aid and approval of socalled [*sic*] labour leaders by the first Transvaal Parliament, including the Industrial Disputes Act and the Workmen's Compensation Act. The former is a piece of class legislation in the interests of the masters of the very first order; the latter, while it may be viewed with approval by a section of the workers who follow more or less dangerous occupations, does nothing of course to relieve the economic position of the working class as a whole.

Genuine industrial reforms, such as increased wage [*sic*], better conditions of labour, etc., are the only reforms that directly affect the rent, interest and profit of capitalist society, and as the capitalist class have all the forces of the State at their disposal to protect the sanctity of this trinity, it follows that it is only the by the workers organising as a class that sufficient economic pressure can be brought to bear to make them disgorge.

Appealing to their sense of justice will not make them do so, as the capitalist has no sense of justice where his pocket is concerned; windy labour politicians out for self-advertisement will not do so, as the capitalist

class can afford to ignore "oratory", and also pay for silence; the ballot box, in fact, cannot do so, as, whether the capitalist is in parliament or not he still rules on the economic field, and is therefore the wage slave's master.

Industrial organisation, I repeat, and that in its strictly literal sense, is the only weapon by which he can be made to stand and deliver, and the working class will find that when properly organised a well meant threat to curtail profits by withholding labour will have the desired effect.

"But", says the craft unionist, "that means strike; I have had enough of strikes". Probably too much. But in passing it may be remarked that the average trade unionist when making this statement seems to forget that for very time he has revolted against his masters he has scabbed a dozen times on his class. However, this is a clear case of where the system, not the individual, must be held responsible.

The fault of the trade unions in this respect is that they refuse to recognise that the scab is none the less a scab though he may pay his monthly dues regularly and carry a union ticket in his breast pocket, if he goes to work whilst his fellow workers employed in the same industry or in any industry directly related, are on strike for better conditions of labour.

The strike of the future will be as different from that with which we have been acquainted as cadet manoeuvres are from the battle of Waterloo. The strike of the near future will be the INDUSTRIAL strike, and if found to be ineffective, the national strike will no doubt be called to its aid. As time goes on the international strike will no doubt play a most important part in forging the final links in the golden chain of working class solidarity, and of driving the last nails into the coffin of the capitalist system.

Document 4:

"WAR!", Wilfred Harrison, War on War League, Cape Town, 1914

Source: Simons Papers, Manuscript and Archives section, African Studies Centre, University of Cape Town, Fragile Papers section

War! A familiar word, a necessary phenomenon, we are told, to maintain, our libertarian traditions and national civilisation. We admit it because it is customary to admit prevailing conditions without question or analysis. Head hunting or warfare in primitive times was customary, and also considered essential to man's religion and destiny; then between individuals, now between organised nations, the same instinct is there, the same purpose, the same atrocious acts.

A distinct analogy between primitive and modern warfare; but the primitive method has been analysed and admitted to be barbarous, brutal and inhuman: modern organised warfare is still customary, lawful, just and heroic! The former was renounced because the perpetrators lived in a condition of savagery. The latter is accepted because the man, and not the deed, is considered a civilised product.

It is to-day NOT murder, it is war! So let us give it the necessary analysis and for the moment cast aside sentiment. Picture the "hero" glorified and awarded the Victoria or Iron Cross in the melee that brought him his fame. The reports of the pistol, the clash of the sword, the dying moans of those whom he has slain, and over whom he stands a maddened and excited victor bespattered in human blood. The heads of mothers' sons and children's fathers lie at his feet and their blood and brains besmear the ground, while in a dark garret to-day these mothers and children mourn with bitter tears their loss that has been his fame.

These and other gruesome deeds are demanded of you who respond to the ironical call of "Your country needs you!" Truly it does! In your country there is always unemployment, high rents and dear goods. There is always bad housing and disease, there is squalor and filth in home and factory, there is poverty and starvation. So YOUR country needs you! And yet in your country there are factories filled with goods eaten with moth and decay, and there are palaces and mansions in which a superfluity of luxury abounds.

Yes! YOUR country needs YOU. Are you prepared to fight for your country and help to bring wealth, happiness and peace with ALL people?

Document 5:

"Revolutionary Industrial Unionism", International Socialist League, Johannesburg, 1917

Source: The International, 1 June 1917

The International Socialist League puts forward its candidates for the provincial Council Elections not because it thinks that getting Socialists into public office will alone emancipate the workers, but because we believe that the industrial organisation of the workers should be supported by that of the political. On the other hand we wish to emphasize the point that the mere putting of representatives into public office is futile unless backed up by the economic power of that class. Economic organisation is the power of our class, but if we are to emancipate ourselves, we must organise in a different manner and on a different basis. The basis on which we must organise is that of Industrial Unionism.

Revolutionary Industrial Unionism – that is, the proposition that all wage-workers must come together in "organisation according to Industry"; the grouping of the workers, in each of the big divisions of industry as a whole into local, national, and international industrial unions, all to be interlocked, dove-tailed, welded into One Big Union of all wage workers; a big union bent on aggressively forging ahead, and compelling shorter hours, more wages and better conditions in and out of the workshops and as each advaunce [*sic*] is made, holding on grimly to the fresh gain with the determination to push still forward – gaining strength from each victory and learning by every temporary set-back – until the working class is able to take possession and control of the machinery, premises and materials of production right from the capitalists' hands, and use that control to distribute the product entirely amongst the workers.

Industrial Unionism is revolutionary – because it is based on the class struggle and aims to bring about a social revolution by shifting the control of production from the capitalists – the non-producers – to the workers – the producers. A small portion of the population controls the means of life and buys labour as cheaply as possible. The vast majority of the population in order to live at all, have to sell their labour – as dearly as possible.

The working class, on the average, only get enough to just live on out of the vast total of what they produce, while the capitalist class revel in luxury, extravagance and waste. There, a struggle – known as the Class Struggle – goes on ceaselessly for the product, a struggle which can only be ended by the workers taking possession. The only way the workers can add to their bare existence which they receive is by combination – by organisation. Ordinary unionism as we know it – Trade Unionism – does not aim at ending the struggle, but tinkers with conditions, barters for bits of the product instead of claiming and struggling for the whole. It therefore perpetuates the wage system with its necessarily ceaseless struggle …

Revolutionary Industrial Unionism embraces every individual, unit, section, branch, and department of industry. It takes every colour, creed and nation. Revolutionary Industrial Unionism is "organised efficiency". Every worker in every industry; every industry part and parcel of one great whole.

And, in the forging of the weapon we get paid, "not in the sky when we die", but as we go along; for every fight won, every advance made through efficient organisation can be held by the same means, and will be reflected in better conditions.

Workers of South Africa, become Class Conscious instead of Craft Conscious!

Document 6:

"International Socialism and the Native: no labour movement without the black proletariat", International Socialist League, Johannesburg, 1917

Source: The International, 7 December 1917

The Management Committee of the ISL has issued the following statement to the Branches as a basis of discussion at the Annual Conference. The MC recommends this statement of our attitude towards the native worker to be embodied in the League platform for 1918 propaganda. Comrades are invited to read it with a view to discussion, and amendment if they so desire, at the Conference of the League, which will be held in January 6th next.

The abolition of the Native Indenture, Passport and Compound Systems and the lifting of the Native Workers to the Political and Industrial Status of the White is an essential step towards the Emancipation of the Working-class in South Africa.

Society is divided into two classes: the working class, doing all the labour; and the idle class, living on the fruits of labour. Strictly speaking therefore there is no 'Native Problem'. There is only a working class problem. But within the working class arises the problem of the native worker. In all countries the influx of cheap labour is used as a whip wherewith to beat the whole of the working class.

In South Africa the cheap labourer, being black, is doubly resented by the higher paid worker. And the employers foment this colour-prejudice through their newspapers, and are thus able to wield the whip of cheap labour with double effect. The suicidal prejudice of the white workers against the coloured workers is the only native problem. This prejudice manufactures the scabs that beat both black and white in the day when the solidarity of all the workers is essential to victory.

We speak therefore to the workers, and above all to those workers who look forward to the emancipation of labour from wage slavery. There can be no appeal to any section of society outside the working-class, as their interests are opposed to labour, and their opinions therefore of no account to us.

One section of the workers cannot benefit itself at the expense of the rest without betraying the hope of the children. Those who receive favours from the master class may lift themselves out of the propertyless proletariat: but their children will inherit the fear of the abyss which their fathers helped to create.

The power of labour lies in its ability to stop, or to control industry. *All* the workers are needed for this. *Labour*, not *Colour*, is the watchword of solidarity. If all those who labour cannot share in the emancipation of Labour, none can be emancipated. 'Labour cannot emancipate itself in the White while in the Black it is branded.' (Marx)

So long as we refuse to admit the native worker into the ranks of Labour solidarity, so long will cheap labour pull down the white worker to the native standard of existence. But so soon as we welcome the native worker into equality on the industrial field, then is he forthwith lifted up towards the white standard of living.

White standards are not in danger from the ambition of the native to improve. White standards are endangered by the attempts to keep him down. White standards will not be saved in South Africa by the White

Labour Policy. White standards will only be saved by the Black workers organising industrially. The highest social culture is safest in the keeping of the lowest paid labourers.

What makes native labour so cheap and exploitable in South Africa? Laws and regulations which, on the pretence of protecting society from barbarism, degrade the native workers to the level of serfs and herded cattle for the express uses of Capital. These are:

The Passport system.
The Compound System.
The Native Indenture system.
The special penal laws which make it a crime for a native to absent himself from work.
The denial of civil liberty and political rights.

All those things which place the native workers on a lower social plane than the white workers are weapons in the hands of the employing class to be used against all the workers, white and black.

These tyrant laws must be swept away. For these degrading conditions of native labour are the abyss into which masses of the white workers are continually being hurled by Capitalist competition.

Sweep them away! What pious horror is aroused by this demand! Unspeakable calamities will follow, we are told. But are they not the very cause of the social calamities they are supposed to guard against? Indeed, they are themselves the greatest of social calamities.

The cause of Labour demands the abolition of the Pass, the Compound, and the Indenture: and as the native workers gain in industrial solidarity, demands for their complete political equality with their white fellow workers.

Only thus can the whole of the working class, white and black, march unitedly forward to their common emancipation from wage slavery.

Document 7:

"Ba Sebetsi Ba Afrika", Industrial Workers of Africa, Johannesburg, 1917

Source: translation by Wilfred Jali attached to report on meeting of 1 November 1917, Department of Justice, "The ISL and Coloured Workers", JD 3/527/17, National Archives, Pretoria

Workers of the Bantu race:

Why do you live in slavery? Why are you not free as other men are free? Why are you kicked and spat upon by your masters? Why must you carry a pass before you can move anywhere? And if you are found without one, why are you thrown into prison? Why do you toil hard for little money? And again thrown into prison if you refuse to work? Why do they herd you like cattle into compounds? WHY?

Because you are the toilers of the earth. Because the masters want you to labour for their profit. Because they pay the Government and Police to keep you as slaves to toil for them.

If it were not for the money they make from your labour, you would not be oppressed.

But mark: you are the mainstay of the country. You do all the work, you are the means of their living. That is why you are robbed of the fruits of your labour and robbed of your liberty as well.

There is only one way of deliverance for you Bantu workers. Unite as workers. Unite: forget the things which divide you. Let there be no longer any talk of Basuto, Zulu, or Shangaan. You are all labourers; let Labour be your common bond.

Wake up! And open your ears. The sun has arisen, the day is breaking, for a long time you were asleep while the mill of the rich man was grinding and breaking the sweat of your work for nothing. You are strongly requested to come to the meeting of the workers to fight for your rights.

Come and listen, to the sweet news, and deliver yourself from the bonds and chains of the capitalist. Unity is strength. The fight is great against the many passes that persecute you and against the low wages and misery of you existence.

Workers of all lands unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains. You have a world to win.

Document 8:

"Where WE Stand", Industrial Socialist League, Cape Town, February 1920

Source: The Bolshevik, February 1920

The interests of the Working Class and of the Employing Class are diametrically opposed. There can be no peace as long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people, and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life.

Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the all the toilers come together on the industrial field, and take and hold what they produce by their labour, through an economic organisation of the working class, without affiliation to any political party. The rapid gathering of wealth in and the centring of the management of industries into fewer and fewer hands make the Trades Unions unable to cope with the ever-growing power of the employing class, because the Trades Unions foster a state of things which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping defeat one another in wage wars. The Trades Unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers.

These sad conditions can be only be changed, and the interests of the working class upheld by an organisation formed in such a way that all its members in any one industry – or in all industries if necessary – cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all.

OUR OBJECTS

The abolition of the wage system and the establishment of a Socialist Commonwealth based on the principle of self-governing industries, in which the workers will work and control the instruments of production, distribution and exchange for the benefit of the entire community.

OUR METHODS AND PRINCIPLES

1. - By propagating by every means in our power, the principles of Industrial Unionism.
2.- By advising and assisting the working class in the establishment of such forms of industrial organisation as will enable them not only to improve their present condition but eventually take over complete control of all industries.
3. - The League is strictly anti-political and anti-militarist.

Document 9:

"Manifesto of the Mine Workers", Council of Action, Johannesburg, 1921

Source: The Workers' Dreadnought, 18 February 1922

… The Council of Action, as an industrial body, [is not an] inspiration or a brain wave of the moment, but is an attempt to formulate a scheme of things likened to the Workers' Committee movement in Britain, which, in an unofficial way, is doing a great and useful work. The method is to work within and without the official Trade Union movement, with the object of abolishing Capitalism and establishing control of industry by the worker for the worker.

The Council of Action, as an indutrial [*sic*] body, claims that the purpose of production, distribution and exchange, under Capitalism, is to serve class interests. Under this system of society, the working class is dependent upon the capitalist class, because the latter owns and controls the means of production, distribution and exchange, and thus the two classes have nothing in common. From this opposition of class interests there arises an antagonism which manifests itself in the class struggle; one class organising and fighting to hold the power of ownership and control, whilst the working class is compelled to organise to capture the means of production, distribution and exchange to be worked in the interests of society as a whole.

To achieve such power over the resources of life, the working class must organise along class lines to bring about the overthrow of Capitalism, and its class function is the act of Industrial Control. Only by bringing about working class control can the workers eliminate Capitalism and free themselves from wage-slavery. Therefore we stand for class-consciousness, education, organisation, and the direct industrial power of Labour.

The class struggle, as outlined in our general principles, opens up a two-fold form of industrial organisation. First, Industrial Unionism; secondly, Craft Unions. Industrial Unionism stands for the departmental and co-ordinated organisation of the workers, with the avowed object of wresting the economic power out of the hands of the capitalist class. Such an industrial policy arises out of the industrial conditions created by economic development. Therefore, it imposes the duty of Industrial Class Unionism upon the working class. By organising in revolutionary industrial units within each industry, and throughout all the industries, the class-conscious working class are preparing that form of power which will be required to carry out the proper organisation of production during the transition period. To further the objects of class-conscious Industrial Unionism, the class-conscious workers should play an active part in all forms of activity within the existing Unions, in order to sway the mass of workers over to the support of direct industrial organisation, which would be used to institute a Republic of Industrial Workers…

In order to function as herein stated, our purpose therefore is: (1) to bring all workers in the mining industry into the one organisation; (2) to bring about rank and file control of the organisation. The whole history of Trade Unionism has always been a history of sectionalism and exclusiveness … It is object-lessons of this kind, and others already enumerated, which demand a better form of organisation, not only for usefulness in the wages struggle, but for the greater ideal of full workers' control….

The cardinal points in the education of the class-conscious workers are three in number: Firstly, the class struggle; secondly, the science of revolution; thirdly, the industrial and political needs of the Industrial Republic. To provide such knowledge, the principles of Marxism must be taught. Hence, the education work of the Council of Action shall be to advance the foregoing principles.

Document 10:

"Revised Constitution of the ICU", Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of Africa, 1925

Source: Karis and Carter, 1972, *op cit*., pp. 325-326

Whereas the interest of the workers and those of the employers are opposed to each other, the former living by selling their labour, receiving for its labour only part of the wealth they produce; and the latter living by exploiting the labour of the workers; depriving the workers of a part of the product of their labour in the form of profit, no peace can be between the two classes, a struggle must always obtain about the division of the products of human labour, until the workers through their industrial organisations take from the capitalist class the means of production, to be owned and controlled by the workers for the benefit of all, instead of for the profit of a few.

Under such a system, he who does not work, neither shall he eat. The basis of remuneration shall be the principle, from each man according to his abilities, to each man according to his needs. This is the goal for which the ICU strives along with all other organised workers throughout the world. Further this organisation does not foster or encourage antagonism towards other established bodies, political or otherwise, of African peoples, or of organised European labour.

Bibliography and sources

Given its focus on the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this thesis has relied on archival and documentary sources dealing with South Africa. I have always quoted sources verbatim, indicating grammatical and spelling errors with a [*sic*]. Where the original source uses italics or capitalisation, I have reproduced them faithfully. I have, for instance, made no attempt to sanitise texts of offensive racial terms.

The International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam has an enormous archive of anarchist and other labour and socialist materials. It was here that I was able to consult the Max Nettlau archives, the Freedom Press archive (then still being catalogued), as well as comprehensive sets of overseas papers such as the *International Socialist Review*, the *Call*, the *Socialist* and the *Workers' Dreadnought*. The Institute also has an extensive library, where it is possible to consult Max Nettlau's rare ten-volume history of anarchism, pamphlets by Henry Glasse and Johan Visscher, as well as numerous bibliographies of key figures in international labour and the left.

The staff, notably Marcel van der Linden and Mieke Ijzermans, was extremely helpful and encouraging. Allison Drew, one of the very best scholars of South African socialism, also supplied materials dealing with T.W. Thibedi from her own research into the Institute's Trotsky Collection. A number of other people associated with the Institute helped me in many ways: Piet Hoekman and Jannes Houkes provided important information on Dutch anarchism and its relationship to South Africa, and Kees Rodenburg located data dealing with Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis and South Africa.

Other collections abroad also provided valuable information. The Archives of Labour and Urban Affairs at Wayne State University in Detroit hold the main archives of the Chicago IWW. I was able to obtain a number of key articles from the IWW papers *Industrial Worker* and *Solidarity* (sometimes called *Industrial Solidarity*) from this source. I also managed to locate correspondence between the IWW and the ICU in South Africa in this collection. William Lefevre of the Archives was incredibly helpful, and made all of this possible. A number of people associated with the contemporary American IWW also provided materials: Jon Bekken, editor of the *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review* and *Industrial Worker* sent materials from the *Industrial Worker* and *Solidarity* and provided other articles, while Morgan supplied several pieces from the *International Socialist Review*.

I also corresponded with Freedom Press in London, following its publication of an English edition of Nettlau's *A Short History of Anarchism*, with Marianne Enckell of the Centre for International Research on Anarchism in Geneva, and with the American doyen of anarchist studies, the late Paul Avrich. While Marianne Enckell was able to help me, the other avenues did not yield much in the way of hard data. I had more success in France, where the anarchist bookshops *La Publico* (Paris) and *La Plume Noire* (Lyon) had some materials dealing with anarchism and North Africa.

The South African government archives provide a treasure trove of information on early socialism and labour, and the records are catalogued with an electronic database. While materials are available for the pre-1914 period, there is a veritable explosion of information starting during the First World War, when a

policy of closely monitoring left-wing and nationalist groups was established. Besides locating materials through obvious key words – anarchism, IWW, socialism, CPSA, S.P. Bunting and so forth – it was also necessary to examine government reports on strikes and "native unrest". Materials on radicals before 1914 may be found in the records of national government departments, particularly those of the Department of Justice, the Department of Mines, the Native Affairs Department, and the Government Native Labour Bureau. These include material ranging from reports by detectives and spies on the closed meetings of the Industrial Workers of Africa and reports on public speeches by figures like Andrew Dunbar and Clements Kadalie to copies of materials like Talbot William's *White Trade Unionism, or A Call to the Non-European Workers of South Africa.*

National government department records are kept at the National Archives in Pretoria, which also hosts the records of the Transvaal provincial government and its immediate predecessor, the South African Republic. The Transvaal records also contain some useful information, as do the Natal Archives, kept at Pietermaritzburg. I did not examine municipal records, usually kept with town councils, but there is no doubt that these will repay close examination. However, the local *Hansard* is useful: it may be consulted at the Government Papers collection at the University of the Witwatersrand as the yearly reports of the *Union of South Africa: House of Assembly.*

While correspondence with officials from the Native Recruiting Corporation appears fairly regularly in the records of the Department of Justice and the Government Native Labour Bureau, I did not research the records of the Native Recruiting Corporation, which are now kept as the TEBA archives at the University of Johannesburg (formerly the Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit). I have, however, made use of some Native Recruiting Corporation reports, which were supplied to me by Peter Alexander.

Besides the State archives, I made use of a number of other important archives and collections in South Africa. These include the South African Libraries in Cape Town and Pretoria, which keep extensive collections of local periodicals and publications, the Mayibuye Centre at the University of the Western Cape, which keeps the W.H. Andrews Papers and the Brian Bunting Papers, the Historical Papers collection at the University of the Witwatersrand, which has the Bernard Sigamoney Papers, the S.P. Bunting Papers, the R.K. Cope Papers, and the Fanny Klennerman Papers, the African Studies Centre at the University of Cape Town, which has the Simons Papers and the Smuts Papers, and the Africana collection in the Strange Memorial Library at the Johannesburg Public Library. I did make an effort to locate the minutes of the main organisations discussed in this thesis, but without success. An attempt to track down Dunbar's papers also proved fruitless.

Another important source of information for this thesis was, of course, the early labour and radical press. As noted, the International Institute of Social History has extensive holdings of the *International Socialist Review*, the *Socialist* and the *Workers' Dreadnought*, while collections of the *Industrial Worker* and *Solidarity* are held at Wayne State University.

The South African radical press has survived surprisingly well, with two exceptions: the *Cape Vanguard* (later the *Cape Socialist*) seems lost, as does the *Socialist Spark* of Durban. No complete run of the *Voice of Labour* is available, but the South African Reference Library in Cape Town has most of issues

until 1912, and the Pretoria State Library has an overlapping holding that includes the 1912 issues. A few copies of the paper also appear in the archives of the national government, included in correspondence discussing the paper. It is therefore possible to follow almost the entire history of the paper.

The Trade Union Library and Education Centre in Cape Town has a few materials on the 1913 general strike, while the African Collection at the Johannesburg Public Library has an almost complete collection of the *Strike Herald*, many of the manifestoes issued during the 1913 general strike, as well as a number of press clippings and bibliographical materials dealing with Archie Crawford and Mary Fitzgerald, including Fitzgerald's abortive three page autobiography. The *Worker*, published by the SA Labour Party, has been almost entirely lost: the only available set seems to be held in the Africana collection, and only covers July 1913 to October 1914.

An almost complete set of the *War on War Gazette* is held at the Johannesburg Public Library. The most comprehensive single holding of the *International* (Johannesburg) is that of the South African Reference Library, Cape Town, whose collection has recently been updated by the donation of the Institute for the Study of Marxism holdings from the University of Stellenbosch. Incomplete collections of the paper may be found at the Johannesburg Public Library and the library of the University of South Africa. This allows an almost complete run of the paper's first ten years to be assembled. An almost complete set of the *Bolshevik* can be consulted at the South African Reference Library, Cape Town.

Numerous articles from the *Communist Review* of the CPGB bearing on South Africa in the 1920s may be found in the Brian Bunting papers at the University of the Western Cape. A full set of *Isizwe: the nation: journal of the United Democratic Front* is available at the Historical papers at the University of the Witwatersrand, while the William Cullen Library at that university has an incomplete set of the *African Communist* and *Freedom-Vryhied.* An almost complete run of the African Communist may be found at the SACP's Chris Hani Memorial Library in COSATU House in Braamfontein, Johannesburg.

Three final points must be made. Firstly, autobiographies, memoirs and studies of labour and left by contemporaries of the movements discussed in this thesis provide invaluable insights. These include works such as those written by Gilbert Coka, R.K. Cope, Ernest Gitsham, James F. Trembath and Wilfred Harrison. Secondly, a growing number of published anthologies and documentary collections provide an extremely valuable resource. Excellent examples include the works produced by Sylvain Boulouque, Brian Bunting, Jane Degras, Allison Drew, Michael Harmel and Brian Willan.

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