Title:

"I See You" in the Soil: The Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU) in the Western Transvaal, 1926-1934

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts - Masters in the Department of History, School of Social Sciences, Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand.

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Declaration

This study represents an original work by the author and has not been submitted in any form to another university. It is being submitted for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts - Honours at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. Where use has been made of the work of others it has been duly acknowledged in the text.

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Abstract

This dissertation focusses on the history of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU) in the Western Transvaal and northern part of the Cape Province (what is today the North West Province) between 1926 and 1934. By employing archival research and an extensive set of archived interviews, the research unearths the trajectory of the ICU and its character as a political organisation in this region, which has been overlooked in the scholarship. Histories of land dispossession and capitalist expansion framed the ICU's emergence in South Africa and indeed its unfolding in the Western Transvaal as the capitalisation of agriculture pushed black sharecroppers and labour tenants into wage labour and onto employment on the diamond diggings. In Lichtenburg, where the economy centred on alluvial diamond mining, the ICU played a crucial role in a strike in June 1928 which saw 35 000 black workers down tools and helped spread its message spread across the Western Transvaal. The ICU's success in this region was uneven and dependent on the local political economy of towns and farming districts, as well as the presence of dedicated leaders in the face of hostile town administrations and malevolent white farmers. In the South-Western Transvaal, in Wolmaransstad, Makwassie, Ottosdal, Schweizer-Reneke and Bloemhof, the ICU rallied farmworkers against proletarianisation and took up the struggles of location residents in towns against passes and poor living conditions. In other parts of the Western Transvaal, like Klerksdorp, Potchefstroom, Rustenburg, Mafeking, Taung and Vryburg, whose economies were linked to the Rand or Reserves, the ICU failed to make significant inroads and was affected to a greater extent by its general organisational decline. Throughout the region, the ICU held meetings where they articulated languages of freedom and subversion, calling for economic freedom and subverting the discourses related to the political and economic context of the region. Through the theory of Henri Lefebvre, this dissertation argues that the ICU's meetings and activity disrupted spatial segregation and played a critical role in reshaping the political economy. While charismatic leaders like Jingoes, 'Mote, Makhatini, Maleke, Modiakgotla and Kadalie kept the union going in the South-Western Transvaal up until 1934, the ICU's presence ultimately buckled under the pressure of repression, violence and the ICU's own organisational problems that included ideological contradictions and corruption. This dissertation concludes that the ICU's experience in the Western Transvaal, which included fighting for political and economic freedoms, defies the overall trajectory, according to which the organisation was a spent force by the 1920s, and sheds new insight onto its character which is best characterised through the label union-cum-protest movement.

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Acknowledgements

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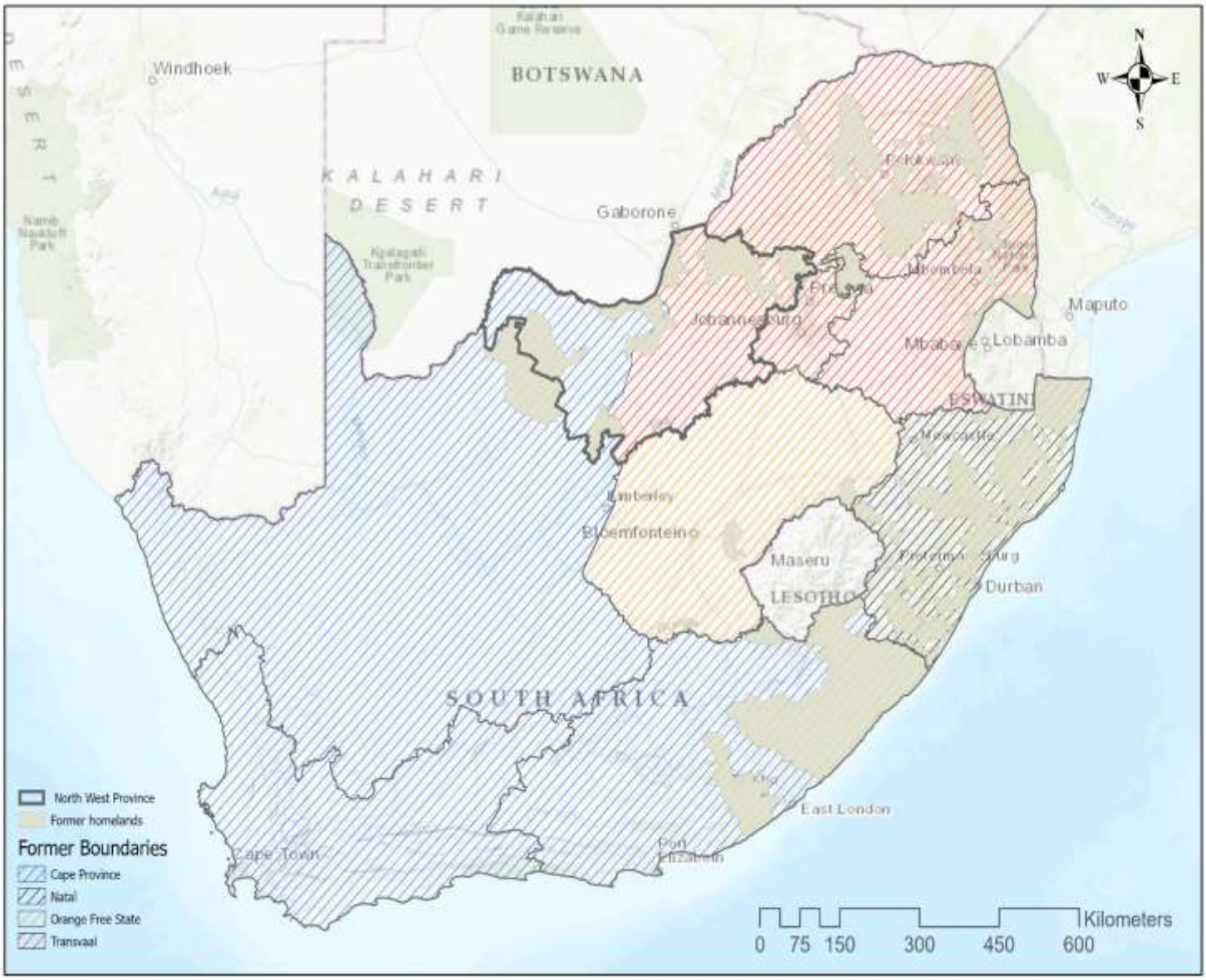
List of Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
CID	Criminal Investigation Department
CPSA	Communist Party of South Africa
HPRA	Historical Papers Research Archive
IASR	Institute for Advanced Social Research
ICU	Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union
IWA	International Workers of Africa
NAD	Native Affairs Department
NASA	National Archives of South Africa
NP	Nationalist Party
SAP	South African Police
TAC	Transvaal African Congress
TNC	Transvaal Native Congress
PEICWU	Port Elizabeth Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union
SANNC	South African Native National Congress

Map 1: Map of South Africa, including boundaries of the former provinces and bantustans, by Graeme D'or (2021).



Map 2: Map of the Western Transvaal and Cape Province. Towns in bold are discussed in this dissertation. Graeme D'or (2021).

Introduction

Background and Aims of the Research

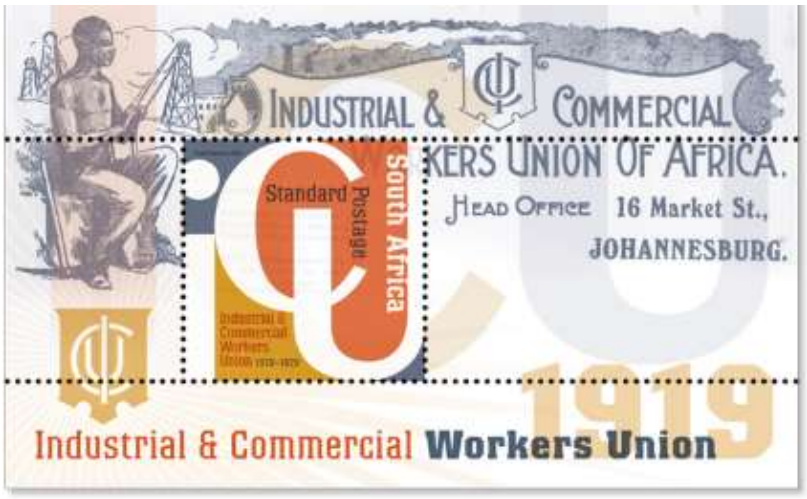


Figure 1: A stamp created by the South African Post Office in 2019 commemorating 100 years since the ICU was founded. Source: South African Post Office, https://www.postoffice.co.za/Philately/NewStamps/workersunion.html accessed on 13 May 2020.

In 2019, on the centenary of the establishment of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU), a stamp was commissioned by the South African Post Office. In the description, they noted that "the history of South Africa cannot be narrated without the acknowledgement of the role played by trade unions and one has to start with the ICU".[1] An ode to the legacy of the ICU as both a national (in the sense that it is commemorated by the South African Post Office) and a transnational movement (in that this stamp represents a travelling identity), the stamp is a reminder some of the struggles the ICU undertook in southern Africa's towns and countryside.

The ICU was one of the largest and most versatile union-cum-protest movements to represent the everyday grievances of black people in twentieth-century Southern Africa. The travelling identity of the ICU meant that within a space of a year from its inception in 1919, it had spread 1 128 kilometres, from Cape Town to Luderitz. As the ICU criss-crossed over Southern Africa, it opened branches from as far south as Port Elizabeth to as far north as Northern Rhodesia.

[1] South African Post Office, Dineo Poo, Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union, Technical Information, https://www.postoffice.co.za/Philately/NewStamps/workersunion.html accessed on 13 May 2020.

The historiography has followed the ICU on its journey: the first to write on the ICU were the communists and contemporaries of the movement like Eddie Roux, Henry Daniel Tyamzashe, Ernest Gitsham and James Trembath and later Jack and Ray Simons.[2]

In the 1970s, the resurgence of the black labour movement and the Soweto uprising renewed interest in South African labour history and the ICU.[3] Phil Bonner, who was part of Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) and a founding member of the History Workshop at Wits University, also wrote a seminal paper about the rise and fall of the ICU.[4] The formation of the History Workshop (HW) in 1977 signalled a new turn to "history from below" which focussed on "how colonized peoples have been drawn into a capitalist society and have resisted their incorporation", which also included the history of the ICU.[5] The expanded focus of radical history extended towards rural South Africa, with Helen Bradford pioneering the study of the ICU in the South African countryside.[6] During the 1980s, growing trade union activism meant that trade unionists and leftist collectives also took an increased interest in the ICU reflected in a number of popular publications (see figures 2 and 3).[7]

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[2] See Eddie Roux. *Time Longer Than Rope: A History of the Black Man's Struggle for Freedom in South Africa,* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964 [1st edition, 1948]); and Jack Simons and Ray Simons. *Class and Colour in South Africa, 1850-1950,* (London: IDAF, 1983 [1st edition, 1969]).

[3] See Sheridan Johns. "Trade Union, Political Pressure Group or Mass Movement? The Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of Africa" in Robert Rotberg and Ali Mazrui. eds, *Protest and Power in Black Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970): 695-755. Peter Wickins. "The Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of Africa", PhD Diss., University of Cape Town, (1973). This renewed interest in the ICU included a focus on biographies of ICU leaders. See Edward Webster. "Champion, the ICU and the Predicament of African Trade Unions." *South African Labour Bulletin* 1 6 (1974): 6-13; Clements Kadalie. *My Life and the ICU: The Autobiography of a Black Trade Unionist*, edited by Stanley Trapido (London: Frank Cass, 1970) and Stimela Jason Jingoes. *A Chief is a Chief by the People: The Autobiography of Stimela Jason Jingoes* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975).

[4] Philip Bonner. "The Decline and Fall of the ICU: A Case of Self-Destruction?" in Eddie Webster. eds, *Essays in Southern African Labour History*. vol. 1. (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1978): 114-120.

[5] Belinda Bozzoli and Peter Delius. "Editors' Introduction: Radical History and South African Society", *Radical History Review* 1990, 46-47 (1990), p. 34.

[6] Helen Bradford. *A Taste of Freedom: the ICU in Rural South Africa, 1924-1930* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1987).

[7] Pamphlets and posters were produced for example by the Cape Town based Labour History Group (LHG) on a variety of historical topics in the 1980s. The LHG included a number of university-educated economists, sociologists and historians who wrote "inexpensive post-literacy books", some of which were on the ICU. (Figure 2 is the front cover of one of the booklets produced by the LHG which included a brief history of the ICU in 1986. Figure 3 is a poster produced by the LHG, probably also in the 1980s. The writing in isiZulu on the left-hand side reads "The ICU mobilized thousands of black workers in the 1920s. The ICU mobilised farmworkers, factory workers and dock workers together. There was a lot of panic and grievances. People were saying 'I See You White Man!'".

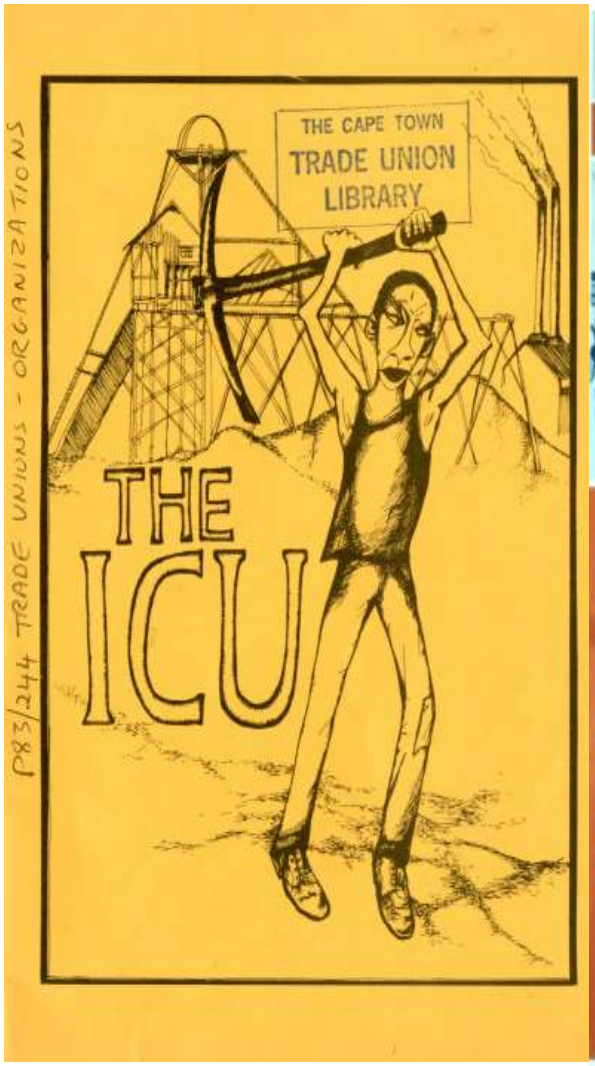

Figure 2 (Left): Front Cover of a pamphlet on the ICU produced by the Labour History Group. Source: South East Academic Library Systems (SEALS) Digital Commons, http://vital.seals.ac.za:8080/vital/access/manager/Repository/vital:27739?site_name=GlobalView, accessed on 11 April 2021.

Figure 3 (right): Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union "There is Fire Here", poster produced by the LHG in the 1980s showing images (clockwise) of farmworkers, Clements Kadalie and aggrieved factory Workers. Source: South African History Archive (SAHA), AL2432, SN537, South African Labour History Group, unknown date.

In the years post-apartheid, the scholarship on the ICU has been temporally scattered and heterogeneous in its focus. In 2007 the HW launched the "Local Histories and Present Realities" programme, which generated new research on the ICU in a local context. Other members of the HW have studied the ICU in a transnational context.[8] Sylvia Neame has made

Callinicos gives a brief history of the LHG in: Luli Callinicos. "Labour History and Worker Education in South Africa", Labour History 65 (1993): 162-178.

[8] For research with a local focus see Tshepo Moloi. "The Emergence and Radicalisation of Black Political Formations in Kroonstad, 1915 to 1957", *New Contree 67* (2013): 167-186. Van Der Walt has written on the ICU's transnationalism; Lucien Van der Walt. "The First Globalisation and

a major contribution to our understanding of the ICU in her three-volume *The Congress Movement*, published in 2015.[9] In 2019, the ICU centenary created new momentum for reassessing the historiography and generating new research, and this dissertation fits into the thrust to re-enliven the history of the ICU.

While the ICU spread "like wildfire"[10] through much of Southern Africa, and much of the literature has followed it, one region where its trajectory and character remain relatively unknown is the former Western Transvaal and also including the northern part of the Cape Province – in what is today the North West Province. The reasons for this are multiple: they include dispersed and sparse source materials, the ICU's own organisational decline and increasingly moderate political outlook after 1929, as well as the fact that most of the literature, with the exception of Bradford, has tended to focus on urban centres. While these remain challenges, it is significant to note the appeal of the ICU in the late 1920s in this part of the country: between November 1928 and April 1929 the ICU's branch at Makwassie (a small farming town in the then Western Transvaal) came second only to Johannesburg in income received from membership fees (during this period, the Makwassie branch had a membership income of £93 while Johannesburg had an income of £94) corresponding to between 250 and 400 members with regular subscriptions.[11]

The ICU began to develop in the Western Transvaal in 1926, initially opening branches in Potchefstroom, Mafikeng and Lichtenburg. Both a strike in June 1928 in Lichtenburg and a "rural upsurge", which was a response to proletarianisation among classes of farmworkers across the country described in detail by both Bradford and Neame, were catalysts for the growth of the ICU into a mass movement in this region. Riding on these upheavals, the ICU became active in Klerksdorp, Rustenburg, Taung, Vryburg, Wolmaransstad, Makwassie, Schweizer-Reneke, Bloemhof and Ottosdal. Map 1 shows the division of South Africa into four separate provinces prior to 1994; these were the Transvaal, Natal, Orange Free State and the Cape Province. The geographical boundaries of this dissertation are what is today the North West Province (encompassing the Western Transvaal and a northern portion of the Cape

Transnational Labour Activism in Southern Africa: White Labourism, the IWW, and the ICU, 1904–1934" *African Studies* 66, 2-3 (2007).

[9] Sylvia Neame. *The Congress Movement: The Unfolding of the Congress Alliance 1912-1961*, volumes 1-3. (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2015).

[10] Helen Bradford. "Mass Movements and the Petty Bourgeoisie: The Social Origins of ICU Leadership, 1924–1929", *The Journal of African History* 25, 3 (1984), p. 295.

[11] Wits Historical Papers Research Archive (HPRA), Ballinger Family Collection, A410, C2.3.7, Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union, Membership figures, 29 December 1928.

Province). For the sake of brevity, "Western Transvaal" will be used to capture the region that is the focus of this dissertation. The towns whose names appear in bold in Map 2 are the collection of towns in which there is archival or oral evidence of the ICU's presence.[12]

There are a number of distinctive features of the Western Transvaal in the early decades of the twentieth century, foremost among them are the economies of white commercial farming (linked to sharecropping and labour tenancy) and alluvial diamond mining. From the inception of the mineral revolution, the development of the capitalist economy both in rural towns and the countryside was unfolding on the *stoep* of labour tenants, sharecroppers and workers on the diamond diggings. Proletarianisation was reconfiguring relationships between landowners, tenants and workers. This was coupled with the government's turn to poor whites, land dispossession and the creation of legislation to segregate urban areas and police black organisations. The struggle that the ICU attached to was thus not merely against proletarianisation, it was also against the massive upheavals in the countryside through which African people were being dispossessed of land; this restructured relationships in chiefdoms and forced African people into poorly paid work. These processes forced many black people into locations and introduced new kinds of spatial relationships; local administrations policed the flow of workers between farms and towns through controlling and prohibiting ICU meetings, they demanded passes and rigidly enforced spatial segregation.

This research will trace the ICU's uneven emergence in this region through reference to different loci of power and struggle. This will entail charting the local dynamics of farming, capitalist penetration, the development of the segregationist state at the local level and the declining power of chiefs. This political economy shaped the variegated character of the ICU in the Western Transvaal. The title of this dissertation, "I See You in the Soil" aims highlight the significance of the ICU in this rural region. It refers to black people who had been dispossessed of their land and worked as labour tenants, sharecroppers and diamond diggers, those who were made to live in locations, in whose name the ICU fought for.

[12] There were other towns where the ICU had a definite presence, but the archival and oral sources provide no indication of the extent or character of this presence. For Leeudoringstad, see Jingoes. *A Chief is a Chief by the People*, p.111. For Coligny and Delareyville, see Wits HPRA Ballinger Family Papers A410 "Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union", C 2.3.7, Letter from Henry Maleke to William Ballinger from the Delareyville location, 11 March 1931. ICU organiser Henry Maleke had taken over the branch, and notes that Jason Jingoes made promises to people he could not fulfil. Kadalie held a pass burning in Ventersdorp, see Bradford. *A Taste of Freedom*, p.164.

The period that this dissertation will focus on is from 1926 until 1934. In 1926, the ICU opened branches in Mafikeng and Potchefstroom. In 1934, ICU organiser Jason Jingoes sent a letter to the Native Affairs Department (NAD) complaining that he was being persecuted by the Makwassie local authority. It was within this eight-year span that the ICU was most active in the Western Transvaal.

Research Question(s)

This dissertation aims to understand and analyse the ICU through its development in the peculiar and particular political economy of the Western Transvaal, which included paternalism, violence, proletarianisation, a high prevalence of Reserve areas and segregationist town administrations. It is within this context that the ICU entered and began to address people's diverse set of needs, grievances, desires and hopes.

The main question framing this research is: what was character and trajectory of the ICU in the Western Transvaal? To answer this question, a number of further questions guide the research with regards to the local political economy which gave rise the ICU's emergence in the Western Transvaal, and the way the ICU related their protest to this context and the grievances of farm dwellers, wage labourers and location residents. Moreover, how did the local political economy shape the character of the ICU on the ground? How was the ICU's trajectory in this region affected by the organisation's fortunes and internal problems at the national level? In connection with this, the dissertation will interrogate why the ICU in the Western Transvaal was able to gather support, and even expand into the 1930s, while elsewhere in the country it experienced a marked decline in organisational and political terms in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

This dissertation probes the way in which the ICU used the interconnectedness of farms and towns and spatial flows to facilitate their political activism. Moreover, it asks: How did the ICU's presence shape the spatial politics of the region? Speaking to the overall character of the ICU in the Western Transvaal, this research analyses the kinds of messages it articulated: what kinds of speech did the ICU use and how did it relate to the local political economy?

Rationale

This research comes out of my Honours research project[13] where the history of a small North West town – Ottosdal – was explored. Letters in the National Archives of South Africa (NASA) sent by Jason Jingoes (one of the leading figures of the ICU in the Western Transvaal, who was a Basotho chief and the leader of the ICU's Makwassie branch) to the Ottosdal municipality on behalf of the ICU in 1933-1934 piqued my interest in the ICU within the broader North West Province. These letters protested the poor conditions in the town location as well as poor economic conditions on the alluvial diamond mines in the area.[14] These documents suggested a significant presence of the ICU in the region into the 1930s, when the ICU had generally declined.

Despite a wealth of literature being produced on the ICU, it still occupies a marginalised position in South African History. The African National Congress (ANC) government, has produced "exclusionary languages of liberation" and constructs the ANC as *the* movement for national liberation.[15] Phil Bonner suggests that up until the 1940s, people "viewed the ANC as largely irrelevant to their own most pressing needs of life" and that organisations like the ICU better articulated people's needs, if only under the auspices of "undefined freedom and the hope that they might regain access to their lost lands".[16] This dissertation helps broaden the political history of the Western Transvaal through uncovering the history of the ICU in this region.

The Masters' scholarship that I have been awarded as part of the History Workshop's "Local Histories and Present Realities" programme aims to centralise the place of the "local" in South African history and challenge the urban bias in much of South Africa's resistance history. Noor Nieftagodien criticises the notion of describing the local according to a national template – in

[13] Laurence Stewart. "The Ferment of a Rural Economy: Beer Brewing and its Socio-Historical Context in Ottosdal, North West Province", Honours Diss., University of the Witwatersrand (2019).
[14] For instance, see National Archives of South Africa, NTS, 4934, 313/313, Letter from JJ ka Jingoes and JL Diniza to the Native Affairs Department, 14 August 1933.
[15] Sara Dorman. "Post-liberation Politics in Africa: Examining the Political Legacy of Struggle", *Third World Quarterly 27*, 6 (2006), p. 1092; and Alexander Beresford. "The Politics of Regenerative Nationalism in South Africa", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 38, 4 (2012), p. 863.
[16] Philip Bonner. "First Keynote Address: Fragmentation and Cohesion in the ANC: The First 70 Years", in Arianna Lissoni, Jon Soske, Natasha Erlank, Noor Nieftagodien and Omar Badsha. eds, *One Hundred Years of the ANC: Debating Liberation Histories Today* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press and SAHO, 2012), p. 3.

essence, reading local histories without reference to local specificities.[17] While there are differences in scale of what "local" means, the concept allows for a "critical engagement with meanings of 'the local', including its spatial dimensions (where does the local start and end), its relationship to the national and its production over time".[18] These concerns also animate the research for this dissertation.

Literature Review

This literature review focusses on three main features; the historiography of the ICU, key literature on the political economy of industrialising South Africa (with special reference to the Western Transvaal) and Lefebvre's theory on the interconnectedness of space. Chapter one provides a detailed description of this scholarship to sketch a broad outline the twin processes of colonial expansion and capitalist development in the South African interior and their effects on African people. Furthermore, the chapter will discuss overall development of the ICU from 1919 until the mid-1930s from a historical (rather than historiographical) point of view by drawing on the existing literature. The review of the literature below is therefore meant to provide a general introduction and overview, as this literature will be discussed in greater detail in chapter one.

The earliest literature used in this dissertation are early histories of towns in the Western Transvaal, produced by white missionaries and white town historians. These include the chronology of the establishment of towns and of the black location and provide insight into their local political economy and the formation and the character of the local state.[19] This literature is used in chapters three and four to describe the particular political and economic conditions in Western Transvaal towns.

As mentioned above, the first authors to write about the ICU were trade unionists, communists and liberals who were contemporaries of the movement. Ernest Gitsham and James Trembath chronicled the history of the ICU, with a strong focus on Clements Kadalie in *A First Account*

[17]Noor Nieftagodien. "The Place of 'The Local' in History Workshop's Local History." *African Studies* 69, 1 (2010), p. 44.
[18] *Ibid*., pp. 57-58.
[19] Examples of this are: Cornelius Johannes Kriel. *Goue Jubileum: Ned. Geref. Gemeente Ottosdal, 1913 – 1963* (Cape Town: Paarl Drukpers Maatskappy, 1963); Coetzee, G.J.M. "Die Geskiedenis van Onderwys van Blankes in die Wolmaransstadse Distrik, 1876-1952" MA Diss., Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, (1953).

of Labour Organisation in South Africa in 1926.[20] Together with Gitsham and Trembath, activist scholars intellectuals like Eddie Roux and later Jack and Ray Simons, who were politically active during the 1930s and engaged with the Union – both in the course of struggle and later in their research – also wrote on the ICU as part of broader studies researching black political organisation.[21]

Trinidadian communist CLR James and pan-Africanist George Padmore reflected on the ICU in their transnational accounts of black political organisation. In 1931, James likened the ICU's activism to the revolution in Haiti, quoting "there is the same instinctive capacity for organisation, the same throwing-up of gifted leaders from among the masses…"; one-year later, Padmore labelled Clements Kadalie as a "reformist" and a "black traitor".[22] In 1933, Albert Nzula (who was an ICU branch secretary in Aliwal North, and in 1929, after communists were expelled from the ICU, became the first black secretary of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA)), published a collection of essays called *The Struggles of Negro Toilers in South Africa* (which shares a title with Padmore's book) which included an account of the ICU. The editor of the ICU newspaper, *Workers' Herald*, Henry Daniel Tyamzashe, published *A Summarised History of the ICU* in 1941 giving an overall history of the ICU from its inception until its disintegration.[23] Other contemporaries of the ICU were the white liberal advisors who had begun to engage with the union in the late 1920s - notably William Ballinger, Winifred Holtby and Ethelreda Lewis. The biographies of Ballinger and Holtby thus partly deal with the history of the ICU.[24]

This early literature on the ICU contains contrasting accounts of the ICU, in part because the perspectives were ideologically determined and also because many of these intellectuals

[20] Ernest Gitsham, and James Trembath. *A First Account of Labour Organisation in South Africa* (Durban: E. P. and Commercial Printing, 1926).
[21] Roux. *Time Longer Than Rope* and Simons and Simons. *Class and Colour*.
[22] CLR James, *A History of Negro Revolt* (Chicago: Research Associates School Times Publications, 1931) p. 62; George Padmore, *Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers* (London: Red International of Labour Unions, 1931), p. 81.
[23] Wits HPRA, Ambrose Saffery Collection, AD 1178, unpublished mimeograph, H.D. Tyamzashe, "A Summarised History of the ICU by Henri Danielle Tyamzashe who was Complaints and Research Secretary ICU and Editor of ICU Newspapers", 1941; Alfred Nzula, "The Struggles of the Negro Toilers in South Africa" in Albert Nzula, I. I. Potekhni and A. Z. Zusmanovich, *Forced Labour in Colonial Africa*. Edited by Robin Cohen. Translated by Hugh Jenkins (London: Zed Press, 1979 [1933]), pp. 19-213 (for an account of the ICU, see pp. 206-210).
[24] Vera Brittan. *Testament of Friendship: The Story of Winifred Holtbv.* 2nd ed. (London: Virago, 1980 [1940]). Alex Mouton, *Voices in the Desert: Margaret and William Ballinger. A Biography* (Pretoria: Benedic Books, 1997).

witnessed the ICU's problems themselves. For instance, while Nzula saw Kadalie as a "tool of the bourgeoisie" and Roux saw him as "intelligent, versatile and passionate".[25] Characterising the wide range of grievances that the ICU attached to, Roux suggests that the ICU was a "general union". Many of these authors wrote in the late 1920s, where the ICU's meteoric rise was punctuated by corruption, mismanagement of funds, ideological conflicts with communists and internal splits. This contributed to the idea that the Union was a spent force by the late 1920s, and undoubtedly informed the accounts of Bradford and Van Onselen which suggest this in relation to the Western Transvaal. This research argues that despite the organisational decline of the ICU in this period, the ICU's activism in this region stretched up to 1934.

The political context of the 1970s generated renewed interest in South African labour history, including the ICU. Speaking in an interview with Gail Gerhart on the topic of the South African Students Organisation (SASO) in 1972, Steve Biko believed the ICU's struggle was instructive for the struggles to be waged in the 1970s. He stated that he engaged in an "extensive study" of black political movements in South Africa for his leadership training courses which focussed on:

> […] the early so-called religious breakaways of 1890, the Ethiopian movement; concentrating on the foundation of ANC and reasons for the foundation of ANC; concentrating on the ICU, its operation, its growth, its cause of growth and its death, its cause of death.[26]

At a scholarly level, Sheridan Johns and Peter Wickins offer general organisational accounts of the ICU. Wickins' work is especially useful for this dissertation because he provides a chronology of the establishment of ICU branches across South Africa and information on the ICU's growth and collapse. The autobiography of Clements Kadalie was published in 1970, Stimela Jason Jingoes' in 1975 and a brief biographical account of Alisson Wessels George Champion was published in 1974.[27] Jingoes' biography is a crucial source for this study as he recounts his tenure as an ICU organiser in the South-Western Transvaal between 1928 and

[25] David Johnson, "Clements Kadalie, the ICU, and the Language of Freedom", *English in Africa* 42, 3 (2015): 43-69. See footnote 1, p. 65.
[26] Gail Gerhart, "Interview With Steve Biko", in Andile Mngxitama, Amanda Alexander and Nigel Gibson, eds, *Biko Lives!: Contesting Legacies of Steve Biko* (Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), pp. 26-27.
[27] See Sheridan Johns. "Trade Union, Political Pressure Group or Mass Movement?". Peter Wickins. "The Industrial". Clements Kadalie. *My Life and the ICU*. Eddie Webster. "Champion" and Jingoes. *A Chief is a Chief by the People*.

1934. Furthermore, Jingoes suggests a link between the ICU's success and the absence of chiefs in the Western Transvaal, which this dissertation explores in chapter five.

This dissertation adopts a political economy approach in a broad sense. This has its roots in Karl Marx's critique of the classical economists, who viewed a linear and harmonious accumulation of capital through rent and profit, suggesting instead that the proletariat is subordinated to capital through the appropriation of unpaid surplus, producing conflict rather than harmony.[28] Marx's critique led to a radical reinterpretation of the political and the economic and a more critical understanding of the production process; as Lefebvre has noted "political economy is also a critique of [classical economist's representation of] political economy… and of their supposed unity or syndissertation".[29]

In South Africa, the political economy tradition had its most clear articulation in the 1970s and 1980s among the radical historians; first from a structuralist perspective, which was subsequently critiqued and rethought by social historians influenced by the work of E.P. Thompson.[30] For the purposes of this research, it is sufficient to note that political economy includes the politics of the state and civil society within a broader economic context of economic practices and institutions, and the contestations over power within these spheres. The ICU's protest and activism in the Western Transvaal are linked to both South Africa's general political economy and the local political economy of the region and its towns, linked to farming and alluvial diamond mining.

During the 1980s, radical social historians began to examine how the process of industrialisation was shaped increasingly by the African societies at the centre of it. Bozzoli and Delius sum up this approach: rather than viewing early capitalist development as co-ordinated, linear and complete, "the processes of capitalization and industrial revolution on land and in cities were seen as having made what they could of the society at their disposal, against ever-resurgent resistance".[31] The scholarship of Shula Marks, William Beinart, Stanley

[28] Karl Marx, translation by Eden and Cedar Paul. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1928 [First Edition in German, 1867]), p. 885.
[29] Henri Lefebvre and Donald Nicholson-Smith. *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 323.
[30] Patrick Bond. "A Half-Century of Competing Political Economic Traditions in South Africa", Conference Paper, *Race, Class, and the Developmental State Conference*, Port Elizabeth, 16 November 2010 at http://ccs.ukzn.ac.za/files/Bond%20Legassick%20poli%20econ%20conference%20paper.pdf accessed on 23 June 2020, pp. 8-11.
[31] Belinda Bozzoli and Peter Delius. "Editors' Introduction", p. 31.

Trapido, Charles Van Onselen and Peter Delius offer histories of capitalist development from the discovery of diamonds in 1867 and gold in 1886, with a focus on how African resisted and adapted to these changes. [32] Other authors like Timothy Keegan have shown the contradictory nature of capitalist development, as he explores the proliferation of sharecropping and labour tenancy relationships between dispossessed black peasants and inexperienced white farmers.[33] The control of urban areas, which took the form of segregation, was a central theme of town administration and local governance. Both Paul Maylam and Saul Dubow characterise this as the contradictory imperatives of capitalist expansion and racism.[34]

Authors also focussed on the effect of these changes on the Western Transvaal. For example, Timothy Clynick's unpublished paper on the diamond diggings provides information on Lichtenburg's political economy.[35] Charles Van Onselen expertly lays out the race and class relationships between white farmers and black workers, which included paternalism on farms in the South-Western Transvaal.[36] Graeme Simpson provided an overview of the politics of chiefdoms in the Western Transvaal.[37] The work of these authors illustrates the political economy of the Western Transvaal which is indispensable to this dissertation.

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[32] Examples of this scholarship includes: Shula Marks and Richard Rathbone. "Introduction", in Shula Marks and Richard Rathbone. eds., *Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa* (London and New York: Longman, 1982): 1-61, pp. 3-12; William Beinart and Peter Delius. "Introduction" in William Beinart, Peter Delius and Stanley Trapido. eds., *Putting a Plough to the Ground: Accumulation and Dispossession in Rural South Africa, 1950-1930* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986): 1-56, p.1; Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido "The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism" in Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido. eds., *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa* (London: Longman, 1987 [2nd Edition, 1993]): 1-71, p.2, p. xi.

[33] Timothy Keegan. *Facing the Storm: Portraits of Black Lives in Rural South Africa* (Cape Town: David Phillip, 1988).

[34] Saul Dubow. *Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid in South Africa, 1919–36* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1989); Paul Maylam. "Explaining the Apartheid City: 20 years of South African Urban Historiography", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 21, 1 (1995): 19-38

[35] Tim Clynick. "The Lichtenburg Alluvial Diamond Diggers 1926-1929", Unpublished Seminar Paper, *African Studies Institute*, University of the Witwatersrand, 21 May 1984. At: http://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10539/8515/ISS-86.pdf?sequence=1 accessed on 20 May 2020.

[36] Charles Van Onselen. "Paternalism and Violence on the Maize Farms of the South-Western Transvaal, 1900–1950" in Alan Jeeves and Jonathan Crush, eds. *White Farms, Black Labour: The State and Agrarian Change in Southern Africa* (Oxford: James Currey, 1997): 192-213; Charles Van Onselen. "Race and Class in the South African countryside: Cultural Osmosis and Social Relations in the Sharecropping Economy of the South Western Transvaal, 1900-1950", *The American Historical Review* 95, 1 (1990): 99-123.

[37] Graeme Simpson. "Peasants and Politics in the Western Transvaal, 1920-1940", MA Diss., University of the Witwatersrand, (1986).

The scholarship of Bonner on the "Rise and Fall" of the ICU, Beinart and Bundy (writing on East London), Bradford (Northern, Eastern and Western Transvaal, Transkei, Natal, Orange Free State), and La Hausse (Durban) illustrate the interest of the radical historians in the ICU during the late 1970s and 1980s. Further interest in the ICU in the 1980s and 1990s came from Hirson (whose focus is Bloemfontein), Baines (Port Elizabeth) and Breckridge, who discusses the ICU on the gold mines. Breckenridge argues that the ICU contributed to, and participated in the making of, a public sphere on the South African gold mines during the 1920s, this theory is used in examining the character of the ICU's meetings in the Western Transvaal, discussed in chapter five.

The focus of radical history began to look into rural South Africa and Helen Bradford's influential study on the ICU is characteristic of this shift.[38] Bradford posits the ICU as primarily a rural movement, a claim which she backs up with an account of the ICU in every nook and cranny in the country, and importantly disturbs some of the early historiography which saw the ICU waning in the second half of the 1920s. Bradford's typological insights of the ICU as a "rural movement" are useful for this dissertation and she provides an account of the ICU in the Western Transvaal which includes details of some of the ICU's campaigns and meetings. Added, she also provides a strong account of farm conditions across the country, including the farming context in the Western Transvaal.[39] Bradford suggests that the ICU's trajectory in this region was determined by the burgeoning context of "embezzlement and disintegration". In connection with this, Simpson regards the ICU as being unable to articulate the grievances of reserve-based Tswana peasants in the region.[40]

Charles Van Onselen's *The Seed is Mine* contains the life history of a sharecropper, Kas Maine, who traversed the Western Transvaal during the first half of the twentieth century South Africa and encountered the ICU. Van Onselen explores the ICU from the perspective of Maine and his family through interviews which are part of the Sharecropping and Labour Tenancy Project, one of the sources for this dissertation further discussed in the methodology section below.

[38]Belinda Bozzoli and Peter Delius. "Editors' Introduction"; Bradford. *A Taste of Freedom*. Bradford's work emerged out of the turn to labour history and a renewed interest in rural histories. See Jon Lewis. "South African Labor History: A Historiographical Assessment", *Radical History Review* 1990, 46-47 (1990), p. 227.

[39] Bradford. *A Taste of Freedom*, pp.1-64.

[40] Simpson. "Peasants and Politics", pp.185-191.

Despite a wealth of qualitative sources, Van Onselen too regards the ICU as being finished in the South-Western Transvaal by 1929.[41]

The radical scholarship of the late 1970s and early 1980s generated a fresh regional focus, and highlighted the uneven development of capitalism across the country, as well as the varied regional character of the ICU and other resistance movements. The ICU's development was different across the country and shaped by the local political economy and in relation to a diverse set of factors including, but not limited to, race, gender, religion, millenarianism, proletarianisation, economy and tradition. What characterises this scholarship, which will be outlined in more detail in chapter one, is the attention to the dynamics of capitalist expansion and the ramifications for class and labour relationships in particular local contexts, which the ICU tried to use to its advantage and was shaped by. This dissertation aims to relate the ICU's activism in the Western Transvaal to the peculiar and particular political economy of the Western Transvaal.

Post-apartheid research on the ICU has been dispersed.[42] An indispensable unpublished paper by Phil Bonner discusses the character of the ICU's language, which in this dissertation is used to characterise the ICU's subversive and ridiculing language.[43] New research on the ICU came up as part of the HW's programme on "Local Histories and Present Realities". Tshepo Moloi's work on black politics in Kroonstad, where the ICU had a presence in the 1920s, is an example of this.[44] Other members of the HW like Lucien Van Der Walt have analysed the ICU's anarcho-syndicalism and transnationalism.[45] Henry Dee's PhD dissertation on Clements Kadalie argues that the politics of migration and race are central to understanding Clements Kadalie and the ICU's experience in South Africa.[46] Dee gives excellent insight into the character of Kadalie as well as a clear chronological account of the ICU's development, which is useful for the periodisation of this dissertation. He also posits that "no scholar has addressed

[41] Charles Van Onselen. *The Seed is Mine: The Life of Kas Maine, a South African Sharecropper, 1894-1985 (*New York: Hill and Wang, 1996).
[42] Desmond Phiri. *I See You: Life of Clements Kadalie: The Man South Africa, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Namibia Should Not Forget* (Johannesburg: College Publishers, 2000); Allison Drew. *Discordant Comrades: Identities and Loyalties on the South African Left* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000).
[43] Bonner, Phillip. "Home Truths' and the Political Discourse of the ICU", Unpublished Paper presented at the Biennial Conference of the South African Historical Society, UWC, July 1999. [unpublished paper in author's possession, courtesy of Henry Dee].
[44] Moloi. "The Emergence and Radicalisation".
[45] Van der Walt. "The First Globalisation".
[46] Henry Dee. "Clements Kadalie, Trade Unionism, Migration and Race in Southern Africa, 1918-1930", PhD Diss., University of Edinburgh (2019).

the implications of what it meant to be a general trade union in Southern Africa", and explores the idea of a "general union" in the context of unionising migrant workers.[47] David Johnson has argued that the ICU espoused a distinct "language of freedom" and this is applied to the context of the Western Transvaal in chapter five.

John Higginson, who discusses the prevalence of violence on farms in the Rustenburg and Marico districts, and Andrew Manson and Bernard Mbenga, who provide an overview of the politics in the chiefdoms of the Western Transvaal, have produced the most recent works on the political character of the Western Transvaal and are used throughout the dissertation. [48]

While Neame is somewhat an outlier to the historiographical trends described here, she has made a major contribution to our understanding of the ICU in terms of its links to other political organisations, typology and progression.[49] She provides a consummate account of the ICU that places it as an integral part of the Congress Movement in the fight for national liberation.[50] Neame further suggests that the ICU developed a radical-democratic tendency in the countryside. Neame's research provides a crucial history of the rural upsurge and the way the ICU related to it. This is described in more detail in chapter one, which aims to assess the ICU's response and actions in relation to the upheavals in the countryside.

Drawing on the typological insights provided by Roux, Bradford and Neame, this dissertation adopts the label "union-cum-protest movement". In the forthcoming chapters, ideas surrounding the ICU as a "general union", a "rural movement" and as "radical-democratic" will be explored.

Thinking Space: Lefebvre and the Ordering of Space in the Western Transvaal

French Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre's theory of space provides a useful theoretical springboard to explore the social and associated spatial relationships in the Western Transvaal. Lefebvre argues that political change is "as much a matter of politics as it is a matter of

[47] Dee. "Clements Kadalie", p.311.
[48] John Higginson. *Collective Violence and the Agrarian Origins of South African Apartheid, 1900–1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Andrew Manson and Bernard Mbenga. *Land, Chiefs, Mining: South Africa's North West Province Since 1840* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2014).
[49] Neame went into exile in 1967 after serving a prison sentence for membership of the SACP. She lived and worked in the German Democratic Republic for over three decades, and her work remains somewhat isolated from the currents shaping South Africa's historiography in this period.
[50] Neame. *The Congress Movement, vol 1-3*.

space".[51] The political economy of the Western Transvaal produced a particular spatial organisation (and vice versa); towns were segregated between the white town and black location, farms were isolated and the links between town and countryside were controlled and policed. The ICU's presence in the Western Transvaal affected the spatial divisions between town, farm, location and diamond digging and in turn influenced the spatial outlay and politics. In this dissertation, Lefebvre's theory of the interconnectedness of space helps probe how the ICU both used the already present links between town and countryside, and created new ones.

In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre aims to delineate a "unitary theory" of space, where space is understood as being physical, mental and social.[52] For Lefebvre, the "underpinning" of society is space because it is within space that, for instance, the production or social relations occurs. In this regard, the material underpinning of space is *necessary* but not *sufficient* to define space,[53] in that space is neither a result of nature, nor simply a product of its history, nor does it bear a direct causal relationship to the forces of production.[54] Space encompasses elements which are in essence material but exist beyond their materiality.[55]

For Lefebvre, space is not static and acted upon; it is rather bound to the changes of "mediators and mediations" as well as "networks and pathways that facilitate the exchange of material things and information".[56] How space changes is thus not dependent *only* on factors inherent within it; rather spaces and elements within spaces "interpenetrate", where "great movements, vast rhythms, immense waves – these all collide and 'interfere' with one another; lesser movements, on the other hand, interpenetrate".[57]

These "movements", "rhythms" and "waves" are different factors (people, events, social and productive relationships) within spaces which are intimately "intertwined". But what happens when spaces "interpenetrate" and "collide"? For Lefebvre, at its most dramatic, a process of "fission" takes place; and at its least dramatic, a process of interpenetration takes place.[58] The clashes and interpenetrations do not have a determined outcome; and for example, "no space

[51] Anne-Maria Makhulu. "The "Dialectics of Toil": Reflections on the Politics of Space After Apartheid," *Anthropological Quarterly*, 83, 3 (2010): 551-580, p.551.
[52] Henri Lefebvre and Donald Nicholson-Smith. *The Production of Space*, pp.11-12.
[53] *Ibid.*, p.403.
[54] *Ibid.*, p.77.
[55] *Ibid.*, p.403.
[56] *Ibid.*, p.77.
[57] *Ibid.*, p.87.
[58] *Ibid.*, p.87-88.

disappears in the course of growth and development: the worldwide does not abolish the local".[59] Rather, there is a constant ebb and flow as a result of the interactions between spaces,

> All these spaces, meanwhile, are traversed by myriad of currents. The hyper-complexity of social space should be now be apparent, embracing as it does individual entities and peculiarities, relatively fixed points, movements and flows of waves – some interpenetrating, others in conflict and so on.[60]

In South Africa, legislative measures like the Native Land Act of 1913 and the 1923 Urban Areas Act determined where black people could live and own land and deemed them unwanted in urban spaces. The segregation period in South Africa was characterised by "enforced geographies of separation" and Paul Maylam elaborates that segregation was the solution to manage the "demand for black labour in cities and towns and the racist desire to keep them out".[61] Pass laws were a key legislative measure created to control the movement of African people,[62] and throughout the country in both the big urban areas of Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town as well as small rural backwaters, spaces of "European modernity" were shielded from the "uncivilised 'outsides'" through rigidly-enforced segregation.[63] Spatial divisions were also present between town and countryside. With particular reference to southern Africa's migrant labour system, segregation was justified through the "healthy rural and degenerative urban African lifestyle".[64]

Lefebvre suggests that "visible boundaries such as walls [which in the South African context could be the trees or dams separating township and town] or enclosures in general, give rise for their part to an appearance or separation between spaces where in fact there is an ambiguous continuity".[65] Noor Nieftagodien suggests that in South Africa conventional historiography has tended to understand black townships, adjacent white towns and rural hinterlands as "separate entities".[66] Belinda Bozzoli's edited book, *Town and Countryside in the Transvaal: Capitalist*

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[59] *Ibid.*, p. 86.
[60] *Ibid.*, p.88.
[61] Melissa Steyn and Richard Ballard. "Diversity and Small-Town Spaces in Post-Apartheid South Africa: An Introduction", *Diversities* 15, 2 (2013), p.1; Paul Maylam, "Explaining the Apartheid City".
[62] Kate Darian-Smith, Liz Gunner, and Sarah Nuttall. *Text, Theory, Space: Land, Literature and History in South Africa and Australia* (London: Routledge, 1996), p.14.
[63] Popke, Jeffrey and Richard Ballard. "Dislocating modernity: Identity, Space and Representations of Street Trade in Durban, South Africa", *Geoforum,* 35, 1 (2004), p.101.
[64] John Dixon, Don Foster, Kevin Durrheim and Lindy Wilbraham. "Discourse and the Politics of Space in South Africa: The Squatter Crisis'", *Discourse & Society* 5, 3 (1994), p.278.
[65] Lefebvre and Nicholson-Smith. *The Production of Space*, p.87.
[66] Noor Nieftagodien. "The Place of 'The Local'", pp.57-58.

Penetration and Popular Response, shows the links between towns, farms and reserves in the Transvaal and seeks to grapple with the variegated and urban and rural experiences connected through the capitalist economy and migrant labour.[67] The book shows the tight-knit relationship between town and countryside and strongly stresses the "interconnectedness of rural and urban".[68]

In the context of South Africa's spatial divisions, Lefebvre's theory of interconnectedness space is useful. In chapters two and four, instances where the ICU aided or used the interconnection of space are noted. When the ICU entered the Western Transvaal, they drew workers from towns, farms and diamond diggings and challenged the predominant spatial politics of spatially-policed towns and isolated farms. A full application of Lefebvre's theory of space to the Western Transvaal is reserved for chapter five. Central themes of this chapter are that the spatial organisation of the Western Transvaal greatly inhibited the ICU's efficacy through drawing divisions between towns and isolated farms (which limited the ICU's ability to reach their constituency). Yet, migrant labour between towns and farms and the prevalence of ICU meetings changed the political organisation from individualised to collective protest as the ICU disrupted set divisions between town, farm, diamond digging and location.

Method

John Thompson has defined in-depth social research as being divided into two different methods; social-historical analysis and discourse analysis. Social-historical analysis is a practical method through which primary evidence is placed within its broader political economy and socio-historical conditions. Thompson argues that this method leads to a "reinterpretation" of the material in a way that is critical and practically relevant.[69] Thompson's social-historical analysis provides a means to critically engage with primary evidence (both archival and oral) and place it within the political economy of the Western Transvaal.

This research relies heavily on archival sources. The Wits Historical Papers Research Archive (HPRA) holds information on the ICU as part of several of its collections.[70] Particularly

[67] Belinda Bozzoli. eds., *Town and countryside in the Transvaal: Capitalist Penetration and Popular Response* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983).
[68] Nieftagodien. "The Place of 'The Local'", p.45.
[69] John Thompson. *Ideology and Modern Culture* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), p. 290.
[70] These include AWG Champion's (leader of the ICU Yase-Natal) papers, Kadalie's papers and other miscellaneous documents on the ICU. Sylvia Neame's papers in the HPRA are currently under re-organisation, and due to Covid-19, this process has been protracted. They include her own

relevant are the documents and correspondence kept by Scottish trade unionist William Ballinger, who came to South Africa as an advisor to the ICU in 1928, a time when the union was expanding in the Western Transvaal. Trade unionist Ambrose Saffery worked in South Africa between 1920 and 1940 and kept personal archives on the ICU (as well as retail and food unions). His collection contains correspondence between ICU officials, copies of the *Workers' Herald*, and the *Workers' Herald Weekly News Bulletin*, published sporadically and fortnightly in the latter years of the 1920s (more below) and some other ICU-related material. The library at the University of Cape Town (UCT) holds a number of collections containing material on the ICU.[71] Most useful for this project are the documents kept by Lionel Forman, a journalist and member of the CPSA who kept extensive information on the ICU and on other political bodies.

The *Rand Daily Mail* started publishing in 1902 and houses articles on the ICU in the Western Transvaal and Cape Province; these are stored in an online repository which has been accessed online. Henry Dee has collected digital versions of all known copies of the ICU's newspaper *Workers' Herald* as part of his PhD.[72] The *Workers' Herald* was started in 1923 and was published monthly. It was edited by Clements Kadalie "only in name", with sub-editors James Theale (edited form 1923-1925) and H. D. Tyamzashe (1925-1929) doing the actual job.[73] What is unique about the *Workers' Herald* is that it dedicated a larger portion of its pages to trade unionism and politics than other black newspapers.[74] This has proved an invaluable resource in terms of recovering the voices of ICU leaders and a rich account of their ideological

correspondence with leaders of the ANC and ICU, like Selby Msimang, who championed workers struggles as part of the ANC and was president of the ICU in 1920, and AWG Champion. She also has interviews with Ray Simons as well as other CPSA members. I have not been able to access these papers because she was reorganising them and then Covid-19 struck, making it difficult to view them.

[71] Ray and Jack Simons's papers at UCT also have documents on the ICU: these includes Ray's own research and notes on the ICU as well Kadalie's own writing. The University of South Africa (UNISA) has a large collection of material kept by AWG Champion worked both in Natal and the Transvaal. He kept archives relating to ICU meetings, campaigns, documents, photographs and speeches as well as personal biographical information. I haven't used either of these collections because of the restrictions placed on travel and research because of Covid-19.

[72] I thank Henry Dee for his help in this regard, especially considering the limitations placed on archive visits because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

[73] Les Switzer. eds., *South Africa's alternative press: Voices of protest and resistance, 1880-1960 (*Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1997), pp.153-157.

[74] *Ibid.*, p.156.

outlook. The paper also helped provide detail about ICU events and a chronology of the ICU in the Western Transvaal.

Umteteli wa Bantu, which was a moderate black newspaper established by the Native Recruitment Corporation and had a clear anti-communist ideology, provides a conservative critique of the ICU.[75] Copies of the paper are kept at the Pretoria campus of the National Library of South Africa (NLSA). The *Workers' Herald Weekly News Bulletin*, contains more practical information than the *Workers' Herald* newspaper, such as ICU branch meetings and branch reports. The study also draws on a few articles from the CPSA's mouthpiece *Umsebenzi* (or *The South African Worker* in English).

In the National Archives of South Africa (NASA) in Pretoria, archived under the Department of Native Affairs (NAD), "location" files include information that helped reconstruct the political economy and the material conditions in particular towns and locations, as well as the political activities of the ICU. The archives of the Director of Local Government are also useful to give general context to town formation. Files of the Department of Justice form the largest body of evidence from the NASA used in this dissertation. They comprise of transcripts of speeches and meetings held by ICU officials and notes on their activities, which were gathered by the authorities as evidence to prosecute ICU leaders for sedition under the Native Administration Act of 1927.

Debates abound about the use of archival material which focus on the interaction of the researcher with archival material, the conditions under which archives are accessed, the ownership of archives, who controls their use, the way archival information is interpreted, the way it is presented, the arrangement of archival information and the political implications of archiving and using archives.[76] Bhekizizwe Peterson argues that South Africa's state archives

[75] Natasha Erlank has suggested that *Umteteli Wa Bantu* developed a degree of editorial independence from the Native Recruitment Corporation, and developed a rapport between the paper and its readers. This was especially in the instance where editions were "co-produced" between audience and editors. Natasha Erlank. "Umteteli wa Bantu and the Constitution of Social Publics in the 1920s and 1930s." *Social Dynamics* 45, 1 (2019): 75-102.

[76] Archives rely on a decoding and formation of meaning by the historian herself, which means that archives are brought to life through the ideology, assumptions and thoughts of the historian. The writing of history from archives, is in a sense the "resuscitation (of) life" and is a subjective experience. Mbembe argues that when archives are opened to be used by the public and the historian, a "fundamental" and irreversible process occurs, death: a distance from the original author and the original subject. The historian is merely "engaged with a battle against ghosts", with the historian being the only path to existence. Achille Mbembe. "The Power of the Archive and its

were created by "successive white oligarchies" chronicling certain histories, which exclude black working-class people.[77] Verne Harris further suggests that the State Archival Service (SAS) was for the twentieth century controlled by white officials and bureaucrats who created linguistically and physically segregated archival spaces and effectively "oiled the wheels of Apartheid bureaucracy".[78] This also entailed a side-lining of marginal groups: "black experiences were poorly documented [and the] voices of women, the disabled, and other marginalised people were seldom heard".[79]

Laura-Anne Stoler shows how the interpretation of the colonial archive, such as some of the repositories used in this dissertation, needs a close reading of *what is being said* prior to ascertaining whether what is being said represents reality. She argues for a twofold process whereby one reads both "along the archival grain" as well as "against it", to find both the "regularities", "omissions" and "consistencies" and to reveal the contradictions, manipulations and intentions.[80] This two-fold process entails, as John Tosh notes, "understanding an age on its own terms" while simultaneously going "against the grain" by remaining critical and scrutinising facts.[81] The archive of the Justice Department and Native Affairs Department (NAD) include the reports of state officials who reflected on ICU meetings. I have reflected on any evident bias in these reports and have tried to note and counteract any omissions and mischaracterisations of ICU officials.

Hamilton, Harris and Reid, argue that in order to "refigure the archive", archival collections should be expanded and have new organising criteria (political) and hold new kinds of objects (expanding beyond just documents). They suggest that the South African History Archive (SAHA) (which provided figure 3), as well as the Wits HPRA constitute new and oppositional archives.[82] I have attempted to "refigure" the archive in a different way; the reports of Criminal Investigation Department (CID) officials attempted to surveil the ICU and quell protest. I have

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Limits" in Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris, Michèle Pickover, Graeme Reid, Razia Saleh, and Jane Taylor, eds. *Refiguring the Archive* (Cape Town: New Africa Books, 2002), pp.21-25.

[77] Bhekizizwe Peterson. "The Archives and the Political Imaginary" in Carolyn Hamilton, et al. *Refiguring,* p. 31.

[78] Verne Harris. "The Archival Sliver: Power, Memory, and Archives in South Africa", *Archival Science* 2, 1-2 (2002), p. 71.

[79] *Ibid.*, p. 73.

[80] Ann Laura Stoler. "Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance", *Archival Science* 2, 1-2 (2002), p. 100.

[81] John Tosh. *The Pursuit of History* (London: Routledge, 2013), p.118.

[82] Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris and Graeme Reid. "Introduction" in Hamilton et al, *Refiguring*: 7-19.

used these reports to bring light to the ICU's struggles and to access the different voices ICU officials, location residents and black farmworkers.

Oral sources also form an important part of this research, although no interviews were conducted specifically for this research. As part of the Institute for Advanced Social Research collection held by HPRA, Charles van Onselen's "Sharecropping and Labour Tenancy Project" includes over 300 life-history interviews conducted with farmworkers in the Transvaal, many of whom were in the Western Transvaal, as sharecropping was still prevalent in this region when the interviews were conducted in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s.[83]

The interviews were conducted by Charles van Onselen and a team of researchers: M Nkadimeng, T Matsatsala, T Couzens, E Kgomo and J Phiri. Forty of the interviews in this collection contain information on the ICU in the Western Transvaal including on branch secretaries, the political outlook of the movement, popular attitudes towards the ICU and personal memories about ICU meetings.[84] These interviews are used in Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5. They form an intrinsic part of this dissertation and help fill in the factual, ideological and political complexities of the Western Transvaal and Cape Province. In the same collection, twenty further interviews include a mix of information on the ICU in surrounding regions like in the Free State and Eastern Transvaal, as well as on issues like diamond mining and farm brutality. These interviews are used primarily for contextual information.

The 1980s were a period of heightened state repression in South Africa. Dee notes that old ICU members were "cautious" when interviewed and that the police confiscated and "lost" a number of the tapes.[85] This may have impacted the memory of interviewees could have omitted commentary on the ICU for fear of persecution. Almost all of the interviews were in Southern Sotho or Setswana and undoubtedly some of the subtle idiom of Setswana was lost. That being said, this dissertation does not overly dissect the interviewees reflections and tries to quote them in full where possible. The final point concerns the consent of the interview participants, as the norms of the 1980s did not require interviewees to verbally indicate their consent to be interviewed. There are three reasons why I have chosen to use the interviews and include the original names of the interview participants; firstly, they are held in a public archive; secondly,

[83] Some of these interviews were used for *The Seed is Mine*, and can be found at Wits HPRA, Institute for Advanced Social Research (IASR), AG2738, Interview Transcriptions, Aa1-Aa326.
[84] The topics of these interviews include information on a range of topics, including life histories, cultivation of black sorghum, World War One, the influenza epidemic, women's subsistence production and migrancy.
[85] Dee. "Clements Kadalie", p.55.

many of the interviews I have used appear in Van Onselen's book *The Seed is Mine*; lastly, I limited the use of personal information from the interviews.

Oral history has been well defended as an historical methodology and it has been used in many of South Africa's most important historical works. For example, Sekibakiba Lekgoathi notes that it has played an important role in documenting the history of South Africa's countryside where few archival records are available.[86] Charles van Onselen's book on Kas Maine has oral history as its central source.[87] The same is reiterated by Paul la Hausse who argues that oral history in South Africa has created the foundations of important topics of interest in South African history – at the very least by recording the personal experiences of African people who have been ignored in archival records.[88]

As Alessandro Portelli suggests, memory "is not a passive depository of facts but an active creation of meaning" and much of the debate around the validity of oral history rests on the ideas about memory and narrative construction.[89] For instance, while Charles van Onselen's *The Seed Is Mine* was a phenomenal work of oral history, according to Rassool and Minkley, it paid little attention to the debates on memory that were common at the time of the books' publishing. Kas Maine's memory was not analysed as a complex collection of fact, fable and selection, it was rather used for factual content that it provided. This, according to Rassool and Minkley, "collapses memory into a realist narrative", suggesting the importance of theorising memory and orality in oral history narrative.[90] In this dissertation, farmworkers' reflections and memories are quoted throughout chapters two to five, and they add rich accounts of how people viewed and experienced the ICU. I have tried to pay attention to instances when the memory of farmworkers' is clearly mistaken, selective or intentionally omissive.

[86] Sekibakiba Lekgoathi. "Voices of Our Past: Oral Testimony and Teaching History", in June Bam and Claire Dyer. eds, Educator's Guide to the UNESCO General History of Africa. (South Africa: New Africa Education (NAE), 2004): 41-51.
[87] Van Onselen. *The Seed is Mine.*
[88] Paul La Hausse. "Oral History and South African Historians", *Radical History Review* 1990, 46-47 (1990), pp. 354-356.
[89] Alessandro Portelli. "What Makes Oral History Different?" in Robert Perks, and Alistair Thomson, eds. *The Oral History Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 37.
[90] Gary Minkley and Ciraj Rassool. "Orality, Memory and Social History in South Africa" In Sarah Nuttall and Carli Coetzee. eds, *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press: 1998), pp. 96-99.

Note on the Chapter Structure, Maps and Biographical Profiles

A considerable amount of the chapter structure has already been provided in the earlier part of the introduction. The organising logic of the chapters is as follows; chapter one gives a contextual account of the history of South Africa, with a particular focus on the North West province and the rise of the ICU. This provides an overall regional political and economic context for the remaining chapters. While the ICU had branches in the Western Transvaal and Cape Province prior to 1928, chapter two discusses the growth of the ICU which began in earnest after the strike in Lichtenburg in June 1928, in which the ICU played an important role. At the same time, a rural revolt was occurring in South Africa's countryside districts, and chapter three looks at the ICU in the primary maize producing district, the Bloemhof-Schweizer-Reneke-Wolmaransstad triangle. At the onset of the ICU's organisational decline in 1928 (with corruption and internal splits beginning to emerge), the ICU actually defied this national trend by growing in strength in this region in the face of state onslaught.

This general context of organisational decline had more of an impact on the ICU outside of region's maize growing districts. Chapter four sketches the ICU in an array of towns where its trajectory was greatly affected by the inability of the ICU to respond to the local political economy of each of the towns and the union's internal organisational problems. Chapter five discusses the ICU's languages of freedom and subversion, its role in helping with civil cases and in creating a public sphere and the Union's role in reorganising the space of the Western Transvaal.

Throughout chapters two, three and four biographies of ICU activists that were active in the Western Transvaal will be provided. These appear in the narrative inside boxes placed which take up between half-a-page and one-page. They are not positioned at first mention of the leaders, but rather where a leader was most active, i.e., the biography for Jason Jingoes is placed in the section on Makwassie because of his consistent presence there. Many of these leaders are fairly unknown, or have biographies that are lean. Included in this dissertation are the biographies of Thomas Mbeki, Keable 'Mote, Alexander Maduna, Doyle Modiakgotla, Robert Makhatini, Jason Jingoes, H. D. Tyamzashe and Bennet Gwabini. Their biographies illustrate a number of key points about the ICU activists in the Western Transvaal; their class position, their role in the ICU, their place of origin, their skills and their political affiliations. The

biographies of figures like Clements Kadalie and William Ballinger have been omitted because a fair amount of work has been published about them.[91]

Scattered throughout the dissertation are photos from different sources. Many of them come from the *Workers' Herald*, which published photos of ICU leaders (which are mainly kept in the biographical profiles) and cartoons. An online archive of photos taken at the Lichtenburg diamond diggings are used in chapter two. Since there are very few photos of the Western Transvaal in the 1920s, a handful of miscellaneous images have been used. These include pictures in *The Seed is Mine* which were taken as part of Sharecropping and Labour Tenancy Project.

Two general maps have been created to sketch the geographical setting of this dissertation. Map 1 situates the Western Transvaal and northern parts of the Cape Province in relation to the whole of South Africa. Map 2 sketches the Western Transvaal and northern parts of the Cape Province, which together form what today is the North West Province. In chapter two, Map 3 shows the spread of diamond diggings across the Western Transvaal. Map 4 provides the specific farms where diamonds were found in Lichtenburg. In chapter three, Map 5 indicates the farms that are part of the Bloemhof-Schweizer-Reneke-Wolmaransstad triangle.

[91] For Clements Kadalie, see Dee. "Clements Kadalie"; Kadalie. *My Life and the ICU*. For William Ballinger, see Mouton. *Voices in the Desert*.

Chapter One – A Wildfire from the Embers: The Rise of the ICU in the Western Transvaal in the Context of a Changing South Africa: c. 1500s-1930s

Introduction

This chapter has two aims: the first is to outline the history of the region that became known as Western Transvaal (see Map 1) in the context of a changing South Africa between the 1500s and the 1930s, with particular emphasis on the period following the mineral revolution and the Western Transvaal region; the second is to narrate the history of the ICU between its inception in 1919 and its organisational decline by the start of the 1930s in relation to these transformations. The nature, character and trajectory of the ICU nationally, including a discussion of its organisational, political and ideological vacillations, are key to understanding its specific path in the Western Transvaal. The chapter's title seeks to elicit the dire economic and political conditions in the post-World War One period which spurred on the growth of workers' organisations, amongst which was the ICU, which spread across southern Africa like a "wildfire". Secondary sources are the backbone of this chapter, and they outline the effects of the industrial revolution on South Africa and the Western Transvaal. A handful of primary sources are also used, mainly from the *Workers' Herald*.

The Rise of Modern South Africa: 1500s-1930s

African Land and Colonial Expansion in the Western Transvaal, 1500-1880

Three-hundred years prior to the first mineral discoveries, diffuse communities of Sotho-Tswana people lived in decentralised communities with little cattle wealth or long-distance trade in what today is the North West Province.[92] In 1500 a fission occurred in the primary Sotho-Tswana chiefdom in the Highveld, after which a distinct group of Sotho-Tswana speaking people formed (this rupture has since been revised to have been slightly later than 1500).[93] Members of the chiefdom were spread throughout southern Africa from as far north

[92] Jan Boeyens. "The Late Iron Age Sequence in the Marico and Early Tswana History." *The South African Archaeological Bulletin* 58, 178 (2003): 63-78, p.75.
[93] *Ibid.*, p.68.

as Brits to the borders of the Kalahari (a few kilometres west of the North West's western border) and as far south as the Caledon river (which is in the southern Free State).[94]

It was characteristic of Sotho-Tswana chiefdoms to reproduce the political, judicial, administrative and economic structure of a chiefdom on a smaller-scale, and smaller polities reproduced the "parent" chiefdom structure; newly formed groups like the BaFokeng, BaKwena and BaKgatla crossed the Vaal river into the western and north-western parts of what today is the North West Province; the BaKgatla moved close to Rustenburg; the BaKgatla ba Kgafela moved to Pilanesberg; and lastly the BaTlokwa moved into present-day Mpumalanga.[95] Some chiefdoms had had a degree of cultural assimilation with the Nguni. As a result of growing populations within chiefdoms and a growing ivory trade in the interior, a process of amalgamation took place around 1800.[96] The most notable examples of this consolidation, although they did not produce culturally homogenous groups,[97] are the Pedi in Mpumalanga and the Hurutshe west of the Pilanesberg.

Fred Morton suggests that from 1820 onwards Tswana settlement patterns were greatly changed by the primitive accumulation of white settlers.[98] The northward movements of *trekboers* into southern Africa's interior had forced Africans – through frontier wars, land dispossession and speculative land buying – to work in white productive sectors of farming and diamond mining.[99] Many of these settlers came from the Cape and settled in the southern Orange Free State and Western Transvaal. Robert Ross suggests that the "large, owner-operated farm" which was "worked by a harshly exploitable black labour force" was a "distinct social form" which emerged during struggles in the Cape over two centuries.[100] The legal

[94] Martin Legassick. "The Sotho-Tswana Peoples Before 1800", in Leonard Thompson. eds., *African Societies in Southern Africa* (London: Heinemann, 1969): 86-125, p. 100-101.
[95] *Ibid*., p.103-105.
[96] *Ibid*., p.107.
[97] *Ibid*., p.97.
[98] Fred Morton. "Settlements, Landscapes and Identities Among the Tswana of the Western Transvaal and Eastern Kalahari Before 1820," *The South African Archeological Bulletin,* 60, 182: 72-78.
[99] Doreen Atkinson. *Going for Broke: The Fate of Farm Workers in Arid South Africa* (Cape Town, HSRC Press, 2007), p. 25.
[100] Cited in William Beinart and Peter Delius. "Introduction" in William Beinart, Peter Delius and Stanley Trapido. eds., *Putting a Plough to the Ground: Accumulation and Dispossession in Rural South Africa, 1950-1930* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986): 1-56, p.21.

boundaries and social expectations of this social form was loosely reproduced on farms in the Transvaal.[101]

There were also other forms of "capital accumulation and dispossession" during the nineteenth century which characterised Boer capitalist expansion. Veldcornets and Boer accumulators plied their trade in the interior through a variety of income earning activities; one being the Harts river irrigation project in the Northern Cape which spanned over a century (and subsequently, in the late 19th century, displaced the BaTlokwa leading to their revolt).[102] Boer Commando raids throughout the Transvaal, most easily identifiable in Potchefstroom and Rustenburg, resulted in Sotho-Tswana communities being made to work as *inboekselinge* (people registered as "apprentices" who were allotted to a particular master and often sold). As *inboekselinge* they did miscellaneous work on farms for Boer owners and were beaten and seldom manumitted even after the Boer declaration to suspend slavery north of the Vaal in 1852.[103] Botlhale Tema's historical novel *Land of My Ancestors* tells the story of her relatives who were *inboekselinge* captured in the 1850s.[104]

The disruptions to African societies were further exacerbated with the opening of the diamond fields in Kimberly in 1867. Kevin Shillington shows that Sotho-Tswana chiefdoms experienced considerable economic and ecological changes as a result of the new economy in Kimberly.[105] Shillington discusses how members of the BaTlhaping (a Tswana polity based close to Kuruman) managed to eke out a living in Kimberly, either working on the mines or in an associated industry transporting wood. New class cleavages began to develop among the BaTlhaping and as a result fragmentation of the political structure followed. Colonial taxes and land annexation as well as environmental degradation coupled with an already compromised

[101] *Ibid*., p.21 The authors note that while these links are evident, they need not be claimed too strongly.
[102] *Ibid*., pp.27-29, 30-31.
[103]Fred Morton. "Slave-raiding and Slavery in the Western Transvaal After the Sand River Convention." *African Economic History* 20 (1992): 99-118, pp.99-101, pp.104-106.
[104] Botlhale Tema. *Land of My Ancestors* (Cape Town: Penguin Random House South Africa, 2019 (1st Edition 2005)). Tema's ancestors, Polomane, Christina and Maja were part of a lucky few who managed to avoid the trappings of life-long labour on a white farm. They found providence and subsistence on Welgeval; a mission station set up by Swiss missionary Henri Gonin inside what today is the Pilanesberg National Park.
[105] Kevin Shillington. *The Colonisation of the Southern Tswana, 1870-1900* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1985).

political structure eventually proved too heavy a burden for the BaTlaping to bear, as their political structure largely collapsed by the turn of the century.[106]

Minerals, Masters and the Making of the State, 1864-1910

Diamond mining and farming drew many African people into migrant labour as subsistence economies declined and land became increasingly scarce.[107] The mining of gold in the Witwatersrand, which was discovered in 1884, drew many more men into the migrant labour system. As Van Onselen writes, "in less than thirty years, a republic [the South African Republic] founded on a[n] agricultural economy was transformed into a colony boasting the world's largest and most technologically-sophisticated gold mining industry".[108] The coordination of the mining industry and the colonial state meant that a workforce was ripped from southern African agrarian societies, leaving trails of destruction in town and countryside alike.[109]

By the turn of the twentieth century, colonial encroachment and the development of the mining industry had displaced African communities. According to Manson and Mbenga, in the Western Transvaal, chiefs of the BaFokeng, BaTlhaping and BaHurutshe used tactics ranging from "outright resistance to accommodation of colonising forces" to "preserve their land, their independence and ethnic unity".[110] Affiliation to mission stations provided a considerable degree of shelter from the low wages and dangerous working conditions. One example is chief of the BaHurutshe, Moiloa II, who had developed an affiliation to the Hermannsburg Missionary Society which helped his chiefdom gain access to land.[111] During the South African

[106] Kevin Shillington. "The Impact of Diamond Discoveries on the Kimberly Hinterland: Class Formation, Colonialism and Resistance Among the Tlhaping of Griqualand West in the 1870's": 99-119 in Shula Marks and Richard Rathbone. *Industrialisation and Social Change, pp.*99-119.
[107] See Peter Delius. *The Land Belongs to Us: the Pedi Polity, the Boers, and the British in the Nineteenth-Century Transvaal* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Kevin Shillington. "The Impact of Diamond Discoveries on the Kimberly Hinterland". For chief co-option and subsistence production, see Judy Kimble. "Labour migration in Basutoland, c. 1870-1885" in Shula Marks and Richard Rathbone. eds, *Industrialisation and Social Change*: 119-142. For ecological decline, see Peter Delius. *The Land Belongs to Us.*
[108] Charles Van Onselen. *New Babylon, New Nineveh: Everyday Life on the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2001), p. xvii.
[109] Shula Marks and Richard Rathbone. "Introduction" in Marks and Rathbone. eds, *Industrialisation and Social Change,* p. 27.
[110] Manson and Mbenga. *Land, Chiefs, Mining.* p.16.
[111] *Ibid.,* pp. 23-26, 46-58.

War, the allegiances that Tswana chiefdoms developed during the preceding century would prove important as they helped determine military loyalties and material support.[112]

By 1898, twelve years after gold was first found, South Africa was producing 27 per cent of the world's gold output,[113] drawing washermen, prostitutes, cab drivers, domestic workers and, of course, miners toiling with pick and shovel to the bourgeoning Rand mines.[114] Infrastructure was set up to support and capitalise on the influx of people to the Rand: trains carrying thousands of men to the mines from Mozambique and across southern Africa;[115] alcohol production in the distilleries set up by President Kruger;[116] and agreements with farmers, [117] dubbed the "union of gold and maize",[118] provided the expanding mines with transport, alcohol and food.

Gold mining and migrant labour wrought changes throughout the country. One example of the impact of the mineral revolution in the then Western Transvaal is how it influenced general patterns of migration among both men and women. While men migrated to the diamond mines from Bechuanaland, Cockerton shows how women too had a fairly established pattern of migration by the 1920s. Women willingly migrated from Bechuanaland into the Western Transvaal for marriage, tribal duties, education at mission institutions and to farms. Migrant women worked on farms in Rustenburg and Zeerust after the ecological disasters of 1894 and 1896,[119] and some women migrated with their families often working in labour tenant or sharecropping relationships on farms.[120] More coercive forms of migration, which included wives migrating because of unhappy marriages, physically assaulted women and children and those who had been forcibly kidnapped by Boer farmers and their agents, were also commonplace.[121]

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[112] *Ibid.,* See Chapter 2.
[113] Van Onselen. *New Babylon, New Nineveh,* p. 1.
[114] *Ibid*., p. xix.
[115] Charles Van Onselen. *The Night Trains, Moving Mozambican Miners to and from the Witwatersrand Mines, 1902-1955* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2019).
[116] Van Onselen. *New Babylon, New Nineveh,* p. 7.
[117] Robert Morrell. "The Disintegration of the Gold and Maize Alliance in South Africa in the 1920s", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 21, 4 (1988): 619-635, p. 623.
[118] *Ibid*., pp. 621-622. The concept of the "union of gold and maize" was first argued by Stanley Trapido in Stanley Trapido. "South Africa in a Comparative Study of Industrialization", *The Journal of Development Studies* 7, 3 (1971): 309-320.
[119] Camilla Cockerton. "Less a Barrier, More a Line: The Migration of Bechuanaland Women to South Africa, 1850–1930." *Journal of Historical Geography,* 22, 3 (1996): 291-307, pp.296-297.
[120] *Ibid*., pp.293-295.
[121] *Ibid*., p.295.

Speaking to the sum of the changes wrought by frontier wars, the mineral revolution and the destruction wrought within Sotho-Tswana communities, Keegan notes,

> From Iron-age cultivators and herders organised in lineages and living in small autonomous communities, the Sotho-Tswana people of South Africa's interior regions have in a century and a half become fully integrated into a racially structured industrial economy, albeit as a dominated, insecure, propertyless underclass.[122]

The reordering of societies throughout southern Africa meant that there were new markets which "provided possibilities for commercialisation and capital accumulation", and many who seized these opportunities were black farmers-turned-sharecroppers who "recolonise[d] the wide and large plains north and south of the Vaal River… albeit under the patronage of white landlords".[123]

Following the mineral discoveries, northward-moving trekboers bought land in the Western Transvaal from the government hoping that it would hold mineral wealth. Van Onselen suggests that much of this land did not hold mineral wealth and what is more, it was a continuum of harsh plains composed of "sand and gravel".[124] The Bloemhof-Schweizer-Reneke-Wolmaransstad triangle was settled by trekboers who engaged in agriculture on this land producing maize, sorghum, mutton and beef for growing industries on the Rand. The mineral revolution entailed that towns sprung up throughout the Transvaal; some had a wealth of mineral deposits; others had arable land on which food was grown; and yet others would take up a role manufacturing goods – all of which contributed to the industrialisation of South Africa.

Van Onselen notes that land in the South-Western Transvaal was suited to the "most elusive of all forms of agriculture – 'mixed farming'". By 1910, diamonds had emerged in the sandy soils of this region giving erstwhile prospectors reward for their patience and agricultural toil. The discovery of diamonds made the prospect of mixed farming more viable, especially considering the variable and unpredictable rainfall in the region. Farming and diamond mining constituted the central economic activities in towns of the South-Western Transvaal. Afrikaner communities joined together around these economies and through religion or military

[122] Keegan. *Facing the Storm,* p.132.
[123] *Ibid*., p.133-134.
[124] Charles Van Onselen. "Race and Class in the South African Countryside: Cultural Osmosis and Social Relations in the Sharecropping Economy of the South Western Transvaal, 1900-1950." *The American Historical Review* 95, 1 (1990): 99-123, p.102.

organisation developed towns throughout the countryside in a "haphazard and piecemeal" way.[125]

Understanding these processes of change wrought by the mining revolution has been a central part of the historiography on southern Africa. Colin Bundy speaks to changes in the Eastern Cape after the mineral revolution in the *Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry*, published in 1979. He suggests that white farming only became economically viable after the mineral revolution as new markets formed on the Rand – thus destroying innovative and thriving African peasant communities.[126]

Helen Bradford provides a sharp critique of Bundy's "Rise and Fall" dissertation using Herschel (a town in the Eastern Cape) as a case study.[127] She suggests that the conclusions of Bundy's study were greatly flawed because of a gender bias that ran through his work. If Bundy had looked more closely at women's subsistence production, Bradford argues, he would not have concluded that there was "overwhelming prosperity" in this region during the second half of the nineteenth century (and consequently no "rise" in peasant production).

A similar point can be made about the Western Transvaal. Nancy Jacobs shows that in most Tswana polities, but particularly among the BaTlhaping, it was women that were the cultivators, "it is the province of women to build their houses, to dig the fields, to sow and reap".[128] The disruption of Tswana chiefdoms broadened the duties of Tswana women who, in the absence of men, took up a more gender-fluid role in agricultural production.[129] The sharecroppers, farmworkers and labour tenants (that form a central part of the story that follows) were a collection of men and women who had moved out of reserves and migrated from Bechuanaland and chiefdoms in the Highveld to work on white farms throughout the Transvaal and Free State.

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[125] Paul Maylam. "Explaining the Apartheid City", p.19.

[126] This is the central argument made by in Colin Bundy. *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979). It is also well articulated in a review by Frederick Cooper. "Peasants, Capitalists, and Historians: A Review Article" *Journal of Southern African Studies* 7, 2 (1981): 284-314. Also see Jack Lewis. "The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry: A Critique and Reassessment." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 11, 1 (1984): 1-24, p. 1.

[127] Helen Bradford. "Peasants, Historians, and Gender: A South African Case Study Revisited, 1850–1886." *History and Theory* 39, 4 (2000): 86-110.

[128] John Campbell, "Travels in South Africa: Undertaken at the Request of the Missionary Society", (Andover Massachusetts: Flagg and Gould, 1816 [2nd edition 1974]), p,190 quoted in Nancy Jacobs. *Environment, Power, and Injustice: A South African History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.54.

[129] Nancy Jacobs. *Environment, Power and Injustice,* p.144.

The "re-colonisation" of the plains "north and south of the Vaal River" by black sharecroppers[130] in the Western Transvaal and Orange Free State meant that African people had managed to carve out an agricultural niche in the new industrial economy. Despite there being a clear relationship between the mines and the countryside, the massive changes which the mineral revolution brought were incomplete as "the vast majority of South Africans remained as subsistence farmers for the market".[131] Keegan, who focusses primarily on the Free State and the Transvaal, argues that early white farming relied heavily on sharecroppers and labour tenants – who were far better farmers than whites – to provide food for the growing populations on the Rand. [132]

Throughout the Transvaal, white farmers relied heavily on black labour in the face of growing indebtedness and pressures on them to be self-sufficient. Keegan reckons that "it would probably be true to say that black resources, skills and enterprise kept a whole generation of Afrikaners afloat on the land".[133] Trapido provides an example of this system on the Vereeniging Estates, land owned by the Marks and Lewis Company in the southern Transvaal, where "a share-tenancy cum share-cropping system was already in existence" when the Estates came into being.[134] The Company and many other farmers relied on this system of unpaid labour to produce food at competitive prices, using labour tenants' implements, oxen and seeds.[135]

The first decade of the twentieth century was characterised by considerable competition in the countryside, and the eventual victory of white capitalist farming was not "clear cut"; African families had a supply of family labour and lower costs which made them more resilient than white farmers.[136] It took considerable state intervention for white farmers to more systematically capitalise their farms. The outcome of the South African War, and the victory

[130] Timothy Keegan. *Facing the Storm*, pp. 133-134.
[131] Marks and Rathbone. eds, *Industrialisation and Social Change*, p.10.
[132] Keegan. *Facing the Storm*, pp. 29-31 and also Sipho Pityana. "The 'Land Question': The South African Constitution and the Emergence of a Conservative Agenda", in Cheryl Walker and Ben Cousins. *Land Divided, Land Restored: Land Reform in South Africa for the 21st Century* (Johannesburg: *Jacana Media,* 2015), pp. 166-167.
[133] Keegan, *Facing the Storm,* p.137.
[134] Stanley Trapido. "Putting a Plough to the Ground, a History of Tenant Production on the Vereeniging Estates 1896-1920", Seminar Paper, African Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersrand, 7 May 1984. At: http://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10539/9907/ISS-427.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y accessed on 11 May 2020, p.3.
[135] *Ibid.,* pp. 3-5.
[136] Keegan. *Facing the Storm,* p.138.

of the British, meant that there would be a unified state. The introduction of the 1913 Land Act after the establishment of the Union in 1910 was part of an ongoing process of land dispossession; it signified a convergence of processes of proletarianisation, state formation and of black political organisation.[137] The Act led to the formation of the South African Native National Congress (SANNC) as an African land-owning class was threatened (Keegan argues that this landed elite was sustained "between the field and the classroom").[138]

On farms, the Land Act threatened farmer-tenant relationships; as Keegan suggests, "legislative intervention was a reflection of heightened public awareness, alarm and debate over these issues amongst whites".[139] The Act can be seen as a second push to proletarianisation (after mining on the Rand) as capitalising farmers rallied for the removal of labour tenants and the introduction of wage labour. Yet, despite the Act being "farmer-led", it also signified the particular position of the state, as it stipulated that Africans were not allowed to own land outside the Reserves. After 1913, in areas like Rustenburg and Marico, African peasants clashed with white landowners and their militancy heightened the anxieties of white farmers. Among the BaKwena and BaHurutshe, African peasants protested the provisions of the Land Act by "defying the legal and customary constraints on ploughing land".[140]

With the coming of the Union in 1910, additional changes occurred in South African society. Louis Botha was the first Prime Minister of South Africa and together with Jan Smuts presided over government and the formation of the South African state for its first 9 years.[141] The Union represented a joining of hands of "Boer and Brit", which invariably angered JBM Hertzog's Nationalist Party. Crucially, as Magubane notes, was that the Union excluded Africans from political participation, and their opposition to this Union led to the formation of the SANNC,

[137] Keegan makes this point implicitly in Timothy Keegan. *Facing the Storm.*
[138] See Keegan. *Facing the Storm*, p.135. In response to the increasing threats of land dispossession, the Native Farmers Association (NFA) was set up prior to the Native Land Act of 1913, and was a syndicate that bought and sold land. It was a response to the threat of land dispossession coming in 1913 as well general deprivation of black landowner classes. For Information on the NFA see Tara Weinberg. "Making Collective Property: Land-buying Syndicates and the Native Farmers Association of South Africa in early 20th century Transvaal", History Workshop Seminar, 17 April 2019 as well as Tembeka Ngcukaitobi. *The Land is Ours: South Africa's First Black Lawyers and the Birth of Constitutionalism* (Johannesburg: Penguin Books, 2018), p. 158.
[139] Keegan. *Facing the Storm*, p. 140.
[140] Higginson. *Collective Violence,* p.225.
[141] On the formation of legislation, see: Jonathan Hyslop. "Martial Law and Military Power in the Construction of the South African State: Jan Smuts and the "Solid Guarantee of Force" 1899–1924." *Journal of Historical Sociology* 22, 2 (2009): 234-268, p.236.

(later renamed the ANC) in 1912.[142] Neame argues that the Congress Movement (an umbrella organisation which fought for national liberation, in which the ANC was the primary organisation) began after the establishment of the Union. The formation of the ANC in 1912 is linked to the eventual rise of the ICU in 1919 as black politics found greater expression.

Black Politics, Segregation and the Pact Government, 1910-1927

The growth of state capacity after 1910 sought to manage "contradictory" forms of development. Paul Maylam terms this contradiction the "inclusionary and exclusionary imperatives" of the colonial and Apartheid systems, arguing that the contradiction was created by the demand for black labour in cities and towns and the racist desire to keep them out.[143] Segregation was the solution developed to manage this contradiction, and it fulfilled the function to both guard white space and allow labour to enter into urban areas. Saul Dubow argues that segregationist ideology was developed in a loose and deliberately flexible way as a "defensive strategy" aimed at "preserving the existing social structure under conditions of rapid industrial growth".[144] Segregation was also a response to the growth of black political organisations like the SANNC, who had begun to mobilise elite black political forces in opposition to the provisions laid out by the Union of South Africa.

Throughout South Africa, including in the Western Transvaal, the managing of this "contradiction" took place through Health Committees. The association of black people with disease meant that Health Committees would take up the realm of "native administration". Over time, a tight regulatory framework was designed to administer black "locations" and wield "tight control over black urban underclasses"; controls were used to limit black people's mobility, economic opportunities and leisure activities.[145] Throughout this dissertation,

[142] Ben Magubane. "Race and Democratisation in South Africa: Some Reflections", in Yvonne Muthien, Meshack Khosa and Ben Magubane. eds, *Democracy and Governance Review: Mandela's Legacy 1994-1999* (Pretoria: HSRC Press, 2000): 17-36, pp. 17-18.
[143] Maylam. "Explaining the Apartheid City".
[144] Dubow. *Racial Segregation.* Also see Alf Stadler. *The Political Economy of Modern South Africa* (Johannesburg: New Africa Books, 1987) who suggests that the social composition of the ICU leadership was similar to that of the South African Native National Congress (SANNC) (which formed, in part, as a reaction to the deterioration of African middle-class living standards) and that it was the development of segregationist logic which gave space to the formation of a politically informed African petty bourgeoisie, pp. 3, 9.
[145] Maylam. "Explaining the Apartheid City", p.31.

emphasis has been placed on the various controls used to limit black people's movement between location, farm, town and diamond digging.

Somewhat obscured by the segregationist discourse were the divisions present within the white population as a result of the Union of South Africa. This was particularly the case among "angry, relatively young [Afrikaans] men who had been pushed to the margins of rural society".[146] During the years 1913 until 1917, the collection of poorer "rural Afrikaners" in the Western Transvaal were active in urging the state to allow them to enforce the Land Act and perform police duties in the countryside.[147] Afrikaner Nationalists who were upset at the lack of implementation of the Land Act and felt "exposed to an uncertain economic future" under the Union government, rejected the notion of a unified South Africa, and organised a rebellion (1914-1915) against the government (principally based in the Western Transvaal). As a symbol of their discontentment, they did not participate in the war against German South-West Africa. The rebellion stoked Afrikaner Nationalist sentiments, particularly in the Western Transvaal, where many white Afrikaners were part of military commandos. In small towns in the Western Transvaal the rebellion was a source of Afrikaner pride, and the political and military organisation in these areas grew in importance with developments a decade later.

Just after the establishment of the Union and the entrenchment of segregation, a massive world-wide industrial boom as a result of World War One ensued. The war-time boom caused a drop in commodities produced overseas and South African manufacturing increased by 173 percent in seven years (between 1911 and 1918).[148] General industrial development and the progressive destruction of the peasantry meant that workers flooded into towns creating an industrial worker spirit.[149] This led to an upsurge of pro-worker organisations in 1919-1920 and included the formation of the Industrial Workers of Africa (IWA) (with the backing of International Socialist League) in 1917, the Transvaal Native Congress (TNC) in 1917, the ICU in 1919 and the CPSA in 1921. Organisations like the ICU and the CPSA were both formed in the context of strike action, with the ICU forming in 1919 at the Cape Town docks and the CP gaining prominence after the 1922 Rand Revolt.

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[146] Higginson. *Collective Violence,* p.136.
[147] *Ibid*., p.154.
[148] Duncan Innes. *Anglo American and the Rise of Modern South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1984), p.119.
[149] Stadler. *The Political Economy of Modern South Africa*. Also see Higginson. *Collective Violence*, p.191.

Manson and Mbenga regard the years 1900 to 1940 as being particularly turbulent in the Western Transvaal as struggles over land and chiefly authority predominated in chiefdoms across the region. Common to the BaKgatla, BaKubung, BaKwena, BaFokeng and BaHurutshe were conflicts that arose over communal land tenure; chiefly rule and the apportionment of resources.[150] Following the growth of workers' organisations between 1917 and 1920, it was the TNC that had managed to penetrate the rural areas of the Western Transvaal. Graeme Simpson details how white paranoia fuelled rumours about a chiefs' revolt in 1917, after a few meetings were held between chiefs and members of the TNC in the Rustenburg district. White farmers in the area began peddling reports of African people acquiring ammunition and guns. It was eventually resolved by the Rustenburg Native Commissioner that all rumours of a chiefs' rebellion were constructed by white people.[151]

After World War One, the presence of the SANNC grew in towns. In Ventersdorp, the TNC had a branch and advocated for school education, better pay for workers and argued against the Transvaal poll tax. There were also smaller and less impactful TNC branches in Delareyville and Lichtenburg. Continuing the trend of previous years, it was the politics within chiefdoms which dominated the political activism of the SANNC. For example, two SANNC members, Sol Plaatje and Modiri Molema, were hired to deal with land claims brought forward by the BaFokeng and BaKwena in the early 1920s.[152]

Sylvia Neame argues that worker organisations played an important part in the "industrial wing" of the Congress movement.[153] As already mentioned, many of these organisations fell under the umbrella of the Congress movement where there was an overlap of leadership, membership and purpose: at Congress meetings, leaders of the ANC, ICU, IWA and CPSA were present. In addition, African leaders[154] were involved in the ICU, CPSA and ANC and,

[150] Manson and Mbenga. *Land, Chiefs, Mining*, pp.63-85.
[151] Simpson. "Peasants and Politics", p.182.
[152] Andrew Manson and Bernard Mbenga. "The African National Congress in the Western Transvaal/Northern Cape Platteland, c. 1910–1964: Patterns of Diffusion and Support for Congress in a Rural Setting." *South African Historical Journal* 64, 3 (2012): 472-493, pp.478-480.
[153] Neame. *The Congress Movement: vol 1*, *preface*, p. xviii.
[154] This includes leaders like AWG Champion, Selope Thema and Selby Msimang. CPSA members like TW Thibedi, Albert Nzula and Gana Makebeni were all part of the ICU and CPSA. TW Thibedi, the first African person to be a CPSA member, had links to the ICU and later a Trotskyist group. Albert Nzula was a secretary of an ICU branch in Aliwal North and an assistant secretary in the CPSA and author of a book about the rising tide of nationalism in the ANC and ICU. Gana Makabeni was a member of both the ANC and ICU. Mia Roth. *The Communist Party in South Africa: Racism, Eurocentricity and Moscow, 1921-1950* (Johannesburg: Partridge Africa, 2016).

Neame argues, were "contained in a national democratic framework". Neame suggests that both the ANC and ICU were bourgeois democratic organisations responding to capitalist development, [155] and seeks to explain how "the bourgeois nature of Congress" was reconciled "with the aim of national liberation".[156] One way it was reconciled was through the ICU's development of a radical-democratic politics in the countryside, prioritising economic liberation in the latter half of the 1920s.[157] Neame regards the links between different political organisations as being so clear that she suggests the ICU was a precursor to the ANC Youth League (ANCYL).[158]

The growth of industry in South Africa as a result of World War One experienced a relative drop from 1919 onwards, and the formation of workers' organisations can be linked to this. In the years 1920-1921 industrial production continued to rise by 63 percent, despite European economies recovering from the manufacturing drop.[159] Duncan Innes accrues this continued increase in production, in part, to European manufacturing's slow pace of recovery; but it was also the product of an "assault on the working class", where the sharp rises in production related to the incessant surplus extraction of mine and manufacturing bosses.[160] This increased exploitation of workers produced a greater degree of labour militancy – for instance, as a result of inflation and wage suppression, over 70 000 black miners went on a twelve day strike in 1920. Despite the heightened militancy, segregation and racial differentiation undermined class alliances which could have effectively challenged new capitalist formations.[161]

The 1923 Urban Areas Act systematically controlled the movements and living conditions of African people in urban areas. The Act declared African people as "temporary sojourners" in towns who "would be tolerated within Urban Areas only as long as they were economically desirable and necessary".[162] Towns were designated as white spaces, black people were confined to residence in rentable accommodation in segregated locations and fines gathered from pass contraventions, violations of the location regulations and illegal beer brewing and

[155] *Neame. The Congress Movement: vol.1.*, p.6.
[156] *Ibid*., p. xvii.
[157] *Ibid.*, p.6 and *preface*, p. xviii.
[158] *Ibid*., *preface*.
[159] Innes. *Anglo American,* p.122.
[160] *Ibid*., p.127.
[161] Higginson. *Collective Violence*, p. 191; Ambrous Jacobs. "The Rise and Fall of the Industrial and Commercial Union of South Africa 1919-1929", *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 1 (2011), pp. 40-41.
[162] Robert Jones and Howard Griffiths. *Labour Legislation in South Africa*. (Johannesburg: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1980), p.23.

selling provided the necessary funding to implement and enforce the Act.[163] While the Urban Areas Act "embodied most of the key mechanisms and institutions" for urban segregation, it did not control the way urban segregation unfolded. In general, "municipalities chose whether or not to implement" the provisions of the Urban Areas Act.[164] In this respect, Mabin and Parnell note that greater attention be paid to the way in which "municipal lobbying of central government for extended segregationist controls" shaped the legislative character of towns.[165] The fluid nature of local government is illustrated in towns of the Western Transvaal where *ad hoc* measures were used to police the flows of workers into urban areas and prohibit the ICU from holding meetings.

When Botha died in 1919, Smuts became Prime Minister. Hyslop has argued that violence and martial law characterised Smuts' premiership, although it was largely a result of the South African legal framework, reliant on military power, which allowed such violence to happen.[166] In 1922 two major instances of violence by armed forces in civil disputes occurred; the first was the massacre of over 200 Israelites, led by Enoch Mgijima, in Bulhoek; and the second was the excessive use of force in the Rand Rebellion. The 1922 Rand Rebellion, also known as the white miners' strike, was led by a large majority of white workers opposing the influx of cheap black labour and was crushed by Smuts, who bombed the workers.

Smuts' actions during the strike symbolised a watershed between white workers of both the Nationalist and Labour Parties, who subsequently joined forces to oppose him.[167] Allegiances in the Western Transvaal were on the side of the Nationalist Party; after all, following First World War, Smuts had decided not to provide support and aid for farmers and poor whites in the Western Transvaal. This inevitably angered poorer whites, who felt they would be better cared for by the incoming Nationalist-Labour Pact Government. The Pact government was elected in 1924, during the "turbulent years" of the post-war depression. What allowed the Nationalist and Labour parties to engage in a coalition was that both were "vaguely anti-capitalist" (with the Nationalists identifying with Bolshevism to rail against the British) and committed to maintaining the Colour Bar.[168] The Pact did not resemble a clear pro-labour

[163] *Ibid*., p.22.
[164] Paul Maylam. "Explaining the Apartheid City", p.34.
[165] Susan Parnell and Alan Mabin. "Rethinking Urban South Africa." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 21, 1 (1995): 39-61, pp.49-53.
[166] Jonathan Hyslop. "Martial Law and Military Power", p.260.
[167] Brian Bunting. *The Rise of the South African Reich.* (London: Penguin Books, 1969), pp.33-34.
[168] *Ibid*., p.30.

stance of the Nationalist top brass (for a start, they had not supported the Nationalist workers that played a large role in the Rand Rebellion); they rather resembled and represented a land-owning elite "who had no interest in workers as workers" but in their instrumental value to achieve political power.[169]

With the incoming Nationalist-Labour Pact, the government did a fair amount to "satisfy the Afrikaans ego". The Pact was the first attempt "towards the creation of an authoritarian state based on that rigid race stratification".[170] Part of this race stratification was the deeper entrenchment of the Colour Bar. Hertzog proposed four Bills aimed at: abolishing the common roll vote in the Cape; creating an African representative council; pegging African land ownership and allowing coloured people to vote in the Cape.[171] Although the Pact resembled a change from Smuts' militarism and the South African Party's allegiance to big mining interests, it would eventually fold under pressure from their Nationalist constituency to curtail workers' rights and organisation.

During the second-half of the 1920s, black political organisations flourished in the Western Transvaal. While the chiefs in reserves managed to keep the ICU at bay, there was a relative lacuna of leadership in the Western Transvaal farmlands, which meant that there was organisation from the ICU and CPSA (and to a lesser degree the ANC) in places like Delareyville, Bloemhof, Schweizer Reineke, Klerksdorp, Potchefstroom and Ventersdorp.[172] While the ANC experienced decreasing enthusiasm in the second-half of the 1920s, they did have a branch in Klerksdorp and the TNC did hold meetings and organise workers in Potchefstroom. The ANC did not symbolise the overall trend of black politics; more vibrant political cultures espoused by the ICU and the CPSA took hold of small towns and farms in the Western Transvaal countryside in the second-half of the 1920s. The CPSA, under the leadership of Josie Mpama and Edwin Mofutsanyana, garnered mass support in Potchefstroom, where almost all of the location residents were members of the party.[173] The ICU's development in the Western Transvaal was varied and although it had "limited organisational appeal among the reserve-based Africans" and failed to articulate the "local material concerns

[169] *Ibid*., pp.31-33.
[170] *Ibid*., p.36.
[171] *Ibid*., p.36.
[172] Andrew Manson, Bernard Mbenga and Arianna Lissoni. *Khongolose: A Short History of the ANC in the North West Province from 1909* (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2016), pp. 22-25.
[173] Manson and Mbenga. "The African National Congress", p.481.

of Tswana peasants", for the eight odd years that it was active, it was the central political organisation that represented the everyday grievances of black people.[174]

The Pact government responded to the growth of African political organisation. Hertzog's Bills caused "widespread agitation" among African people and the rise of the ICU and CPSA "led the government to take further steps on that road of repression" mirrored in apartheid legislation after 1948.[175] The 1927 Native Administration Act was the most immediate effort to quell the rise of worker organisations. It included a Sedition Clause which aimed to eliminate "agitation" between white and black people, primarily through chronicling and controlling what was said at meetings held by black political organisations (principally concerning those held by the ICU and CP). Figure 4 (below) is a cartoon in the *Workers' Herald* which shows how the Pact government was using the Act to arrest agitators and quell trade unionism for the purpose of appeasing the interests of white workers and capital.

Figure 4: "African Trade Unionism is Undergoing Persecution Under the Nationalist-Labour Government of South Africa". Source: *Workers' Herald*, 14 August 1926

[174] *Ibid*., p.481; Graeme Simpson. "Peasants and Politics", p.184.
[175] Bunting. *The Rise of the South African Reich*, p.38.

The Rural Revolt, 1927-1929

The Pact government's ascension into power both created conditions for, and intersected with, a "rural revolt" which was brewing in countryside districts. Both Bradford and Neame have indicated that the second half of the 1920s was characterised by changing relationships in the countryside which provided fuel for the revolt. The dispossession of African land in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had been given legal sanction by the 1913 Land Act, and by the early 1920s Africans had little ability to own land or cultivate it independently. After the Pact government assumed control in 1924, they added further legislation to control African landholding. The 1926 Land Amendment Bill sharpened legislation regarding squatting and tenancy by demarcating land for African occupation[176] and the 1927 Native Administration Act tightened the administration of reserves by the Native Affairs Department.[177]

As already mentioned, black people who were unable to own land independently worked as sharecroppers, labour tenants and farmworkers – much to the benefit of inexperienced white farmers. Neame argues that the thrust of the "rural upsurge" was an effort by white farmers and the government to change the status of Africans from "squatters to labour tenants", and also, through the 1927 Native Administration Act, to "retribalise" them and "annul" their ability to own land. [178] In this sense, according to Neame, the rural revolt was a rejection of the "landlord path to capitalist development".[179]

Both the CP, ICU and ANC attached to the rural revolt. The ICU had been engaged in countryside districts in the Cape from 1921, and, in the second-half of the 1920s, developed most strongly in rural towns.[180] Throughout the 1920s, the CPSA publicly tried to draw attention to rural Africans, and in 1928, the party adopted the Native Republic resolution which stipulated that South Africa's land belonged to Africans.[181] The ANC did have purchase among farmworkers in the Eastern and Northern Transvaal, and in 1927, Josiah Gumede (the then

[176] This Bill did little to restore dispossessed land to African people, indicating rather an introduction of wage labour, and consequently raising tenants' level of struggle and consciousness as rural cultivators. Bradford. *A Taste of Freedom,* pp. 34, 58 and 61.
[177] Neame. *The Congress Movement: vol. 2*, p. 277.
[178] *Ibid*., p. 263, p.281.
[179] *Ibid*., p. 263.
[180] *Ibid*., p.313
[181] *Ibid*., p.315-317.

ANC's president) had aimed to transform the ANC into a mass-based movement which supported rural struggles.[182] Neame regards the ICU's radical democratic approach as the reason why they were more successful than the ANC during the 1927-28 rural revolt.

The Pact government had a strong focus on farming, which related to their Nationalist constituency in the Western Transvaal. An important mission of the Pact government was to appease this constituency, which comprised of government efforts to placate poor whites and increasingly focus economic resources on agriculture rather than mining.[183] This took the form of providing support to farmers who were against the largescale capitalisation of farms. Despite this state support, poorer farmers were still in a precarious position as the banks and large capital were backing richer farmers.[184]

The support given to farmers by the government, the capitalisation of farms by white farmers and the resistance of black political organisations reflected the struggles that were waged by different classes of farmworkers in the countryside. For Neame, there were a several axes around which the rural revolt revolved. These included Zulu nationalism, the desire for land, generational struggles among labour tenants and the moving of African people into reserves. To add to this, Bradford suggests that proletarianisation and the dropping of sharecroppers' shares were also key factors. Neame regards the revolt as being countrywide and linking not only to workers on white farms, but also to reserve-based Africans.[185]

On farms throughout the country, rigidly ordered relationships between farmers, labour tenants, squatters and sharecroppers predominated. Labour tenants, who were often locked into paternalist and property relationships with farmers, were to feel the most abrupt change, and evidence of this was that much of the rural revolt in the countryside centred around them.[186] By the second-half of the 1920s, sharecroppers were being increasingly squeezed, having had their shares dropped from halves to thirds.[187] Bradford argues that "squatters and labour tenants were thrust ever closer in class terms to hired hands" and "from the eagerly sought-after site of a prosperous peasantry in the early twentieth century, white holdings were by the 1920s

[182] *Ibid*., p.332.
[183] Bradford. *A Taste of Freedom*, pp. 6-9.
[184] *Ibid*., p. 33.
[185] For the above arguments, see Neame. *The Congress Movement: vol 2* pp.343-378 and Bradford. *A Taste of Freedom,* p. 34-41.
[186] Neame. *The Congress Movement: vol 2.* pp. 359-361. This is also because labour tenants were freer to join the ICU as they often were squatting on speculative land.
[187] Bradford. *A Taste of Freedom*, p. 36.

predominantly the work-places of a poverty-stricken tenantry".[188] These different classes of farm labourers adopted tactics to counteract the changes on farms. Neame writes that insubordination and work stoppages were common among labour tenants and squatters.[189]

The 1920s were characterised by new agricultural methods as well as farmer's changing attitudes towards tenant and sharecropper labour. Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, farmers wanted to rid their farms of this form of labour because it did not allow them to earn as handsome a profit as if they hired workers on a wage basis. In these conditions, a process of proletarianisation (in this case, the process of forcing workers out of agricultural work as tenants, sharecroppers and squatters into wage work) was accelerated throughout the decade. International turbulence in agricultural areas also spurred on the rural revolt. All over the world between 1900 and 1930 relationships in rural and countryside areas were being restructured. In 1925 and 1926, farm prices declined across the world creating a "world-wide agricultural depression" and the 1929 Wall Street Crash created an economic depression.[190]

Kas Maine, a prominent sharecropper himself, remembered his landlord at Sewefontien (a farm in the middle of the South-Western Transvaal), Jeffery John Edwards, saying that "halves were no longer to be practised. Agricultural methods had changed and tractors were being introduced. Those who had cattle would have to sell them". Maine was attuned to the changes taking place in the countryside,

> This thing [mechanisation/capitalising farmers trying to reduce sharecroppers' share] started during the time of halves. They [white farmers] wanted to stop them so that blacks would not have cattle and many other essentials. The law is like this, when the Boers were making the law, they decided that a black man should not plough on the halves. But some were ploughing

[188] *Ibid*., p. 61. Tenants were struggling further because landlords were unable to make economic concessions because of agricultural policy that entailed South Africa changing from a net importing to an exporting country.
[189] Neame. *The Congress Movement: vol 2,* pp.378-390.
[190] Bradford. *A Taste of Freedom*, p. 25. There is evidence of proletarianisation processes all over the world. In America, the Southern Tenant-Farmers Union (STFU) formed in response to proletarianisation; cotton sharecroppers were turned into wage labourers and joined the STFU with the promise of cultivating land independently. In the Catalan Vineyards sharecroppers lost control of their vines and were forced to accept a decreased share. In protest, workers challenged and broke the terms of their contracts. In Cauca Valley, Colombia upper and middle-class landowners laid claim to rural land which converted "free peasant squatters" into "wage-earning rural proletarians". In response peasants formed armed syndicates.

> on them. They said that if a black man ploughed on the halves, he would be expelled from farms. They wanted us to work under them only.[191]

The Western Transvaal was also characterised by different land and labour relationships. Georgina Relly discusses that in Lichtenburg, African people did not supply their labour to farms as it was close to the Kunana Reserve where they had a degree of self-sufficiency and could resist proletarianisation.[192] In Potchefstroom and Wolmaransstad, there were many white farms with locations and Crown Lands initially few in number. This meant that people had little ability to be self-sufficient (apart from some mobility between farms, reserves, and locations to sell on markets).[193]

In the South-Western Transvaal, conditions were different to the rest of the country. In general, farming conditions were less prosperous than in Natal or the Free State and farmers greatly relied on tenant and sharecropper labour to stay afloat. Bradford suggests that in areas like the Western Transvaal, the prospect of "proletarianisation hung like a sword … over the bulk of black servants and white masters alike".[194] A process of stunted proletarianisation took place here because, poor world markets, drought and bad soils meant that conditions were not productive enough to have large-scale capitalisation of farms.[195]

Relationships on farms across the Western Transvaal were structured through paternalism and violence. Drought and poor mechanisation in this region meant that paternalism and the use of family labour lingered.[196] Van Onselen argues that sharecropping relationships predominated in this region and that the economic divisions between white farmers and black sharecroppers were less clear by the late 1920s.[197] Higginson suggests that in the Rustenburg and Marico districts, violence was a key and historically rooted feature of farms. This took on two main forms: violence sanctioned by the law and extra-legal violence of white farmers.[198]

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[191] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Maine, Kas, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng, T. Couzens and G. Relly, 2 July 1980. Ledig, Rustenburg, Tape Nos.204 and 205. Transcript No.30.
[192] Wits HPRA, Students' Resource Centre, AG2386, E1-E10, Relly, Georgina. "Social and Economic Change Among the Tswana in the Western Transvaal 1900-1930", (1978), pp. 22-28.
[193] *Ibid.*, p. 24.
[194] Bradford. *A Taste of Freedom,* p. 60.
[195] *Ibid.*, pp. 25-29.
[196] *Ibid.,* pp. 200, 206.
[197] Van Onselen. "Race and Class"
[198] Higginson. *Collective Violence.*

The Development of a Radical, African, Working-Class Movement: The Rise and "Fall" of the ICU, 1919 – 1931

The ICU started among black dockworkers in Cape Town in January 1919. Its members were at the forefront of a strike at the docks in December of the same year which lit the spark for its rapid spread across southern Africa. The ICU was an exciting movement with grand objectives and aimed to disrupt the capitalist and white supremacist structure of towns and farms across southern Africa.

The ICU was led by Clements Kadalie (general secretary), who had been at the forefront of its formation at the docks in 1919.[199] The ICU's vibrancy and politically astute character partially relied on Kadalie. Henry Dee suggests that the ICU had brought mass mobilisation to the fore, principally articulated by a migrant from Nyasaland (Kadalie) through a "young and virile politics" centred on and transforming ideas about race, class and worker organisation.[200] Despite the ICU being a trade union, representing "class interests rather than a 'race unity'",[201] its outlook and practice was broader than a conventional trade union, and even broader than Roux's conceptualisation of it as a "general trade union".[202] Both Helen Bradford and Sylvia Neame argue that the ICU had a nationalist character, while Bradford stresses the idea that, especially in the second-half of the 1920s, it was principally a rural movement.[203]

As mentioned, the ICU was part of a host of workers' organisations which sprung up during the recession following World War One. Much like the IWA and the CPSA, the ICU was not formed in a vacuum. Van der Walt suggests that the ICU had many transnational links, including with Garveyism, the syndicalism of the International Workers of the World (IWW), the international working-class movement as well as with neighbouring colonies like Rhodesia and Nyasaland. [204] Many of its leaders were from outside of the borders of South Africa; Kadalie was from Malawi (Nyasaland); the President, J.G. Gumbs, was West Indian and leaders like Jason Jingoes and Keable 'Mote were from Basotholand.

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[199] Kadalie. *My Life and the ICU*. Kadalie initially worked as a textile factory worker and made his way into the labour movement through links to trade unionists and working-class causes on the Cape Town docks.
[200] Dee. "Clements Kadalie", p. 6.
[201] Neame. *The Congress Movement*, vol 1, p. 10.
[202] Roux. *Time Longer Than Rope*.
[203] For many of these typological insights, see Neame. *The Congress Movement*, vol 1, pp. 7-14.
[204] Van der Walt. "The First Globalisation", pp. 237-244.

Campaigns held by the ICU in the first half of the 1920s were situated in the industrial and political centres of Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and Bloemfontein. In some cases, the ICU amalgamated with already existent political formations; in Bloemfontein they joined forces with the IWA, Selby Msimang's Native and Coloured Workers' Association and in Port Elizabeth they collaborated with Samuel Masabalala's Port Elizabeth-based workers organisation, forming the Industrial and Commercial Amalgamated Workers' Union (ICWU).[205] Aside from its links to black organisations, the ICU beguiled the "good boys" linked to the ANC or Selby Msimang's ICWU. By 1925, the ICU had emerged as *the* dominant force in South Africa's in Southern African trade unionism and had opened further branches in Durban and Johannesburg.[206]

Gary Baines discusses the emergence of the ICU in Port Elizabeth (PE) in reference to local economic factors which gave rise to a large lumpenproletariat in Korsten township.[207] The early 1900s in PE were characterised by the SANNC dominating the political scene. After elite and mission educated Africans were lumped together with the unskilled African working class, a popular cross-class alliance began to form,[208] coalescing in the early 1920s into an alliance that allowed a transcending of "populism" and an adoption "unionism". In 1920, the Port Elizabeth Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (PEICWU) was formed and was led by the radical Samuel Masabalala.[209]

The most notable campaign organised by the PEICWU and Masabalala was agitation about the increase in worker's wages in January 1920. Nine months later, on 23 October 1920, members of the PEICWU and discontented workers embarked on a strike and demanded increased wages and Masabalala was arrested.[210] As people circled the police station demanding his release, a shot was fired, perhaps from a policeman or a vigilante, which started a killing spree where 23

[205] Dee. "Clements Kadalie", p. 50.
[206] *Ibid.*, p. 50.
[207] Gary Baines. "From Populism to Unionism: The Emergence and Nature of Port Elizabeth's Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union, 1918–20", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 17, 4 (1991), pp. 679-690.
[208] *Ibid.*, pp. 697-702.
[209] Masabalala was educated on an Eastern Cape mission and then went on to work various petit-bourgeois jobs, eventually culminating with his entry into politics on the executive of the Cape Native Congress. See Baines. "From Populism to Unionism", pp. 702-716. There is no specific date on the emergence of the PEICWU. Baines suggests that it could have been in January 1920 or "even earlier".
[210] Gary Baines. "South Africa's AMRITSAR? Responsibility for and the Significance of the Port Elizabeth Shootings of 23 October 1920", New Contree, 34 (1993): 1-10, pp. 3-4.

members of the protesting public and PEICWU were killed and a further 50 injured, most of whom were running away.

Tshepo Moloi focusses on the genesis of black political formations in Kroonstad. Like in PE, early protest (1910-1920) in Kroonstad had centred around the SANNC. In 1920, an ICU organiser from Bloemfontein was reported to have spoken to black workers and urged them to demand increased wages. This set the foundations for the ICU to have more co-ordinated campaigns towards the end of the 1920s. By 1928, the ICU had managed to achieve a break from the ANC's narrow and moderate political outlook, and instead appealed to a mass-based constituency, fighting the plight of workers and those facing high rents in the Kroonstad location.[211]

After a raid on beer sellers in Waaihoek Location in Bloemfontein on 19 April 1925, women and location residents retaliated against violent police tactics. The initial resistance was led by women, but ICU officials began to enter into the fray, transforming the "riot" into a "political demonstration with strong proletarian overtones".[212] Almost all of the 23,000 location residents subsequently embarked on a stay-away which drew the ire of the police and town residents. The protests and resistance of the location residents had a wider scope than initially intended; it transformed into a general protest against low wages, under-employment, violence of the authorities and persecution by the police.

A similar situation prevailed in Natal where women who were members of the ICU led huge protests against the state-supported beerhalls in favour of home-brewed beer.[213] Paul La Hausse uses a similar methodology to Baines in describing the economic, legislative and political factors that led to the ICU's ranks being swelled by rural refugees and radical artisans. Led by A.W.G. Champion, popular discontent was expressed in the revolt against the beerhalls and bore the imprint of Zulu militancy, chiefly leadership and women fighting for their "traditional right" in society.[214]

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[211] Moloi. "The Emergence and Radicalisation".
[212] Baruch Hirson. "The Bloemfontein Riots, 1925: A Study in Community Culture and Class Consciousness", *Collected Seminar Papers. Institute of Commonwealth Studies*, 33 (1984): 82-96, p.84.
[213] Paul La Hausse. *Brewers, Beer Halls and Boycotts* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1988), pp. 31-35.
[214] Paul La Hausse. "The Message of the Warriors: The ICU, the Labouring Poor and the Making of a Popular Political Culture in Durban, 1925-1930", unpublished paper, History Workshop Seminar Series "The Making of Class", 9-14 February 1987. p.25, p.28.

Henry Dee notes the presence of black women in the ICU: "despite the dominance of men at the top of the trade union's leadership, women were consistently at the forefront of ICU campaigns in Bloemfontein, Kroonstad and Durban" and 'Mote recognised women as being the ICU's "real fighters".[215] While it has been difficult to recover women's voices in archival sources, women do feature centrally in the collection of interviews used for this dissertation in chapters three to five.

The ICU's move to Johannesburg was met by difficulty.[216] Bonner suggests that both repression by "government troops" and the inability of the ICU to "lend support" to striking workers on the Johannesburg mines in 1927 eventually stemmed the tide against the ICU.[217] Keith Breckenridge shows that the ICU had a presence on the Johannesburg mines from the early 1920s, and when being banned by the Chamber of Mines from organising in the mine compounds, turned to the Native Recruiting Organisation set up in the then Transkei. Breckenridge sees the Chamber of Mines' "supervision of the public sphere" through the Sedition Clause in the 1927 Native Administration Act as being critical in ending the successes of the ICU on the mines.[218]

In rural areas, the ICU had been involved in wage disputes from as early as 1921, and by 1926, the union had made representations to the Economic and Wage Commission regarding the "scandalous" wages paid on farms.[219] The ICU's Manifesto, which was adopted by the ICU's National Council in Port Elizabeth in January 1927, committed the union to campaigning for a minimum wage for agricultural labourers.[220] Similarly, at the ICU's Annual Conference in 1927 it was suggested that the government extend "the Wages Act to include domestic and agricultural and all other workers".[221] Neame suggests that up until 1926, the ICU

[215] Dee. "Clements Kadalie", p. 61.
[216] *Ibid.*, p. 55.
[217] Bonner. "The Decline and Fall of the ICU", p.115, p.117.
[218] Keith Breckenridge. ""We Must Speak for Ourselves": The Rise and Fall of a Public Sphere on the South African Gold Mines, 1920 to 1931", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 40, 1 (1998): 71-108, p.94.
[219] *Workers' Herald*, "National Secretary's Report for 1925", "Economic and Wage Commission", 28 April 1926.
[220] *Workers' Herald*, "I.C.U. Manifesto" "Pass Laws to be Challenged" "Struggle for Freedom" "Minimum Wage for African Workers to be Demanded", 12 January 1927.
[221] *Workers' Herald*, "Seventh African Labour Conference", "Minimum Wage for Non-European Workers in the Union of S. Africa", 17 May 1927.

"submerge[ed] the concept of an African peasantry", and had a sole interest in farmworkers engaged in orthodox wage labour.[222]

Throughout the 1920s, young and radical black intellectuals began entering the ranks of the ICU and CP, thus changing the composition of these organisations. It is possible that the increase in black intellectuals in these organisations was because of the newly crowned Pact government's focus on poor whites, which meant that colour bar restrictions forced African middle classes out of the realm of skilled work and into the ICU.[223] Bradford notes this as characteristic of the ICU leadership: despite organisers being drawn from the ranks of the petty bourgeoisie, there was not significant class differentiation in African society to produce leaders that were out of touch with the needs of the poor and the plight of workers.[224]

Grounded and intelligent young men like Thomas Mbeki and Keable 'Mote brought a breath of fresh air into the stale atmosphere of black politics; 'Mote joined as early as 1922 and Mbeki in 1925.[225] By 1925, the ICU had moved out of the Cape to grow the union membership into the countryside and their headquarters were moved to Johannesburg in 1926. The ICU's new regional focus enabled the union to move into the Western Transvaal, and both Mbeki and 'Mote were central in spreading the ICU into this region. Both of these features disrupted the prevailing black politics in the Western Transvaal, which had been characterised by a smattering of TAC meetings and parochial reserve politics.

Divisions grew in the Congress movement (most notably at the ICU's Annual Conference in 1926) between the "good boys" (ANC old guard) and the "ginger group" (young ICU members); both Mbeki and 'Mote were described as members of the "ginger group", and at times as "extreme gingeriat[s]".[226] They espoused new anti-reformist and anti-capitalist ideologies and wrote prolifically in the *Workers' Herald* during 1926.[227] Moreover, during late

[222] Neame. *The Congress Movement: vol 2.*, pp.312-313.
[223] Bradford. *A taste of Freedom,* pp. 13-15.
[224] Bradford. "Mass Movements and the Petty Bourgeoisie".
[225] It wasn't only these two new recruits that held a mirror up to the "old guard", a *Workers' Herald* article in January 1926 railed against "Themaism, Msimangism or any other vaccumism" which dominated black politics. See *Workers Herald*, "Forgetfulness and Lethargy", 15 January 1926.
[226] *Workers Herald*, "African National Congress in Special Convention" "Accepts Prime Ministers Challenge" "Strenuous Propaganda Campaign Advocated", 15 January 1926.
[227] Both Mbeki and 'Mote wrote for the *Workers' Herald* in March 1926. Mbeki provided a sharp criticism of the "Old Race Leadership", and suggested that "it goes without saying that the old fellow with his hundred-year-old methods must go". He focussed on the fact that the government had not had any direct challenge to their "anti-native legislation". Mbeki claimed that a new African leader was emerging, and that any African leader ought to engage the "spirit of class-consciousness [which]

1926 and early 1927 they visited a host of towns in the Free State and Transvaal. Together 'Mote and Mbeki (see Figure 5) opened a total of 23 branches in the Free State and Transvaal; 'Mote opened nine in the Free State and Mbeki opened another 14 in the Transvaal. One *Workers' Herald* author urged

> We would like to see all our provincial and branch secretaries take a leaf out of the book of these brave I.C.U. workers, and we shall soon attain membership that will "Shake White South Africa".[228]

Another young intellectual, Jason ka Jingoes, a chief and a teacher from Basotholand, learnt of the ICU because of meetings held by 'Mote in Bethlehem. Kadalie himself also visited Bethlehem and gave a speech that Jingoes vividly remembers in his memoir, highlighting how "white men expect Africans to work for them for nothing", and that "the Bantu must share the profits of their labour".[229] Jingoes suggests that after this speech, "Kadalie left, and he left me convinced".[230]

The new generation of ICU organisers triggered a fresh regional and organisational focus within the ICU. This expanded rural focus was influenced by the CPSA, which increasingly articulated the need to focus on the African peasantry.[231] Mbeki, who was also a CPSA member, inspired the ICU to take up rural issues, first organising labour tenants and rallying against the labour recruiting systems of chiefs in the Eastern Transvaal.[232] 'Mote adopted a similar approach in the towns of Ficksburg and Kroonstad in the Orange Free State, where his activism aimed at "uniting urban and rural people", and integrating rural people into the mass movement.[233] Neame argues that although Kadalie was outside of the country when the ICU

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is now taking root in the African proletariat. *Workers' Herald*, Thomas Mbeki, "Old Race Leadership", 27 March 1926. In the same newspaper issue (March 1926), 'Mote provided a sharp critique of the country's capitalist economic conditions, relating that "none of us, White and Black must ever forget that we must fight as class against a common foe – capitalism". He asserted that there was no option but the "wholescale socialisation of all industries" and that African people "are ready for action wherever duty calls". *Workers' Herald*, Keable 'Mote, "The Eve of Struggle" "Call to the Workers' Delegates to Johannesburg", 27 March 1926.

[228] *Workers Herald*, "No Title" (Caption of Image on front page), 15 February 1927. Also see Peter Wickens. "The Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union", p. 353. The efforts of the young recruits did not go unnoticed. At the ICU's Seventh Annual Conference in May 1927, the "ginger group", led by Thomas Mbeki, had increased its influence and garnered greater respect among ICU officials; his speeches were referred to as persuasive, "calm" and "stentorian".

[229] Jingoes. *A Chief is a Chief by the People*, p.101.

[230] *Ibid.*, p.102.

[231] Neame. *The Congress Movement: vol 2.* pp.318-320.

[232] *Ibid.*, p.320.

[233] *Ibid.*, 323.

turned to the countryside (see below), his thinking had a strong bearing on the organisation. Kadalie believed that South Africa's land belonged to all people, and it was this radical-democratic tendency which shaped the ICU's activism in rural areas.[234] The greater attention on peasants and the reserves by ICU organisers shifted the focus from wage negotiations towards land. Referring to its plan for 1928, the ICU declared that

> our programme must be largely of an agrarian character, for the reason that the greater proportion of our membership comprises rural workers, landless peasants whose dissatisfaction with conditions is with good reason greater than that of the workers in urban areas.[235]

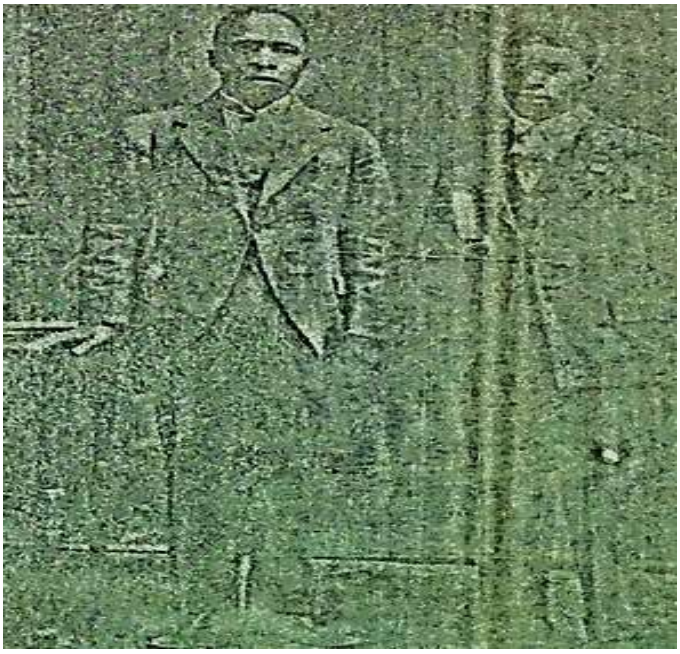


Figure 5: Edited Image of Keable 'Mote and Thomas Mbeki in March 1926. Source: *Workers Herald, "No Title" (Caption of Image on front page), 15 February 1927.*

This decision to turn to the countryside was pragmatic on the part of the ICU's leadership, for conditions on farms were dire. The destruction and exploitation of the African peasantry (a majority of the South African population)[236] meant that the ICU's new rural focus pivoted on the land question, in part related to tenancy and sharecropping but also to new ways in which African people were being deprived of land.[237] When the ICU turned to the countryside, they engaged with an already fomenting "rural revolt", which centred around white farmers' relationships with tenants and sharecroppers as well as on ways African people had lost or were

[234] *Ibid.*, pp.326-331.
[235] *Workers Herald*, "I.C.U. Program for 1928", 17 May 1928.
[236] Bradford. *A Taste of Freedom*, p. 2.
[237] Neame. *The Congress Movement: vol 2.* pp. 259-273.

doomed to lose their land.[238] In 1927 there were over 360,000 labour tenants in South Africa, many without security of tenure and wages.[239]

From 1926 the ICU played a pivotal role in the revolt that dominated the countryside. As the ICU penetrated into the countryside, they began providing legal counsel to dispossessed squatters, sharecroppers, farmworkers and labour tenants. This was the constituency that the ICU appealed to in the Western Transvaal; in chapter three, many of the speeches quoted spoke to farm wages, sharecroppers' shares and land. Speeches calling for freedom and better wages were appended to the ICU's generalised resistance in the countryside.[240] The revolt did not emerge in a linear way: it unfolded in contradictory ways and in reference to vectors like region, proletarianisation, social order, subsistence economy, patterns of migrancy, labour control, political conscientisation, land ownership, ethnicity, religion and chiefly power. The ICU managed fairly successfully to both "piggy-back" on already present fractures in rural areas and also organise campaigns, attach to local struggles, provide support to workers and stoke, as well as provide space for the articulation of, rural anger.

Bradford looks at how developments in the political economy – for instance the fluctuations of wattle and sugar production precipitated by an increased demand for land and wage labour – meant that pressure for evicting tenants became increasingly prevalent in Umvoti and Greytown in the then Natal province.[241] Landlessness and material deprivation resulted in the ICU having an appeal for dispossessed tenants and farm workers and thus a political radicalisation ensued. Increased worker consciousness entailed work stoppages and strikes against the employers' demands for land and wage labour (a proletarianising force) were commonplace.[242] While local whites protested and fought back, a political culture of defiance lingered in Greytown, one centred on national liberation and opposition to proletarianisation.[243]

Around the same time, 400 km south of Umvoti, a Garveyist-cum-millenarian ICU movement emerged in Pondoland.[244] Developing out of economic and political degradation in the area (decreasing arable land and increasing migrancy) the amaPondo began to adopt new beliefs

[238] *Ibid.*, pp. 263-274.
[239] Wickins. "The Industrial", p. 364.
[240] Neame. *The Congress Movement: vol 2.* pp.375-391.
[241] Helen Bradford. "Lynch Law and Labourers: The ICU in Umvoti, 1927–1928." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 11, 1 (1984): 128-149, pp. 129-135.
[242] *Ibid.*, pp. 135-145.
[243] *Ibid.*, p.149.
[244] Bradford. *A Taste of Freedom.*

about liberation and economic freedoms through Garveyist and millenarian ideas. The ICU in Pondoland mobilised people through an infusion of traditional and "international" ideologies which articulated the increasingly difficult conditions that were prevalent.[245] Robert Vinson provides an account of the spread of Garveyism in South Africa and its influence on black political organisations like the ANC and ICU. James Thaele (a theologian, Garveyist, *Workers' Herald* editor and organiser of a Cape Town ANC branch in the 1920s) challenged segregation and racism in South Africa and was the primary proponent of Garveyism and African Christian theologies to this end.[246]

Just as the ICU's influence in rural areas began to grow, the organisation began to experience an organisational and administrative crisis. In 1926 the ICU expelled communist members from its leadership. The ICU had growing animosity about the influence of communist leaders and communist tendencies in their leadership, and coupled with this, following the Native Republic resolution, the CPSA was attracting more rural Africans.[247] Bonner regards the expulsion of communists as creating a moderate tone within the ICU's ranks. He suggests that expelling communists distanced the ICU from revolutionary change, as they began to abandon the strike as a form of protest.[248]

William Ballinger, a Scottish trade unionist who arrived in December 1928 to help reorganise the ICU along "trade union lines", was symbolic of the change in outlook that would occur at the ICU's core. He was part of a host of other white liberal advisors, like Ethelreda Lewis and Winifred Holtby, who begun to have an increasing role in shaping both Kadalie and the ICU's outlook.[249] The idea behind Ballinger helping "reorganise" the movement along trade union lines was partly due to the inability of the ICU to be recognised as a trade union and to access the collective bargaining advantages of such a status. What is more, Jack and Ray Simons regard the ICU's non-recognition as part of a broader "pact" between "white workers, the

[245] *Ibid.*, pp. 213-214.
[246] Robert Vinson. *The Americans are Coming!: Dreams of African American Liberation in Segregationist South Africa* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2012).
[247] Dee. "Clements Kadalie", pp. 185-189; Neame. *The Congress Movement: vol 3*, p.45.
[248] Bonner. "The Decline and Fall of the ICU", p. 117.
[249] Ambrous Jacobs. "The Rise and Fall of the Industrial and Commercial Union of South Africa 1919-1929", *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 1 (2011), pp. 42-43 shows how the ICU generated panic among white people, which is best reflected in how white liberals began meddling in the union affairs during the late 1920s thus stunting the ICU's growth and a more robust political ideology. At the same time, as government flirted with recognising the ICU (racial segregation prohibited this), it had a negative effect on their political mobilisation as they began to focus on constitutionalism.

police and privilege" which inhibited the ability of the ICU to build a broad class alliance, link to international communism, or even develop a trade union along traditional (communist) principle.[250]

Eddie Roux, suggests that despite the ICU's success in organising African workers, this initial militancy of the ICU was replaced by internal fighting, corruption and leading figures becoming increasingly moderate.[251] Moreover, Kadalie's overseas travels in 1927, [252] and increasing corruption[253] contributed to the fracturing of the movement. Dee notes that the "ICU was hampered by officials who embezzled funds and disagreed on strategies".[254] In 1928, further divisions began appearing in the ICU as branches in Cape Town and Transkei broke off, and in May 1928, AWG Champion seceded the Durban branch to form the ICU yase Natal. By February 1929, Kadalie himself had resigned from the original ICU and formed the Independent ICU having a predominant base in East London.[255]

During 1927 and 1928, the government also took a more repressive stance towards the ICU. A *Workers' Herald* article in June 1927, noted that branch secretaries and ICU organisers were increasingly being apprehended for contravening pass laws.[256] At the ICU's Annual Conference in 1928, Keable 'Mote and Esau Nhlapo (an ICU organiser in Bethlehem and the 1928 Provincial Secretary for the South-Western Transvaal) complained that ICU officials and branch secretaries had their movement curtailed by pass laws and municipal by-laws and that they were being refused lodgers' permits by local administrations.[257] Pass laws were deliberately used to stop ICU organisers. Up until 1928, the ICU had been loosely accepted by Hertzog, who had not taken any measures to completely alienate the union. Following the ICU's strike at a government veterinary lab in Onderstepoort, Pretoria, in 1928, according to

[250] Simons and Simons. *Class and Colour*, pp. 370-384.
[251] Roux. *Time Longer Than Rope*.
[252] See Clements Kadalie. "The Old and the New Africa", *Labour Monthly* 9, 10 (1927). In 1927 Kadalie noted the need to forge an international socialist movement through federations like the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU) to establish an inclusive international fight against capitalism and imperialism.
[253] Jack and Ray Simons suggest that Kadalie was an "arch-pilferer" who stole money from the organisation and blamed communists (while, they argue, it was the communists who had been keeping the books clean). Simons and Simons. *Class and Colour*. This is challenged by Mia Roth who suggests that that it was members of the Communist Party that were "pilfering". Roth. *The Communist Party in South Africa*, pp. 77-80.
[254] Dee. "Clements Kadalie", p.52.
[255] Dee. "Clements Kadalie", p.52.
[256] *Workers' Herald,* "Annual Review of Work", 17 June 1927.
[257] *Workers' Herald*, "Eighth African Labour Conference" "Pass Laws", 17 May 1928.

Neame, Hertzog turned "reactionary conservative".[258] Hertzog ousted the Labour Party constituency in the 1929 election, clearing a path for a Nationalist assault on the ICU.[259]

In East London, Kadalie and other local organisers led a successful branch well into the 1930s. Beinart and Bundy in their work on the Independent-ICU East London provide an account of the Union between 1929 and 1932. They discuss the way the Union joined urban and rural struggles that were met by a strong state and an organised business class. They also analyse the disintegration of Independent ICU's organisation, members' consciousness and the resistance to beer brewing regulations and lodgers permits.[260]

Bonner suggests that while the ICU had a central strategic objective, i.e., the redistribution of economic and political power, they lacked a clear theory of how the South African economy worked.[261] Thus the ICU did not manage to direct their "populist" appeal to the African working class into militant "trade unionism" in industrial centres.[262] One example of this is how the ICU was efficient in mobilising farm workers and sharecroppers, but did not foresee how this strong focus on this constituency would dry up funds because of how dispersed the work was.[263]

It was in this context that the ICU entered the Western Transvaal. Helen Bradford suggests that despite the ICU being militant in the South-Western Transvaal, it was unable to fully actualise in the context of embezzlement and disintegration.[264] In part, she suggests this was also because of the ICU's "cautious trade union approach" (linked to Kadalie's European exploits and the role of white liberals like Ethelreda Lewis and William Ballinger).[265] In his autobiography, Jingoes suggests that Ballinger tried to quell his spirit.[266] Environmental conditions like

[258] Neame. *The Congress Movement: vol 2.*, p.272.
[259] *Ibid.*, p.295.
[260] William Beinart and Colin Bundy. "The Union, The Nation, and the Talking Crow: The Ideology and Tactics of the Independent ICU In East London", Seminar Paper, *African Studies Institute*, University of the Witwatersrand, March 1985 at: http://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10539/8422/ISS-24.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y accessed on 27 May 2020.
[261] Bonner. "The Decline and Fall of the ICU".
[262] *Ibid.*, p.119.
[263] *Ibid.*
[264] Bradford. *A Taste of Freedom*, p. 182.
[265] *Ibid.,* pp. 163, 166-167.
[266] Jingoes. *A Chief is a Chief by the People*, p. 122.

drought and locusts meant that the ICU struggled to gain a foothold in affected areas because of the lack of prosperity.[267]

Conclusion

This chapter has claimed that the ICU grew from the objective conditions of industrialising South Africa. The four key features relating to the general development of South Africa and the Western Transvaal are: industrialisation, the proliferation of sharecropping and labour tenant relations, the growth of the South African state and the rural revolt of 1927-1929. The ICU grew in reference to these features, emerging in 1919 and rapidly proliferating during the rural revolt. The government policed the ICU at both a local and a national level through segregationist legislation. This chapter provides the foundation for the broad political developments in the Western Transvaal and the organisational developments within the ICU.

The following chapters aim to insert the ICU's presence in the Western Transvaal more systematically (see Map 2). This spanned at least 8 years from 1926 to 1934, thanks to the vibrant organising of ICU officials such as Jingoes, Makhatini, Kadalie, 'Mote, Maduna and Modiakgotla. Bradford argues that these ICU organisers addressed meetings throughout the Western Transvaal appealing to tenants and sharecroppers to strike, boycott and demand for written contracts.[268] They appealed to sharecroppers too; Kas Maine remembered ICU organisers "fighting for the halves" and their frenetic organising meant that "[their] horses were running day and night".[269]

Despite the ICU experiencing an organisational decline by 1928, which worsened in 1929, in the Western Transvaal the ICU managed to expand their constituency in this period. This is similar to Beinart and Bundy's account of the ICU in East London, which too challenges the idea that the ICU and its related splinters were a spent force by 1928. As the following chapters will show, the ICU achieved this in three ways; first through their strike on the Lichtenburg diamond diggings in June 1928, second through organising in small towns and on farms. Moreover, the ICU gave speeches which articulated languages of "freedom" and of "subversion" and disrupted the spatial outlay and politics of towns in the Western Transvaal.

[267] Bradford. *A Taste of Freedom*, pp. 163-164.
[268] Van Onselen. "Paternalism and Violence", pp. 207-208.
[269] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Maine, Kas, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng, T. Couzens and G. Relly, 2 July 1980. Ledig, Rustenburg, Tape Nos.204 and 205. Transcript No.30.

The next chapter discusses the ICU's presence in Lichtenburg, which following the strike in June 1928 blossomed in the rest of the Western Transvaal.

Chapter Two – Diamonds in the Rough: the ICU's Activism on Diamond Diggings in the Western Transvaal, 1927-1931

Introduction

This chapter provides an account of the ICU's presence on the diamond diggings in Lichtenburg between 1927 and 1931. The main focus is the strike by 35,000 black workers at the Lichtenburg diamond diggings in June 1928 in response to an 8-shilling reduction in their wages. This was, at the time, the second largest strike in South Africa's history after the black mineworkers' strike on the Rand in 1919-1920, which saw between 40,000 and 80,000 workers go on strike. The Lichtenburg strike was dubbed the "Kadalie Strike" by white diggers and, as Clynick notes,

> the action of Black labourers to the growing pressure on wages and living conditions in general allows us a fascinating glimpse into the organisation and resistance of Blacks on the alluvial diggings, constituting an unwritten chapter in the social history of the Transvaal countryside.[270]

The main argument of this Chapter is that the ICU played a pivotal role in the Lichtenburg strike and that this strike provides insight into an underdeveloped aspect of the ICU's organisational capacity and history. This chapter is an attempt to address a portion of this "unwritten social history".

Clynick examines both the political economy of the Lichtenburg diggings, which provides a background to this chapter, and the causes of the strike. He focusses on the development of political consciousness among white workers and gives a basic chronology of the strike. Van Onselen has also discussed the history of diamond diggings in the Western Transvaal. The first sections of this chapter sketch the political economy of the diamond diggings in Lichtenburg by drawing on this scholarship.

The ICU's role has been underplayed in the existing literature. Bradford suggests that during the strike "black rank-and-file were forcing ICU officials to bend to their will"; Simons and Simons regard the ICU as having "never rose to the challenge of the workers' militancy" and Van Onselen argues that the Union "played a far less important role in the conflict than

[270] Clynick. "The Lichtenburg Alluvial Diamond Diggers", p. 13.

attributed to it by deeply resentful white employers".[271] The chapter provides new perspectives on an underdeveloped aspect of the ICU's organisational capacity and history and argues that the ICU played a pivotal role in the Lichtenburg strike. Secondly, the chapter suggests that the causes of the strike were broader than wage disputes and were rooted in broader grievances relating to the harsh living conditions and violent persecution from the Lichtenburg authorities.

Van Onselen has argued that the ICU's organising on the Lichtenburg diamond diggings laid the foundation for it to move into the rest of the Western Transvaal.[272] Importantly, the ICU's branch in Mafikeng, which was established in 1926, enabled the ICU to have a solid presence in Lichtenburg during 1928. Following the Lichtenburg strike, the ICU's membership in the Western Transvaal grew considerably. In Lichtenburg itself, however, the ICU suffered from organisational disintegration as a result of political infighting at a national level, particularly after the arrival of William Ballinger. Moreover, during the years 1928 and 1929, the Lichtenburg diggings experienced considerable decline as diamonds dried up. The title of this chapter "Diamonds in the Rough: The ICU's Activism on Diamond Diggings Across South Africa" seeks to capture the ICU's role in the strike (a proverbial diamond) amid the difficult or "rough" organising conditions which were prevalent during and after the strike.

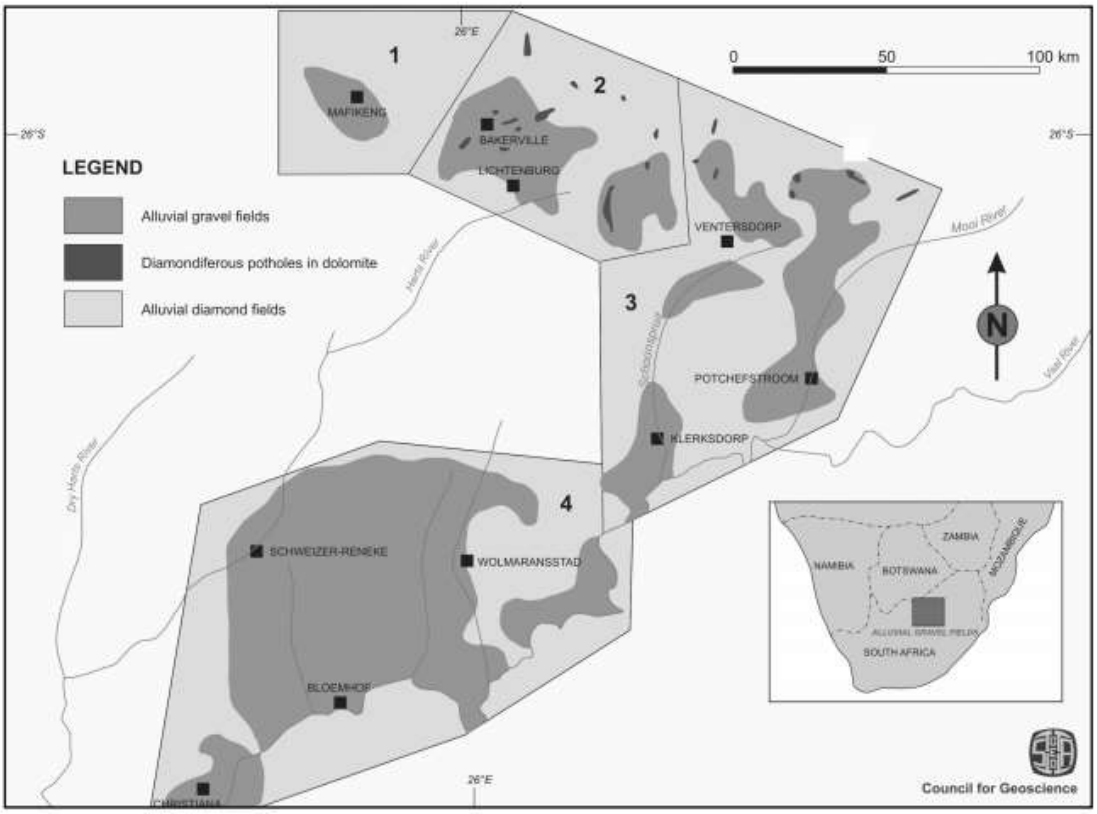
The archival documents on which the chapter is based include a commission of inquiry into the causes of the Lichtenburg strike, information of the ICU's speeches and meetings across the Western Transvaal and basic contextual information. Several oral history interviews are used, but the most important are two oral history interviews conducted with Ishmael Moeng and Piet Baraganyi who provide an account of the events from a workers' perspective.

The Political Economy of Diamond Diggings in the Western Transvaal

There are two regions in the Western Transvaal where diamond mining was most prevalent. These are the diggings surrounding the Bloemhof-Schweizer-Reneke-Wolmaransstad triangle and those that surround Lichtenburg (see Map 3). In the former, from as early as 1900, "the region enjoyed the effects of a relatively sustained but unevenly spread boom as thousands of white diggers and their black labourers invaded the district to work the local alluvial diamond

[271] Bradford. *A Taste of Freedom,* p. 166; Simons and Simons. *Class and Colour,* p. 362; Van Onselen. *The Seed is Mine,* p. 146.
[272] Van Onselen. *The Seed is Mine,* p. 146.

deposits".[273] Further north in Lichtenburg, the discoveries of diamonds early in 1926, meant that "an average of some 60 to 75 percent of farmers from the Western Transvaal districts of Lichtenburg, Ventersdorp, Zeerust, Wolmaransstad and Potchefstroom trekked to these diggings".[274]



Map 3: The alluvial diamond fields are divided into (1) the Mafikeng-Molopo or Northeastern field; (2) Licthenburg-Bakerville or Northern field; (3) the Ventersdorp-Potchefstroom-Klerksdorp or Eastern field and (4) the Christiana-Scweizer-Reneke-Wolmaransstad-Bloemhof or Southern field (4). Source: M. G. C. Wilson, G. Henry and T. R. Marshall. "A Review of the Alluvial Diamond Industry and the Gravels of the North West Province, South Africa." *South African Journal of Geology*, 109, 3 (2006): p. 302.

[273] Charles Van Onselen. "The Social and Economic Underpinning of Paternalism and Violence on the Maize Farms of the South-Western Transvaal, 1900–1950", *Journal of Historical Sociology* 5, 2 (1992), p. 134.

[274] Tim Clynick "'Digging a Way into the Working Class': Unemployment and Consciousness Amongst the Afrikaner Poor on the Lichtenburg Alluvial Diamond Diggings, 1926-1929" in Robert Morrell eds., *White but Poor: Essays on the History of Poor Whites in Southern Africa 1880-1940* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1992), p. 77.

As Charles van Onselen writes,

> The production of alluvial diamonds in the Bloemhof-Schweizer-Reneke-Wolmaransstad triangle peaked at 81,000 carats in 1913 after which, in the decade that followed, it went through a gradual but uneven decline with production ranging between 75,000 and 31,000 carats per annum. By 1925 there were about 5,000 active diggers left in the Bloemhof district but this number slumped to only five hundred in 1927, when a new and richer deposit was discovered at Lichtenburg.[275]

Van Onselen suggests that the diggings presented an "episodic lurch" towards an industrial economy in the Western Transvaal as newly established farms sold "large quantities of beef, mutton, milk, maize and sorghum to the thousands of diggers and labourers".[276] This growth was paralleled by new legislation adopted in towns across South Africa as part of the Natives Urban Areas Act of 1923.

Diamond digging constituted the second most prevalent economic activity after farming in the Western Transvaal, and many of the workers that were drawn to the diggings had ties to farms. One example of this is how a "share" system existed on the diggings which mirrored the predominant relationships on farms: whites owned the land and black labourers who worked on the land could share the profits in a similar manner to that in crop cultivation.[277]

Owing to the unreliable rainfall in the Western Transvaal generally, much of the region was suited to "mixed farming" (farming subsidised or supplemented by an alternate income, in this case farming supplemented by diamond digging).[278] Mixed farming led to a large number of "farmer-diggers" in the Western Transvaal, who used the diggings "during times of economic uncertainty or failure as an opportunity to recuperate losses suffered as a result of crop failure whether due to drought, locusts or floods".[279] When a severe drought hit the Western Transvaal between 1926-1929, there was an associated rise in workers and prospectors looking towards the alluvial diamond diggings.

The process of proletarianisation, which was based on the restructuring of labour relationships on farms, swept through the farming districts in the Western Transvaal between 1925 and 1930

[275] Van Onselen. "The Social and Economic Underpinning", p. 7.
[276] *Ibid.,* pp.14-15.
[277] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Maine, Kas, interview conducted by M.M. Molepo. Ledig, Rustenburg, 28 July 1987. Tape No. 300. Transcript No. 51.
[278] Van Onselen. "The Social and Economic Underpinning", p. 134.
[279] Clynick. "The Lichtenburg Alluvial Diamond Diggers", p.2.

and placed the economic livelihoods of black and white workers in state of constant precarity. From the perspective of the government, and their anxieties over the "poor white problem", the diggings were effectively a space where the it could placate land owning poor white farmers who had been hit by drought. Poor white and black workers flocked towards either farms or diggings depending on the season, climate and availability of work. Clynick suggests that the economic function of the diamond diggings in the political economy of the Western Transvaal served as support for "marginalised rural communities or groups to resist 'full proletarianisation' through their occupation of various peripheral niches in the rural economy".[280]

The diggers who entered the Western Transvaal seeking a fortune had heterogenous social and economic positions, and this was most clearly the case in Lichtenburg. There were white diggers who worked with relatively little capital (often in conjunction with other diggers) on the public diggings throughout Lichtenburg.[281] Professional diggers worked on private diggings (also called "reserve claims"; if these claims were eventually proclaimed as public diggings, it allowed those owning reserve claims to compensation) owned by wealthy landowners; eight families dominated the ownership of these private diggings and leased out trading stands and water to diggers.[282] Stratification among the white diggers was thus based on which claims (public or private) diggers worked, how much capital a digger had and how prosperous diggings were.[283]

The mineral revolution had attracted people from all over the world in search of economic opportunity, and the presence of migrant workers on South African diamond and mines was commonplace. Migrant workers from southern Africa worked on the Western Transvaal diamond diggings including Basotho, Batswana, Xhosa and Zulu workers (Natal ICU organiser A.W.G. Champion worked on the Taung diamond diggings in 1917-1918).[284] Migrant labourers from southern Africa also worked the diggings, and a large proportion of these workers came from Malawi (then called Nyasaland). Anusa Daimon notes that "Africans from

[280] *Ibid.*, p.1.
[281] Clynick "'Digging a Way into the Working Class'", p.85.
[282] *Ibid.*, p. 80.
[283] *Ibid.,* p. 85.
[284] Wickins. "The Industrial", p.265.

Malawi were at the centre of this phenomenon [migration to South Africa], subverting an exploitative capitalist wage system for their own economic survival".[285]

The white diggers and workers were made up largely of farmer-diggers from the Western Transvaal, but also included a "cosmopolitan crowd" which included "Australians, Americans and Englishmen, people from all over the world" who had come to the diamond diggings to get rich quickly.[286] The migrant nature of labour on the diggings is important to remember when considering the strike at the Lichtenburg diamond diggings in June 1928, which saw the participation of over 35,000 workers.[287]

Economic Expansion and Depression in Lichtenburg, 1926-1928

In 1924, a farmer named John Voorendyk was digging a hole at his Elandsputte farm for a cattle dip when he found a 3-carat diamond. He contacted a prospecting friend, Dr Harger, to come and view the site, and after some time, Dr Harger declared it unlikely to have large volumes of diamonds. Despite this report, Voorendyk's farm became the centre of a massive boom in alluvial diamond digging, as an inflow of people entered the Lichtenburg area seeking their fortune on the mineral rich land. After more mineral rich deposits were found at Grasfontein on farm Uitgevonden No. 99 in 1925, "the rumoured richness of the Elandsputte diggings [as these diggings were named] sparked off one of the most astonishing treks in the history of South African alluvial diamond diggings", figure 3 shows the mass of prospectors.[288] But it was not only in Grasfontein that large amounts of diamonds were discovered; deposits were also found in Treasure Trove, Ruigtelaagte, Klipkuil, Vaalboschpatte and Witklip.

[285] Anusa Daimon. "Settling in Motion: Nyasa Clandestine Migration Through Southern Rhodesia Into the Union of South Africa, 1920s–50s", WIDER Working Paper, 2018, 41 (2018), p.22.
[286] Duncan Money "Underground Struggles: The Early Life of Jack Hodgson" in Klaas van Walraven eds., *The Individual in African History: The Importance of Biography in African Historical Studies* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2020), p.7.
[287] Wickins. "The Industrial", p.265.
[288] Clynick. "The Lichtenburg Alluvial Diamond Diggers", p.3.

Figure 6: Thousands of motor cars at the proclamation of the Grasfontein diamond diggings, probably in 1925.

Source: J. Wood "Motors at Proclamation of Grasfontein, Lichtenburg", http://www.on-the-rand.co.uk/Diamond%20Grounds/Lichtenburg1.htm, accessed on 1 September 2020.

A large and unregulated population flocked to the Lichtenburg public diggings and there was prosperity to be found in a range of occupations: "the gamble of diamond digging provided quick and ready profits to the owners of the farms, the hotel and canteen keepers, the merchants and the diamond buyers".[289] Poorer white farmers who had lost their land because of drought, crop failure, debt and farm subdivisions made their way there; but the diggings also "attracted tens of thousands of blacks […], and the magnitude of this response threatened to break down the existing structures of white domination, those being based on the premises of a cheap, ultra-exploitable and regulated black labour force".[290] For both black and white workers there was a departure from ordinary farm life and the diggings were, in the words of a government official speaking at the Carnegie Commission in 1931, characterised by a "lack of community feeling or recognised moral standards, and their all-pervading spirit of gambling, recklessness and instability, reacts perniciously on simple rural people ".[291]

The unregulated atmosphere that prevailed on the diggings was enjoyed mostly by men. Women who had entered the diggings as domestic workers and other miscellaneous jobs were more tightly controlled. Upon entering the diggings, women were made to produce a document

[289] Clynick "'Digging a Way into the Working Class'", p.79.
[290] Clynick. "The Lichtenburg Alluvial Diamond Diggers", p.7.
[291] *Ibid.,* p.4. This characterisation of the diggings was given by J.F.W. Grosskopf to the Carnegie Commission.

called a "certificate of character", which had to be produced on demand from the police.[292] This aimed to ensure that women had no prior criminal convictions, but it was also a mechanism to control their movement.

By 1926, the population of white diggers on the diggings was over nine-and-a-half thousand, while black workers numbered over twenty-six thousand.[293] Figure 4 shows black workers shovelling gravel through a sieve. When Sol Plaatje visited the diggings in May 1927, he described how black workers were housed, "in the native locations with which the diggings are intersected the shacks resemble the ant hills on a wide plain; and some of them not much bigger". Plaatje wrote about whole black families who had moved to the diggings, each member being employed in a different occupation: "one native digging, his wife shovelling, his daughter carrying the gravel to the washing machine".[294]

Figure 7: Black workers on the Lichtenburg diggings. Source: Clynick "'Digging a Way Into the Working Class'", p.96.

In August 1927, it was noted by the SAP at Elandsputte that Malawian workers were engaged in "faction fights" with Basotho and Xhosa workers. In order to stop the fighting, which had resulted in several deaths, the SAP at Elandsputte had the Malawian workers moved to a police

[292] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Moeng, Ishmael, interview conducted by T. Matsetela, Oersonskraal, 19 May 1987. Tape No. 570. Transcript No.158.
[293] Clynick. "The Lichtenburg Alluvial Diamond Diggers", p.2.
[294] Solomon Plaatje "Native Life at the Alluvial Diggings" *English in Africa*, 3, 2 (1976): 64-67.

camp.[295] In December 1927 a flurry of fights between Basotho and Batswana workers against Malawian workers erupted around Christmas day in Lichtenburg (as well as in Johannesburg's Western Native Township). The supposed causes were that the Malawian workers were courting Basotho women,[296] but it is more likely these had to do with competition over jobs. Many of the altercations between Basotho, Batswana, Xhosa and Malawian workers were violent and resulted in a number of injuries and death.[297]

With the influx of workers from across southern Africa, and ethnic tensions flaring up in different parts of the Transvaal, the Transvaal African Congress (TAC) took up an anti-immigrant position. In February 1928, a black attorney, Robert Msimang, criticised the TAC's attempts to get workers from Nyasaland deported in the *Workers' Herald*. The TAC had sent a petition to the Minister of Native Affairs on 1 February 1928 requesting the repatriation of "Blantyre Natives". "Prominent" leaders of the TAC, including Edward Khaile (who was an ICU member, and at the time was the General Secretary of the ANC), claimed that "Central African Natives [i.e., from colonial Malawi] molest Union Natives in various ways" and that there was ill-feeling growing on the diggings because of the "'replacement of Union Natives by Blantyres'." The petition further claimed that the Central African workers were "interfer[ing] with Native women" and generally were a "menace to the peace of the community".[298]

Msimang strongly rebuked these claims and suggested that the petition was fraught with contradiction and provocation. Msimang rejected the petition, which he argued

> in principle supports a drastic policy of deportation. Deportation or repatriation by force is an extreme form of punishment resorted to by the state on rare and exceptional circumstances.[299]

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[295] NASA, BNS, 1/1/377, 194/74. "Natives from Rhodesia, Bechuanaland, Portuguese East Africa, British East Africa, Nyasaland Etc Etc: Influx of. (1924-1929)", Letter from Howe, inspector for the SAP at Elandsputte to Deputy Commissioner of Police, 2 September 1927.

[296] NASA, GNLB, 356, 45/24, 208/27/48 and 23/3/28. Lichtenburg Labour District. Faction Fights: Blantyre Natives and Basutos (1927); The Western Native Township Disturbances 25 December 1927; *Times of Natal*, "Fights at the Western Native Township: Houseboys Formed Part of the Attacking Force", 29 December 1927; NASA, BNS, 1/1/377, 194/74. Natives from Rhodesia, Bechuanaland, Portuguese East Africa, British East Africa, Nyasaland Etc Etc: Influx of. (1924-1929) Letter from Secretary of Native Affairs, J.E. Herbst to Schmidt, the Secretary for the Interior, 12 June 1929.

[297] *Abantu Batho,* "Africans Versus Africans", 9 February 1928; *Umteteli Wa Bantu*, "Trouble at Western Native Township", 31 December 1927.

[298] *Workers' Herald*, R.W. Msimang, "Congress Folly Exposed", 15 February 1928.

[299] *Ibid*.

The TAC's appeal added fuel to the ongoing bid to banish migrant workers from outside South Africa's borders, including Clements Kadalie. The South African Party had tried to deport Kadalie since 1920, and in 1926 the then minister of Justice Tielman Roos told parliament that Kadalie should to be deported to Nyasaland. If Kadalie had been convicted of a crime under the 1927 Native Administration Act, his punishment would have been deportation.[300]

As well as ethnic tensions between African workers, there was also racial conflict between black and white workers who, thrust in close occupational proximity, had to renegotiate class and labour relationships. Crime and general anomie were features of the diggings, and a *Workers' Herald* article in March 1927 provides three anecdotes on the "tit-for-tat" between black and white workers on the diggings. Criminal behaviour on the Lichtenburg diggings involved both black and white petty criminals robbing, intimidating and assaulting workers, often for large sums of money. The anecdotes of robbery and assault took on a racialised character, as those committing the crime often chose victims of the opposite race.[301]

A criminal organisation called the "Bull Nines", who "passed off bits of polished glass as uncut diamonds to gullible white farmers" also operated on the diggings across the Western Transvaal. Kas Maine, who had heard tales of the Bull Nines from family members and friends, suggests that it was in Lichtenburg that the Bull Nines started, and for him this was a sign of social degeneration.[302] Charles Van Onselen describes the character of a Bull Nine,

> An authentic Bull Nine, so it was said, nearly always disguised himself by posing as a shabbily dressed worker from the diggings nearby, never descended to defrauding a black man and, once settled on a victim, would move to another district to cover his tracks.[303]

The Bull Nines were an "ethnically diverse" group of "small-time gangsters" that was symbolic of the changing class, racial and ethnic character of the diggings.[304] The government's attempts to regulate the diggings was piecemeal and struggled to keep up with the mass of workers making their way to Lichtenburg. The Minister of Mines, Frederick Beyers, noted in March 1928 that "if people went [to the diggings] in thousands as they were, the government was not

[300] Henry Dee. "Clements Kadalie", p.127.
[301] *Workers' Herald*, "Tit for Tat and Another Tit", 18 March 1927.
[302] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Maine, Kas, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng. Ledig, Rustenburg, 13 January 1983, Tape No. 355, Transcript No. 71.
[303] Van Onselen. *The Seed is Mine,* p.171. Although Maine saw it as a sign of "social degeneration", Van Onselen suggests that he had had no "deep-seated moral convictions" about it.
[304] *Ibid*., p.170.

to blame".[305] The provision of police to the diggings was also desperately short. Owing to the need to "protect life and property in the remainder of the Union", the diggings were staffed with 42 white and 20 black policemen for a population of over 35,000. By May 1928, the number of policemen was increased by four.[306]

The Lichtenburg diamond diggings received attention from a variety of black political organisations; these included the TAC, ANC (as evidenced in Sol Plaatje's report), and eventually the CPSA and ICU. As well as criminality, the rapid expansion of the diggings led to a rise in informal settlements and poor living conditions in the black locations surrounding Lichtenburg. These were characterised by "insanitary living conditions, lack of facilities for juvenile education, no social welfare services for the unemployed and irregular and intermittent economic opportunities."[307] As noted already, Sol Plaatje described the large, sprawling informal settlements that surrounded the diggings. A *Rand Daily Mail* article in March 1928 notes that there was considerable "misery" on the diggings, with the influx of over 30 000 workers making the "distress on the fields […] very great".[308]

During September and October 1927, Doyle Modiakgotla (see profile below) visited the Lichtenburg diggings and had witnessed the dire conditions experienced by location residents. Modiakgotla had requested legal counsel from attorneys J.B. Kieser and McLaren on the conditions at the Lichtenburg diggings, with reference to police arresting poll tax offenders multiple times; the assault of location residents by police; withholding wages and other matters. The attorneys advised him to send a letter to the ICU's Head Office in Johannesburg with a detailed list of complaints and to escalate the matter to the Minister of Justice, who they thought would then "order an enquiry".[309]

Modiakgotla chronicled his report detailing the terrible conditions at the diggings in a letter to the ICU's Head Office on 1 November 1927. He suggested that the "atrocities perpetuated on our people there are most disgraceful" and went on to describe the grievances of workers and location residents. One of the issues included in Modiakgotla's letter related to people being

[305] *Rand Daily Mail*, "Lichtenburg Distress", 1 March 1928,
[306] *Rand Daily Mail*, "Diggings with no police", 25 May 1928. Crime was widespread, the *Rand Daily Mail* reported that two murders and five homicides occurred over a single weekend at the diggings.
[307] Clynick. "The Lichtenburg Alluvial Diamond Diggers", p.9.
[308] *Rand Daily Mail*, "Lichtenburg Distress", 1 March 1928.
[309] University of Cape Town Archives, Lionel Forman Papers, B 3.137, "Industrial and Commercial Workers Union", Letter from Kieser and McLaren, Attornies, to C. Doyle Modiakgotla re treatment of ICU members at Mafeking. Mafeking, 29 October 1927.

hauled out of churches to demand pass and tax receipts and that those arrested for pass or tax offences were "bitterly assaulted and then marched down to the police station". Modiakgotla also described the persecution of ordinary people, where police would assault sick people; destroy property like suitcases and handbags; and throw illegally brewed beer on people's blankets before marching them to the police station.[310]

Figure 8 (left): Deep Diamond Digging, Grasfontein, Lichtenburg. Source: J Wood. "Grasfontein Diamond Diggings 1927", accessed at: http://www.on-the-rand.co.uk/Diamond%20Grounds/Lichtenburg13.htm on 8 April 2021

Figure 9 (right): Mining gear at Welverdiend, Lichtenburg. Source: J Wood. "Deep Diggings, Grasfontein, Lichtenburg", accessed at: https://www.mindat.org/photo-862858.html on 8 April 2021.

[310] UCT Archives, Lionel Forman papers, B 3.145, "Industrial and Commercial Workers Union" Holograph of Letter from C. Doyle Modiakgotla to Champion re visit to the Grassfontein diggings. Kimberley, 1 November 1927.

Conan Doyle Modiakgotla

Doyle Modiakgotla was born between 1880 and 1890 in Thaba 'Nchu in the Orange Free State (OFS). It was reported by the *Rand Daily Mail* that he saved the life of Nicolaas Havenga, the 1929 finance minister, during the South African War, where Modiakgotla had served "as a youngster". He "almost certainly" attended secondary school, and fought in France during World War One. It is noted that he "came away from France with a particular sense of grievance", having witnessed thirteen of his colleagues being killed (within the South African Native Labour Contingent) by non-commissioned officers. He was a building contractor by occupation and worked in Kimberly, Bloemfontein and the freehold areas of Thaba 'Nchu. William Ballinger described Modiakgotla as an "expert master builder".

Back Row: Modiakgotla is fourth from the left. R.V. Selope Thema is on his left and A.W.G. Champion is to his right. Source: Thomas Karis and Carter, Gwendolyn, eds., *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1964.* Volume 4. (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1977).

Modiakgotla joined the ICU in the early 1920s, and was the secretary of Griqualand West, having had his base in Kimberly. At an ICU meeting in Kimberly in 1927, he "denounced resolutions" and urged African people to throw away their passes and refuse to pay taxes. Modiakgotla's primary role in the ICU was as "Complaints and Research Secretary". In the Western Transvaal and Cape Province, Modiakgotla conducted expert research work in small towns. In 1927 he visited Lichtenburg and researched the conditions of workers and location inhabitants. He conducted similar research in Schweizer-Reneke. This kind of work was Modiakgotla's greatest asset; during ICU congress he exposed the attitudes of farmers across the OFS and Transvaal and analysed the implementation of dispossessive land legislation. By mid-1928 however, the ICU split and Modiakgotla decided to stay in the original ICU under Ballinger. Modiakgotla was in the ICU's executive at this stage and continued to do research work, although, relating to the Union's organisational decline, he had decreasing resources and time to do such visits.

Throughout the 1920s, Modiakgotla had been part of the ANC. He was a member of the national executive and the provincial Secretary for the OFS. By 1929, he was part of the League of African Rights (a group under the guidance of the CPSA to create a mass organisation of African people). After becoming a resident in Kimberly, Modiakgotla remained in the ANC working in the Cape Provincial Congress.

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Thomas Karis and Bugg-Levine, Anthony; Benson, Mary; Gerhart, Gail; Barnes, Terri eds., *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1990.* Volume 4. (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2017), p.309.

Wits Historical Papers Research Archive, Ballinger Papers, A924 "Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union I.C.U.", Letter from William Ballinger to Winifred Holtby, 30 April 1930.

The ICU's branch in Mafikeng, which was established in 1926, enabled Modiakgotla to be in close proximity to Lichtenburg and use the attorneys in the town. Modiakgotla's report revealed the dire conditions prevailing on the diggings as well as the gross abuse of power by the police. This shows the research capacity of ICU organisers, and as will be shown below, it laid the groundwork for the ICU's activism in the area.

Manipulation of the Market: Intervention by the State and De Beers

The fortunes of all workers in Lichtenburg, whether opportunistic diggers or the mass of white and black labourers, were bound to the variable nature of diamond production in South Africa. While big fortunes could be made on the Western Transvaal alluvial fields, there were great variations in alluvial diamond output (see table 1 below) as opposed to deep kimberlite diamond mining (which predominated in Kimberly, for example). Figures 8 and 9 show the kinds of machinery used by workers on the alluvial diggings in Lichtenburg.

Figure 10 highlights that the communities of diggers and workers on the alluvial fields had almost managed to match the production of kimberlite diamonds across South Africa (see in years 1927 and 1928), but were up against the world's biggest diamond cartel, De Beers. Deborah Spar describes the control of De Beers over the diamond trade globally, who have managed to maintain the conformity of the diamond price as a result of "over a century of careful planning and negotiation".[311] This planning and negotiation presided on Rhodes' initial investment of machinery in the diamond diggings around the Vaal and Kimberly. Rhodes saw the dangers of allowing thousands of carats of diamonds to freely flow to Europe, something which would both undermine the price and the "image" of scarcity and value attached to the stone.[312] He formed the Diamond Syndicate in 1889, which controlled the distribution of diamonds across the world, calculating roughly that the number of diamonds that should be allowed on the market should be equal to the number of weddings occurring. It is this mechanism, which Ernest Oppenheimer took control of, and tightened, in 1925 under the new guise of the Central Selling Organisation.[313]

[311] Debora Spar. "Markets: Continuity and Change in the International Diamond Market", *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 20, 3 (2006), p.196.
[312] *Ibid.*, pp.197-198.
[313] *Ibid*., pp.198-199.

DIAMOND PRODUCTION OF THE UNION (1,000 CARATS)

Year	Mines	Alluvial	Total
1925	2 192,9	237,2	2 430,1
1926	2 409,7	808,3	3 218,0
1927	2 389,6	2 318,4	4 708,0
1928	2 256,2	2 114,7	4 372,0
1929	2 293,5	1 367,7	3 661,2
1930	2 244,9	918,7	3 163,6
1931	1 472,1	647,1	2 119,2
1932	310,3	488,1	798,4
1933	15,5	491,1	506,6

Figure 10: Diamond production in alluvial diamond fields as opposed to kimberlite deposits, years 1925-1933.

Source: Clynick "The Lichtenburg Alluvial Diamond Diggers", p.4.

In Lichtenburg, the presence of such large volumes of diamonds moving unregulated by farmer-diggers and workers to the market "threatened the very existence of the Diamond Syndicate". In the words of a leader in the Diamond Syndicate, "the Lichtenberg discovery was a find which might conceivably undermine the cornerstone of the diamond industry" and this was echoed by Ernest Oppenheimer too, "the syndicate are off their heads with worry about the find".[314] Because of this, and also as a result of new deposits being found in British Guiana and Namaqualand, Oppenheimer placed a standard not only of the size of the diamond, but also the quality.[315] This led to a sizeable decrease in the average price per carat of diamonds, from £4, to £3 and then £2 in September 1927.

In response to the overproduction of diamonds, the Precious Stones (Alluvial) Diamond Act of 1927 was adopted. This Act aimed to give preference to capital intensive deep level mining and stem the tide of unregulated alluvial diamond mining.[316] At the time, it appeared that the Act would be peddled as a political manoeuvre of the Pact Government to protect workers from large companies owning individual claims and illegally obtaining "diggers certificates"; but in actual effect it created unemployment as these companies were forced to shut down.[317]

[314] Quoted in Patrick Hastings. *Cases in Court* (Auckland: Pickle Partners Publishing, 2018), pp.134-135.
[315] Hastings. *Cases in Court,* pp.135-137.
[316] Clynick. "The Lichtenburg Alluvial Diamond Diggers", p.11.
[317] Clynick "'Digging a Way into the Working Class'", pp.89-90.

In addition to the price of diamonds and the control over production, by late 1927 and into 1928, claims in Elandsputte and Welverdiend became less profitable and diggers turned to the more prosperous gravel controlled by landowners and big capitalists. The exclusion of poorer diggers from the best land by large landowners created "groundswell" where white diggers began to organise themselves to preserve the "public's rights".[318] Clynick describes the growth of the Diggers Union (DU) of South Africa, which was a body of white diggers opposing the strangling of their production. The Union formed in 1927 as a response to

> Growing unemployment and the shortage of shallow gravel accelerated the growth of the diggers' movement. This movement had no clear class basis, for its constituency shifted with the availability of new ground. Yet at its base lay this residue of impoverished and marginalised producers, which grew extremely impatient with the failure of the government to cater for their narrow, particular interests.[319]

The "small" workers on the diggings, whether claimholders or ordinary labourers, were being squeezed increasingly by the state and large capital. The DU and white diggers had a radical political influence on the diggings. This came principally from Solomon Buirski, a member of the CPSA, who had "taught [CPSA] study groups for the transient white population on the diamond fields".[320] The formation of the DU was important for claimholders who were being forced into wage work and the newly unemployed. In this sense, the DU took up the case of the "small diggers" and wage workers who had recently become unemployed after large companies shut down.[321] While the digging community in Lichtenburg and the DU found themselves threatened by the limits placed on prospecting,[322] throughout the early months of 1928 they led a few unsuccessful deputations to relieve their grievances. These included meeting with ministers and holding conferences with landowners to free up land for "small" prospectors.[323]

From late 1927 black workers also started experiencing reductions in wages and growing unemployment. When Modiakgotla visited Grasfontein in October 1927, he noted that "the police refuse to prosecute employers who withhold wages of the employees on the grounds that

[318] *Ibid.,* p.87.
[319] *Ibid.*, p.89.
[320] Money "Underground Struggles", p.7.
[321] Clynick "'Digging a Way into the Working Class'", pp.92-95.
[322] Clynick. "The Lichtenburg Alluvial Diamond Diggers", p.12.
[323] *Ibid*., p.12.

the employers cannot help if they have not found good stones".[324] Added, African people staying in locations around Elandsputte were constantly harassed for pass law contraventions and other misdemeanours. A white resident in Lichtenburg wrote the Minister of Justice on 9 May 1928 on the situation prevalent in the locations, claiming that many black people "are lying in the diggings and are not in service", and thus were "committing theft and burglary, and other crimes". He asked of the Minister of Justice whether it was possible to "remove the black people in the locations who are not working …"[325] This kind of attitude reflected the segregationist ideas according to which Africans were "temporary sojourners" in urban areas.

The police at Elandsputte were swift in dealing with workers who had recently become unemployed as a result of the overproduction of diamonds, the state control over mining and claims drying up on the diggings. On 29 May 1928, the police inspector at Elandsputte noted that "250 natives are in custody because of contraventions of the Pass Laws. The contraveners are charged a pound fine or a short jail term".[326] The inspector also suggested that the locations are "attractive for black people as they finish their contract".[327] The police were tasked with patrolling twice-a-week and often arrested people for pass offences and crimes relating to burglary. They also engaged in night patrols on the diggings and within the adjacent locations.

On 15 June 1928, white diggers responded to the manipulations of the diamond market by the state and De Beers and reduced black workers' wages from 20 shillings per week to 12 shillings. Clynick gives a convincing account of the development of consciousness among white diggers and suggests that they transcended a purely rural identity and developed a strong degree of "group consciousness",

> The Lichtenburg diggers in the period 1926-29 exhibited a remarkable degree of resilience to the efforts by the State and Capital (represented by the large diamond producers in the Union) to eliminate the small man on the diggings through legislative and economic pressure.[328]

As sketched above, the conditions among black workers were equally volatile and when white diggers reduced black workers' wages, this triggered a massive strike of over 35,000 black

[324] UCT Archives, Lionel Forman Papers, B 3.145, "Industrial and Commercial Workers Union" Holograph of Letter from C. Doyle Modiakgotla to Champion re visit to the Grassfontein diggings. Kimberley, 1 November 1927.
[325] NASA, JUS, 443, 3/524/28. Letter from I.V. Raubenheimer to the Minister of Justice, 9 May 1928.
[326] NASA, JUS, 443, 3/524/28. Letter from the Office of the Deputy Inspector at Elandsputte to the District Commandant of the SAP at Potchefstroom, 29 May 1928.
[327] *Ibid.*
[328] Clynick. "The Lichtenburg Alluvial Diamond Diggers", p.16.

workers. The evidence suggests that unemployed workers living in the Lichtenburg location faced constant persecution from the police. In the account below, it was both the reduction in black workers' wages as well as the dire conditions in the Lichtenburg location that formed the impetus for black workers to strike. As will be shown, the ICU played a critical role in picketing workers, holding meetings and in negotiating a final settlement.

Pittance and Police Persecution: The ICU and the Lichtenburg Strike

As shown above, the ANC, TAC, ICU and CPSA all had a presence in Lichtenburg. While the CPSA held study groups among white diggers, the ANC, TAC and ICU had undertaken research visits and chronicled the dire and conflictual conditions among black workers at the Lichtenburg diggings. The DU engaged in political activism on behalf of white workers, and it was the ICU that engaged in political activism for an extended period among black workers on the Lichtenburg diamond diggings.

On 22 April 1928, ICU organiser Alexander Maduna gave a speech at the Elandsputte diggings. He was well known for his oratory and fiery speeches (see biography below). In the speech, he drove at the heart of the problems on the diggings, which Modiakgotla had also highlighted six months prior. A police report relays some of what Maduna said,

> He [Maduna] spoke about the treatment the coloured workers on the diggings were receiving from their European employers. He stated that the natives were working like slaves, while the Europeans were looking on with their hands in their pockets, when at the end of the week their employers failed to pay them and the natives reported the matter to the police, the police invariably failed to take action against the Europeans. He urged the natives to demand that the proceeds of the diamonds be equally divided between the employers and employees. He stated that the natives were being exploited by foreign adventurers, and urged them to fight as there could be no peace between the robbers and the robbed.[329]

The message articulated by Maduna concerns the greatest injustice black workers faced at the diggings: low wages. Whether it was the equal division of wages, fair remuneration for black workers or persecution of black workers by the police, the ICU made clear that there could be

[329] NASA, JUS, 920, 1/18/26, vol.16 – vol.18. Report given to the Officer in charge of the Criminal Investigation Department at Elandsputte to the Criminal Investigation Department at Elandsputte, 25 April 1928.

no peace between the "robbers and the robbed". Maduna also drew attention to the treatment of those contravening pass laws and other regulations,

> He further stated that if what he heard of the police raids were true, the present state of affairs were disgraceful, and that they [ICU members/ workers/residents of locations] did not want the police there at all. On beer raids, the police first drank their gill of beer and then threw the beer over the beds and furniture, the police were not creating crime, but promoting hostility between the natives and the whites. He urged natives to protest being dragged out of their bed at night on account of the pass law. The natives should not look to government for protection, as the government had failed to protect them.[330]

[330] NASA, JUS, 920, 1/18/26, vol.16 – vol.18. Report given to the Officer in charge of the Criminal Investigation Department at Elandsputte to the Criminal Investigation Department at Elandsputte, 25 April 1928.

Alexander Maduna

Alexander Maduna.

Source: Henry Dee. "Clements Kadalie, Trade Unionism, Migration and Race in Southern Africa, 1918-1930", PhD Diss., University of Edinburgh (2019), p.149.

Alexander Maduna was born in Uitenhage, Eastern Cape most probably in the late 1890s. Maduna had spent five years in prison prior to moving to Pietermaritzburg in the early 1920s. Here, he was one of the most "militant" leaders of the local Native National Congress (NNC). Maduna was famous for his "fiery speeches", which were characterised by religious scepticism and a strong criticism of tribalism. His aversion to tribalism was a result of his Garveyism, from which he developed a race consciousness.

In 1924 Maduna was the provincial secretary for the ICU in Natal, whereafter A.W.G. Champion succeeded him. He moved to the Orange Free State in 1926 and was the Provincial Secretary there. Maduna's more militant character emerged when he led a march of railway workers demanding a wage increase in Waaihoek location, Bloemfontein. In June 1928, Maduna was part of the ICU's Clean Administration Group, which aimed to clean up the finances of the in-debt and embattled ICU head office.

Maduna was not averse to strike action. He had been one of the first ICU officials to visit the Lichtenburg diamond diggings in the months leading up to the 1928 strike. This was again evidenced in his participation in the East London general strike in 1930. Maduna will best be remembered for his public oratory, which enlivened audiences. By 1940, old quarrels resurfaced; Maduna had decided to leave the ICU because of an "unequal distribution of funds".

References

Henry Dee. "Clements Kadalie", p.49.

Thomas Karis and Carter, Gwendolyn, eds, *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1964.* Volume 4. (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1977), pp. 63-64.

A week later, on 29 April 1928, three speakers addressed a crowd of 50 workers under the "auspices" of the ICU. The speakers were ICU organisers Augustus Jonathan Stephens and Albert Jonga, and a local worker, H. Ghobos, who according to a police report was "a local native labourer and cannot be classed as an agent of the I.C.U." Stephens opened the meeting by telling workers to carry their pass and tax receipts, as well as saying that women brew beer because their husbands were not paid properly on the diggings. Jonga and Ghobos both referred to "the non-payment of native labourers by their masters, and expressed the wish that the Government would take steps against the delinquents".[331]

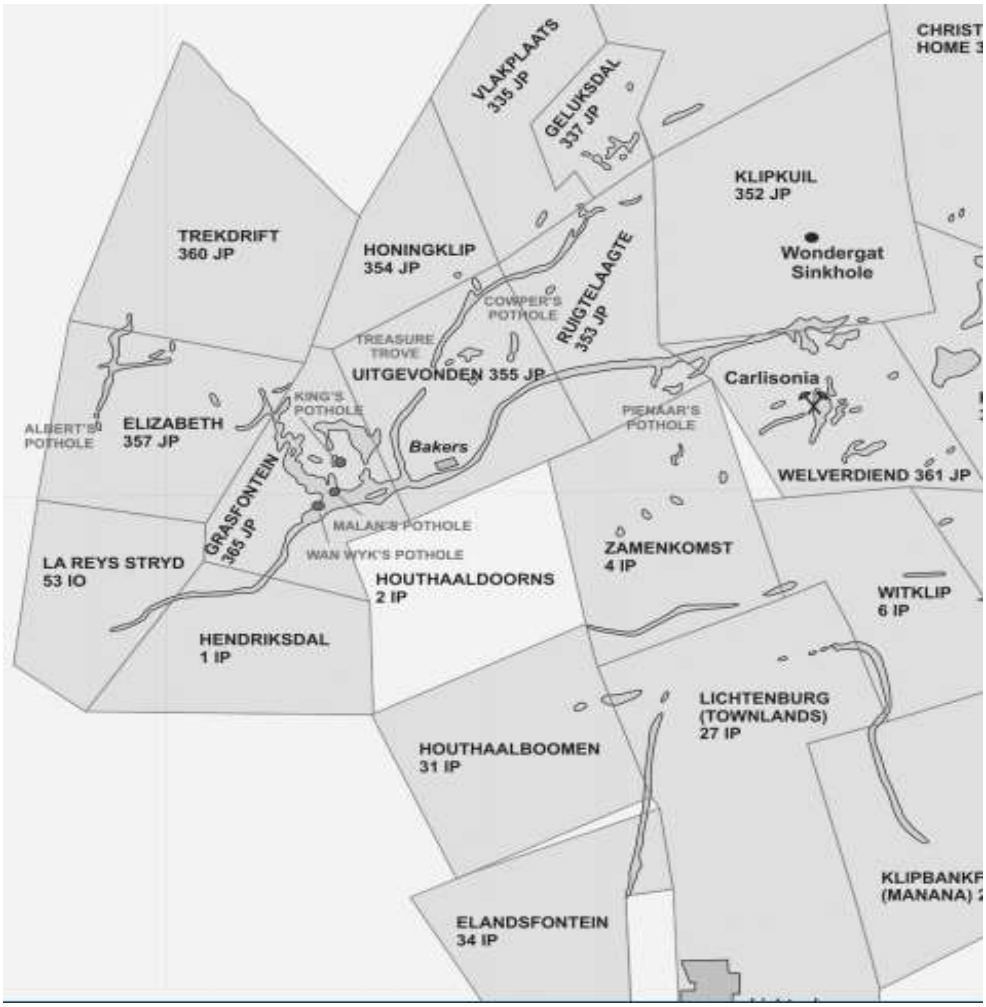
At a meeting in Potchefstroom on 24 June 1928, Keable 'Mote spoke about a meeting at Grasfontein earlier that month.

> On the 9th [of June] I opened one of the biggest agitations at Grasfontein. I found the workers treated worse than slaves. I did not go to create hostility between white and black. I went to tell the thieves and robbers that my people must leave. The people are treated and sjambokked like dogs. I told the Magistrate of Lichtenburg. I told the Commandant of Police of Potchefstroom to stop sjambokking of natives or I will give him a damn good lesson. If a policeman comes at 5 a.m. and pulls me out from my sweetheart, I would fight – would you not fight? [Cries "Yes!" and "I'll Fight"].[332]

The pressures placed on black and white workers came to a head on 15 June 1928, when white diggers, responding to the squeeze of the state and the diamond market, cut black workers' wages. On 18 June some 5000 black workers embarked on a strike on the "poorer sections of the diggings" and by 20 June, between 35,000 and, as reported by some police, 80,000 workers "struck work, picketed and pulled strike-breakers out of their claims".[333] By Wednesday, all work on the diggings was at a standstill.[334] The central question that arises is: what led black

[331] NASA, JUS, 920, 1/18/26, vol.16 – vol.18. Report given to the Officer in charge of the Criminal Investigation Department at Elandsputte to the Criminal Investigation Department at Elandsputte, 2 May 1928.
[332] NASA, JUS, 920, 1/18/26, vol.16 – vol.18. Report from the Criminal Investigation Department in Potchefstroom to the District Commandant of the South African Police at Potchefstroom, 25 June 1928.
[333] Simons and Simons. *Class and Colour,* p.364; *Rand Daily Mail*, "Diggers and Native" "Washing Machines Restart" "Farms Affected" "Order Kept by Few Police", 23 June 1928. The Rand Daily Mail provides a report of police putting the number of striking workers at 80,000.
[334] Clynick. "The Lichtenburg Alluvial Diamond Diggers", p.12.

workers to strike *en masse* and in a co-ordinated way? The account which follows attempts to provide a partial answer to this question, arguing that the ICU's role was critical.



Map 4: Map of farms in Lichtenburg where diamond digging was prevalent. Grasfontein is the centre of the image and Elandsputte is north-east of it. Source: Wilson, Henry and Marshall. "A Review", p.308.

When white diggers cut black workers' wages on Friday 15 June 1928, they gave no notice to black workers.[335] It appears that workers found out about the reduction when they went to collect their weekly wages on Saturday, and on Monday 18 June they embarked on a strike instead of returning to work. Both Piet Baraganyi, an ordinary labourer at Grasfontein, and Ishmael Moeng, a mechanic at Elandsputte, were working on the diggings at the time and

[335] NASA, NTS, 2092, 215/280. Lichtenburg Alluvial Diggings, Native Strike. Minutes of meeting held at the South African Police Station on Wednesday the 20th June 1928, convened for the purpose of coming to some finality on the question of the native strike, 20 June 1928, p. 2. It was Major Cooke that had brought up this point.

witnessed the events of the forthcoming week, which they remembered when they were interviewed many years later.

On Monday 18 June 1928, Baraganyi was working on a claim in Grasfontein (see Map 3), when he saw Kadalie and 'Mote with his "own eyes", organising workers and demanding that "Tswanas must be paid reasonable wages". Baraganyi remembered: "it was a Monday [18th June 1928] and we were at work, I just saw a group of people coming, they hoisted a red flag".[336] As the procession of people approached him, they began "thrashing" him and other workers with switches (a kind of whip) and told them to leave their jobs.

Baraganyi believed that this was a "a sign of contempt and disrespect for the Boers" and did not want to leave his job, viewing the recommendation to strike as "hasty".[337] The workers were then "told" to follow Kadalie to a meeting and that they were "stupid for [they] worked for nothing for whites".[338] Kas Maine's account of how the strike began at Lichtenburg echoes Baraganyi's,

> They would stop you from working. They get hold of you, there at the claim, they tell you you must get out, you must not work, because the man does not want to pay. That was the time of the ICU.[339]

At meetings held throughout the week by state officials and white diggers, references were made to outside "agitators" and "loafers" as responsible for the strike. A member of the DU and a digger at Grasfontein, Daly, stated that

> the natives who were out of work loafing in the locations who were causing all the trouble, the I.C. Union being the instigators of the strike and not the boys on the claim […] when the natives' wages were reduced, they were willing to work, and it was only late this morning when the natives who were at the bottom of the trouble came to the claims and chased the boys who were working off.[340]

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[336] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Baraganyi, Piet, interview conducted by M.M. Molepo, Boskuil, 5 August 1985. Tape No. 535. Transcript No.140.
[337] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Baraganyi, Piet, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng. Boskuil, 16 January 1987. Tape No. 560. Transcript No.157.
[338] *Ibid*.
[339] Bradford. *A Taste of Freedom,* p.166. Note that this is her translation of Kas Maine's words which in the original are in Afrikaans. Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Maine, Kas, interview conducted by Charles van Onselen. Ledig, Rustenburg, 24 February 1982. Tape No.264. Transcript No.45.
[340] NASA, NTS, 2092, 215/280. Lichtenburg Alluvial Diggings, Native Strike. Minutes of meeting of diggers held a portion "U", Grasfontein, on Monday afternoon, 18th June 1928, at Lemmers Café in Connection with the Native Strike, 18 June 1928.

Thus, according to the DU, black workers went on strike because of intimidation "on account of the rise of the natives" who took "pick handles" and chased workers on the claims "until they all stopped working and joined the band of strikers".[341] Swanepoel, the Secretary for the Diggers and Farmers Committee, reiterated at a meeting held on Wednesday 20 June that the "instigators" of the strike: "were not the old diggers boys […] but the loafers in the locations" and that the "the agitators chased them and forced them to follow them. These loafers are parasites on the boys who attend work regularly".[342] At the same meeting, another digger, Ruitgelaagte, suggested that his workers "were willing to work at that wage but the agitators will not allow them to do so", and that he had made it clear to his workers that they "must work at a reduced wage".[343] A digger from Grasfontein, Jooste, noted that Grasfontein "[had] the largest locations" and recounted that the "I.C. Union together with the loafers in the locations stirred up the bad feelings".[344]

After the meeting held by Kadalie on Monday afternoon, workers were told to return to another meeting on the following day, Tuesday 19 June, at which they were addressed by Kadalie again,

> We then returned the following day, Ooh! We were many. He told us that he was Kadalie and he would like to help us and was not afraid to come face to face with the white man. And during those times, while we were in Motati [the "ancient name of the area in the Lichtenburg district"], we were earning low wages. Some people were paid a pound a week, some nineteen shillings or eighteen shillings.[345]

After the meeting was concluded, the workers were advised by ICU organisers to "disperse to [their] respective jobs and start working" and that they must be paid one pound and five shillings.[346] Swanepoel affirmed that "meetings have been held and Kadalie has the power over

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[341] *Ibid.*

[342] NASA, NTS, 2092, 215/280. Lichtenburg Alluvial Diggings, Native Strike. Minutes of meeting held at the South African Police Station on Wednesday the 20th June 1928, convened for the purpose of coming to some finality on the question of the native strike, 20 June 1928, p.3. Comment made by Swanepoel.

[343] *Ibid.,* p .9. Comment made by Ruitgelaagte.

[344] *Ibid.,* p.4. Comment by Jooste.

[345] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Baraganyi, Piet, interview conducted by M.M. Molepo, Boskuil, 5 August 1985. Tape No. 535. Transcript No.140. Sol Plaatje gives the account of Motati in Solomon Plaatje "Native Life at the Alluvial Diggings", pp. 64-67.

[346] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Baraganyi, Piet, interview conducted by M.M. Molepo, Boskuil, 5 August 1985. Tape No. 535. Transcript No.140; Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Baraganyi, Piet, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng. Boskuil, 16 January 1987. Tape No. 560. Transcript No.157. Baraganyi gives two amounts, one being £5 and another £1 and 5 shillings. The £5

the natives – they are ignorant of conditions and believe everything that is told to them".[347] Similarly, De Vos, a digger from Grasfontein noted that the strike was convened by the "I.C. Union and its followers" and that "Kadalie's representative, 'Mote had been on the diggings and started this trouble".[348]

Ishmael Moeng was working as a mechanic in Elandsputte and Vaalboschputte (see Map 3) when he heard of the "big strike". According to Moeng, on Monday 18 June 1928, Jingoes had arrived at the diggings as a "representative of the ICU" and was actively involved in organising the strike: "if he found people working, he would order them to stop as a strategy for an increase in the wages".[349] He also addressed workers in a meeting which Moeng also attended:

> When we arrived we found a lot of people and he [Jingoes] was saying that people should be paid reasonable wages and that special passes should be abolished. Those who don't want to pay reasonable wages should leave the employer. But he didn't suggest what should be done if one left his employer, you see.[350]

Jingoes' "order" to stop working inspired some workers to stay-away. After two or three days, striking workers started breaking into and looting shops.[351] In Moeng's account, the workers' dire conditions on the diggings were made worse by their inability to feed themselves during the strike. He drew a link between lack of wages, employment and starvation, noting that the

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could be referring to the monthly amount, i.e., £1 and 5 shillings weekly. The £1 and 5 shillings as a weekly amount would have been a 17-shilling increase from the post-reduction wage of 12 shillings. This is audacious considering the position of diggers, De Beers and the state.

[347] NTS, 2092, 215/280. Lichtenburg Alluvial Diggings, Native Strike. Minutes of meeting held at the South African Police Station on Wednesday the 20th June 1928 Convened for the purpose of coming to some finality on the question of the native strike. 20 June 1928, p.9. Comment by Swanepoel.

[348] *Ibid.,* p.6. Comment by De Vos. In the *South African Worker,* it was noted that "two I.C.U. officials, who had been present when the cessation of work took place, advised workers to return to work shortly afterwards". *The South African Worker*, "30,000 Natives on Strike at Lichtenburg", 22 June 1928.

[349] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Moeng, Ishmael, interview conducted by T. Matsatela. Oersonskraal, 31 March 1987. Tape No.563. Transcript No. 258. Also see Stimela Jason Jingoes. *A Chief is a Chief by the People,* p.117. Jingoes suggests that there was a strike in Lichtenburg and that he held a meeting during it. He cites a strike for wages of 1s 6d a day, which was increased to 2s a day. This could show the different wages paid across the diggings.

[350] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Moeng, Ishmael, interview conducted by T. Matsetela, Oersonskraal, 12 March 1987. Tape No. 561 and 562. Transcript No.245.

[351] *Ibid.*

looting of shops happened because "there was no food for them".[352] During his interview, Moeng recounted this episode at Grasfontein,

> when they [the striking workers] arrived, they found a woman. They took the pot, small as it was, and they were one hundred in number, and ate the porridge. They were starving.[353]

The same situation prevailed at Elandsputte and Vaalboschputte, "they broke and looted shops so that they could get food to eat". Moeng suggested that many of the workers then turned to Jingoes for food, because he was the one "who encouraged them to stop working" but he was "unable to give them food".[354]

By Wednesday 20 June 1928, the situation had reached a climax. Catching the wave of protest for increased wages, almost all the workers joined the strikers and "all labour had been suspended and an estimated 35,000 blacks were on strike".[355] A *Rand Daily Mail* article captured the tense atmosphere,

> Thirty thousand natives are on strike at the Lichtenberg diggings. Claims from Elandsputte, Grasfontein, and across to the edge of Welverdiend, are deserted. Diggers and natives alike are wandering aimlessly, and gathering for meetings that grow more impatient as no settlement is reached.[356]

The strike had shown the latent power of the black labour force, so much so that *Umteteli Wa Bantu* raised concerns that "the utilisation of the 'strike weapon' always occasions great anxiety to the public […] and the atmosphere at Lichtenburg Diggings is no exception".[357] The desertion of claims by diggers and workers was evocatively reported by the *Rand Daily Mail*: "headgears and washing gears stand stark against the sky like the litter of war abandoned by a retreating army".[358] White diggers and their families hid away for, from their perspective, the "danger" of attacks from black workers loomed large, and it was reported that some white

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[352] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Moeng, Ishmael, interview conducted by T. Matsatela. Oersonskraal, 31 March 1987. Tape No.563. Transcript No. 258.
[353] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Moeng, Ishmael, interview conducted by T. Matsetela, Oersonskraal, 12 March 1987. Tape No. 561 and 562. Transcript No.245.
[354] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Moeng, Ishmael, interview conducted by T. Matsatela. Oersonskraal, 31 March 1987. Tape No.563. Transcript No. 258.
[355] *Rand Daily Mail*, "Lichtenberg A Town of Refugees" "30,000 Natives on Strike at the Diggings" "Europeans in Laager" "Demand for More Police Protection", 20 June 1928.
[356] *Ibid.*
[357] *Umteteli Wa Bantu*, "Lichtenburg Diggings: Strike of Native Workmen", 23 June 1928.
[358] *Rand Daily Mail*, "Lichtenberg A Town of Refugees" "30,000 Natives on Strike at the Diggings" "Europeans in Laager" "Demand For More Police Protection", 20 June 1928, page 10.

diggers wanted to form a commando due to the "inadequate protection afforded by the small force of police on the diggings".[359]

On Wednesday 20 June, negotiations took place. At a large meeting that included a collection of diggers, the Lichtenburg Magistrate and the Mining Commissioner of the Western Transvaal, the Director of Native Labour, Major Cooke suggested that workers be paid 15 or 16 shillings a week which would continue until the beginning of July after which workers would make "individual work arrangements with their master". Cooke decried the actions of the diggers, and questioned whether they can "reasonably expect a native to accept work at 12/- per week without rations, quarters or medical attention …".[360] Helen Bradford argues that 'Mote had "pleaded" with workers from the beginning of the week "to resume work pending the result of a conference [or a wage negotiation]".[361] While some ICU organisers had been on the diggings during the first two days of the strike, Bradford suggests that the national leadership only appeared on the diggings on the Wednesday for the wage negotiations. She suggests that it was minor activists and the black rank-and-file "who were forcing senior officials to bend to their will", and that the leadership, who had initially been apprehensive to support the strike,

> had totally shifted their position […] head office, they now declared, had decided to support the strike, and four organisers would come to the diggings that very night [Wednesday 20 June 1928].[362]

Wickins quotes "Kadalie's actual statement":

> […] four officials of the Union will set out for the diggings to-night. Their object is to induce the strikers to accept 15s. as a basis for further negotiation, and it is also the intention of the Union to approach the Wage Board to investigate conditions on the diggings. It is the contention of I.C.U. officials that the diggers broke the natives' contracts.[363]

With the decision of the wage increase already decided by the diggers and the state, Jack and Ray Simons note that the ICU played a role to "induce the strikers to accept 15s. and return to

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[359] *Ibid.*

[360] NTS, 2092, 215/280. Lichtenburg Alluvial Diggings, Native Strike. Minutes of meeting held at the South African Police Station on Wednesday the 20th June 1928 Convened for the purpose of coming to some finality on the question of the native strike. 20 June 1928, p.9. Comment by Major Cooke.

[361] Bradford. *A Taste of Freedom*, p.166.

[362] *Ibid*.

[363] Quoted in Wickins. "The Industrial", p.442, footnote 1.

work while the union negotiated a final settlement."[364] They regard the ICU's role in the strike was a "glaring example of failure" and an indication of the increasingly moderate currents running through the ICU.[365] Indeed, Ethelreda Lewis, a white liberal who had been engaging with the ICU's leadership, expressed that the ICU was unfairly getting the blame for "fomenting the strike", asserting that "there have been very few strikes recently where the ICU have not intervened with decent suggestions for peace and settlement".[366]

Police reports regarding the whereabouts of ICU organisers during the negotiations were contradictory. Sergeant Mickdal had observed that both Kadalie and 'Mote had left the district for Potchefstroom by 20 June; whereas on 21 June, the Mafikeng SAP reported that "diligent enquiries" were made to find the whereabouts of Kadalie, but noted that after giving a speech in Mafikeng, they could not ascertain whether he left for Grasfontein or Johannesburg.[367] White diggers, however, still threatened violence against Kadalie and 'Mote if they were to return to the diggings. One digger, Ruitgelaagte, promised to retaliate if the ICU continued to force labourers to stop working, "if the natives come back to work and are molested [by the ICU], we will take up the cudgels on their behalf".[368]Another one, Malan made the most violent threats: "if he knew or saw where 'Mote was hiding, he would kill him and so would any of the diggers", who would give both Kadalie and 'Mote "a free grave on the diggings".[369]

As mentioned above, De Beers had initiated several processes, with the support of the state, that had the result of squeezing diggers and workers into receiving a pittance. As the *Rand Daily Mail* reported,

> There is no malice on neither side. The natives simply declare that they have to buy everything, and with prices at their highest 12s, is not a living wage. Diggers speak with one voice against the application of the Diamond Bill and the Government action in Namaqualand. With diamond

[364] Simons and Simons. *Class and Colour*, p.364.
[365] *Ibid.*
[366] Ballinger Family Collection, Collection A410, C2.3.7, "Letter from Ethelreda Lewis to Lord Oliver", 20 June 1928.
[367] Major Irvine noted that Sergeant Mickdal confirmed the movements of Kadalie and 'Mote. NASA NTS, 2092, 215/280. Lichtenburg Alluvial Diggings, Native Strike. Minutes of meeting held at the South African Police Station on Wednesday the 20th June 1928 Convened for the purpose of coming to some finality on the question of the native strike, 20 June 1928, p.6.NASA, JUS, 920, 1/18/26, vol.16 – vol.18. Report received by the Divisional Officer at Kimberly from the SAP at Mafeking, 21 June 1928.
[368] *Ibid.,* p.7. Comment by Ruitgelaagte.
[369] *Ibid.,* p.6. Comment by Malan.

> prices slumping, and no new ground to work, they cannot pay higher wages and feed themselves, they say.[370]

A certain Alberts from Klipkuil regarded the ICU as being "at the bottom of all the trouble", and "because of the drop in the price of diamonds and subsequent reduction of wages they have taken advantage of the situation".[371] However, Jooste, a digger in Grasfontein, noted that white diggers were making the largest loss, "approximately a 40% or 45% drop [in diamond prices] compared with the prices paid in April 1928. If the natives' wages are reduced from 18 or £1. to 12/6 or 13/6 it means a 33% drop and that shows that the digger is the loser".[372]

By Thursday 21 June, police protection had arrived. The Magistrate at Lichtenburg noted in a letter to the Secretary of Mines and Industries on Thursday 21 June 1928, that the police must "protect the black workers who want to work".[373] Moeng remembered the arrival of "soldiers" some "by aeroplane and some by horses". He also remembered that the "Boers called the soldiers and told them that people don't want to work".[374] The soldiers then went

> in the locations and announced that those people who don't work must go back to work. Those people who don't want to work must not raise their hands and those who will must raise theirs … So, people just sat down and said to them that they should do what they wanted to do … [375]

This strategy aimed to divide workers into "claim workers" and outside "agitators" and to further isolate the ICU as an external force driving the strike. This kind of thinking translated into the actions of ordinary diggers towards workers; over the course of the week, a case was reported where the police found a black worker who was severely beaten "tied by the feet with

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[370] *Rand Daily* Mail, "Lichtenberg A Town of Refugees" "30,000 Natives on Strike at the Diggings" "Europeans in Laager" "Demand For More Police Protection", 20 June 1928, page 10.
[371] NTS, 2092, 215/280. Lichtenburg Alluvial Diggings, Native Strike. Minutes of meeting held at the South African Police Station on Wednesday the 20th June 1928 Convened for the purpose of coming to some finality on the question of the native strike. 20 June 1928, p.7. Comment by Alberts.
[372] Ibid., p.4. Comment by Jooste.
[373] NASA, NTS, 2092, 215/280. Lichtenburg Alluvial Diggings, Native Strike. Letter from the Magistrate at Lichtenburg to the Secretary of Mines and Industries, Pretoria, 21 June 1928.
[374] It is unclear on which day of the strike the soldiers arrived, and whether it was the army or the police. According to Moeng's chronology, when the "soldiers" came, "people were already looting the white shops because they were starving", which suggests it could have been as early as 19 June and continuing until 21 June. Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Moeng, Ishmael, interview conducted by T. Matsatela. Oersonskraal, 31 March 1987. Tape No.563. Transcript No. 258.
[375] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Moeng, Ishmael, interview conducted by T. Matsatela, Oersonskraal, 31 March 1987. Tape No.563. Transcript No. 258.

his hands tied behind him bleeding profusely from the nose and mouth", because he had been on a claim, and the digger on that claim had "not recognised him personally".[376]

The division between "loafers" or "agitators", on the one hand, and "old boys", on the other hand, does not account for how widespread the strike was.[377] If anything, it was a ploy to divide the workers and stifle the strike. There was considerable fluidity on the diggings, as the "old boys [claim workers]", "agitators [ICU organisers or activists]" and "loafers [unemployed location residents]" all lived in the locations surrounding the diggings. Lefebvre's concept of the interconnection of space is useful here, considering the movement of workers between the diggings, locations and reserves, and the efforts by the authorities to divide the workers.

In Lichtenburg location, as in other black townships in the country, African people were continually being harassed by the police for brewing beer, pass offences and tax receipts. As discussed in chapter one, in Waaihoek, Bloemfontein, what had started as beer protest transformed into a generalised strike against low wages, underemployment and persecution from police. ICU organiser Doyle Modiakgotla viewed the abolition of pass laws as one of the workers' demands during the strike; at the National European-Bantu conference in February 1929, he "denied that the pass system was any protection to property or contract and stated that in the Grasfontein strike the Native Affairs Department did nothing to assist the Natives".[378] At an ICU meeting in July 1928 the ICU's Lichtenburg branch secretary "injected a broader political note into the review of the strike" suggesting that it was not only the "fall in wages" but also the "brutality of the state" that had "betrayed workers' interests".[379] He called: "away with this government, away with this obnoxious pass system and let us obtain freedom".[380] The wage cut was a "spark" which ignited existing grievances experienced by location residents.

By Friday 22 June, it was reported by the *South African Worker* (the CPSA newspaper) that the "main body of strikers are still standing fast and at the time of writing there is no indication

[376] NASA, NTS, 2092, 215/280. Lichtenburg Alluvial Diggings, Native Strike. Letter from the Director of Native Labour to the Secretary of Native Affairs, 6 July 1929.
[377] See comments by diggers. NTS, 2092, 215/280. Lichtenburg Alluvial Diggings, Native Strike. Minutes of meeting held at the South African Police Station on Wednesday the 20th June 1928 Convened for the purpose of coming to some finality on the question of the native strike. 20 June 1928.
[378] Wits Historical Papers Research Archive, AD 1715, South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), Report of the National European-Bantu Conference, Cape Town, 6-9 February 1929.
[379] Bradford. *A Taste of Freedom,* p.167.
[380] *Ibid.,* p.167.

that they are prepared to concede their demands and accept the reduction in wages".[381] Van Onselen suggests that the wage negotiations had placed the ICU in a difficult bargaining position where they were "trapped between the workers' anger and the diggers' militancy".[382] Despite the continuation of strike action by black workers, Bradford notes that "by Friday, most whites were prepared to pay fifteen shillings a week; [however] by Monday, life was back to normal on the fields".[383]

Baraganyi only became aware of the wage decrease on Saturday 23 June, and only when he arrived at work expecting to be paid that day, he found out that wages had been lowered. When workers went to collect their wages, they were told that "since the ICU had promised to give us five pounds a week, we would get it from [the ICU] and not from them".[384] He regarded Kadalie and 'Mote as responsible for the reduction of workers' wages "because there was no single white man at the meeting [held by the ICU], whom could we point to and say he had agreed" on the increase.[385] Baraganyi's reflections suggest that the ICU's influence in mobilising workers was limited – in that workers misunderstood the position of ICU organisers and even mistrusted their intentions. In this regard, Moeng remembered that after the strike rumours "flew around" that Jingoes had "built a hotel in Johannesburg" and had come to work with people in South Africa "mainly to swindle their money".[386]

On 26 June 1928, a government official suggested that diggers in the meeting of Wednesday 20 June 1928

> seem to have considered that the I.C.U. were more responsible for the [strike] position than the newspaper reports which […] indicated feeling against Kadalie and Mote was apparently very little.[387]

In this vein, Van Onselen asserts that "the I.C.U. had probably played a far less important role in the strike than that attributed to it by deeply resentful white employers".[388] It is undisputable

[381] *The South African Worker*, "30,000 Natives on Strike at Lichtenburg", 22 June 1928.
[382] Van Onselen. *The Seed is Mine,* p.146.
[383] Bradford. *A Taste of Freedom,* p.167.
[384] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Baraganyi, Piet, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng. Boskuil, 16 January 1987. Tape No. 560. Transcript No.157.
[385] *Ibid.*
[386] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Moeng, Ishmael, interview conducted by T. Matsatela. Oersonskraal, 31 March 1987. Tape No.563. Transcript No. 258.
[387] NASA, NTS, 2092, 215/280. Lichtenburg Alluvial Diggings, Native Strike. Note dated 26 June 1929, 26 June 1929.
[388] Van Onselen. *The Seed is Mine,* p.146.

that the largest constituency of the strike were ordinary black workers who had little or no affiliation to the ICU.

Reviewing the strike, the *South African Worker* suggested that it was a "partial victory", but was "splendid united action" and an "example to the toiling masses of Africa".[389] Bradford also regards the strike as an "astounding" achievement where "ordinary blacks, with the help of lesser ICU activists brought the diggings to a halt and even spread the stoppage to farmworkers on an adjacent holding".[390] Clynick states that black workers organised in an "ingenious way" joining forces with the ICU in protest. [391]

The ICU in the Aftermath of the Lichtenburg Strike: Internal Splits, Liberal Intervention and Declining Prosperity on the Diggings

The Lichtenburg strike occurred just prior to the arrival of Scottish trade unionist William Ballinger in South Africa on 18 July 1928. Together with other white liberals, like Winifred Holtby and Ethelreda Lewis as well as Edgar Brooks,[392] Ballinger began wielding increasing influence over policies and character of the ICU. Ballinger's arrival contributed to Kadalie's resignation in January 1929 which broke up the ICU into a number of splinter movements, with Kadalie's being called the "Independent ICU".[393]

Compounding these problems were reports of corruption and mismanagement, which in turn were linked to the splits in the ICU. Ballinger's ideological outlook was less threatening to white state officials than other ICU activists, and what is more this contributed to the ICU taking up less radical economic positions on the Lichtenburg diggings in the months and years following the strike. The ICU's internal divisions could not have emerged at a worse time in Lichtenburg; the diamonds on the diggings were drying up and following the strike of June 1928, the ICU struggled to regain a foothold in Lichtenburg.

In the days following the strike, ICU organisers reflected on their activities. 'Mote delivered a speech in Potchefstroom on 25 June 1928 claiming a victory for the workers at Grasfontein, "you can arrest Keable Mote but the ICU will remain. At Grasfontein I addressed a meeting of

[389] *South African Worker*, "Native Strikers at Diggings", 26 June 1928.
[390] Bradford. *A Taste of Freedom,* p.166-167.
[391] Clynick. "The Lichtenburg Alluvial Diamond Diggers", p.13.
[392] Both Holtby and Lewis were writers; Holtby was a feminist writer and Lewis wrote about the plight of black workers in South Africa. Brookes worked with the Institute of Race Relations in the 1920s.
[393] For more information on the Independent ICU, see: Dee. "Clements Kadalie", pp.282-294.

25,000 – even the magistrate had to beg me … we don't believe in fighting with sticks and stones, we believe in the court and law".[394] In September 1928, at a meeting held in Makwassie, Robert Makhatini suggested that "we will not hear of strikes because this is not Lichtenburg, wherever the ICU is, there are no strikes".[395] While the approach taken by the ICU did prioritise negotiation over extended strike action in the end, both Makhatini and 'Mote's utterances highlighted the ideological contradictions that were present within the ICU. As Bradford argues, black intellectuals were caught in between having both a petit-bourgeois class position and the threat of being pulled into the underclasses.[396] 'Mote thus exhibited contradictory ideologies; first celebrating his speech given to a crowd of 25,000 striking workers and then effectively denouncing the notion of striking in favour of the "court and law".

During June and July 1928, the situation at the diamond diggings got progressively worse as diggers and workers alike were squeezed by the drop in diamond prices. As mentioned above, from 1 July 1928, diggers were left to negotiate wages with workers on an independent basis and as early as 4 July 1928 there were reports of diggers not paying their workers. The situation was especially acute for poorer diggers, as one digger argued: "if the diggers pay what they can afford, some [poorer] diggers will be left without labour".[397] The Director of Native Labour at the time, Major Cooke, suggested to the Secretary for Native Affairs that the issue of non-payment of wages was urgent and that the diggers who were responsible must be found as the practice could "cause ill-feeling".[398]

There were two punishments proposed for diggers who failed to pay wages. The first was suggested by the magistrate of Lichtenburg, who noted that if a digger failed to pay their workers, their licences could be revoked.[399] A second suggestion was to issue the diggers with

[394] NASA, JUS, 920, 1/18/26, vol.16 – vol.18. Report from the Criminal Investigation Department in Potchefstroom to the District Commandant of the South African Police at Potchefstroom, 25 June 1928.
[395] JUS 921 1/18/26 vol.19 – vol.21. Report compiled by the Maquassi police Sergeant, 29 July 1928.
[396] Bradford. "Mass Movements and the Petty Bourgeoisie".
[397] NTS, 2092, 215/280. Lichtenburg Alluvial Diggings, Native Strike. Minutes of meeting held at the South African Police Station on Wednesday the 20th June 1928 Convened for the purpose of coming to some finality on the question of the native strike. 20 June 1928, p.9. Comment by Swanepoel.
[398] NASA, NTS, 2092, 219/280. Natives on diamond diggings, failure of employers to meet obligations. Letter from the Director of Native Labour to the Secretary of Native Affairs, 4 July 1928.
[399] NASA, NTS, 2092, 219/280. Natives on diamond diggings, failure of employers to meet obligations. Letter from the Magistrate at Lichtenburg to the Secretary of Native Affairs, 7 July 1928.

a fine, but eventually it was resolved in favour of revoking diggers' licence to operate.[400] Helen Bradford notes that this move was largely the result of the ICU Lichtenburg branch secretary who had "interviewed state officials to obtain an assurance" that any non-payment of wages would result in the revoking of a diggers' certificate.[401]

Yet ICU activity abated as the union became engulfed in internal wrangling and mismanagement; this was linked to countrywide corruption in branches, the arrival of Ballinger, Kadalie's resignation and the split of the ICU. The political vacuum on the Lichtenburg diggings was filled by Reverend Paterson of the St. Cyprians Native Mission in Johannesburg, who took up the cause of black workers not receiving their wages with the Secretary for Native Affairs.[402] Paterson noted that there were "innumerable cases" of employers not paying their black workers or dismissing them arbitrarily. He suggested that "since native employees are proceeded against for offences against the labour laws, similar actions should be taken against employers".[403]

As indicated above, diggers struggled to pay their workers as a result of the decreased prices they were receiving for diamonds. A digger in Lichtenburg, Mr. Van Rooyen, felt that the government was unfairly biased towards black workers who "were allowed to leave without notice", whereas the diggers were still expected to pay wages.[404] The tug of war between black workers and white diggers was an extension of the conflict during the strike in June. By September 1928, tensions continued to brew on the diggings as black workers accused white employers of not giving "discharged passes on termination" and of not paying the required

[400] NASA, NTS, 2092, 219/280. Natives on diamond diggings, failure of employers to meet obligations. Letter from the Secretary for Mines and Industries to the Magistrate at Lichtenburg, 17 July 1928.
[401] Bradford. *A Taste of Freedom*, p.167.
[402] There is little evidence in the archives with regards to why Paterson got involved in this matter, other than that the Anglican church had a large black congregation and later became involved in the anti-apartheid struggle.
[403] NASA, NTS, 2092, 219/280. Natives on diamond diggings, failure of employers to meet obligations.
Letter from the Secretary if Reverend Patterson St. Cyprian's Native Mission to the Secretary for Native Affairs, 24 July 1928.
[404] NASA, NTS, 2092, 219/280. Natives on diamond diggings, failure of employers to meet obligations. Letter from a digger Mr. Van Rooyen to the Minister of Justice, 30 July 1928.

wages. In turn, white diggers complained about the desertion by black workers.[405] As the cases piled up on both sides, there was little sign of a resolution.

On 28 October 1928, Kadalie returned to Lichtenburg and gave a fiery speech in which he railed against the "doctrine of a white South Africa" espoused by the then Minister of Justice Tielman Roos, whom Kadalie regarded as the most "seditious man" in South Africa.[406] Speaking about the situation in Lichtenburg, he noted that the pass system was "slavery" and "they [the ICU] were determined to remove it".[407] Kadalie claimed that he would electorally "contest" JBM Hertzog's seat as Prime Minister, arguing that while the government preached white supremacy, he wanted a "country where white and black should live together in happiness and harmony".[408] Pass laws plaguing black workers and ICU activists alike were also discussed by Kadalie, who noted that "only that afternoon men had been arrested for not carrying passes. The pass system – this despicable pass system – was slavery, and they were determined to remove it".[409] But, omitted from the speech was the dire situation on the diggings relating to the non-payment of wages.[410]

The speech tore into the government's hypocrisy, and highlighted the contradictions of the Sedition Clause in the Native Administration Act, but Kadalie was forced to retract the comments under considerable pressure from white liberals and the conservative press. Edgar Brookes and Norman Lays (who had been the secretary of the Fabian Society, a British socialist organisation) urged Kadalie that "Europeans" helped the ICU and therefore "should not be attacked".[411] *Umteteli Wa Bantu* also criticised the "insolent" and "forceable" remarks made by Kadalie.[412] *The South African Worker* applauded Kadalie's statement as "typically militant" and would have been endorsed by "every class-conscious worker" but rebuked his "servile and

[405] NASA, NTS, 2092, 219/280. Natives on diamond diggings, failure of employers to meet obligations. Letter from the Director of Native Labour to the to the Secretary for Native Affairs, September 1928.
[406] *Umteteli Wa Bantu*, "The Lichtenburg Outburst", 3 November 1928.
[407] *Ibid.*
[408] *Ibid.*
[409] *Ibid.*
[410] As seen in Table 1, alluvial diamond production across South Africa was decreasing comparatively more quickly than kimberlite deposits. By 1929 production was 750 000 carats less than in 1928 and by 1930, production was a further 350 000 carats less. Diggers and workers were being forced increasingly into precarious economic positions.
[411] Ballinger papers, A410 C2.3.7. Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union, Letters from Edgar Brookes and Norman Lays, 31 October 1928.
[412] *Umteteli Wa Bantu*, "Kadalies' apology", 10 November 1928; *Umteteli Wa Bantu*, "The Lichtenburg Outburst" 3 November 1928.

abject" apology.[413] The apology given to Hertzog, after all, drew only the most racist of responses from Tielman Roos, who quipped that "I would be insulted if a native apologised to me".[414]

The organisational decline and splintering of the ICU at a national level also had an impact in Lichtenburg. As is evidenced below, the ICU failed to formulate a coherent policy regarding the diggings, as they were embattled by corruption and an ideological split within the Lichtenburg branch. In a letter to the *Workers' Herald* in December 1928, the ICU Branch Secretary for Lichtenburg mused over the state of the branch. He wrote that "our people do not long for unity because they do not know it. They have suffered so much under the yoke of hypocrisy, so much so that they do not even know what can heal them". He spoke about the payment of workers at the diggings, noting that they "are being exploited". The letter complained that money that was sent to the ICU's head office in Johannesburg was not being used to improve branches, pay local officials and was being misappropriated instead. In this letter, the branch secretary argued that the continued life of the ICU was at risk.[415]

On 30 June 1929, the ICU, under a new banner of the "I.C.U. Independent Movement Lichtenburg Fields" (a splinter group which was most likely modelled on Kadalie's "Independent ICU"), decried the dire conditions on the diggings. A petition was signed by 43 workers on the diggings which stated:

> Native labourers here are not treated very fairly by their Masters inasmuch that if a native labourer complains at a Police Station that the white men are withholding wages, then the Police continuously put the boys off with the reply to hand in their complaints some other day. Natives therefore have to lose several extra days from their work with the result that there is not alone a lot of poverty here, but the natives are beginning to mistrust the fair administration of the law, which naturally gives rise to unlawful acts upon the part of some of our people … in these circumstances it would appear that natives are almost daily arrested for not paying their passes or Poll Tax Monies.[416]

[413] *The South African Worker,* "The Clown Juggles Again", 30 November 1928.
[414] Roux. *Time Longer Than Rope,* p.202.
[415] *Workers' Herald*, "Kaniziqwlesele Kanobonyana Ezizinto Ma-Afrika [Don't Focus on These Things Africans]", 31 December 1928.
[416] NASA, NTS, 2092, 219/280. Natives on diamond diggings, failure of employers to meet obligations. Petition signed by 43 workers on the diamond diggings sent to the Native Affairs Department, 30 June 1929.

The responses from the different organs of the state were indifferent and obstinate. The non-payment of wages on the diggings was well-known to much of the local state bureaucracy, yet they still demanded poll-tax money. The Secretary for Native Affairs responded to the ICU's petition suggesting that "everything possible is being done" by the members of police at the Lichtenburg diggings to help black workers with wage disputes with the caveat that "the conditions at the diggings are such, however, that it is difficult, if not impossible, in a number of cases to secure results to the satisfaction of complainants".[417] The Commissioner of Police in Lichtenburg on the other hand argued that "the police should not intervene with the cases of withholding wages" and that the "arrest of pass-less African workers on the diggings is justifiable". He took up a position that simply defended the police and condoned the double injustice being done to black workers.[418]

With the profitability of the diggings declining, the exploitation of workers increasing and the ICU slowly disintegrating, some last attempts were made to organise workers in Lichtenburg.

A different faction of the ICU, this time siding with Ballinger, also engaged with workers under the banner of the "original" ICU. The revenue received by this faction in Lichtenburg in November 1928 amounted to £1.18, which meant approximately 25 members.[419] Ballinger introduced an entirely new character to the ICU, one that was far more amenable to state officials. Helen Bradford notes that "for almost a year, he promoted the policy advocated by his white patrons: 'conciliation', 'no strikes' and 'industrial action only'".[420]

In this respect, Ballinger did pay some attention to the diggings. At the National European-Bantu Conference in Cape Town, he suggested that the non-payment of wages in Lichtenburg was a strategy for employers to further exploit workers. He noted that employers "took on Natives without getting a labour pass, and at the end of the week got the Native arrested for being without a pass and so escaped payment of wages". When employers refused or were

[417] NASA, NTS, 2092, 219/280. Natives on diamond diggings, failure of employers to meet obligations. Letter from the Secretary of Native Affairs to Marks Mbhizo and others (who sent on behalf of the ICU), 10 September 1929.
[418] NASA, NTS, 2092, 219/280. Natives on diamond diggings, failure of employers to meet obligations. Letter from the Commissioner of Police to the Secretary of Native Affairs, 21 August 1929.
[419] Ballinger Family Collection, Collection A410, C2.3.7, "Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union", Membership figures, November 1928 – April 1929.
[420] Bradford. *A Taste of Freedom,* p.168.

unable to pay wages, it also created health concerns for ordinary workers who could not to "pay for medical services, even when these were available".[421]

A meeting of workers was held by the ICU branch secretary, Ndadso, on 13 October 1929. A member department for Native Affairs in Elandsputte, who kept track of the ICU in Lichtenburg, noted that Ndadso was under the "control of Mr. Ballinger", and the topics at the meeting were rather tepid and concerned the pass laws. The meeting was also reported to be very "orderly".[422] In another letter he commented that "there has been very little activity by the I.C.U. on the diggings here since the last strike".[423] This was confirmed by the Commandant of police who suggested that there was "nothing of consequence to report on".[424] While this was indeed the case, the local authorities still called for ICU meetings to be banned.[425]

Like during the strike of June 1928, Major Cooke of the Native Labour Department took a diplomatic approach in response to this suggestion by the local authorities. Fearing that repression would lead to increasing antagonism and resistance, Cooke suggested that

> While there is a good deal to be said in favour of disallowance of political meetings in locations on Sundays, I do not favour ostracisation of meetings held by the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union on the Diamond Diggings generally…[426]

It was the arrival of Ballinger which convinced Cooke that the meetings were largely impotent,

> The Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union, as at present constituted under Mr. Ballinger, usually confines its discussions to matters affecting conditions of employment and there would seem to be no good grounds for debarring native employees from discussing such matters.[427]

By the early the 1930s, the diggings were grinding to a halt, reaching a production of 647 000 carats in 1931 and 488 000 in 1932. The economic situation was poor; in 1931 white diggers

[421] Wits Historical Papers Research Archive, AD 1715, South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), Report of the National European-Bantu Conference, Cape Town, 6-9 February 1929.
[422] NASA, NTS, 9550, 164/400. Letter from the Department of Native Affairs at Elandsputte to the Director of Native Labour at Johannesburg, 21 October 1929.
[423] NASA, NTS, 9550, 164/400. Letter from Du Toit, an Official of the Department of Native Affairs at Elandsputte to the Director of Native Labour at Johannesburg, 21 October 1929.
[424] *Ibid.*
[425] NASA, NTS, 9550, 164/400. Letter from the Director of Native Labour to the Secretary of Native Affairs, 29 October 1929.
[426] *Ibid.*
[427] *Ibid.*

were getting economic relief from the government and black workers were putting pressure on the government to provide them with food rations.[428]

Conclusion

This chapter has studied the ICU's role in the strike in Lichtenburg in June 1928, through examining the changes in the political economy of the diggings which were characterised by overcrowding in the locations, declining profitability on the diggings and police persecuting workers. The manipulation of the diamond market by De Beers, which was supported by the state through legislation like the Precious Stones (Alluvial) Diamond Act, precipitated a reaction from white diggers. This chapter has argued that from mid-1927, the ICU began to pay attention to black workers on the diggings in Lichtenburg, and when black workers' wages were cut from 20 shillings to 12 shillings in June 1928, it organised workers in three different ways, acting as a trade union: firstly, by picketing workers and mobilising them to strike; secondly, by holding meetings with workers to discuss their demands; and thirdly by negotiating with white diggers and state officials to secure a less-dramatic wage drop than initially threatened. The union thus played an important role in initiating the strike and negotiating its final settlement, which was that a wage of 15-16 shillings would be paid until the beginning until July (which was one week) after which workers would make individual agreements with their employers. This was a partial and short-lived victory against both the diggers and the manipulations of the monopolised diamond market. The strike also highlighted police persecution of black workers.

The ICU's activism on the diggings, both during the strike and after, shows the its organisational contradictions – relating to the arrival of William Ballinger, Kadalie's resignation and the ICU's internal divisions – which became increasingly pronounced by the late 1920s. Yet, the aftermath of the strike saw an increased interest in the ICU as an organisation across the Western Transvaal. Charles Van Onselen argues that the "given the scale of the exodus from rural areas to the diggings, the ties of kinship and ethnicity among

[428] NASA, NTS, 2092, 219/280. Natives on diamond diggings, failure of employers to meet obligations. Letter from the Secretary of Reverend Edward Paterson Saint Cyprian's Native Mission to the Minister of Justice, 31 July 1931; NTS, 2092, 219/280. Natives on diamond diggings, failure of employers to meet obligations. Letter from the Magistrate of Lichtenburg to the Director of Native Labour, 21 September 1931; NASA, NTS, 2092, 219/280. Natives on diamond diggings, failure of employers to meet obligations. Letter from the Native Commissioner at Lichtenburg to the Secretary of Native Affairs, 24 November 1931.The struggle to profit off of black labour did not end as the state still allowed white diggers to employ black workers despite being in economic turmoil.

black workers and the close link between seasonal agricultural labourers and employment on the diggings", it was unsurprising that the news of the ICU was swiftly transmitted to farming districts across the Western Transvaal. He continues, "the strike at Grasfontein alerted the I.C.U. leaders to the existence of these conduits into the countryside and helped ease the Union's subsequent entry into the Bloemhof-Schweizer-Reneke-Wolmaransstad Triangle".[429] This is the topic of chapter three, which discusses the successes of the ICU in the South-Western Transvaal.

Insofar as Lichtenburg is concerned, the measure of ICU influence is summed up beautifully by Baraganyi: "people joined the ICU thereafter, but the majority did not".[430] While the ICU continued to fight battles in Lichtenburg relating to poor wages as well as the persecution workers by police, declining prosperity on the diggings as well as the ICU's own organisational issues meant that by the early 1930s the ICU had no influence on the diggings.

[429] Van Onselen. *The Seed is Mine,* p.146.

[430] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Baraganyi, Piet, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng, Boskuil, 16 January 1987. Tape No. 560. Transcript No.157.

Chapter Three – "You Cannot Stop a River": Expansion and Repression of the ICU in the Towns and Farms of the South-Western Transvaal, 1927-1934.

Introduction

This chapter outlines the trajectory of the ICU in the South-Western Transvaal, where it was able to establish itself and become popular in the period from 1927-1934, albeit unevenly. The ICU spread rapidly in this region following the Lichtenburg strike and managed to mobilise farmworkers and location residents for over seven years. In the face of severe government repression, the ICU succeeded in the South-Western Transvaal thanks to its use of the legal system, the commitment of intelligent and versatile organisers and an understanding of the local political economy of towns. Land dispossession had meant that black people worked as sharecroppers, farmworkers and on the diamond diggings and the ICU attached to this context of proletarianisation. In other parts of the Western Transvaal, which are discussed in the next chapter, their economies were linked to the Reserves and Rand, which meant that workers had a degree of access to land and were migrant workers respectively.

The ICU moved into the Western Transvaal in the years 1927 and 1928, when the rural revolt was sweeping across the South African countryside. From 1927 onwards, towns in the South-Western Transvaal experienced an increase in workers coming from farms, relating to proletarianisation, farm violence, changes in labour relations and the restructuring of paternalist relationships. During this period, town administrations sharpened their controls over the movement and living conditions of black people, using the provisions of the 1923 Urban Areas Act to more strictly police urban spaces. In newly formed locations, planning, infrastructure, sanitary services and housing received little funding by local administrations.

As the ICU entered towns in the South-Western Transvaal, they took up the grievances of location residents and farmworkers, they held meetings, fought for better wages and improved living conditions and resisted police persecution. The town administrations used both the Urban Areas Act and outdated legislation to limit the influence of the ICU. The range of struggles fought by the ICU stretched beyond the labels "trade union" and a "rural movement" and, as Neame argues, were characterised by a "radical-democratic" politics which called for the democratisation of political and economic freedoms.

The chapter has three key aims: first, to discuss the extent and success of the ICU's activism among black farmworkers and town inhabitants; second, to flesh out the contestations that town administrations and white farmers brought against the ICU's activism; and third, to probe how the ICU utilised and challenged the spatial outlay between towns and countryside.

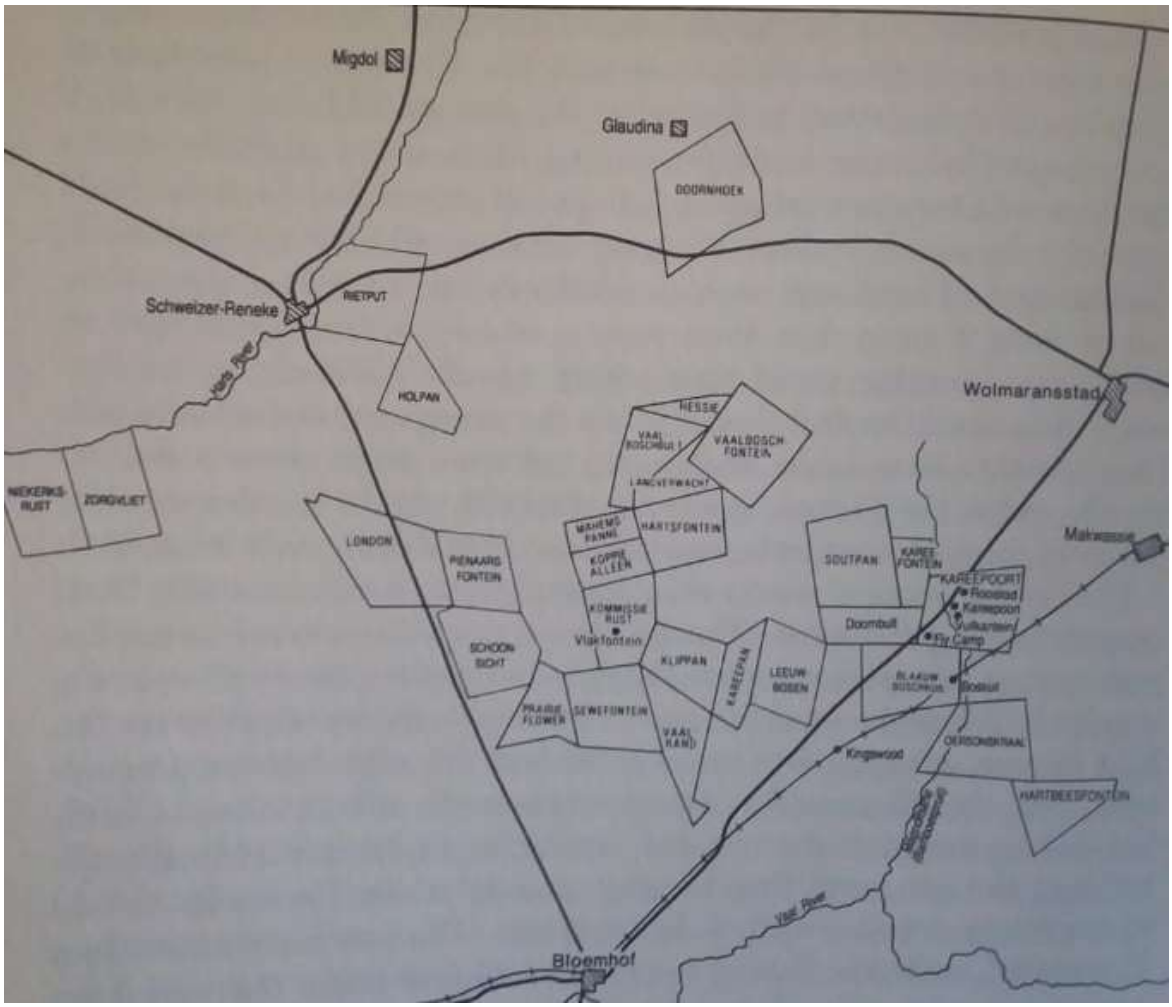
The title of this Chapter "You Cannot Stop a River" comes from a comment made by legendary sharecropper, Kas Maine.[431] He was describing the power of government legislation – which he believed was as certain as a river is to flow. His phrase is used to describe two "rivers" in this context: one being the growing successes of the ICU in the Western Transvaal, and the other being the tide of government legislation that was geared towards quelling its impact. Both the ICU and the local administrations were powerful "torrents" which collided and competed for space and legitimacy.

This chapter uses archival collections from the NASA. These are divided into two main categories: the first comprises of "town files" kept by the Department of Native Affairs; and the second are a set of files which contain transcriptions of "seditious" speeches, utterances and actions compiled under the 1927 Native Administration Act by members of the Criminal Investigation Department and police which are archived under the Department of Justice. This material is interpreted both "along" the archival grain and "against" it.[432] This is done by using the chronology and content of the archives as evidence and reading the interpretations and motivations of those that recorded them with a degree of suspicion. Among the most important secondary sources used in this chapter is Van Onselen's *The Seed is Mine*, which explores the life of Kas Maine, a sharecropper in the Western Transvaal and the autobiography of Jason Jingoes. Both provide excellent regional information on the ICU in this area.

Another important source are interviews with sharecroppers and labour tenants in the Western Transvaal conducted by the Institute for Advanced Social Research between 1979 and 1987 which were used for *The Seed is Mine*. While these interviews do not always provide accurate chronologies, their value lies in reflections of farmworkers on both their experiences and the struggles of the ICU. The chapter is structured through town profiles for Wolmaransstad, Makwassie, Ottosdal, Schweizer-Reneke and Bloemhof (see Map 2). These towns form part of the Bloemhof-Schweizer-Reneke-Wolmaransstad triangle and were a central area for ICU

[431] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Maine, Kas, interview conducted by Charles van Onselen. Ledig, Rustenburg, 24 February 1982. Tape No.264. Transcript No.45.
[432] Stoler. "Colonial Archives", p. 100.

activism. A brief profile will be provided for each of these towns which aims to outline a chronology of the history of the town, including the establishment of the black location and the dominant economy in the area, after which the ICU's presence is analysed through notable meetings and campaigns. The towns are ordered in reference to their geographical position and when the ICU had a presence in them.



Map 5: Farms in the South-Western Transvaal. The Image is unclear: Koppie Alleen, Sewefontein and Vaalboschfontein are in the middle of the triangle; Zorgvliet is west of Schweizer-Reneke and Oersonskraal, Doornbult, Kareepoort and Katboschfontein are near Makwassie. Source: Van Onselen. *The Seed is Mine*, p.138.

Wolmaransstad

As mentioned in chapter one, Sotho-Tswana people inhabited most land in the Western Transvaal at the beginning of the nineteenth century. During this time the BaRolong occupied the area which today is Wolmaransstad. The history of white settlement can be divided into two phases. In 1823 a Wesleyan mission station was set up by Samuel Broadbent in Makwassie, which had a large BaRolong congregation. This development led to further interest in the area. In the 1840s, voortrekkers had dispossessed land owned by the BaRolong, and settled in what became known as Wolmaransstad. They began engaging in both crop and livestock farming.

The discovery of gold and diamonds generally led to more intensive, technologically advanced farming methods as farms were subdivided and mixed farming was introduced. When a trading store was established in 1876 (which was the unofficial establishment of the town), it diversified the functions of the town making it more orientated towards retail, hunting and trade. The discovery of gold on the Rand had contradictory effects; it provided a new market for farmers to access commercial opportunities, but also lured many black workers away from Wolmaransstad farms. The town was proclaimed in 1891 and had churches, schools and a police station built; by the turn of the century, it had appointed a magistrate and a health committee.[433]

In the course of the nineteenth century, Africans had been dispossessed of their land and livelihoods through frontier wars leading to many landless peasants near Wolmaransstad. Many stayed in a quasi-location just outside of Wolmaransstad in 1902, and by 1904 there were 180 black people living in this location.[434] By 1911, the local authorities decided that a new location would be set up one mile away and over a hill so it would not be visible from the white town. The new location was formally established in 1912 and the regulation of the location started with a 2-shilling lodgers' permit charged to every black person renting a stand. Pass laws, like elsewhere, meant that Africans were only allowed in the town if they had a job there. In 1924, a letter from the Wolmaransstad Magistrate suggested that sanitation in the location was extremely poor, and that water was sourced from the Maquassiespruit river. Any improvement

[433] Johannes Coetzer. "Die Geskiedenis van Wolmaransstad tot met Uniewording, 1910", PhD Diss., Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, (1986).
[434] *Ibid.,* p.273.

to sanitation in the location was the burden of the location dwellers, as increased tariffs were instated for new infrastructural developments.[435]

This is the local context in which the ICU opened a branch in Wolmaransstad in 1928, and recorded its strongest presence in the town in this year.[436] At meetings the ICU preached the necessity of equitable land distribution and against farm violence. This section is based on interviews with farmworkers who stayed in Wolmaransstad during the 1920s.

Robert Makhatini

The only biographical evidence available of Robert Makhatini is Kas Maine's description of him. Maine suggested that he was "a little older" than himself, which means he was born in the late 1880s or early 1890s and, by 1928, was in his late-thirties or early forties. His origins were Zulu, but Maine notes that as well as isiZulu he spoke Setswana and English. Maine described him as "very educated", clever and independent. He did not wear particularly "flashy" clothes and dressed "like most people"; Maine suggested that it was not possible to gauge from his clothing his level of education. Makhatini's involvement with the ICU was primarily in the Western Transvaal. In 1928, he was the ICU District Secretary for the South-Western Transvaal and he organised prolifically for the ICU in Wolmaransstad, Schweizer-Reneke, Bloemhof and Makwassie. Makhatini was a selfless, versatile and fiery organiser who fought battles on behalf of farmworkers, location residents and those on diamond diggings. Maine suggested that Makhatini's educated and radical talk sowed seeds of discontent between black and white people.

Source: Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection AG2738, Maine, Kas, interview conducted by C. van Onselen and T. Couzens. Ledig, Rustenburg, 2 November 1982, Tape No.301, Transcript No.52.

Kas Maine remembered the first ICU meeting held in Wolmaransstad (most probably in 1928) which took place at 10am on a Saturday so that workers could easily attend. It was addressed by the ICU District Secretary for the South-Western Transvaal, Robert Makhatini, as well as Clements Kadalie. The meeting was widely publicised in local newspapers and on posters, and it was advertised that "all the farm people need to go hear what he says", so Maine and fellow farmworkers went to the meeting. There was a large crowd of "more than a thousand" people, "person on person", and a wagon was used as a stage so that the crowd could hear what Makhatini said.[437] Makhatini introduced the topic of the "I See You"; "they were saying I.C.U.

[435] NASA, TPB, 919, TALG6068, "Wolmaransstad Native Location".
[436] Wickins. "The Industrial", p.399; Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Molohlanyi, Mmereki, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng. Wolmaransstad, 1984, Tape No.530, Transcript No.136.
[437] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Maine, Kas, interview conducted by C. van Onselen and T. Couzens. Ledig, Rustenburg, 2 November 1982, Tape No.301, Transcript No.52.

means I see you, even if you rob me".[438] However, Maine felt the speech made black and white people "misunderstand one another":

> He's just saying that thing that they're cheating on us. There is no need to do such a thing … The smart people are the ones who make the strikes … He's just making war then he's not there.[439]

Many white farmers attended the meeting and were interspersed in the crowd of black farmworkers and disgruntled location inhabitants. They listened to Makhatini as he spoke about land and increasing sharecroppers' shares. Maine paraphrased Makhatini's speech, "well, from here on out, you're letting people plow half [shares] and who's [sic] is it? You sow part of your land, is not white people's land, is the brown people's land here". Kadalie had also been present, and although Maine does not mention what he said, he claims it was Kadalie that had excited farmworkers. [440]

After the meeting, a portion of the crowd bought ICU membership tickets for the standard fee of 2s. 6d. Mmereki Molohlanyi, a sharecropper and a farmworker on a farm outside Wolmaransstad called Kaatboschfontien, was convinced to join the ICU by a friend from Boskuil (a farm near Makwassie) who "used to tell us about Kadalie". Hearing about Kadalie had whet Molohlanyi's appetite and he began attending ICU meetings. In his interview for the Institute of Advanced Social Research, he remembered meetings held by Kadalie in "Borobalo" (the name given by African people to the area surrounding Wolmaransstad) in 1927 or 1928: "that's when Kadalie came here".[441]

Molohlanyi travelled with other farmworkers on horse-drawn carts to meetings held in Wolmaransstad on Sundays. When he travelled to one meeting held by Kadalie in the graveyard of the Wolmaransstad location, Kadalie used one of the dismounted carts as a platform to start the meeting – which he began by arguing the importance of freedom. The audience at the meeting was a mixture of black and white people and Molohlanyi remembered that while some white people were attentive to Kadalie's speech, others did not buy membership cards and were

[438] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738, Maine, Kas, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng, T. Couzens and G. Relly, 2 July 1980. Ledig, Rustenburg, Tape Nos.204 and 205. Transcript No.30.
[439] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Maine, Kas, interview conducted by C. van Onselen and T. Couzens. Ledig, Rustenburg, 2 November 1982, Tape No.301, Transcript No.52.
[440] *Ibid.*
[441] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Molohlanyi, Mmereki, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng, Wolmaransstad, 19 April 1984, Tape No. 468, Transcript No.100.

"hurt by [Kadalie's] remarks".[442] After the meeting, Molohlanyi remembered Kadalie giving out booklets which were sold for between two and five shillings, and spoke about "how the Boers were ill-treating blacks". The booklet also spoke about how black people would "plough on their own terms".[443]

One of the great practical victories that the ICU managed to win in Wolmaransstad was improvement in the treatment of black people when they were arrested. Molohlanyi spoke of the harsh treatment of black prisoners: "when you were arrested, they would come riding horses and march you to the police station on foot". Molohlanyi saw the ICU as playing a crucial role in stamping out this inhumane practice: "so, after the ICU, that was stopped. Thereafter if you were guilty of anything, you would be asked to come to the police station alone". The ICU fought against the indignity of the public spectacle as Kadalie argued that "people should be summoned to appear in court or at the police station on specific dates".[444]

The holding of regular ICU meetings aided the development of energetic members who further took up the union's cause. Modise Tsubane lived on a farm Bosrand in the Wolmaransstad district and was a traditional doctor and a lay preacher in the Zionist Christian Church in Wolmaransstad. He lost some motivation for the church when the ICU entered Wolmaransstad, and when he heard Kadalie speak he decided to join the union. His half-brother, Petrus Tsubane remembered in an interview: "now when Kadalie came in the area holding meetings, he [Modise] joined him and moved with him. He got a membership card and went with them" (see Figures 11 and 12).[445] Modise helped convene ICU meetings, gave speeches and distributed ICU literature. Like other local, lesser-known ICU activists, he would return to the farms and tell people what he heard at meetings in the towns. After one meeting he spoke about sharing land more equally,

> [he] mentioned that if we are staying on the farm with our span, we must divide the land in such a way that the white man have [sic] his own ploughing fields and the black man his own fields, and our livestock must graze in the same fields.[446]

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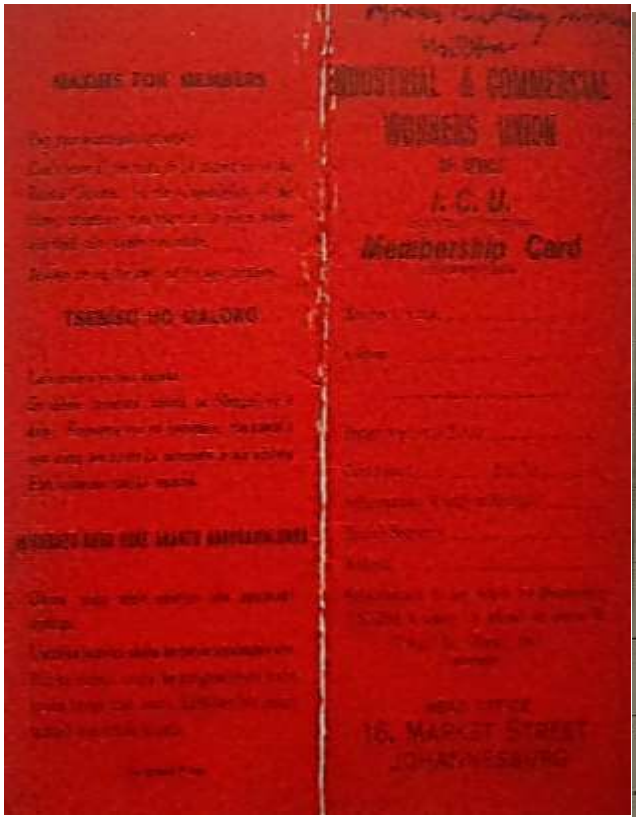
[442] Molohlanyi notes that white farmers at Katboschfontein were generally not against the meetings held by the ICU. As will be shown below, this was an exception to the rule in Wolmaransstad.
[443] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Molohlanyi, Mmereki, interview conducted by M. M.T. Nkadimeng, Wolmaransstad, 1984, Tape No.530, Interview Transcript No.136.
[444] *Ibid.*
[445] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Tsubane, P.K. interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng. Barberspan, 1 June 1986, Tape No. 549, Transcript No.149.
[446] *Ibid.*



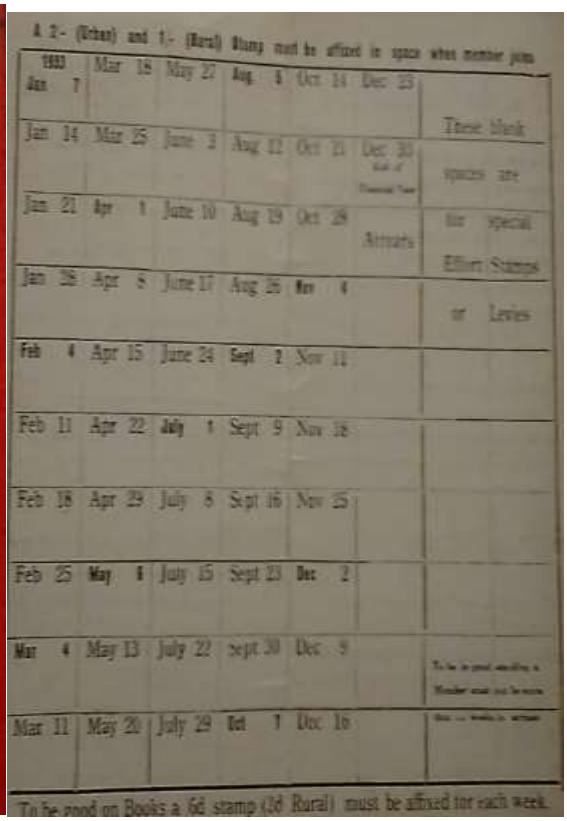


Figure 11 (left): The outside of the ICU's membership card. Figure 12 (right) The inside of the ICU's membership card. Source: HPRA, Ballinger Family Collection, A410, C2.3.7, "I.C.U. Membership Card".

The ICU was able to represent the aspirations and grievances of black people in Wolmaransstad. According to Mmereki Molohlanyi, the CP never gained a foothold in the town, although he did hear about it while staying on farms in the area.[447] Molohlanyi was a member of the ICU and renewed his membership card (which was printed in both Setswana and English) at least once. When he compared the ICU to the CP, he thought that the ICU was far more powerful, "no, you see, ICU was very strong and its meetings were never held secretly and its leaders could speak in the way they wanted to in front of whites without fear".[448]

The fearlessness of the ICU angered the Nationalist Party. In August 1928, Minister of Agriculture General Kemp, gave a speech in Makwassie and suggested that Wolmaransstad was a Nationalist stronghold. Kemp urged farmers to organise against the ICU and a former Wolmaransstad official in the crowd echoed his appeal, urging the audience to "join the Farmers' Association so that they could successfully combat the ICU trouble which had started

[447] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Molohlanyi, Mmereki, interview conducted by E.Kgomo and M.T. Nkadimeng. Wolmaransstad, 16 January 1987, Tape No.559, Transcript No.156.
[448] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Molohlanyi, Mmereki, interview conducted by E.Kgomo and M.T. Nkadimeng. Wolmaransstad, 1 July 1988, Tape No.634, Transcript No.185.

at Wolmaransstad."[449] ICU organiser Jason Jingoes wrote in his autobiography about a high-ranking official from Wolmaransstad calling him a "black snake" who warned people to "be on their guard against [him]".[450] When Kadalie gave a speech at Wolmaransstad calling to end racial oppression and "end slavery", it resonated with Kas Maine's brother – Mphaka Maine – who felt "the boers treated us very badly".[451] Kadalie's presence in Wolmaransstad ruffled the feathers of white farmers who began campaigns of harassment against ICU supporters: "when Kadalie started holding meetings, blacks were chased around by policemen on horseback".[452] When Modise Tsubane went to deliver a speech Witpoort (outside Wolmaransstad), he was intimidated and forced to resign from the ICU,

> Now when they [Modise Tsubane and other ICU members] came back from the meeting […] they met the police. They then threw away their membership cards and ran away. On his arrival at home, he told us that he was no more involved with the ICU, because the boers will kill him.[453]

Farmers responded with violence towards ICU members; Motlagomang Maine, was a member of the CPSA at Soutpan (in the Orange Free State) and was married to Kas Maine's brother – Mphaka, noted how "whites became jealous and started looking for people that were attending [meetings] and killed them".[454] She remembered a range of stories where violence was meted out by white farmers in the Wolmaransstad district. Once she heard of a man who was killed near Wolmaransstad for "his ICU activities" and knew of "ICU members who were killed on the road". [455] At times, workers, having gained confidence from the ICU, would fight back against violent farmers. Motlagomang remembered an incident where a farm owner visited the home of a worker to kill him, and the worker was waiting with an axe and hit the farm owner

[449] *Rand Daily Mail*, "Organise Against the I.C.U." "General Kemps Advice to Farmers" "Speech at Maquassi", 27 August 1928.
[450] Jingoes. *A Chief is a Chief by the People*, p.117.
[451] Van Onselen. *The Seed is Mine*, p.148.
[452] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Molohlanyi, Mmereki, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng. Wolmaransstad, 19 April 1984, Tape No. 468, Transcript No.100.
[453] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Tsubane, P.K, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng. Barberspan, 1 June 1986, Tape No. 549, Transcript No.149.
[454] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Maine, Motlagomang, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng. Hertzogville, 23 October 1986, Tape No. 555, Transcript No.154.
[455] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Maine, Motlagomang, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng, Hertzogville, 23 October 1986, Tape No. 555, Transcript No.154; Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Maine, Motlagomang interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng. Hertzogville, 25 November 1986, Tape No. 555, Transcript No.155.

on the neck. While this was not specifically an incident relating to the ICU, Motlagomang remembered that "it was in the Wolmaransstad district during Kadalie's time".[456]

While the ICU sowed discontent among black and white people, it gave black people hope. The memory of Kadalie in Wolmaransstad was that he "promised that his organisation [the ICU] will strive for a better world for blacks" and that he would try "influence the government to be more lenient [on farmworkers in the Western Transvaal]". [457] Molohlanyi noted that

> We found the ICU very helpful because it helped us against the Whites who were treating us unfairly … So, Clements Kadalie showed us how the ICU could help us against these unfair dealings by the white farmers.[458]

The ICU's activism in Wolmaransstad in the years 1928 and 1929 was short lived but intense.[459] It drew ordinary people from the farms and the location into the union as members and as organisers. The rapid growth in Wolmaransstad can be attributed largely to the presence of Kadalie and Makhatini, who inspired workers through their speeches about land and sharecroppers' shares. The union also helped repeal repressive legislation. Another important feature is how the ICU meetings created new spatial connections which aided the flow of political ideas between town and countryside. Farmworkers travelled into town to listen to ICU meetings where they joined the organisation and brought its messages back to farms. The ICU's popularity was countered by a wave of violence meted out by white farmers onto black farmworkers.

Makwassie

Unlike many towns in the Western Transvaal and indeed much of South Africa, Makwassie does not bear the name of the first white settlers. It has been claimed that "Makwassie", similar to "Namakwa" or "Namaqua", is a Khoe-San word for the wild mint that grows along the

[456] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Maine, Motlagomang, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng. Hertzogville, 25 November 1986, Tape No. 555, Transcript No.155.
[457] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Molohlanyi, Mmereki, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng. Wolmaransstad, 19 April 1984, Tape No. 468, Transcript No.100.
[458] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Molohlanyi, Mmereki, interview conducted by M. M.T. Nkadimeng. Wolmaransstad, 1984, Tape No.530, Interview Transcript No.136.
[459] In December 1930, Keable 'Mote addressed a meeting in Wolmaransstad where he "disassociated himself with the ICU or any other political movement". He discussed the Dingaan Day demonstrations and allowed workers to air their grievances. See *Rand Daily Mail,* "Natives air their grievances" "Wolmaransstad resolutions", 23 December 1930.

Makwassiespruit river.[460] It has also been suggested that the name "Makwassie" comes from Chief Mathlawatshie who led the Koranna in in the Makwassie Hills during the 1700s and early 1800s.[461]

At the centre of Makwassie's history as a town is a Wesleyan mission station, established in 1823 (the BaRolong, then under Chief Sifonela, were the primary congregation).[462] According to Samuel Broadbent, the founder of the mission, the town was initially made up of missionaries and BaRolong; the first to settle there "Siffonello [Sifonela] and his people; first by a party who made folds for their cattle, then by the whole tribe; and in a short time a populous town was built".[463] Map 2 shows the location of Makwassie, east of the Bloemhof-Schweizer-Reneke-Wolmaransstad triangle. In the mid-nineteenth century, trekboers began buying farms around the Makwassie hills and engaged in extensive agriculture. The Makwassiespruit river runs through the centre of the town, and for over two centuries has provided the town with water.

It took another 80 years for the town "Maquassi" to be established. It was laid out in 1907, proclaimed in 1910 and had a Health Committee established by 1911. The location, Lebaleng, was established in 1911-1912 just outside the main town. For African people living in Lebaleng, life was regulated by the embryonic town administration, with residents being forced to fund the maintenance of the location themselves, paying a fee of 3 shillings per month for site and sanitary services.[464] Disenfranchised African peasants and tenant farmers from the land surrounding Makwassie were lumped into the Lebaleng and forced to engage in wage labour to pay for rent in the location. The number of livestock each person could own was regulated to five large and three small animals per adult male.[465] Those working on the alluvial diamond diggings surrounding Makwassie were excluded from accessing the town by the local authority which refused to give them passes and lodgers' permits to stay in Lebaleng (possibly indicating a large number of squatters surrounding Makwassie).[466]

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[460] GJM Coetzee. "Die Geskiedenis van Onderwys", (1953), p.2.
[461] *Ibid.,* p.2.
[462] South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA), "Ruins of Rev. Broadbent's House, Leeuwfontein, Wolmaransstad", accessed at: https://sahris.sahra.org.za/sites/922860005 on 2 February 2020.
[463] SA History Online, "Mission Stations 'M'", Samuel Broadbent, Wesleyan Mission Station Makwassie accessed at https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/mission-stations-m on 24 March 2021
[464] NASA, NTS, 4194 46/313 "Maquassi, Main File".
[465] *Ibid.*
[466] *Ibid.*

By August 1920, there were 146 residents living in Lebaleng and between them they had five bucket toilets and one borehole to share.[467] By 1924, the Makwassie health committee adopted the Urban Areas Act of 1923. [468] This empowered them to systematically control location inhabitants (through pass laws, regulating where people lived, taxes, etc) and establish the location administration on segregated lines (which included a superintendent and advisory board). Due to an outbreak of bubonic plague in 1924, contrary to the practice of the time, a black superintendent was employed to preside over the location.[469] As Lebaleng's development trundled along, conditions remained poor. In 1927, fifteen years after the Lebaleng was established, 150 people were living in the location and there were four toilet latrines with the buckets removed three times a week. Water was provided from a windmill and a few boreholes. There is little information on the exact date the ICU opened a branch in Makwassie, but Wickins suggests the year was 1928.[470] Kas Maine remembered that when he was staying at Koppie Alleen farm in the central part of the south-western Transvaal, ICU Provincial Secretary Robert Makhatini announced that a meeting would be held at Makwassie and that "all people should go there",

> Then we all went from Koppie Alleen riding on horses, some on their carts. That was my first time to attend a meeting.[471]

It is possible that the meeting Maine attended was on the 29 July 1928, when Robert Makhatini addressed a meeting in Makwassie, the details of which are in a police report in the archives. The meeting began with the singing of "Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika",[472] after which Makhatini gave

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[467] *Ibid.*

[468] NASA, TPB, 1390, TA2/11740 "Maquassi Health Committee Native Location".

[469] NASA, TPB, 1390 TA3/11740 "Maquassi Health Committee Application of Superintendent of Native Location".

[470] Wickins. "The Industrial", p.389.

[471] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Maine, Kas interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng, T. Couzens and G. Relly, 2 July 1980. Ledig, Rustenburg, Tape Nos.204 and 205. Transcript No.30. The date here is unclear. Maine remembered travelling to a meeting in Makwassie for an ICU meeting from the farm Koppie Alleen. He was staying at Koppie Alleen between 1923 and 1924, but at this time the ICU did not have a presence in Makwassie. He also stayed at farms Vlakfontein and Zorgvliet, which are adjacent to Koppie Alleen, in the years 1927 and 1928. Perhaps it was while he was at these farms.

[472] *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* is a song composed by Enoch Sontonga and South Africa's national anthem today. It was initially popularised by SANNC President John Langalibalele Dube through his school choir. It was sung at the founding of the SANNC in 1912 and over the years became a popular church hymn and political song. Coplan and Jules Rosette note that it resembled the convergence between "public religion and popular culture". David Coplan and Bennetta Jules-Rosette. "Nkosi Sikelel'iAfrika and the Liberation of the Spirit of South Africa", *African studies* 64, 2 (2005): 285-308, p.186.

a long introduction explaining what the ICU was, how it was formed in 1919 and its history up until 1928. There appears to have been a fair amount of white people in the audience as Makhatini repeatedly referred to the arrival of new ICU advisor William Ballinger, "I know that the white people here do not like the ICU, but there is a white man in Joburg [Ballinger] who will be coming here in two weeks…".[473] He emphasised the importance of negotiation between employers and workers and urged that "the ICU is not here to make black and white people fight, Mr. Ballinger will come and help – he is from Europe and is very clever".[474]

At this point the meeting opened for questions. Different members of the audience, both white and black people, asked questions about the ICU. The atmosphere of the meeting was lively (the meeting is discussed in further detail in chapter five). Two white farmers named Van der Westhuisen and Wentzel then began asking questions about the ICU.

Van der Westhuisen wanted to understand the ICU's purpose. Makhatini replied: "The ICU is there to help people who are in difficulty. We want higher wages. The ICU is organising on the behalf of those caught by pass law infringements". Makhatini and Wentzel then began arguing about black land dispossession and the introduction of wage work. Wentzel further pressed: "Why don't you work for cattle anymore?", to which Makhatini responded, "back in the days we had a place for our cattle, and nowadays we don't have a place for our cattle, here at Maquassi, black people have land which is only good enough for two animals".[475] Makhatini spoke to the political economy of Maquassi (sketched above), which had dispossessed black people of land and reduced their ability to own livestock. The meeting adjourned at 16:45 and ended with the singing of what the police informant termed "God Protect Africa", most likely a second singing of "*Nkosi Sikelel*'".

One month later, in August 1928, the then minister of agriculture, General Jan Kemp, gave a speech at Makwassie. As mentioned above, Kemp recognised the wave of Afrikaner nationalism spreading in the greater Wolmaransstad district, which he believed was quickly becoming a Nationalist Party stronghold. In the speech he urged that "farmers should organise against the ICU. Here the native should be made to know that he is the employee and

[473] NASA, JUS, 921, 1/18/26, vol.19 – vol.21. Report compiled by the Maquassi police sergeant, 29 July 1928.
[474] *Ibid.*
[475] *Ibid*.

subordinate."[476] *Umteteli wa Bantu* criticised Kemp for his "poverty of tact" and, fearing the antagonisms it may create, expressed concern over the "effects" of the speech.[477]

Two weeks after Kemp's speech, on 10 September 1928, Keable 'Mote addressed an audience of between 300 and 400 people at Makwassie where he suggested that Kemp's remarks would spur the ICU on rather than deter them: "Wolmaransstad and Maquassi will be attended to by the ICU as this is the *sentrum* [centre] of General Kemp". He also argued that Kemp's own track-record prompted protests that "General Kemp is a robber, he does not pay his natives".[478] 'Mote promised to return in September and October when said General Kemp would "get a sjambok" from the ICU. [479] He continued,

> Tell Kemp the ICU are going to stay at Maquassi and Wolmaransstad, all nationalists of General Kemp at Maquassi and Wolmaransstad are narrow minded.[480]

As the speech continued, 'Mote spoke about wages and pass laws. Referring to the strike in Lichtenburg a few months prior (see chapter 2), he suggested that wages for all workers should remain high and noted that "everybody should earn 8/- [shillings] a day". He also referred to an idea he articulated a few months prior in Klerksdorp to "suspend the pass laws for two years"; if the government failed to do so, he threatened himself and Kadalie would "put them in a sack and send them to hell".[481]

'Mote promised to return via motor car in both Wolmaransstad and Makwassie with Kadalie on 23 September 1928, but it was not until the end of 1929 that another ICU organiser began working in Makwassie: Jason Jingoes. Jingoes moved to Makwassie because the ICU headquarters at Klerksdorp were "not central enough". In his autobiography, he remembered his time in the Western Transvaal fondly,

> I made liberal use of the newspapers, writing hard-hitting letters stressing the needs and rights of the Bantu people […] white employers felt I was undermining their authority. Whenever I

[476] *Rand Daily Mail*, "Organise Against the I.C.U." "General Kemp's Advice to Farmers" "Speech at Maquassi", 27 August 1928.
[477] *Umteteli Wa Bantu*, "A Ministerial Lapse", 1 September 1928.
[478] NASA, JUS, 921, 1/18/26, vol.19 – vol.21. Report compiled by the SAP at Maquassi to the District Commandant of the SAP at Potchefstroom, 10 September 1928.
[479] *Ibid*.
[480] *Ibid*.
[481] *Ibid*.

> heard of worker difficulties, I tried to help, and I saw to it that any member of our organisation who was involved in a court case got a decent legal counsel.[482]

He gives no date when he moved to Makwassie in his book, but in a letter dated December 1931, he wrote that he had been staying there for "30 months", which dates his arrival to the middle of 1929. The Makwassie branch had "the highest membership" with "over a thousand members" at the time.[483] Makwassie's membership had been increasingly steadily from November 1928, and by April 1929 stood at between 400 and 500 members. The Makwassie branch came second only to Johannesburg in income received from membership fees: during this period, the Makwassie branch had a membership income of £93, while Johannesburg had an income of £94.[484] A branch report in June 1929 reported that the Makwassie branch status was "very good".[485]

In Makwassie, Jingoes campaigned on behalf of the ICU for increased wages and the better treatment of farmworkers. Andries Seiphetlo, who was a prominent sharecropper on a farm in Oersonskraal (outside Makwassie), remembered going to meetings held by Jingoes in 1929. He heard Jingoes say that "we should get more pay, in fact be allowed to own property so that they [black people] could do farming on their own".[486] Ishmael Moeng, who was a member of the CP, had worked as a mechanic on the Lichtenburg diamond diggings in 1928 and moved to Oersonskraal farm in 1929. When he was staying in Oersonskraal, Jingoes gave a speech at Makwassie where he called for the abolition of passes and for better wages.

> He said most people were paid two or three pounds in a year or over a period of six months, so they starved. He said this must come to an end … he said that people should get enough wages to keep them alive.[487]

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[482] Jingoes, *A Chief is a Chief by the People*, p.107.
[483] *Ibid.*
[484] Wits University, HPRA, Ballinger Family Collection, A410, C2.3.7, "Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union", Membership figures November 1928 – April 1929.
[485] Wits HPRA, Ballinger Family Collection, A410, C2.3.7, "Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union", "Administrative Report", 20 June 1929.
[486] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Seiphetlo, Andries, interview conducted by T,Matsatela and E. Kgomo. Klipkuil, Makwassie, 9 September 1987. Tape No. 588. Transcript No.166.
[487] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Moeng, Ishmael, interview conducted by T. Matsetela. Oersonskraal, 12 March 1987. Tape No. 561 and 562. Transcript No.245.

Stimela Jason Jingoes

Jingoes (see Figure 13, p.128) was born in 1895 in the Leribe district of Basutoland, in a small village called Thota Moli under the jurisdiction of Chief Peete. As a young boy Jingoes herded cattle and horses, grazing them on the lush plains bordering the chiefdom. Jingoes remembered the conflicts over control of these plains as "exciting times", as many battles were fought between Peete's chiefdom and their neighbours – as was the case for Jingoes and the neighbouring herders as he grew older. He also remembered the traditional rain-making and battle ceremonies held by his elders. Jingoes believed that this "ordered" childhood which was "governed by tradition" lingered into his later life when he joined a home association on the Johannesburg mines and an all-Basotho regiment during WWI in France.

By the time Jingoes was fifteen he was balancing school and cattle herding, and developed some independence by working in Ficksburg as a police informant and a domestic worker. He then enlisted to train to become a teacher, but this failed as he developed an eye disease rendering him unable to read. Jingoes migrated to the Johannesburg mines in 1915, where his lack of education and mining expertise meant that his first job at Langlaagte Mine as a clerk was replaced by work underground, as a rock-driller and as a "trammer-boy". Jingoes persevered on the mining circuit and got a job as a travelling salesman – but he quickly upended this occupation as his interest was piqued from seeing newspaper reports of black soldiers fighting in WWI. His decision to go to war was influenced by his British loyalties, but it equally was shaped by a notion of masculinity gained in his childhood: he did not want to be a "coward". Jingoes left to fight with the allies in France. Despite being at war and under constant enemy bombardment, Jingoes became aware of – and spoke against – the poor treatment of black corporals, particularly regarding their food rations. This was the first speech he gave demanding fair treatment for black people.

After Jingoes returned from the war, he lived an unsettled life as a teacher and clerk in various towns in the Free State and Natal, until, in 1927, he attended a meeting addressed by ICU organiser Keable 'Mote in Bethlehem. Jingoes was further inspired by a speech by Kadalie on how black people "do not share the profits of their labour", which helped frame his ideological reference point. Jingoes began his work by recruiting members in small towns surrounding Bethlehem, subsequently moving to Kestell. He was eventually moved to the Western Transvaal where he organised a powerful and vibrant branch at Makwassie and travelled to surrounding towns representing worker grievances and giving ICU members legal counsel for over eight years. His fecundity in addressing meetings on farms and diamond diggings landed him in constant trouble; but it was the internal divisions within the ICU which, in the end, stifled the organisation. Jingoes left the ICU in 1937. When he returned to Basotholand Jingoes worked in the Principal Chief's administration as a result of developments in the Basotho paramountcy. Here he worked for several decades in the Treasury Courts, drawing on his legal knowledge gained through his work with the ICU.

Jingoes' life was framed by the backdrop of a declining subsistence economy and the entrenchment of migrant labour in Lesotho. Considering Jingoes' commitment to social issues and proclivity to engage in conflict, his life was characterised by challenges to unjust authority. This is illustrated in a Basotho maxim, which is also the title of his autobiography, that Jingoes identified with when he saw the erosion of chiefly rule in Basutoland, "a Chief is a Chief by the people".

References:

Stimela Jason Jingoes. *A Chief is a Chief by the People: The Autobiography of Stimela Jason Jingoes* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975).

According to Seiphetlo, Jingoes had a positive effect on wages and living conditions on farms. The relationship between Seiphetlo's family and their white landlord was paternalist: in addition to his share and wages, he received extra goods like clothing and food. After Jingoes' arrival in Makwassie, Seiphetlo's employer added one or two pounds to his monthly wage of £1. "During Jingoes' time", as he called period during which Makwassie was under the influence of the ICU, he managed to get around £3 and 15s.[488]

Van Onselen writes about how the ICU challenged paternalist relationships in the South-Western Transvaal. In Makwassie, any initial wage increases for farm workers gave way to less amiable relationships between sharecroppers and white farmers locked into paternalist relationships. Following Jingoes' activism, Seiphetlo had been receiving a goat, milk, clothes and £3 per month from the farmer he was working with.[489] While the arrival of the ICU had help increase his wages, the farmer stopped giving Seiphetlo milk, goat and clothes. Instead, he gave Seiphetlo a rather less exciting due; now he got £3 and half a bag of maize.[490] This instability of the farmer-sharecropper relationship worried Seiphetlo. The ICU's activism and talk of liberation jarred with him as he "severed contact" with Jingoes because, as he notes, "I realised he was going to cause friction between us and whites. And the Boers will treat us badly".[491]

White farmers responded in different ways to the ICU's growing activism. At Oersonskraal, the owner of the farm, a certain Vorster, did not let his workers attend ICU meetings. As Seiphetlo described, "certainly he stopped them from attending because I have never met anyone who said that he was from Vorster's land".[492] Ishmael Moeng noted that "the Boers in Makwassie" did not want the ICU and, at times, the police had to stop farmers from interrupting ICU meetings.[493]

While Jingoes spearheaded the growth of the ICU in Makwassie, he also worked with local ICU members. Jacob Lebone (also known as Jacob Candle, see Figure 14) was an ICU activist

[488] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Seiphetlo, Andries, interview conducted by T. Matsatela and E.Kgomo. Klipkuil, Makwassie, 9 September 1987. Tape No. 589. Transcript No.167.
[489] *Ibid*.
[490] *Ibid*.
[491] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Seiphetlo, Andries, interview conducted by T.Matsatela and E.Kgomo. Klipkuil, Makwassie, 9 September 1987. Tape No. 589. Transcript No.166
[492] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Seiphetlo, Andries, interview conducted by E. Kgomo Makwassie, 29 March 1988, Tape No. 631. Transcript No.183.
[493] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Moeng, Ishmael, interview conducted by T. Matsetela. Oersonskraal, 12 March 1987. Tape No. 561 and 562. Transcript No.245.

in Makwassie. He worked as a cobbler, but had also worked as a guard or "watchman" at the diamond diggings across the road from the farm Oersonkraal.[494] According to his daughter, Susan Kadi, Lebone used to have discussions about the ICU with "prominent men in [Makwassie]".[495] Morris Sello stayed on Boskuil farm, which also had diamonds. He was an ICU member and sold water to make a living.[496] Motlagomang Maine recalled her husband Mphaka Maine (Kas Maine's brother, see Figure 15) was involved with the ICU from 1928: he "knew the months and dates of the meetings". Mphaka had a private meeting with Jingoes in the early 1930s at his farm in Kareepoort (see Map 5), and they had a good relationship.[497] The duties of these members ranged from helping interpret (from English to Setswana or English to Afrikaans) at ICU meetings, to collecting people's membership fees and helping hold meetings.

Figure 13 (left) Jason Jingoes; Figure 14 (centre): Jacob Lebone and Figure 15 (right): Mphaka Maine. Source: Van Onselen. *The Seed is Mine*, images of Jingoes, Lebone between page pp.140-141 and Mphaka Maine between pp.300-301.

The CPSA was also present in Makwassie and despite the antagonisms between the two organisations at a national level, they did not play out locally in Makwassie as there was an overlap of membership and purpose. Moeng was a member of the CPSA and had snubbed the

[494] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Moeng, Ishmael, interview conducted by T. Matsetela. Oersonskraal, 19 May 1987. Tape No. 570. Transcript No.158.
[495] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Kadi, Susan, interview conducted by M.M. Molepo. Makwassie, 5 August 1986, Tape No.534. Transcript No.254.
[496] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Moeng, Ishmael, interview conducted by T. Matsetela. Oersonskraal, 19 May 1987. Tape No. 570. Transcript No.158.
[497] Wits HPRA, IASR, Interview with Maine, Baefesi, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng. Mareetsane, 22 April 1986. Tape No.545. Transcript No.146.

ICU because he "did not quite like their style". He argued that the speeches given by CPSA matched what the ICU called for: freedom and wages. Farmers adopted similar attitudes towards the ICU and CPSA, and were antagonistic to both. Organising for the CPSA was district based; Moeng worked in Oersonskraal, Morris Sello (who, as noted above, was also a member of the ICU) was responsible for Boskuil and Stephen Pholoholo presided over the Kareepoort district. Moeng explained the duties of these men,

> It was like this, if there was any trouble it should be reported to me before it was reported to the police. They should explain how it came about. If I am capable of settling it, I should do so, if not, I should take it forward. Other than that I should go and speak to people on farms about their working conditions.[498]

After a couple of years of successful organising, Jingoes and the ICU Makwassie branch ran into problems at the turn of the decade. Jingoes recounted animosity that developed between himself and Ballinger over Kadalie's split from the organisation – which Jingoes believed Ballinger was responsible for. In 1929, the Makwassie branch was one of the few that remained in the original ICU, but Jingoes seems to have boycotted sending money to the ICU's Head Office. While Ballinger and Sol Crutse, another ICU official, tried to force Jingoes to send money to the original ICU's head office, the dispute was eventually solved by Joe Kokozela (the ICU's administrative secretary), who managed to placate the warring factions and convinced Jingoes to stay in the original ICU for posterity.[499]

Sellwane Legobathe thought that the ICU's problems started as a result of Jingoes withholding money, "[it] was because of money, because people were contributing to the ICU".[500] To make matters worse, rumours abounded about Jingoes' romantic relationships with women in Makwassie, even to the extent that black farmworkers complained to their landlords about his flings with their wives. While the veracity of Jingoes' promiscuity and corruption is not clear, by the early 1930s, Jingoes' popularity in Makwassie had declined. The other half of the story was that white farmers and the local state were positioning themselves to expel Jingoes and the ICU from Makwassie. Kas Maine's nephew Baefesi Maine remembered that "the whites

[498] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Moeng, Ishmael, interview conducted by T. Matsetela, Oersonskraal, 19 May 1987. Tape No. 570. Transcript No.158.
[499] Jingoes, *A Chief is a Chief by the People*, pp.122-124.
[500] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Legobathe, Sellwane, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng., 9 July 1986, Gannalaagte, Tape No. 554. Transcript No.152.

believed [Jingoes] was a communist who came to corrupt people on the farms".[501] Another farmworker, Mmereki Molohlanyi, suggested that there was an organised effort to get Jingoes out of Makwassie,

> You should bear in mind that the whites were against the ICU. And they didn't want Jingoes as well. When he committed such acts, the white[s] realised that this was a chance for them to arrest Jingoes.[502]

The hostility towards the ICU extended to Ballinger, who had visited Makwassie in 1929 or 1930. While there is little evidence of any speeches Ballinger gave or of his impact among black workers, he certainly irked white people. An example of this is an account of Ballinger's visit to Makwassie by Jingoes. Ballinger was in a pub and got caught in a conversation with local white patrons about "the ICU's new advisor" (without them knowing Ballinger was in the conversation himself). They mused over Ballinger's role as an advisor, at which point Ballinger interjected without revealing who he was, but "made little headway when trying to convince them [the white people] that [he] was capable of advising a trade union movement". Jingoes notes that Ballinger "did quite a bit in Makwassie towards giving the white population a better idea of the aims and ideas of the I.C.U."[503] Amusingly, Jingoes' account has some faults: principally, how a Scottish man could bend his accent to guttural Afrikaans in a Makwassie pub.

As noted above, the ICU's influence in Makwassie started to wane at the turn of the decade, although some activity did continue into the 1930s. Baefesi Maine, who stayed on Kareepoort farm near Makwassie, remembered Jingoes holding a meeting in the early 1930s, where Jingoes suggested that whites were "oppressing the blacks and that they were underpaying the blacks".[504] For Seiphetlo, who had enjoyed an increased wage thanks to the ICU's astute bargaining, the consequences of the ICU's decline were seen in tangible losses for

[501] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Maine, Baefesi, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng, Mareetsane, 22 April 1986. Tape No.545. Transcript No.146.
[502] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Molohlanyi, M, interview conducted by M.T. Nknadimeng, Wolmaransstad, 28 June 1985, Tape No.530. Transcript No.136.
[503] Jingoes, *A Chief is a Chief by the People,* p.125.
[504] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Maine, Baefesi, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng, Mareetsane, 22 April 1986. Tape No.545. Transcript No.146.

farmworkers. His wage "reverted back to its low level" and "the added pounds were withdrawn again", making the salary he received only about £1 and 15s.[505]

Owing to at least three years of successful organising in Makwassie, Jingoes had come under constant scrutiny from the local authorities. He had been staying in Lebaleng, and throughout 1931 and 1932 he was ordered to leave for failing to pay his rent. He had contravened section 9 of the Native Urban Areas Act of 1923, according to which "the rental charged for any lot, house, hut or building… shall be such as the Minister may in all the circumstances consider to be fair and reasonable…". It was further noted in section 9 (2) that "the charges made by an urban local authority… shall not exceed the charges made for the like services rendered by the urban local authority in any other portion of its area".[506]

In his appeal to the Minister of Native Affairs, Jingoes tried to challenge the effort to oust him on two counts. First, Jingoes tried to appeal to the Minister under the clause which notes the Minister's discretion in regard the payment which is "fair and reasonable". He noted that although he was being kicked out for not paying his rent, he had "twice paid this before the court through this [Great] Depression [1929-1933]". The Makwassie local authority impounded his horse to make up the 8 shillings they were owed. Jingoes had very little money left and did not want to spend the rest of it paying rent.[507]

His second challenge invoked section 9 (2) of the Urban Areas Act, where he suggested he was the only person in Lebaleng being subject to this treatment.

> A main point that has surprised me it is because tenths of natives location here at Maquassi they owe the rent more than £6.00 down to £2.10 but all these their stocks are not impounded or they are not told to leave the location, is this justice which has been practised against me by the municipality of Maquassi?[508]

In a second letter written by Jingoes on 29 January 1932, it emerges that the horse Jingoes claimed was his actually belonged to another man, whom Jingoes had promised some heifers in exchange for the horse. Jingoes, however, did not keep his promise, and when the location

[505] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Seiphetlo, A, interview conducted by T. Matsatela and E. Kgomo, Klipkuil (Makwassie), 9 September 1987. Tape No. 589. Transcript No.167.
[506] 1923 Native Urban Areas Act, found at: https://www.sahistory.org.za/sites/default/files/archive-files3/leg19230614.028.020.021.pdf.
[507] NASA, NTS, 4194, 46/313 – 47/313, Letter from J.J. Ka Jingoes the Acting Provincial Secretary of the ICU for the Western Transvaal to the Minister if Native Affairs, 12 December 1931.
[508] *Ibid*.

superintendent got involved in the dispute, he sided with the man who claimed the horse as his and who now wanted to sell it (and thus Jingoes would have lost the horse and been in debt). Jingoes admitted that he had not paid the man in full, but suggested it was still unfair to sell the horse. He argued he was one of many other residents that had unpaid debt, but the he was the only one being persecuted.[509]

The Magistrate at Wolmaransstad somewhat confirmed this when he wrote that,

> I may say that Jingoes has been a continued source of trouble in this area. His reason for not paying his rent was that the natives had not renewed their I.C.U. tickets so he had no money.[510]

Whatever the circumstances, the situation was getting dire for Jingoes. He laid bare the hypocrisy of the local administration who were using his weak financial position and the leverage over his horse to force him out of Lebaleng. He noted that he had not been given "ample time" to pay the penalty charged to him and requested that "I must get my horse back and that I must be instructed to go back or return to Maquassie as I have no prominent place".[511] When the matter was referred to the Magistrate at Wolmaransstad for greater clarification, the Magistrate replied to the Secretary of Native Affairs that Jingoes had not paid his taxes for the horse, nor was he the rightful owner of it.[512]

After being suspected of starting a strike in 1932 at the Leeufontein diamond diggings (south-west of Mafikeng), Jingoes was summoned to Wolmaransstad and was thereafter served with a year-long banning order prohibiting him from organising workers or being in a group of more than five people. This banning order was signed by Oswald Pirow, the then Minister of Justice, and stipulated that he may not set foot on the mines and diggings in the "whole area from Johannesburg to the Western Transvaal".[513]

From then on, each time Jingoes ventured to a diamond digging, or tried to organise workers, he would be harassed by state officials. When he tried to visit Boskuil diggings near Makwassie, he was being watched by the police and found refuge at a farm where Mphaka's

[509] NASA, NTS, 4194, 46/313 – 47/313, Letter from J.J. Ka Jingoes the Provincial Secretary of the ICU for the Western Transvaal to the Secretary of Native Affairs, 29 January 1932.
[510] NASA, NTS 4194 46/313 – 47/313, Letter from the Magistrate at Wolmaransstad to the Secretary of Native Affairs, 4 January 1932.
[511] NASA, NTS 4194 46/313 47/313, Letter from J.J. Ka Jingoes the Acting Provincial Secretary of the ICU for the Western Transvaal to the Minister if Native Affairs, 2 January 1932.
[512] NTS 4194 46/313 – 47/313, Letter from the Magistrate at Wolmaransstad to the Secretary of Native Affairs, 4 January 1932.
[513] A full account of this episode is in: Jingoes. *A Chief is a Chief by the People*, pp. 117-118

grandmother, Motheba, stayed and where he was due to speak.[514] The police found him early in the morning while he was sleeping. He was arrested by sergeant Marais.[515]

Jingoes was eventually taken to the police station at Makwassie and was convicted because his banning order barred him even from going "near" the diggings. Jingoes wrote in his memoir "I was sentenced to six weeks' hard labour with no option of a fine".[516] A *Rand Daily Mail* article on 9 May 1932 reported that Jingoes had been sentenced under the

> Riotous Assemblies Act for disobeying an order from the minister of justice prohibiting him from being on any proclaimed diggings in various parts of the Transvaal.[517]

The ICU's presence in Makwassie was fairly consistent from 1928 until 1932. While organising in Makwassie was started by Makhatini and 'Mote, it was Jingoes who took up the ICU's mantle and rallied workers in town and surrounding farms to demand better wages and conditions of work for over three years. His activism did bring about some tangible results which included increases in wages and a growing political consciousness among farmworkers and location residents. ICU organisers helped workers who received low wages, spoke against the controls placed on African land ownership, challenged the structure of paternalist relationships and were policed by the local administration (through the Urban Areas Act). The large membership of the ICU at Makwassie is evidence of the ICU's relative success in this area. However, the local administration did its best to get Jingoes removed from the location and local white farmers were also against the ICU. Jingoes' inability to pay his taxes in Makwassie and his jail term eventually led him to Ottosdal, a town north of Makwassie.

Ottosdal

The Ottosdal town development followed a similar pattern to other towns in the Western Transvaal. While the area surrounding Ottosdal had been occupied by the Koranna during the 1700s and 1800s, it was unofficially established in 1913 by burghers moving north from the Cape who built a church for the surrounding farms (in what today is Ottosdal town).[518] The establishment of the town was delayed because of the Boer rebellion and the World War One,

[514] Wits HPRA, IASR, Maine, Baefesi, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng. Mareetsane, 22 April 1986. Tape No.545. Transcript No.146.
[515] Jingoes. *A Chief is a Chief by the People,* p.119.
[516] *Ibid*., p.119.
[517] *Rand Daily* Mail, "Far and Near"; "News of the day in brief", 9 May 1932, page 9.
[518] Cornelius Johannes Kriel. *Goue Jubileum,* p.8.

meaning that Ottosdal town was proclaimed in 1918.[519] The township, called Makweteng, was formed in 1918 after a member on the Ottosdal Town Council requested that the black residents be segregated.[520] It is useful to note that the call for the town to be segregated was in tandem with the desire to stop black residents from "sowing mealies" outside the town so that their labour could be accessed.[521]

As noted in chapter one, the main thrust of local administration in the 1920s was through health committees which organised "native administration" under the banners of "sanitation" and "health". In 1920, the Ottosdal Church Committee gave way for a newly established Health Committee.[522] From then on, the fate of the location was caught in the channels of the communication between the Health Committee and the NAD. After disputes over the site of the location in relation to a maize-transporting railway, the location was proclaimed under the regulations of the Urban Areas Act of 1923 in 1931. In general, the Ottosdal Health Committee conformed to the blueprint of the Act, following the standard regulations over beer brewing, pass laws, curfews and taxes.[523] That said, there were particular instances when the Ottosdal Health Committee actively petitioned for more stringent laws to be implemented, for example with regards to the overnight curfew.[524]

Despite falling 40 kilometres outside of the Bloemhof-Schweizer-Reneke-Wolmaransstad triangle, the farms and diamond mines that surrounded Ottosdal were the main features of the Ottosdal economy and constituted the main source of employment for residents of the location. Makweteng was home to a variety of residents who had been dispossessed of their land, were kicked off their farms after the 1913 Land Act or were forced off farms by capitalising farmers. Some residents worked on the alluvial diamond diggings surrounding Ottosdal. The location was situated two kilometres outside of the white town of Ottosdal and had a significant ICU presence. While Jingoes was based in Makwassie, he visited Ottosdal regularly holding meetings throughout 1929 and 1930.

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[519] *Ibid*., p.12.
[520] NASA, NTS, 4934 313/313 – 316/313, Letter from JJ der V. Joubert to the Secretary of Native Affairs, the Magistrate of Potchefstroom and the Magistrate of Lichtenberg, 9 of September 1918.
[521] *Ibid*.
[522] Cornelius Johannes Kriel, *Goue Jubileum*, p.28. and NASA, TPB, 1573, TALG12670, "Proclamation by the Administrator of the Transvaal", 30 December 1932.
[523] NASA, NTS, 4934, 316/313, Letter from the Provincial Secretary of the Western Transvaal to the Secretary of Native Affairs, 15 September 1932.
[524] NASA, NTS, 4934, 316/313, Letter from Phillip Otto, Secretary of the Ottosdal Health Committee to the Secretary of Native Affairs, 29 January 1934.

Thetheletse Thys, a member of the Ottosdal Native Advisory board and the Dutch Reformed Church, lived on farms surrounding Ottosdal and Schweizer-Reneke as a cattle herder and sharecropper on Stinkspan farm.[525] After he obtained a driving license, he transported maize for an agricultural co-operative in Ottosdal, staying with his grandmother in Makweteng for 50 years from 1932 to 1981. Thys encountered the ICU when he was working at Stinkspan. He heard Jingoes speak in 1929 at a meeting attended by over two hundred people. Thys did not join the union because he was too young, but he heard Jingoes speak at the meeting:

> He [Jingoes] said that the law was coming. People should join him (because) he will help solve their problems … He said that the law would come, it would find that he had fixed everything up. People would get their farms, they will get their cattle.[526]

At times, the ICU was able to provide legal representation to black farmworkers; in his autobiography, Jingoes remembered representing a squatter by the name of Klaas Mota in what he called a "common dispute".[527] The dispute happened on a farm near Ottosdal and although Jingoes gives no date for this interaction, it is likely to have happened between 1929 and 1932.[528] Mota, who was skilled in animal husbandry, lived in Ottosdal and arrived on a farm there with three cattle and a stallion. Over time, he increased the herd from three cattle to more than twenty. When he wanted to leave, the farmer attempted to keep Mota's stallion and the extra 17 odd cattle. Mota approached Jingoes for help to take the farmer to court, and the case was heard in Wolmaransstad. While travelling with Mota by horse to the court, Jingoes was confronted by the Ottosdal farmer whom they were charging. The farmer pressed him,

> Jingoes, that skelm from the I.C.U. who goes around here and teaches our volk to get stupid ideas about all sorts of things
>
> no my baas, I am not that man [Jingoes pretending not to be himself]
>
> Ja but there is such a man. He goes up and down putting funny ideas into the heads of our volk, so that these days we don't understand each other any more. We don't get on with our

[525] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Thys, Thetheletse, interview conducted by T. Matsatela. Ottosdal, 9 September 1987, Tape No. 587. Transcript No.165.
[526] *Ibid.*
[527] Jingoes. *A Chief is a Chief by the People*, p.107.
[528] This prediction is based on when the Magistrate of Wolmaransstad, A.S. Dunlop, was employed in different towns. He was definitely in Wolmaransstad during 1932, 1933. He was the Magistrate at Carolina in 1926, but Jingoes was in Ottosdal from 1929 so this dates it to 1929-1933.

> volk any more. I don't want him on this farm. And I think you are that man. And I think I am going to shoot somebody tonight![529]

Despite the farmer claiming that he had purchased the stallion and 17 cattle from Mota, he could produce no written proof and was thus ruled against by the magistrate.[530]

As in other rural towns of the Western Transvaal, living conditions in Makweteng were poor. A report compiled by the South African Police at Ottosdal in 1927 noted that were not enough sanitary services, including water, with residents using quarry holes as toilets.[531] The location was also not large enough for the increasing population – as it was squeezed between two farms and a newly built railway. After Jingoes was forced to leave Makwassie, in 1933 he became active among Makweteng residents, organising for better living conditions in the location and countering the persecution of the local administration on behalf of the ICU. By August 1933, Jingoes, along with his fellow Ottosdal ICU organiser J.L. Diniza and ten other Makweteng residents, took up the concerns of the location residents sending letters to the Native Affairs Department complaining that the water and sanitary situation in Makweteng was still in an "awful state",

> We have no water here in the location and even our lavatories are in an awful state …[532]

The governance of the location, under the 1923 Urban Areas Act, placed specific responsibilities on the local authority in regards the provision of water, ablutions and place to wash clothes. These do not seem to have been executed.[533] Further, since the location was governed under the Urban Areas Act, it also required that a superintendent be appointed with specific responsibilities. These included administrative duties related to the recording of residents' names, the number of houses, yearly reports on the location, controlling the amount of stock, registering incoming residents, site permits and regulating entertainment.[534] The superintendent of Makweteng, however, appeared to be grossly abusing his power. According to the Makwateng residents' letter to the Native Affairs Department,

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[529] Jingoes. *A Chief is a Chief by the People,* p.109.
[530] Ibid, p.110.
[531] NASA, NTS, 4934, 316/313, Letter from the South African Police at Ottosdal to the Magistrate at Lichtenberg, 27 October 1927.
[532] NASA, NTS, 4934, 313/313, Letter from JJ ka Jingoes and JL Diniza to the Native Affairs Department, 14 August 1933.
[533] NASA, TPB, 1260, TALG17/10553, Ottosdal Health Committee Native Location Regulations. See "Location regulations chedule", 13 December 1932.
[534] *Ibid*.

> We were made to understand that this location was under the municipality and we [were] forced to pay rent [and] we agreed, but today we find out that this location is under the Superintendent and the Civil servants, which means we are forced to work for a certain European no matter whether you get paid or not.[535]

In other words, the local authority was extending its reach and organising labour for particular employers. In another case, Jingoes and Diniza wrote to the NAD on behalf of location residents who were being asked to act as diamond runners (i.e., people who distribute diamonds, in this case probably illegally):

> what surprises us is this [:] sometimes our superintendent wants us to do a work which we are not quiet [sic] prepared – to do it as – to be Diamonds Runners. He even one day pointed one man here in the location with a revolver demanded if he don't offer him a diamond he will shot [sic] him or have him arrested now that is why he wants us to leave the location because we are not prepared to follow his will.[536]

As a result of their efforts to challenge the unfair practices of the superintendent, Jingoes and Diniza started facing increasing persecution. This, they wrote,

> means in our location there is a segregation, some are favoured [and] some are hated [and] we are all paying rent…And he even said that we are belonging to the ICU members [sic] that is why he want to get rid of us but for that fact most of the Residents of the location belong to the ICU if he is intended to chase some and leave the others, we think it is not lawful…[537]

As in other towns, the police were trying to rid the location of the ICU. A member of the Ottosdal SAP, Sergeant Steyn threatened to "deal with" and remove both Jingoes and Diniza from the location by persuading the health committee to arrest them and another location resident.[538] Jingoes and Diniza complained that the police were "controlling the locations" rather than the Superintendent, and they subsequently appealed to the NAD about the lawfulness of the vendetta against the ICU,

> [Police Sergeant] Steyn goes as far to tell the superintendent that he left to arrest the members of the ICU only because he hates them himself [539]

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[535] NASA, NTS, 4934, 313/313, Letter from JJ ka Jingoes and JL Diniza to the Native Affairs Department, 14 August 1933.
[536] *Ibid*.
[537] *Ibid*.
[538] NASA, NTS, 4934, 313/313, Letter from JJ ka Jingoes to the Native Affairs Department, 25 August 1933.
[539] *Ibid*.

Jingoes and Diniza questioned the powers of the police, as well as their use of "bad" and "abusive" language used towards the location inhabitants. The "insulting" language, according to them, was impacting the ability of residents to lodge legal claims, especially when these claims were about the Masters and Servants laws.[540] The Master and Servants Act was an archaic law established in 1841 (again amended in 1856) which would "enforce discipline on ex-slaves, peasants, pastoralists, and a rural proletariat" by ensuring that these people were not allowed to abscond.[541] These conflicts suggest that workers in Makweteng were disgruntled with conditions on farms and were deserting their employment.

The Secretary for Native Affairs forwarded Jingoes' letters of complaint to Sergeant Steyn, who accused Jingoes of lying, of not paying his taxes (despite Jingoes saying they were paid by the ICU's head office) and of being in the location illegally.[542] In a letter addressed to the District Commandant of the SAP which responded to Jingoes' allegations, Steyn claimed that Jingoes "is in the habit of ruling a place, and as soon as he finds that his bluff does not work he is up against the police". Referring to a prior court bid that barred Jingoes from residing in the location, which Jingoes ignored, Steyn suggested that,

> unless Jingoes can get the required passes and permits to live in the location, I will have him before Court every sitting. This is not the first complaint he submitted against me. Every time he is hooked in he takes refuge to Higher Authorities, well knowing that he is in the wrong. This Native has a very high opinion of his abilities and always boasts of what he can do and what he will do. He has his own ways with everything and no one else is right except Jingoes and his followers.[543]

On 4 September 1933, a few days after Steyn sent his letter, Jingoes reported that he had been told to leave the location by Steyn. Jingoes appealed to the superintendent, but soon realised that the superintendent was being advised by, and was in cahoots with, Steyn "who had poked his nose into Municipal Affairs".[544] Jingoes appealed to the Department of Native Affairs for protection,

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[540] *Ibid*.
[541] Jack Simons and Ray Simons. *Class and Colour*, p.23.
[542] NASA, NTS, 4934, 316/313, Letter from Sergeant Steyn to the District Commandant of the South African police at Lichtenberg, 29 August 1933.
[543] *Ibid*.
[544] NASA, NTS, 4934, 313/313, Letter from JJ ka Jingoes to the Native Affairs Department, 4 September 1933.

> Are we going to get your protection as our protection to this man, or else why can't you notify us that you have empowered that superintendent to act as he is now acting. … There are many criminal cases down but he is busy with people whom he hates, no sir protect us, this is rather going too far. Stop this before further troubles. We are abiding people, but as Superintendent is illegally acting, we can't abide any longer.[545]

This state of affairs between Jingoes and the ICU on one hand and the superintendent and Sergeant Steyn on the other is indicative of the battles waged by the ICU in town locations across the Western Transvaal. In Ottosdal, the ICU took on the grievances of location residents relating to poor sanitation and farm disputes, but its leaders were individually pursued by the local authority and disgruntled farmers through court action and the provisions of legislation like the Urban Areas Act. Furthermore, the Ottosdal authorities grossly abused their power by forcing Makweteng residents into unpaid work and paying scant attention to the poor conditions in the location. The superintendent abused his power using workers as diamond runners, for their own personal gain. Despite the repression, the ICU's activism helped location residents articulate their grievances and fight for better conditions.

Schweizer-Reneke

In her doctoral dissertation on Ipelegeng, the black location on the outskirts of Schweizer-Reneke, Susanna Bester contextualises the development of the location in tandem with the spread of the Spanish Flu, which hit this region particularly hard between 1917 and 1918. Black people in Schweizer-Reneke were cramped into a location with poor sanitary conditions during the Spanish Flu, but it was not this that alarmed the Schweizer-Reneke Town Council; it was rather the proximity of the location to the white town. In February 1920 it was declared and proclaimed that a location would be created further away from the white town, and almost no notice was provided to the residents that they were going to be moved. When the location residents realised this, there was significant resistance. This resistance, together with the fact that the municipality was in a "weak" financial position, meant that the location was not relocated for some years.[546]

[545] *Ibid*.

[546] Susanna Bester. "Ipelegeng, 1918-1994: Van Plakkerskamp tot Dorpsgrond:'n Historiese Studie", PhD Diss., University of the North West, (1997), pp.22-26.

In 1924, the town council again applied for a new location to be set up, but black residents resisted forcing the town council to create two locations.[547] By 1927 a new location was "officially" in operation and was proclaimed under the 1923 Urban Areas Act, including an advisory board and a location superintendent. The old location was named "Location One" and the new one "Location Two". The process of moving residents from Location One to Location Two was slow and took into account the backlash received in the previous years; the Town Council only allowed new residents to live in Location Two, and at times removed residents from Location One to Location Two because of unpaid rent. The process took another 10 to 20 years to be completed, and required extra measures like the proclamation of Location One under the Urban Areas Act and suspending municipal services to it.[548]

In 1928, one year after Location Two was established, the ICU became a prominent political force, having opened a branch in Schweizer-Reneke as part of the general turn of the ICU to the countryside and rural towns.[549] The evidence suggests that the majority of ICU organising was done in Location One because even as late as 1939, over 110 houses in Location One remained occupied, while 90 were occupied in Location Two.[550] Bester suggests that the ICU was very active in Schweizer-Reneke. They offered black residents a "helping hand", and from the evidence provided below, the ICU held meetings and joined forces with aggrieved Ipelegeng residents.[551] Robert Makhatini, the District Secretary for the ICU in the Western Transvaal, was among the chief ICU figures in Schweizer-Reneke.

The first trip to Schweizer-Reneke by an ICU organiser appears to have been by Henry Daniel Tyamzashe, who visited towns in the Free State and Transvaal in 1928 to research and write about "Municipal Government". His research was published in the *Workers' Herald* in December 1928 after he had visited Klerksdorp, Schweizer-Reneke and Viljoenskroon. Tyamzashe's article described the stringent municipal laws in Schweizer-Reneke, which prohibited the brewing of beer, even for domestic consumption. Throughout the Transvaal, the law allowed black people to brew a "certain quantity" of home-brewed beer for "personal use", but in Schweizer-Reneke, the report explained, "the local authorities [did] not allow a pint of

[547] *Ibid.*, p.27.
[548] *Ibid.*, pp.27-29.
[549] Wickins. "The Industrial", p.390.
[550] Bester. "Ipelegeng", p.28.
[551] *Ibid*.

beer". It was only in the cases where beer was deemed to cause "trouble in the location" that local urban authorities could ban beer brewing. Tyamzashe questioned:

> But where is [in] the whole of the Transvaal and even the Free State will you find a more peaceful location than Schweizer Reneke? This action of the authorities here is going to cause, or already is causing people here to contravene their regulations by making kaffir beer illegally for such beer has been regarded always as food and not as intoxicant.[552]

While Tyamzashe noted that Schweizer-Reneke "will stand the beer test better than any location in the Union",[553] it would require more consistent petitioning of the local municipality to change their opinion. Several attempts were made by the residents of the locations for the Town Council to revise their conditions on beer brewing, but initially to no avail. By August 1929, after a successful negotiation between the ICU and the Town Council, it was eventually agreed to allow beer brewing, and the location regulations were amended so that beer brewing permits could be obtained for a fee of one pound.[554]

By 1929 the ICU had managed to gain a solid footing in Schweizer-Reneke. Even before the conditions over beer brewing were revised, the ICU had a branch of over 400 members by April 1929. The increase in membership was related to the ICU's tenacity in holding meetings and challenging the persecution of location inhabitants. The local ICU organisers also "did not hesitate to file complaints against the police", with the largest number of these complaints regarding the arrests due to violation of the pass laws and the disruption of ICU meetings (by civil servants).[555]

Kas Maine travelled to an ICU meeting in Schweizer Reneke in 1929 (probably in the early months, between January and March) during his stay at the farms Zorgvliet and Vlakfontein (see Map 5) between 1927 and 1929.[556] Clements Kadalie began addressing the crowd, who were "sitting on top of the other", on the topic of freedom. The atmosphere at the meeting was so lively that "some [people] did not even hear". As the meeting progressed, Kadalie shifted his focus to conditions on farms, where Maine suggests the ICU "were fighting for the

[552] *Workers' Herald*, H. D. Tyamzashe, "Municipal Government", 31 December 1928.
[553] *Ibid*.
[554] Bester. "Ipelegeng", p.29.
[555] *Ibid*.p.30.
[556] It isn't clear the exact date when this meeting happened. I have chosen 1929 because the ICU had only just managed to open a branch and have Tyamzashe visit in December 1928. The ICU had a solid presence in Schweizer-Reneke in 1929, and it is possible that this meeting was held between January and March 1929 because the rest of the year was dominated by meetings held Robert Makhatini and more local organisers.

halves".[557] "Halves" represented a half-share in a sharecropping relationship, with the sharecropper getting one half of the produce and the farmer the other half, and the ICU was fighting against a more concerted effort by farmers to reduce the share of sharecroppers. Kadalie stressed that the new system of reducing sharecroppers' shares or expelling workers from farms by newly capitalised farmers would "collapse". Maine notes the central struggle Kadalie was waging,

> He was fighting for halves. You see, halves helped me, for I didn't work for the whites but for myself yet the farm was the white man's. Now they didn't want that, they wanted you not to have cattle and other things, so that you could come and work on their farms. Now that is where the fight started.[558]

Kadalie challenged the new agricultural methods that white farmers were adopting which threatened to dispossess and proletarianise workers. Following the meeting held by Kadalie, farmworkers returned to Sewefontien, which was about 20 kilometres from Schweizer-Reneke (see Map 5), and "said that they wouldn't sell their cattle, they must be given land to plough on".[559] Baefesi Maine, who had squatted with his father Mphaka at the farm Vlakfontien, remembered that Mphaka had first heard about the ICU after it came to Schweizer-Reneke.[560]

In early March 1929, the ICU branch secretary for Schweizer-Reneke P.J. Mahombo sent a request to the Magistrate of Bloemhof for the ICU to hold a meeting, but this was denied.[561] The matter was taken up by the Complaints and Research Secretary of the ICU, Conan Doyle Modiakgotla, who wrote to the commanding officer of the South African Police claiming that the prohibition was invalid.[562]

Modiakgotla tried to challenge the Magistrate's decision and asserted that the ICU would hold a meeting on Sunday the 17 of March 1929. The Public Prosecutor rebuked Modiakgotla, and Modiakgotla remembered him saying "'de kaffir dink hij is slem' [this kaffir thinks he is clever]," and then proceeded to say "'NO MEETING OF THE I.C.U. SHALL BE HELD IN

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[557] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Maine, Kas. interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng, T. Couzens and G. Relly, 2 July 1980, Tape Nos.204 and 205. Transcript No.30.
[558] *Ibid*.
[559] *Ibid*.
[560] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Maine, Baefesi, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng, Mareetsane, 22 April 1986. Tape No.545. Transcript No.146.
[561] NASA, JUS, 517, 6044/29, 6180/29, 6175/29. Letter from C. van Breda the Magistrate to J. Mahombo of the ICU in Schweizer-Reneke, 8 March 1929.
[562] NASA, JUS, 517, 6044/29 - 6180/29 - 6175/29. Letter from Doyle Modiakgotla to the Commanding Officer of the SAP, 16 March 1929.

THE LOCATION TO-MORROW OR ANY OTHER DAY.'"[563] The effort to thwart ICU officials holding meetings and allowing organisers to reside in the location was a deliberate strategy by the local municipality to limit the ICU's engagement with the location residents of Schweizer Reneke.

Despite the prohibition, Robert Makhatini went ahead with the meeting on 17 March 1929. The meeting was held in Ipelegeng to an audience of between 150 and 200 location residents. It began with the singing of the "national anthem", "Nkosi sikelel' iAfrika", after which Makhatini spoke.

> We are not allowed to address a meeting at Schweizer Reneke. … My employers, head office at Johannesburg had authorised me to address a meeting at 12 noon … God worked six days and on the seventh day he rested. You are supposed to work six days and rest on the 7th and on the 7th day you can go wherever you like. So, without the permission of your employer if he refuses to give you a pass – go without passes … I am not going to threaten the Government with my mouth but with my heart, and I am not going to say what they are...[564]

At this juncture, Constable Gauche, who was among the white and black policemen attending the meeting in plain clothes, interrupted Makhatini and asked whether he had permission to hold the meeting. There was an instruction to arrest ICU officials who "illegally" organised a meeting from the Bloemhof Magistrate Van Breda, which was premised on the provisions of Proclamation no.1787 of the Native Administration Act.[565] Makhatini had only addressed the meeting for a mere fourteen minutes before he and his interpreters (who may have been interpreting from Zulu or English into Setswana or Afriakaans) were interrupted, and after being unable to produce evidence of permission for the meeting, they were marched to the police station.[566]

Seeing that the meeting had been disrupted and ICU leader Makhatini arrested, the majority of the black audience attending marched in line towards the police station in solidarity with

[563] *Workers' Herald Weekly News Bulletin*, Doyle Modiakgotla "Oppressive Laws and Their Validity", 5 May 1929.
[564] NASA, JUS, 921, 1/18/26, vol.19 – vol.21. Report from Sergeant Wagner of the Schweizer-Reneke SAP to the District Commandant of the SAP at Potchefstroom, 19 March 1929.
[565] NASA, JUS, 517, 6044/29 - 6180/29 - 6175/29. Letter from the Sergeant of the SAP at Schweizer-Reneke to the District Commander of the SAP at Potchefstroom, 6 May 1929.
[566] NASA, JUS, 517, 6044/29, 6180/29, 6175/29. Letter from Robert Makathini to the Secretary of Justice, 19 April 1929.

Makhatini and his interpreters.[567] As they walked towards the police station, the crowd was singing and shouting in protest against the arrest of the three accused. Noticing the mood of the crowd, the sergeant present, Sergeant Wagner, confronted each of those marching and demanded they produce their tax receipts and passes.[568] The actions of the police had incensed large portions of the protestors, and following this demand to produce tax receipts, forty black women began "shouting, singing" and threw their shawls (headscarves) onto the ground. They pointed at the group of police who had arrested Makhatini, and, in the words of Sergeant Wagner, "appeared to call on the powers that be to destroy us".[569] The confrontation appears to have lasted around 30 minutes before Makhatini and the interpreters were taken into the police station and the crowd dispersed.

Makhatini and his interpreters were arrested for contravening Notice no.1787 of the Native Administration Act. Historian Paul Landau suggests that "Magistrates were already (from 1914) permitted to ban forums or convocations for "Natives" by decree as riotous, but as of 1927, all mass assemblies were presumed illegal, by Government Notice no. 1787, unless they were sanctioned in advance or were religious in nature".[570] The three accused were locked up for holding a mass assembly for just under five hours until 5:30 p.m. and then were released on bail of £2.10 each and told to appear in court on 4 April 1929 for being in contravention of the Native Administration Act. On their court date, the charge of contravening Proclamation no.1787 was withdrawn and they were charged for contravening municipal by-laws instead.[571] Makhatini delayed the court case to a later date in order to get a lawyer from Johannesburg. When he reappeared on 18 April, he was discharged with all charges against him removed.[572]

The court battles did not deter Makhatini. On 19 April 1929, Makhatini wrote to the Secretary of Justice that farmworkers were being constantly harassed for not paying fees for their passes. This was despite the fact that the workers had not been paid for a few months.[573] In response, the SAP sergeant at Schweizer-Reneke said that the complaints Makhatini was relating must

[567] NASA, JUST, 517, 6044/29 - 6180/29 - 6175/29. Letter from the Sergeant of the SAP at Schweizer-Reneke to the District Commander of the SAP at Potchefstroom, 6 May 1929.
[568] *Ibid*.
[569] *Ibid*.
[570] Paul Landau. *Popular Politics in the History of South Africa, 1400–1948* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.209.
[571] NASA, JUS, 517, 6044/29- 6180/29 - 6175/29. Letter from the Sergeant of the SAP at Schweizer-Reneke to the District Commander of the SAP at Potchefstroom, 6 May 1929.
[572] *Ibid*.
[573] NASA, JUS, 517, 6044/29 - 6180/29 - 6175/29. Letter from Robert Makathini to the Secretary of Justice, 19 April 1929.

be lodged with employers who were paying poorly and not with the local authority.[574] April was also harvest time and workers reacted to their unscrupulous employers, as well as increasing persecution under the Masters and Servants Act, by absconding from work. At this point, Van Onselen notes, "the state marshalled in its counter-attack".[575]

In a *Workers' Herald* report published in May 1929, Modiakgotla noted that "'WAR' had been declared against the workers by both the Local Urban authorities and the Police."[576] Through prohibiting meetings and disallowing ICU officials' space to reside in the Schweizer-Reneke location, the local municipality and police were attempting to keep the ICU and its influence on workers at bay. Despite these efforts by the local authorities and police, Modiakgotla and Robert Makhatini fought to remain in the location. Makhatini stayed in a small "hut" outside of the jurisdiction of the location (where he could not be evicted).[577] Modiakgotla wrote,

> It then became plain to me that unless we put up a fight the I.C.U. was doomed as far as Schweizer-Reneke was concerned. After consultation with Comrade Makhatini, we decided to take the risk, and thereupon accepted the challenge. That night we slept in the location, despite the threats of both the Police and the Municipal authorities.[578]

Modiakgotla had examined the provision under which ICU officials were being prohibited to reside and hold meetings in the location, and recognised that they were in fact *ultra vires.* The law in question was Government Proclamation no.1787 which prohibited ICU meetings and officials the privilege of residing in the location. Modiagkotla noted that

> I had pointed out to [the public prosecutor/ sergeant] that Notice No.1787 was invalid and that it was neither fair, just nor right that the Police should take advantage of the ignorance of Natives and muzzle them with Laws which were no longer in operation.[579]

At the meeting on 17 March 1929 which had led to Makathini's arrest, fifteen attendees of the meeting were also arrested for not being in possession of "special passes" to enter the

[574] NASA, JUS, 517, 6044/29 - 6180/29 – 6175/29. Letter from the Sergeant of the SAP at Schweizer Reneke to the District Commander of the SAP at Potchefstroom, 6 May 1929.
[575] This is Van Onselen's argument. See Charles Van Onselen. *The Seed is Mine,* p.153.
[576] *Workers' Herald Weekly News Bulletin*, Doyle Modiakgotla, "Oppressive Laws and Their Validity", 5 May 1929.
[577] NASA, JUS, 517, 6044/29 - 6180/29 - 6175/29. Letter from the Sergeant of the SAP at Schweizer Reneke to the District Commander of the SAP at Potchefstroom, 6 May 1929.
[578] *Workers' Herald Weekly News Bulletin*, Doyle Modiakgotla "Oppressive Laws and Their Validity", 5 May 1929.
[579] *Ibid*.

location.[580] In connection with this, Modiakgotla noted that "the police still arrest our members who come to the Location on Sundays for the purpose of attending our meetings, for 'SPECIALS'".[581] "Special passes" related to a municipal by-law which required Africans to have a special pass to attend a meeting. According to Modiakgotla, the law that was being invoked was in fact Proclamation 37 of 1901 and had a test case in Boksburg where it was ruled to be was no longer in operation.[582] The laws governing the "special pass" had been invalidated by the Urban Areas Act of 1923. It is clear that the Schweizer-Reneke municipality was using a set of laws which enabled them to quell dissent, despite these laws having been repealed or even contradicting one another.

Most of those arrested for not holding "special passes" were ICU members and Makhatini had approached the public prosecutor to have the workers' case remanded.[583] Makhatini wanted the members to have adequate legal representation, which was a commitment in the ICU's 1927 Constitution, subject to the National Council deeming it "necessary and expedient".[584] There is no evidence as to whether this was escalated to Phillip Morris, the ICU's Legal Advisor in 1929 who was the brainchild of the ICU's land schemes.[585] Nevertheless, Makhatini asked the public prosecutor to allow for time to find proper legal representation. The SAP sergeant, who was also the public prosecutor, refused to help Makhatini and when asked to defer the case to a later date, denied that it was his duty to remand a case.[586]

Much of what has been mentioned above was part of an exchange of letters involving Makhatini regarding "complaints against the police of Schweizer-Reneke", the SAP Sergeant at Schweizer-Reneke and the district commandant at Potchefstroom, who tried to exonerate the actions of the police.[587] While Makhatini and the Public Prosecutor both wrote to the Secretary

[580] NASA, JUS, 517 6044/29 - 6180/29 - 6175/29. Letter from the Sergeant of the SAP at Schweizer Reneke to the District Commander of the SAP at Potchefstroom, 6 May 1929.
[581] *Workers' Herald Weekly News Bulletin*, Doyle Modiakgotla, "Oppressive Laws and Their Validity", 5 May 1929.
[582] *Ibid*.
[583] NASA, JUS, 517, 6044/29 - 6180/29 - 6175/29. Letter from Robert Makathini to the Secretary of Justice, 19 April 1929.
[584] Wickins. "The Industrial", p.499.
[585] For more on Phillip Morris, see: Wickins. "The Industrial", Appendix, p.551.
[586] NASA, JUS, 517, 6044/29 - 6180/29 - 6175/29. Letter from the Sergeant of the SAP at Schweizer Reneke to the District Commander of the SAP at Potchefstroom, 6 May 1929. NASA, JUS, 517, 6044/29 - 6180/29 - 6175/29. Letter from Robert Makathini to the Secretary of Justice, 19 April 1929.
[587] These two letters are: NASA, JUS, 517, 6044/29 - 6180/29 - 6175/29. Letter from Robert Makathini to the Secretary of Justice, 19 April 1929 and NASA, JUS, 517, 6044/29 - 6180/29 -

of Justice to articulate their point of view, the Secretary of Justice replied to Makhatini suggesting that the police had done nothing wrong and no action would be brought against them.[588] This did not satisfy Makhatini who had seen, quite rightly, that the police and magistrate were using their positions of power to quell protests which they disagreed with. Makhatini did not forget the matter and wrote "I therefore wish to bring to your notice that, as this has not satisfied one yet, I am still going to pay it my attention".[589]

At 10am on 17 April 1929, Makhatini held another meeting in Ipelegeng. Residents and those interested in the meeting began filing into the location from farms and areas outside Schweizer-Reneke. Police were strategically placed at all of the entrances to the location in order to demand passes and special passes from "every lady entering the location".[590] It is not clear why it was only women that were asked for special passes; perhaps it was because of the direct challenge that women presented to the local authority a month prior. By 12:30 pm sixteen people had been arrested; according to the sergeant present, the arrests were for Hut Tax contraventions (the "Hut Tax" had its inception in colonial Natal, but in this case, it seems to be a tax due for rental of a hut, lot, house or building in the location).[591]

Makhatini remembered the sergeant threatening to arrest "every native in the location for staying more than three hours". To counteract this threat, Makhatini moved the meeting to the town which would save people from being arrested under the pass law regulations. It grew increasingly apparent that the prohibition of ICU meetings at any cost was the goal of the police and municipal authorities, as Makhatini wrote to the Secretary of Justice,

6175/29. Letter from the Sergeant of the SAP at Schweizer Reneke to the District Commander of the SAP at Potchefstroom, 6 May 1929.

[588] NASA, JUS, 517, 6044/29 - 6180/29 - 6175/29. Letter from the Secretary of Justice M. Jeffery to Robert Makatini, ICU Secretary for the Western Transvaal, 22 May 1929.

[589] *Ibid*.

[590] NASA, JUS, 517, 6044/29 - 6180/29 – 6175/29. Letter from Robert Makathini to the Secretary of Justice, 19 April 1929.

[591] NASA, JUS, 517, 6044/29 - 6180/29 - 6175/29. Letter from the Sergeant of the SAP at Schweizer Reneke to the District Commander of the SAP at Potchefstroom, 6 May 1929. Also see Digital Innovation South Africa (DISA). "1923 Natives Urban Areas Act" found at: https://disa.ukzn.ac.za/sites/default/files/pdf_files/leg19230614.028.020.021.pdf on 2 February 2021. See section 9.

> What surprises me, the town hall where the location superintendent [is based]; is always closed. And the poor natives have nowhere to get the permission of entering the location. For there are no municipal offices open on Sunday.[592]

The constant harassment that location residents and ICU organisers experienced was part of the state apparatus (municipal officials, police and the judiciary) wielding their power and control over the location inhabitants.

Two months later, Makhatini addressed yet another meeting in Ipelegeng. On 16 June 1929, he, with a fair amount of bravado, claimed that he would turn the "local court into a coffee shop", take up the position of magistrate of Schweizer-Reneke and make Magistrate Van Breda his deputy.[593] He was interrupted by Sydney Moeketsi, a public servant who had worked as court interpreter in Schweizer-Reneke for over 9 years. According to Makhatini, Moeketsi interrupted his speech by saying "you are telling lies",[594] but Moeketsi maintained that, noticing the mocking tone of Makhatini, he jokingly remarked "you can't do it boy".[595]

While it is not clear what the intentions of Moeketsi were in this particular instance, Moeketsi was fairly well embedded into the local state apparatus.[596] Added, when Makhatini wrote to the Secretary of Justice complaining about the interruption by Moeketsi, he also noted that he was interrupted by an official of the Criminal Investigation Department, a certain Brewis, in Bloemhof. Makhatini thus suggested that the law should prohibit this because "government servants are strictly prohibited from interfering in political matters".[597]

As the ICU became increasingly acquainted with the conditions in the Schweizer-Reneke location, they were able to fight more focussed battles based on residents' grievances. However, there is very little evidence that the ICU took up the ongoing removal of the location to the new site. Bester writes that "although there is no conclusive evidence that the ICU

[592] NASA, JUS, 517, 6044/29 - 6180/29 - 6175/29. Letter from Robert Makathini to the Secretary of Justice, 19 April 1929.
[593] NASA, JUS, 517, 6044/29 - 6180/29 - 6175/29. Letter from Sydney Moeketsi to the Magistrate of Schweizer Reneke, 2 July 1929.
[594] NASA, JUS, 517, 6044/29 - 6180/29 - 6175/29. Letter from Robert Makathini, the Secretary of the ICU for the Western Transvaal, to the Secretary of Justice, 17 June 1929.
[595] NASA, JUS, 517, 6044/29, 6180/29, 6175/29. Letter from Sydney Moeketsi to the Magistrate of Schweizer Reneke, 2 July 1929.
[596] See file: NASA, JUS, 530, 7187/29, "Interpreters. Western Circuit Courts. Transvaal", 1928-1938.
[597] NASA, JUS, 517, 6044/29 - 6180/29 - 6175/29. Letter from Robert Makathini, the Secretary of the ICU for the Western Transvaal, to the Secretary of Justice, 17 June 1929.

represented the black residents with regard to the relocation process, the activities of the organization probably contributed to the feeling of negativity towards the shift".[598]

In June 1929, Makhatini and "National ICU Propagandist" and Schweizer-Reneke organiser, Henry Maleke, highlighted some of the poor conditions existent in both Locations One and Two in a letter to the Secretary of Justice. They noted that Location One residents were "without water" as the water system was "out of order and with no sign of repair". Location Two also did not have the required amenities as residents were provided neither with a water well nor a windmill.[599]

Furthermore, Makhatini and Maleke highlighted the ailing infrastructure in the location, like the steps surrounding the location area (presumably Location 1) were unsafe and caused "great disturbance, danger etc. to women and old men of the location". They proposed that the steps be replaced by a grade (or a ramp) which would make the moving up and down the incline easier. The ICU organisers also drew attention to the increase in stand rents. These increases were "illegally made" without the consent of the location residents.[600] In connection with this, the ICU negotiated on behalf of location resident Sarah Koloi who was unable to pay her rent. She had asked the ICU for help and they pleaded in writing to the Town Council. Her case was dismissed and she was ordered to pay the rent.[601]

Through the strong base developed by the ICU in Schweizer-Reneke, the union further spread their influence to surrounding farms and diamond diggings. On 19 April 1929, Robert Makhatini relayed concerns about workers on the London and Mimosa diggings (near Schweizer-Reneke, see Map 5) who were arbitrarily arrested by police for pass contraventions. Makhatini pleaded his case to the Minister of Justice:

> At London diggings which is about 17 miles from Schweizer-Reneke, natives are supposed to get night passes. When visiting their neighbours from 20 to 25 yards away from their houses. The same with Mimosa location. And natives are always arrested.[602]

[598] Susanna Bester. "Ipelegeng", p.30.
[599] NASA, JUS, 517, 6044/29 - 6180/29 - 6175/29. Letter from Robert Makathini, the Secretary of the ICU for the Western Transvaal and Henry Maleke, ICU National Propagandist, to the Secretary of Justice, 17 June 1929.
[600] *Ibid*.
[601] Susanna Bester. "Ipelegeng", p.29.
[602] NASA, JUS, 517, 6044/29, 6180/29, 6175/29. Letter from Robert Makathini to the Secretary of Justice, 19 April 1929.

Furthermore, Makhatini noted that even after being arrested, workers were forced to sign an "admission of guilt" agreement in order to get bail. When matters were referred to the Sergeant of the SAP at Schweizer-Reneke, he suggested that the laws on a night curfew also applied at the London and Mimosa diggings, both of which were proclaimed diggings. In this light, black workers were mandated by law to carry passes after 9 p.m. The sergeant also "emphatically" denied that members of the police forced people to sign "admission of guilt" and suggested nothing could be gained by doing so.[603]

On 12 August 1929 the now ICU Branch Secretary for Schweizer-Reneke, Henry Maleke, lodged a complaint about farmworker Piet Mateba not being paid for building a kraal. Maleke noted in a letter to the Department of Justice that his client Mateba had received poor treatment from farm owner Mr. van der Heever.[604] Mateba was contracted to build a kraal and a stable for £6 and £14 respectively, and was also promised to be supplied with "food and assistance". None of the commitments had been honoured by Van der Heever: he provided no other food but mealies and did not pay him what was agreed. Piet had completed the kraal (which he was owed £6 for) but left the stable because he no longer wanted to work with Van der Heever. He "received £2 and £4 was withheld by Mr. van Heever, he refused totally to pay the balance of £4".[605]

Maleke petitioned the Secretary of Justice for the £4 to be paid to Mateba, and for Mr. van der Heever to stop treating Mateba with disdain because he "cannot read or write". Van der Heever had used this fact to make a "false agreement" which would cheat Mateba out of his wage.[606] After sending several letters, Maleke noted that the Sub-Native Commissioner was not paying attention to the issue because it involved a white person committing the crime. The Magistrate at Schweizer-Reneke sent correspondence to the Secretary of Justice noting that Mateba did not file a case, and it would not be pursued.[607] Considering Mateba's illiteracy, this seems to have been a ploy by the Magistrate to ensure that the case would not reach the court.

[603] NASA, JUS, 517 6044/29, 6180/29 6175/29 Letter from the Sergeant of the SAP at Schweizer-Reneke to the District Commander of the SAP at Potchefstroom 6 May 1929.
[604] NASA, JUS, 517, 6044/29 - 6180/29 - 6175/29. Letter from Henry Maleke, the Acting District Secretary for the Western Transvaal to the Department of Justice, 12 August 1929.
[605] *Ibid*.
[606] *Ibid*.
[607] NASA, JUS, 517, 6044/29 - 6180/29 – 6175/29. Letter from the Magistrate at Schweizer Reneke to the Secretary of Justice, 31 August 1929.

This collection of grievances drafted by the ICU and the location residents received scant attention from the superintendent of the Schweizer-Reneke location as well as the resident magistrate. Makhatini and Maleke pleaded with the town council to take the matters seriously as they threatened to cause "a great misunderstanding between the location residents and the Village Council", but received no response.[608]

At every turn the ICU experienced opposition from the Schweizer-Reneke local administration. Again, after Makhatini addressed a meeting in August 1929, Moeketsi interrupted him for a second time. This time it appears that Makhatini was considerably more incensed by the interruption as he suggested that "bloodsheds nearly occurred".[609] Makhatini complained that the Schweizer-Reneke local authority had been "wrongfully and unlawfully advising and instructing" people to interrupt the ICU meetings.[610] He thought that Moeketsi was working in tandem with the local CID, and using his position of interpreter to disrupt meetings. While the Schweizer-Reneke Magistrate simply sided with Moeketsi,[611] Makhatini was worried that his repeated behaviour was "not thoroughly investigated" and that "things were running from bad to worse through him".[612]

By 1930 the ICU's presence in Schweizer-Reneke bore the scars of constant government repression. While the ICU's activism in the town lasted at least until mid-1932, repression by the local administration and the union's own organisational issues at both national and local level (including a factional split in the ICU branch in Schweizer-Reneke, discussed below) meant that they took up smaller struggles.[613] ICU Branch Secretary Henry Maleke became increasingly involved in mediating civil disputes between farmers and workers as well as between ICU members in the town (see chapter 5).

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[608] NASA, JUS, 517, 6044/29, 6180/29, 6175/29. Letter from Robert Makathini, the Secretary of the ICU for the Western Transvaal and Henry Maleke, ICU National Propagandist, to the Secretary of Justice, 17 June 1929.
[609] NASA, JUS, 517, 6044/29 - 6180/29 - 6175/29. Letter from Robert Makathini to the Department of Justice, 11 August 1929.
[610] *Ibid*.
[611] NASA, JUS, 517, 6044/29 - 6180/29 - 6175/29. Letter from the Magistrate at Schweizer-Reneke to the Secretary of Justice, 31 August 1929.
[612] NASA, JUS, 517, 6044/29 - 6180/29 - 6175/29. Letter from Robert Makathini to the Secretary of Justice, 11 August 1929 and NASA, JUS, 517, 6044/29 - 6180/29 - 6175/29. Letter from Robert Makathini to the Secretary of Justice, 16 August 1929.
[613] For factionalism in the ICU branch in Schweizer-Reneke see Peter Limb. *The ANC's Early Years: Nation, Class and Place in South Africa Before 1940* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2010), p.372.

The issues of low wages and poor farm conditions persisted, and it was Maleke – the central ICU figure in Schweizer-Reneke in the early 1930s – that represented the cause of farm residents. In April 1931, Maleke wrote to the Chairman of the Native Economic and Wage Commission, F.A.W. Lucas. He complained that farm workers in the Schweizer-Reneke district were suffering from "drastic treatment" from their employers, particularly with regards to "withheld wages, few acres ploughed for them and their stock and no assistance [from the local authority]".[614] Maleke advocated for contracts that would bind employers to only take up workers if they could afford to pay them, and urged that written contracts should be given to farm labourers. Owing to the increased cost of living, he also wanted a wholescale increase in wages: a minimum wage of between 3s and 4s per day for those working in towns, and 2s 6d as well as an extra 6 to 9 acres of ploughing land for those on farms.[615]

Owing to his activism, Maleke was praised by a member of the Bethal Methodist Church in Schweizer-Reneke for "[performing] miracles" in the town, but the Schweizer-Reneke local government continued to organise against the ICU. In June 1931, *Ikwezi Le Africa* (a "moderate" ANC newspaper which discussed labour issues) "objected to the refusal by local governments to advance loans to some Africans merely on the basis that they were 'once conspicuous luminaries of the ICU'".[616]

Maleke had clearly sided with Ballinger's ICU. He sent a letter in January 1932 and praised the "few loyal" members of the ICU, like Theo Lujiza (the general secretary of Ballinger's ICU) and Bennet Gwabini (see biographical profile in chapter five). He noted that on 13 January, the ICU held a "very big gathering in the location", which had been addressed by Jingoes. Further, a meeting had been announced for 7 February, and Maleke pleaded Ballinger to join it.[617]

The story of the ICU in Schweizer-Reneke is one of significant repression. While the ICU addressed meetings and engaged with location residents and farm labourers for over four years, they endured a barrage of legislative hurdles which aimed to limit their success. Bester maintains a generous view of the Town Council suggesting at times that they were

[614] Wits HPRA, Native Economic Commission. F.A.W. Lucas papers, Collection AD1769, A4.1Letter by Henry Maleke, District Secretary of the Industrial and Commercial Union (I.C.U.) of Africa, Western Transvaal and Borders, describing the life of Native farm labourers in Schweizer Reneke, 7 April 1931
[615] *Ibid*.
[616] Limb. *The ANC's Early Years,* p.372.
[617] Wits HPRA, Ballinger Family Collection, Collection A410, C2.3.7, Letter from Henry Maleke to W.G. Ballinger and Miss. Hodgeson, 22 January 1932.

"sympathetic" and took note of black residents' "feelings and views",[618] whereas, in fact, the Schweizer-Reneke municipality was decidedly anti-ICU and aimed to challenge their presence at every turn, using piecemeal government legislation to the halt the union. In addition, it did not provide adequate services to location residents. The struggle against their removal to a new location suggests that there was a fairly strong culture of resistance among its residents, and this contributed to a stronger working relationship with the ICU. The ICU was able to link up with struggles in Schweizer-Reneke's location, and fight alongside its residents. The ICU's tenure in Schweizer-Reneke is a glittering example of the commitment of ICU organisers and the union's ability to respond to a range of grievances – like poor services in the location, controls on beer brewing, proletarianisation, land dispossession, farm wages, the decreasing of sharecroppers' shares and pass laws.

Bloemhof

Bloemhof is situated at the southern tip of the South-Western Transvaal "maize triangle" and sits north of the Vaal River, which was the border between the Western Transvaal and the Orange Free State (see Maps 1 and 2). Its proximity to the Vaal River allows easy irrigation for the many maize farms which surround it. The main reason for the establishment of Bloemhof in 1864 was the discovery of the alluvial diamonds in the region. As for many other Western Transvaal towns, Bloemhof's main economic assets were farming and alluvial diamond mining.

Following the mineral revolution, Indian traders set up commercial stores in mining towns along the reef, but were confined to the Transvaal because Indians were not allowed to settle or trade in the Orange Free State. Bloemhof's Indian population was housed in a location called Salamat just outside the white town. By 1910, owing to a "boom" in diamond discoveries in the area, the Indian location had to be moved because it was on diamond-ferrous ground.[619]

The impetus to start the African location in Bloemhof emerged from the large population squatting in the area; many black squatters were involved in informal economic activities like beer brewing and beer drinking and were deemed to be too close to the white town.[620] Although the Bloemhof local authority had drafted *ad-hoc* regulations by 1906, from 1912 there was a more co-ordinated effort to regulate and police the African location by the newly formed

[618] Susanna Bester. "Ipelegeng", p.30.
[619] NASA, TPB, 967 TALG6626 "Bloemhof Native Location".
[620] *Ibid*.

Bloemhof Health Committee. These regulations were largely concerned with health and sanitation and were built on the regulations of 1906.[621]

The ICU started holding meetings in Bloemhof prior to the establishment of a branch there in 1928.[622] Kas Maine remembered a meeting held in Bloemhof while he was staying at Piet Reyneke's farm (which was during the years 1924-1927) most probably in the latter months of 1927. ICU organisers had approached farms to inform farmworkers and farm owners of the meeting. Strike action was mentioned at the meeting but those attending "just listened and didn't strike".[623] Other issues discussed included "ordinary" matters like "what you must know, how you must work" as well as with

> what white people have to pay brown people. They should not just let the people work for free. They have to pay their pounds a day. Those [white people] with the money say it's too much.[624]

Maine did not feel that the crowd attending the meeting were particularly "enthusiastic", and his own feelings were that the ICU "talked and gave you nothing". Yet the ICU held many more meetings in Bloemhof over the next few years. [625]

Keable 'Mote addressed a meeting in Hoopstad, just over 40km from Bloemhof, on Sunday 21 October 1928, where he spoke about the unfriendly welcome he had received in Bloemhof. He described how, when entering Bloemhof, he was summoned by the police to appear before the location superintendent for being in the location for more than three hours without a pass. Given these conditions, he decided to introduce the meeting on the topic of the pass laws,

> We are fighting against the Pass Laws and we wish to have the Pass Laws abolished as a pass is a mere license to commit crime… I have been before the courts of law and I gave the Government a good sjambok this year.[626]

'Mote was due to appear in the Bloemhof court in front of Magistrate Hope the next day, 22 October, after he had been "arrested and fined a pound at Bloemhof, for being there without a

[621] NASA, TPB, 919, TA3/6089, "Bloemhof Municipality, Regulations".
[622] Peter Lionel Wickens. "The Industrial", p.389. He notes that Bloemhof was not on the 1927 lists.
[623] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Maine, Kas, interview conducted by Charles van Onselen. Ledig, Rustenburg, 24 February 1982. Tape No.264. Transcript No.45.
[624] *Ibid*.
[625] *Ibid*.
[626] NASA, JUS, 921, 1/18/26, vol.19 – vol.21. Report on meeting held at Hoopstad, 21 October 1928.

lodger's permit".[627] The pressure put on 'Mote aimed to stifle his and the ICU's presence in the town.

In November 1928, Jason Jingoes was reported in the *Workers' Herald* and *Weekly News* to have been hiding during the day because the Bloemhof local authority would "put him in the gaol" if they found him. In the same issue, it was noted that A. Senatle, the Bloemhof ICU Branch Chairman, was arrested together with "thirteen others" for contravening "Proclamation No.250 for holding an I.C.U. meeting without the written consent of the Magistrate". They were acquitted, because the "policeman who charged them evidently did not know that this proclamation applied to municipal locations".[628]

'Mote and fellow ICU organiser Titus Melk visited Bloemhof for a second time on 25 November 1928. On this trip, it happened again that the town council refused to allow ICU organisers to do work in the location. Permission to reside in the location was refused by the superintendent, because in the magistrates' opinion, "they were not 'fit and proper persons' to reside therein".[629] Senatle, the ICU branch chairman, accompanied 'Mote and Melk to their interviews with the authorities, but they were unsuccessful as the magistrate, who "like all Magistrates in the Union is also an official of the Native Affairs Department", had refused to grant them an interview.[630]

On the same day, Keable 'Mote held a meeting in the Bloemhof location. He began the meeting by rebuking the Bloemhof municipality and saying that himself and Clements Kadalie would "hold a big meeting by force of law" at the end of December 1928, whatever the wishes of the municipality.[631] He continued by replying to the attempts by the municipality to disallow him to stay there:

> On the 30th December I won't ask Jesus nor the Prime Minister nor the municipality to stay in the location. On one Monday morning we will say men and women don't go to work in the kitchens, strike is not a sin, if we can't get our rights, we will have to strike.[632]

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[627] NASA, JUS, 921, 1/18/26, vol.19 – vol.21. Meeting of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union at Kopje, Korsten in Port Elizabeth, 28 October 1928.
[628] Wits HPRA, Ambrose Saffery Papers, AD1179, B2, *Workers' Herald Weekly News Bulletin*, 21 November 1928.
[629] *Workers' Herald*, "Branch News" "Bloemhof", 31 December 1928.
[630] *Ibid*.
[631] NASA, JUS, 922, 1/18/26 vol.22 – vol.24. Report compiled by SAP Constable Brewis at Bloemhof sent to the District Commandant of the SAP at Potchefstroom, 28 November 1928.
[632] *Ibid*.

To give credence to his threat, 'Mote boasted about the part he played in organising 35,000 workers to go on strike in Grasfontein four months earlier (see chapter two). 'Mote ended the meeting saying that he would return and organise a strike, "in January we will have a holiday for two days as we are going to strike".[633] While there is little evidence that 'Mote returned to Bloemhof at the end of the year or of the strike, this did not signal the end of the ICU's presence in Bloemhof.

Motlagomang Maine, who worked as a domestic worker and on the diamond diggings in Bloemhof throughout the 1920s, stayed at the farm Komissierus (see Map 5) between Bloemhof and Wolmaransstad and she remembered hearing 'Mote address a meeting and saying that

> white people are cheating blacks because blacks are not educated. They accept little renumeration with no complains [sic] yet they work hard. They (I.C.U.) advise us to educate our children.[634]

Many farmworkers from Komissierus engaged with the ICU. Among them was the enthusiastic and dedicated ICU member, Mphaka Maine. He used to travel on horseback to meetings held in Bloemhof by Jingoes or 'Mote, and was often accompanied by his friends. The messages that they heard at the meetings were brought back to the farm. Motlagomang remembered,

> He [Mphaka] was telling us that the ICU people are talking the truth for they said that the blacks must learn to be wise and built schools for their children so as to live a better life. Schools will teach our children wisdom, and their parents will see a better life … Boers were handling blacks very tough [sic] before.[635]

Sellwane Legobathe, who was Kas Maine's sister, stayed at Komissierus and attended ICU meetings, had learned songs like "Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika". They would return to their farms and sing it,

> You know there is a song "Nkosi Sikeleli iAfrika". When you sing it, the Boers ask you "Ken jy daardie ding" ["do you know that thing?"] they did not like it. They would ask you why we sing that song. We told them that it is just a song.[636]

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[633] *Ibid*.
[634] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Maine, Motlagomang interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng. Hertzogville, 25 November 1986, Tape No. 556, 557 and 558. Transcript No. 155.
[635] *Ibid.*
[636] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Legobathe, Sellwane, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng. 9 July 1986, Gannalaagte, Tape No. 554. Transcript No.152.

The ICU's presence in Bloemhof had a clear impact on relations on farms such as Komissierus. Kas Maine (who had already moved from Komissierus by the time the ICU gained a solid foothold) notes that white farmers at Komissierus like a certain Petrus Reynecke did not stop them from going to meetings. Mphaka Maine, who also stayed at Petrus Reyneke's farm, noted that "whites have their own meetings on the farms and we [black people] never question them about those meetings".[637] The farmers' meetings were held on a Wednesday and discussed

> Whether the whites agree with what the 'kaffir' was saying. Some said they agree and they were told that they were stupid because the 'kaffir' wants whites to increase their pay and educate their children, and if we can do that, they were going to take a piece of bread out of mouths. I learned that the meeting ended up with a fight amongst them.[638]

As Van Onselen has argued, the divisions between farmers and farmworkers in the Western Transvaal were heterogenous and were underpinned by class.[639] Farmers were unable to capitalise their farms in this region because they weren't profitable enough, and this meant that farmers worked closely with sharecroppers, often sharing their class position and social norms.

Motlagomang learned that at farmers' meetings, they spoke about anxieties over land and the ICU,

> I learned that the whites believed the ICU was going to corrupt the land. They hated blacks who joined the ICU. I also learned that some of the black ICU members were killed by the Boers. They feared that Kadalie was going to give the land to blacks…[640]

Threats of white violence turned into fear for black workers at Komissierus. Mphaka Maine used to carry a spear in case of an attack. This was based on an instruction by the Magistrate at Bloemhof who had "warned people who were attending these [ICU] meetings that they must be careful and protect themselves with spears in their homes in case of any attack by Boers…".[641]

Beyond the rhetoric espoused at meetings, just like in Wolmaransstad, the ICU also managed to successfully combat some of the laws and violent cultures present in Bloemhof. Charles van

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[637] *Ibid*.
[638] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Maine, Motlagomang, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng, Hertzogville, 25 November 1986, Tape No. 556, 557 and 558. Transcript No. 155.
[639] Charles Van Onselen. "Race and Class", p. 108.
[640] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Maine, Motlagomang, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng, Hertzogville, 25 November 1986, Tape No. 556, 557 and 558. Transcript No. 155.
[641] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Maine, Motlagomang interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng, Hertzogville. 23 October 1986, Tape No. 555, Transcript No.154.

Onselen suggests that from as early as 1920, the Transvaal Native Congress (TNC) was lodging complaints about the treatment of black prisoners in Bloemhof. Black people who had been accused of tax defaulting or other offences were "handcuffed, roped to a white constable's horse and made to scramble and stumble over the twenty-mile haul to the Bloemhof police station".[642]

This treatment of black prisoners was still aimed at public humiliation and spectacle; the distance to the police station was often long, as people could be arrested on farms almost 25 kilometres from the town. Sellwane Legobathe suggests that the ICU helped change the way the police treated black prisoners,

> ICU helped us; at that time it was the Boer's laws that governed. People we handcuffed and locked inside for poll tax. That you will be made to walk on foot to Bloemhof police station, and he on a horseback.[643]

She recounted hearing Jingoes speak at Bloemhof where he said "why do they handcuff a simple poll tax offender like a thief".[644]

Over time the ICU began to be interspersed in the ranks of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC) in Bloemhof. While the relationship between the ICU and AMEC in the Western Transvaal is not clear, there was an overlap of members. Mphaka Maine was both a member of the ICU and AMEC and, as Van Onselen suggests, had been "searching for a cause that extended beyond the confines of the [church]".[645] The lay preacher and the reverend for the Bloemhof AMEC were both members of ICU. Both the AMEC and the ICU talked about "freedom and slavery" and this drew the organisations together. Van Onselen suggests that the familiarity between the ICU and AMEC "did much to smooth the way for some of the wealthier sharecroppers [in the Western Transvaal], such as Mdeboniso Tabu and Nini Tjalempe, to accept the ICU".[646]

ICU meetings throughout the Western Transvaal were often held strategically after AMEC's Sunday morning service. Members of the church used to "walk directly across the way to a Union meeting" which were set up deliberately after the Sunday services. The ICU used the

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[642] Van Onselen. *The Seed is Mine,* p.151.
[643] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Legobathe, Sellwane, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng. Gannalaagte, 9 July 1986, Tape No. 554. Transcript No.152.
[644] *Ibid*.
[645] Van Onselen. *The Seed is Mine*, p.144.
[646] *Ibid*., p.149.

already existent spatial networks of farmworkers travelling to town, and thus were able to articulate their message to a broader constituency. Sellwane Legobathe remembered going to a meeting held by Jingoes in Bloemhof,

> It was the time we went for Holy Communion Service at Bloemhof. Now on the very same Sunday there was an ICU meeting. Now after our service we went to the meeting just to see.[647]

The ICU had an impressive ability to conscientise ordinary people and, like in the example above, used the already existent spatial networks in the Western Transvaal to their benefit.

Like in Schweizer-Reneke, as the ICU grew into a force that challenged the racist and demeaning cultures present in Bloemhof, they came up against greater repression. For example, in May 1929, a member of the Bloemhof CID, Brewis, arrested Robert Makhatini for failing to pay his general tax for the year 1929. Makhatini was convicted and sentenced in the Bloemhof court and ordered to pay the two months' outstanding tax.[648] At 3:30 pm on 2 June 1929, Makhatini addressed a meeting in Bloemhof. He had let Brewis know about this meeting by sending him a letter asking him to attend and take notes. At the meeting, Makhatini aired his particular gripe with Brewis,

> My friend, Mr. Brewis, sitting in the motor car but we will face one another in this court at Bloemhof one of these days, as long as the unlawful arrest going on at Bloemhof I will make noise.[649]

As Makhatini got into the speech, he became increasingly fired up and angry, railing against the "murderous" Hertzog government which spent its time trying to stop the ICU. He then directed his attention to Brewis and the Bloemhof CID, and continued in an even more fiery and lengthy speech,

> I am going to report the C.I.D. of Bloemhof for the unlawful arrest, we are no more kaffirs. Mr. Brewis is a snake. When I came in Bloemhof I was told about you … You should look after your wife and servants and pay your servants more money instead of running after the I.C.U. My friends listen, from now on you must report the C.I.D. of Bloemhof, and I will help you people to report him … I am going to make more noise when I come back to Bloemhof next

[647] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Legobathe, Sellwane, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng. Gannalaagte, 9 July 1986, Tape No. 554. Transcript No.152.
[648] NASA, JUS, 517, 6044/29 - 6180/29 - 6175/29. Letter from Constable Brewis of the South African Police to the Public Prosecutor at Bloemhof, 15 June 1929.
[649] NASA, JUS, 517 ,6044/29 - 6180/29 - 6175/29. Notes taken of Makhatini addressing a meeting at Bloemhof, providing a speech. Notes taken by Brewis, 2 June 1929.

> time I will be more extreme in this poor town of Bloemhof. What are the people of Bloemhof, they are nothing more than I.C.U. haters, Hertzog wasting his time to have Makathini arrested. There are twelve more Makatinis. Hertzog thinks he is smart, but he is nothing.[650]

This sharp and aggressive speech angered Brewis who interrupted the meeting and, according to Makhatini, began "giving questions in connection with politics instead of taking notes…". Makhatini interpreted Brewis' involvement as "changing [the atmosphere of the meeting to] an angry and serious fighting mood". Brewis later denied interrupting the meeting, and instead claimed that he had spoken after. His account was as follows,

> Since the meeting was closed by complainant, I asked him what he meant by it to call me a snake. He refused to answer my question. I kept quiet and walked away. This was the only word I asked the complainant after the meeting was over and I do not think any person could stand it when a kaffir called a person a snake.[651]

Makhatini's speech was a blistering rebuke of the persecution he – and the ICU – continually faced. His promise of justice, through the "twelve more Makatinis" warned the authorities that African resistance against repression would only increase. As in Schweizer-Reneke, this was another case of a public servant interrupting ICU meetings.[652] Once again, different representatives of the state sided with Brewis. The public prosecutor indicated that no action could be taken in regards to Makhatini's complaint,[653] and the commissioner of police reiterated this, suggesting that Makhatini was simply trying to "win points".[654] Bloemhof provides another case of the ICU coming up against government repression and hostility.

Conclusion

The ICU's tenure in the South-Western Transvaal, in the towns Wolmaransstad, Makwassie, Ottosdal, Schweizer-Reneke and Bloemhof, started in 1928 and dwindled by about 1934. The union fought a range of battles in the region which related the consequent impacts of land dispossession; the unfolding of proletarianisation in the context of paternalism and violence.

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[650] *Ibid*.
[651] NASA, JUS, 517, 6044/29 - 6180/29 - 6175/29. Letter from Constable Brewis of the South African Police to the Public Prosecutor at Bloemhof, 15 June 1929.
[652] NASA, JUS, 517, 6044/29 - 6180/29 - 6175/29. Letter from Robert Makathini, the Secretary of the ICU for the Western Transvaal, to the Secretary of Justice, 17 June 1929.
[653] NASA, JUS, 517, 6044/29 - 6180/29 - 6175/29. Letter from the Public Prosecutor to Robert Makathini, 19 June 1929.
[654] NASA, JUS, 517, 6044/29 - 6180/29 - 6175/29. Letter from the Commissioner of Police to the Secretary of Justice, 6 July 1929.

The ICU often attached to already present struggles in towns, and fought for: better wages, land, sharecroppers to receive a fair share, better living conditions in the locations, the abolition of pass laws and against the victimisation of their constituency and workers (especially with regards conditions of arrest and beer brewing). The ICU had expert knowledge of the law and this enriched their activity in these towns. With the ICU's organisational decline by the late 1920s, charismatic and committed leaders carried it into the 1930s and took up the plight of black farmworkers and location inhabitants.

In the towns of the South-Western Transvaal discussed in this chapter, the ICU embodied a character which did not exclusively conform to the labels of "trade union" and "rural movement". The ICU took up local struggles, and did not confine themselves issues of work and wages, which is the conventional mandate of a "trade union", nor did they only conform to farm issues. The ICU also fought political issues, and Neame's characterisation of the ICU as radical-democratic describes this more fluid character.

Lefebvre's theory of space helps interpret the ICU's ability to organise farmworkers and location inhabitants. In all South-Western Transvaal towns, there was a movement of farmworkers between farms and towns. At the same time, farmworkers who entered towns for church or temporary work engaged with the ICU. The ICU also held meetings which created new spatial relations. These flows were more stringently policed after the declaration of the Urban Areas Act, with local government officials demanding pass receipts, lodgers permits and tax receipts from incoming workers. At every turn, ICU leaders were barred from addressing farmworkers and location residents, individually persecuted by town administrations and often evicted. At times, local administrations used outdated laws in a bid to quell the ICU's presence with whatever means. It is in these ways that the spatial politics of the Western Transvaal affected the trajectory of the ICU in this region.

Chapter four discusses the towns of the Western Transvaal, like those near the Reserves or adjacent to the Rand where the ICU's impact was less effective because of organisational issues that included ideological divisions, corruption and internal splits.

Chapter Four – Ideological Paradox, Poor Praxis, Corruption and Dwindling Funds: the ICU's Struggles in Other Towns of the Western Transvaal, 1926-1929

Introduction

While the ICU enjoyed a degree of success in the South-Western Transvaal and Lichtenburg, they struggled to organise in other towns in the rest of the Western Transvaal. As the previous chapter argued, in the South-Western Transvaal to the ICU was able to link to existing grievances, thanks to the commitment and power of individual organisers in the context of changing labour relations on the farms and hostile local authorities. In spite of the organisational issues plaguing the union in the late 1920s, the ICU enjoyed a degree of success in these areas, albeit for short and uneven periods.

This chapter focusses on towns on the periphery of the Rand (Klerksdorp and Potchefstroom), as well as in northern districts (Rustenburg) and the Cape Province (Mafikeng, Taung and Vryburg) in the proximity of Native Reserves (See Map 2). The ICU gave speeches and drew large crowds to their meetings in these towns as they sought to represent the grievances of location residents and farmworkers and gave sharp criticisms of conditions experienced by them. Yet the successes of the ICU in these towns were few and far between. This chapter suggests that the ICU failed to establish itself and effect real change in the towns that will be discussed below, because of issues plaguing the union and the towns' local political economy.

Klerksdorp and Potchefstroom were adjacent to the Rand, and here the ICU encountered stronger competition from other political organisations like the ANC and CPSA. The gold mines on the Rand attracted workers from Potchefstroom and Klerksdorp, and hence these towns were not the locus of proletarianisation. Rustenburg, Mafikeng, Taung and Vryburg were all adjacent to Reserves, where opposition from chiefs and a lack of sensitivity to issues in Reserves meant that the ICU had limited success. Equally, African people in these towns had a degree of access to land, meaning that they were less dependent on wage labour.

Chapter one discussed the organisational issues that plagued the ICU in the second-half of the 1920s and these played out locally in these towns. First, anti-communist ideology had been present in the discourse of Kadalie from the early 1920s, but became more pronounced and widespread among ICU members in 1926 when CPSA members were dismissed from the ICU, as well as in subsequent years when white liberals began influencing the union ideologically.

Second, increased corruption plagued ICU branches towards the end of the 1920s. Henry Dee suggests that "as corruption within the ICU became publicly known, crushing disillusionment rapidly spread amongst members", and this included cases of corruption across South Africa, being most rampant in places like Natal and involving prominent leaders including Kadalie and Champion. Third, as the ICU experienced a decline in membership payments across the country as well as decreasing funds because of corruption, their research capabilities were significantly hindered; this meant that the ICU was less able to articulate local grievances. Fourth, repression from white farmers and town administrations, like seen in chapters two and three, greatly inhibited the ICU's capacity to organise.

This chapter uses various newspapers sources, including *Umteteli Wa Bantu*, *Workers' Herald*, *Workers' Herald Weekly Newsletter*, *Rand Daily Mail* and *Ikwezi la Bantu*. Furthermore, it relies on material held at NASA such as reports kept by police of "seditious speeches" as well as correspondence between town administrations and the national government. Oral history interviews from the Sharecropping and Labour Tenancy Project also form an important part of the narrative below by providing the insights of black people and their experiences of the ICU. This chapter is structured much like chapter three. Six towns will be discussed, Klerksdorp, Potchefstroom, Rustenburg, Mafikeng, Taung and Vryburg. An overview of the history of each of these towns will be given, after which the unfolding of the ICU's presence will be critically examined. The title of this chapter aims to use the word "struggle" to both draw attention to the activism of the ICU and the difficulties they faced in much of the Western Transvaal.

Klerksdorp

Klerksdorp was founded in 1837 by a group of 12 Voortrekker families who had settled as farmers on the banks of the Schoonspruit river. While farming was, and is today, an important economy in Klerksdorp, Van Rooyen and Lenka – who argue from a development perspective – regard it as a "service centre", with the provision of services to surrounding towns and the Rand constituting the main part of the economy for the last 180 years. Klerksdorp provides agricultural supplies, retail facilities, schools and medical services.[655] The town did experience its own gold rush in 1885, when a few mine shafts were developed. This sped up the process of the town's formation, which was linked by railway to the Rand in 1897 and the Kimberly

[655] Deidre Van Rooyen and Molefi Lenka. "City of Matlosana" in Lochner Marais, Etienne Nel, Ronnie Donaldson, eds., *Secondary Cities and Development* (New York: Routledge, 2016), p.49, p.51.

diamond mines in 1906.[656] In the 1930s, the greater Klerksdorp area experienced a more substantive gold rush which peaked during WWII and dissipated by the 1990s. Van Rooyen and Lenka suggest that it was precisely because of Klerksdorp's role servicing the Rand and surrounding towns that it managed to stay afloat (for instance, when gold deposits dried up). Unlike towns in the South Western Transvaal, it did not primarily rely on the economies of farming and alluvial diamond mining.[657]

While the ICU had expressed interest in "yet disorganised centres" like Klerksdorp as early as January 1926,[658] ICU activity in Klerksdorp began in 1928 as it started holding meetings and established a presence in the town. In May 1928, a *Workers' Herald* article followed the movements of Keable 'Mote from "Sophia Town to Potchefstroom and Klerksdorp all over Vereeniging. We ask that all those who live in the branches of the forest [to] open their eyes."[659]

Two months later, on 1 July 1928, David Leeo, the ICU Branch Secretary for Klerksdorp, addressed a meeting of over 300 people in the Klerksdorp location. The main topic of the meeting concerned the strengthening of the relationship between worker and employer, as Leeo called for members of the audience to "unite and speak to [their] employers", further clarifying that "I do not want you to quarrel with your masters or say bad words to them, or leave their work; show them that you are obedient". The central point that Leeo was making was that black people would be willing to "pay their taxes" as long as "[rural] capitalists pay … better salaries".[660] Leeo's encouragement of worker "obedience" was in order to avoid "bloodshed",

> If we don't work, no work will go on in this town. If your hands were not there, they will be as poor as a bloody dog … I warn against the dangerous propaganda of the communist, we don't want bloodshed but speak mainly to our superiors.

Leeo's warning against the CPSA reflected the antagonisms between the party and the ICU as a result of the expulsion of communists in 1926. This decision, taken at a meeting by the ICU's national executive in December that year, impacted at the local level in Klerksdorp two years later, with Leeo adopting the ideological "anti-communist" outlook of the ICU. He told the crowd that he would come again two weeks later to address them.

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[656] *Ibid.,* p.52.
[657] *Ibid.*
[658] *Workers' Herald*, "I.C.U. at Work", 15 January 1926.
[659] *Workers' Herald*, "Tsa Transvaal (Keaubona) [Transvaal (I See You)]", 17 May 1928.
[660] NASA, JUS, 920, 1/18/26, vol.16 – vol.18. Report from the SAP at Klerksdorp to the District Commandant of the SAP at Potchefstroom, 3 July 1928.

'Mote and Leeo sent an application to hold the proposed meeting on 15 July. The application was referred to the Klerksdorp Public Health Committee, who rejected the application and passed it to the location Advisory Board.[661] At a meeting held on 13 July 1928, three members of the Board were debating the arrival of the ICU. While some members felt the ICU had not followed the proper channels in communicating that they intended to hold a meeting, others felt that there would be "no use to prevent them from coming" and that this would allow the union to "outline what was meant by ICU" and explain more about themselves.[662]

In the end, the Advisory Board voted against allowing the meeting.[663] After this decision was communicated to the ICU officials, they then approached the Magistrate, who after meeting with the Town Clerk and police "did not apparently feel that there was sufficient justification for refusal" and thus granted permission to hold the meeting.[664] The legislative hurdles placed on the ICU by the local administration were an attempt to curtail its influence and this inhibited its overall efficacy in the town.

Despite the decision of the magistrate, the Klerksdorp town council had not given permission to Keable 'Mote, David Leeo and Aaron Leaage (an ICU organiser in Klerksdorp) to hold a meeting. Additionally, the "visitors' permits" required for them to enter the location for more than six hours were also refused by the town council.[665] In spite of this, the three ICU organisers went ahead with the meeting. 'Mote began by calling out the town council for refusing permission, and decried the "slavery in the location". He noted,

> The town Council thinks that they are men that can still say, 'hou die kaffer op sy plek' [hold the kaffer in their place]. But I am holding this meeting in complete defiance of the town council …

[661] NASA, MKD, 2/3/144, N2, Letter from the Klerksdorp Town Clerk to Town Solicitors Smit and Jooste at Klerksdorp, 24 August 1928. See NASA, MKD, 2/3/153, N6 which suggests that the character of the Klerksdorp Advisory Board was concerned with running a neat and efficient location and demanding improved conditions of location inhabitants within the confines of what the local municipality provided.
[662] NASA, MKD, 2/3/153, N6 Minutes of the Native Advisory Board Meeting held at the Office of the Location Superintendent, 13 July 1928.
[663] *Ibid.*
[664] NASA, MKD, 2/3/144, N2 Letter from the Klerksdorp Town Clerk to Town Solicitors Smit and Jooste at Klerksdorp, 24 August 1928.
[665] NASA, JUS, 921, 1/18/26, vol.19 – vol.21. Report sent from the SAP at Klerksdorp to the District Commandant at Potchefstroom, 16 July 1928.

He then went on to denounce passes with Leeage, who spoke in Afrikaans, suggesting that the ICU was working to abolish passes. 'Mote reiterated that it was the ICU's policy to get rid of passes and outlined the ICU's plan,

> We are going to ask the government to suspend the pass law for six months, and if it is proved that there is less crime then we are going to ask the government to abolish the pass law, and if they don't we are going to collect the passes and send them to hell.[666]

Leeage also spoke about the ongoing process of dispossession black farmers faced at the hands of capitalising white farmers, "the time is no more when they will take black people's land and stock …".[667] 'Mote also noted the more practical issue of wages and taxes in the town,

> The Municipality is charging you 6/- and 9/6 a month for living in the location, and they are only paying you as much as £1.10 or £2 per month, are they Christians?[668]

Mote promised that "If the authorities are not going to play the game, I am going to stop 14 days here in Klerksdorp".[669] Leeo spoke about wages and strike action. He suggested that "the ICU is prepared to fight for you for an increment of salary", and, contradicting what he had said two weeks earlier, proclaimed that "the ICU believes in strikes if the capitalist does not give you justice".[670] Like illustrated in chapter two, the contradictions within ICU leaders' discourse related to the class position of organisers who occupied an "intermediate stratum (between 'petit bourgeois and poor')" where they were "pulled in different directions by antagonistic social forces".[671]

[666] *Ibid.*
[667] *Ibid.*
[668] *Ibid.*
[669] *Ibid.*
[670] *Ibid.*
[671] Bradford. "Mass Movements and the Petty Bourgeoisie", pp.307-308.

Thabo Wilfred Keable ‘Mote

Keable 'Mote. Source: Henry Dee. “Clements Kadalie, Trade Unionism, Migration and Race in Southern Africa, 1918-1930”, PhD Diss., University of Edinburgh (2019), p.173.

‘Mote was born in 1898 in Leribe, Basotholand. He attended Grace Dieu Anglican teacher training college in Pietersburg, Transvaal. He taught until 1924 (age 26), whereafter he joined the ICU. By 1925, ‘Mote was the Provincial Secretary for the Orange Free State, and together with Kadalie and other ICU organisers, led a successful campaign in Bloemfontein for a minimum wage. ‘Mote was trialled for his participation, but to save his own skin turned state witness and, during 1926, acted as a “private native informer”. In 1928, ‘Mote helped organise the Kroonstad rent strike. One Kroonstad man described ‘Mote, who “used to dress up elegantly. He would carry a walking stick and wore the Churchill-styled hat – they called it the Stetson hat. One day the man insulted the boers in full view of everyone. They called him ‘the Lion of the Free State’”.

While ‘Mote continued to work in the Free State, during 1927 and 1928 he moved into towns of the South-Western Transvaal like Bloemhof, Makwassie, Wolmaransstad and Schweizer-Reneke as well as towns further east of Klerksdorp and Potchefstroom. ‘Mote was a committed organiser and often embodied radical economic and political positions drawing the ire of local town councils. In Lichtenburg during June 1928, he helped organise workers in a strike for better wages and living conditions.

‘Mote was an “energetic” and “bombastic” public speaker who prolifically used meetings to represent workers’ grievances and direct attention to the failure of government. Contradictions abounded in ‘Mote’s political speeches; he simultaneously argued for communist and reformist positions. Henry Tyamzashe reflected on ‘Mote’s politically heterogenous character, noting that his “policy is like the colours of the rainbow. In other words: He never knew what he actually wanted, and where he was going. He was like the wind, which no one knoweth whence it cometh and whither it goeth.”

During the 1920s, ‘Mote was a member of the ANC, and into the 1940s was part of the Kroonstad Advisory Board and Joint African and European Councils. When the ICU split in the late-1920s, ‘Mote led a secession of northern Free State branches, but later associated himself with Kadalie’s Independent ICU in East London. When delivering a speech in Wolmaransstad in December 1930s, he dissociated himself with the ICU, claiming instead that he was a “social worker”.

References

Thomas Karis and Bugg-Levine, Anthony; Benson, Mary; Gerhart, Gail; Barnes, Terri eds., *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1990.* Volume 4. (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2017), p.344.

Wits HPRA, Ambrose Saffery Papers, AD 1178 B5. HD Tyamzashe, “A History of the ICU”, p.50.

Rand Daily Mail, “Natives air their grievances” “Wolmaransstad resolutions”, 23 December 1930, page 5.

Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Molete, J, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng. Kroonstad, 26 February 1980, Interview No. 24, Transcript No. 158.

Dee. “Clements Kadalie”, p.60.

After this meeting, the town council, who had had their bid to stop the ICU's meeting overturned by the magistrate, decided to approach solicitors Smit and Jooste. They wanted to know the extent to which they could limit the presence of the ICU in Klerksdorp, asking whether the Town council could "prevent the holding of a public meeting", and a range of other questions such as banning ICU organisers from entering the location or arresting them if they defied the orders of the town council.[672] While no further correspondence from the solicitors has been found, this example shows how local town councils, failing backing from the magistrate, utilised private legal advice to obstruct the ICU.

George Lephadi grew up in Klerksdorp and worked on a farm owning some of his own livestock. He remembered the ICU visiting Klerksdorp after the "black sorghum" (a year when so much rain fell that the sorghum crop turned black) in 1925. He remembered a meeting held by Kadalie and 'Mote in the Klerksdorp's "old location" where "there were many people" and "they stood on a wagon so that everybody could see them". The meeting mainly focussed on freedom and they told people that "something should be done because [they were] living in slavery". They spoke about "verbal negotiation" as the strategy for protest, which was characteristic of organisers in Klerksdorp.[673]

Towards the end of 1928, the then ICU District Secretary for the Western Transvaal, Jonga, had introduced Jason Jingoes to the ICU's Klerksdorp branch.[674] According to the latter, the branch had around 250 members, but struggled because Klerksdorp was an ANC "stronghold".[675] According to Peter Limb the ANC and ICU did "unite in campaigns" but there was organisational rivalry between organisations.[676] Limb also suggests that "Congress had put down strong roots" in the Transvaal including in places like Ventersdorp, Lichtenburg and Delareyville, and they exploited the failings of the ICU in various towns.[677] This is echoed by

[672] NASA, MKD, 2/3/144, N2 Letter from the Klerksdorp Town Clerk to Town Solicitors Smit and Jooste at Klerksdorp, 24 August 1928.
[673] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Lephadi, George, interview conducted by T. Matsetela. Ikageng, 27 May 1987. Tape No. 572. Transcript No. 238.
[674] It is not clear whether this was W.E. ka Jonga, Reginald Jonga or James Woska Jonga. All three people with the surname "Jonga" were part of the ICU. It seems that James Woska Jonga worked in Natal. W.E. ka Jonga and Reginald Jonga are mentioned in Philip Bonner. "Division and Unity in the Struggle: African Politics on the Witwatersrand in the 1920s", African Studies institute, Seminar Paper, 9 March 1992. W.E. ka Jonga and Reginald Jonga were both based on the Rand and either of them could have gone to Klerksdorp.
[675] Jingoes. *A Chief is a Chief by the People,* p.107.
[676] Limb. *The ANC's Early Years,* p.349, footnote 12.
[677] *Ibid.,* p.315. Also see, Manson and Mbenga. "The African National Congress in the Western Transvaal/Northern Cape Platteland", pp.478-479.

Bradford, who argues that throughout the Western Transvaal the reputation of the ICU as a movement that "mismanaged funds" was exploited by "political opponents [who] hammered this issue home.[678]

Jonga's own track record as ICU Branch Secretary in Johannesburg was poor as he was one of three individuals accused of misappropriating funds by members of the branch. In October 1928, the *Weekly News*, reported that in Klerksdorp, Germiston, Heidelberg and Standerton "the manner in which the monies of the Organisation have been handled by branch secretaries and collectors is shockingly disgraceful".[679] Despite the Klerksdorp branch being run on little money and with Jonga's dubious leadership, the ICU still faced persecution from the local authority. In December 1928, Jonga spoke to *Weekly News* noting that he had a barrage of complaints "meted out to him" by the Klerksdorp authorities. In the same article, the stringent laws of the Klerksdorp municipality were laid bare,

> In this town, we learn, African women are expected to report themselves on arrival and to carry the usual civilised symbol of slavery – the infernal pass which natives of all rank, religion and education must carry on their persons if they would not be locked up.[680]

As already noted, one way to understand Klerksdorp is through its position as a service centre. In this sense, it was an urban town with a white middle class population which meant that there were a greater proportion of service sector jobs, including domestic work for middle class families. When Henry Tyamzashe (see profile below) had travelled around the country to research "Municipal Government", he noticed the "slavelike operation" of Government Notice No.1547, which controlled African women seeking work in an urban area:

> This section lays down that women entering that (Urban) area for the purpose of seeking work, must report to the registering officer, obtaining 6 days' permission to seek work, and at the expiration of 6 days, that women, undefended, and sometimes financially disabled, is sent to no mans land.[681]

[678] Bradford. *A Taste of Freedom*, p.164.
[679] Wickins. "The Industrial", p.388, footnote 2.
[680] Wits HPRA, Saffery Papers, B2, *Workers' Herald Weekly News Bulletin*, 5 December 1928.
[681] *Workers' Herald*, H. D. Tyamzashe, "Municipal Government", 31 December 1928.

Henry Daniel Tyamzashe

Henry Daniel Tyamzashe. Source: Wits Historical Papers Research Archive (HPRA), T.D. Mweli Skota Papers, 1930-1974, A 1618, "Who's Who", "HD Tyamzashe", p.276.

Henry Daniel Tyamzashe was born in Kimberly in 1880. His father was a preacher in Zoutpansburg at the United Free Church of Scotland. Tyamzashe went to school in Kimberly and later studied at Lovedale. He did a course in printing, and thereafter worked as a printer for various newspaper offices. He contributed articles to newspapers with a primarily African readership.

Tyamzashe met Kadalie in Johannesburg in 1925, and when Kadalie succeeded in winning a dispute with Tyamzashe's former employer, they bonded and Tyamzashe joined the Union. He worked as the editor for the ICU's newspaper *Workers' Herald*, and often wrote insightful and cutting articles under the pseudonym "Skomo". He was well versed in literature, politics, economics and sport and he helped publish the *Workers' Herald* on a monthly basis for the first time. He was a "self-identifying 'non-Bolshevist'" and was an admirer of Marcus Garvey and black economic independence.

Tyamzashe was the provincial secretary for the Transvaal, and also occupied the position of Complaints and Research Secretary. In 1926, he visited Potchefstroom with Thomas Mbeki. While writing for the *Workers' Herald*, he drew attention to the plight of farmworkers across the Transvaal. Later, in 1928, he visited towns across the Transvaal and Western Transvaal, including Klerksdorp and Schweizer-Reneke on research visits.

Tyamzashe was part of a variety of political organisations; he was part of the ANC and wrote for *Abantu Batho* and *Bantu World*. When the ICU split, Tyamzashe followed Kadalie to East London and wrote for his newspaper *New Africa*, thereafter taking up a position on the East London Advisory Board.

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Thomas Karis and Bugg-Levine, Anthony; Benson, Mary; Gerhart, Gail; Barnes, Terri eds., *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1990.* Volume 4. (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2017), p.546.

Dee. "Clements Kadalie", p.170.

Wits HPRA, T.D. Mweli Skota Papers, 1930-1974, A 1618, "Who's Who", "HD Tyamzashe", pp.276-277.

In November 1928, on behalf of the ICU, Keable 'Mote represented women who had been asked to produce "registration certificates" when they were entering the town to look for work. A *Rand Daily Mail* article gave the following report on 'Mote's activities,

> Discussing the attitude of the Klerksdorp Municipality, Keable 'Mote said that this amounted to a declaration of war on African women. It was wholly against European democracy to force native women to carry such passes. The I.C.U. was fighting for the abolition or modification of the pass laws, and a test case would shortly be heard in Kingwilliamstown, in which action the point at issue concerned night passes for women. Klerksdorp's ruling was regarded as an indirect attack on the I.C.U.[682]

'Mote had approached the Bloemhof Magistrate to plead the case of the women, but when he arrived, he was told that there was a directive from a government minister (not clear which one) that "no interviews were to be given to I.C.U. officials."[683] 'Mote recognised the deliberate attempt to side line the ICU and threatened "direct action [and] revolutionary methods as the only effective means left to have our grievances put right." In this light, and because women did not fall under the Masters and Servants Act, 'Mote suggested that "in order to bring the municipality to their senses (failing satisfaction in any other way) he would call a little holiday for domestic workers."[684]

When 'Mote was asked by the *Rand Daily Mail* journalist whether he would have communist help to organise the strike he replied,

> I, personally, believe in direct action. I admit that the majority of the national council of the I.C.U. do not support my views when it comes to the question of a general strike. The natives don't believe in interviews with Cabinet Ministers on the subject of Pass Law modifications; they want total abolition. They want to be free from troubles with police. Some tangible result is wanted.[685]

Almost opposite to Leeo, 'Mote glossed over the differences between the ICU and the CPSA (which had developed in part because of Kadalie's aversion to "revolutionary violence").[686] He

[682] *Rand Daily Mail*, "Threat of direct action" "I.C.U. leader lets himself go" "His 'revolutionary methods'", 28 November 1928.
[683] *Ibid.*
[684] *Ibid.*
[685] *Ibid.*
[686] Dee. "Clements Kadalie", p.188.

rather focussed on the practical impact that "direct action" could have on eradicating pass laws plaguing black women.

The hostility of the Klerksdorp municipality towards the ICU was also matched by local white farmers. The Transvaal Farmers' Conference was held on 10-12 September 1929 and was opened by the Minister of Agriculture, Jan Kemp. Delegates at the conference argued for tighter labour control and pass laws for workers on farms, and lamented the ICU's stance in favour of less regulation.[687] They also suggested that the leaders of the ICU were "sedition mongers" and that they would "quickly dispose of them".[688] During the conference Klerksdorp farmers expressed confusion as to why farmers in Waterberg (a prosperous district in the Northern Transvaal) would meet with ICU officials,

> As for Klerksdorp, they do not want to hear anything in agreement with the I.C.U. To them Kaffir is kaffir, and they have no time to waste talking to this.[689]

The ICU's presence in Klerksdorp lasted no more than a year and a half, between 1928 and 1929. During this short span, it gave speeches to location residents, fought against the town council and attempted to remove the arbitrary controls placed on the movement of people – especially women. ICU officials spoke to the political aspirations of residents against the pass laws and for better wages. It seems that the difficulties of the ICU in Klerksdorp outweighed its achievements; mismanagement of funds, competition with other political organisations, uncompromising white farmers and the repression of the Klerksdorp local authority greatly inhibited the success of the ICU in the town.

Potchefstroom

Potchefstroom was founded by Voortrekkers in 1838 and was the first capital of the South African Republic. The town is about 120 km south-west of Johannesburg and this draws it into the economic sphere of the Rand and its concomitant industries, but also notably its political influences. The town was segregated from an early stage and up until 1869 black administration was the responsibility of the central government, thereafter alternating between the central government and a *stadsraad* (town council) until 1899. Both the central government and the town council were administering emergent black locations until 1902 when, following the

[687] *Rand Daily Mail*, "Farmers Black Bogey", 14 September 1929.
[688] Rand Daily Mail, "Trade Unionism among Natives" "Farmers Congress Debates Grave issue", 12 September 1929.
[689] *Workers Herald*, "Ho se Tsebe we le Bote [Ignorance and Confidence]", 7 September 1929.

South African War, the British took control of the Transvaal. In the context of changing local administrations in Potchefstroom, agreements made between black residents and white town councils were re-envisioned and changed. Between 1902 and 1907, protests by black residents over location regulations were prevalent as new laws were implemented which "made the administration of justice in the township easier" but further restricted the location residents.[690]

In 1904, for example, the "headman" of the Potchefstroom location (Makweteng), Petrus Molotto, complained to the mayor of the high taxes charged to location residents. He reasoned that many of the residents of Makweteng had arrived simultaneously with the earliest Voortrekkers and deserved a "share in the development of the country".[691] In 1905, Makweteng resident Lazarus Muthle argued on behalf of location residents for the reinstatement of agreements made with the previous Town Council with respect to the ownership of stands within the location and the rights of owners (with regards to rent, sale and upgrades). Muthle and two other residents, Stephen Mpama (the father of 1920s Potchefstroom activist, Josie Mpama) and George Ntombella, went to petition the Minister of Native Affairs and a member of the Legislative Assembly about the injustices with regards "stand permits" and the tax applied to women doing washing.[692]

In 1914, Makweteng residents formed an "advisory committee", which by and large had the support of the local authority. The advisory body concerned itself with issues such as liquor drinking, which often led to fighting in Makweteng. After five months, this body was dissolved and in 1916 a Health and Parks Committee, with a strong religious constituency, took on the administration of the location. While the advisory committee had been predominantly black, the Health Committee was mostly white. The Health Committee concerned itself with seemingly banal issues like "dances, concerts" which, according to the SAP, needed supervision.[693] Unsurprisingly, most of the protest in Potchefstroom came from people with everyday grievances over regulations like the night curfew, the closing of water wells and, most notably, the imposition of a lodger's permit for those who were 18 years or older.[694] By 1926,

[690] Fanie Jansen van Rensburg. "Protest by Potchefstroom Native Location's Residents Against Dominance, 1904 to 1950." *Historia* 57, 1 (2012), pp.22-23.
[691] *Ibid.,* 22-41, p.24.
[692] *Ibid.,* pp.24-26.
[693] *Ibid.,* p.28.
[694] Robert Edgar. *The Making of an African Communist: Edwin Thabo Mofutsanyana and the Communist Party of South Africa 1927-1939* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2005), p.6.

a second Advisory Board was in operation and represented residents' grievances with regard to job reservation for poor whites, the evening curfew and water tariffs.[695]

Along with the residents of Makweteng, national political organisations like the TNC, ANC, CPSA and ICU were all present in Potchefstroom. Following the 1922 mineworkers' strike, the TNC and ANC leader Sol Plaatje held meetings which "drew big crowds" in Potchefstroom to oppose the Urban Areas Bill.[696] Meetings were also held by ANC leader James Theale.[697] The strongest political movement in Potchefstroom was the CPSA, and according to Bradford "almost all the residents [of the location] were Communist supporters".[698] The CPSA's strength in Potchefstroom presented a challenge to the ICU's organising; this was partly due to the rivalries between the two organisations, but also to the fact that residents of the location (who were under great financial pressures) were unlikely to be able to afford membership of both organisations. As will be shown below, one of the most important reasons why the CPSA was so popular in Potchefstroom is that they were well attuned to residents' grievances and provided them with excellent legal support.

In January 1926 the *Workers' Herald* wrote that the then ICU Western Transvaal Provincial Secretary, Thomas Mbeki (see biographical profile) expressed interest in "disorganised centres" and among them was Potchefstroom.[699] By March 1926, Mbeki had "less work to do in Gauteng" and was able to give more time to Potchefstroom. Another *Workers' Herald* article chronicled the ICU's approach to Potchefstroom,

> The new branch will be opened in Potchefstroom on the 14th of this month [March 1926] […] On the 12th, the election of Mbeki, the Provincial Secretary, and Mr. Buller were sent to this old Transvaal town. Mbeki – the "Small Lion of the North" was one with Tyamzashe in Pretoria, they ran for the township – leaving as if chased by a train.[700]

Mbeki had been active in Potchefstroom and was reported to be "preaching unity" one month after the launch of the ICU branch.[701] Despite his best efforts, a *Workers' Herald* article noted

[695] Jansen van Rensburg. "Protest by Potchefstroom", p.29.
[696] *Ibid.,* p.32. Also see, Limb. *The ANC's Early Years,* p.180.
[697] Jansen van Rensburg. "Protest by Potchefstroom", p.32.
[698] Bradford. *A Taste of Freedom,* p.164.
[699] *Workers' Herald*, "I.C.U. at Work", 15 January 1926.
[700] *Workers' Herald*, "I.C.U. ePotchefstroom [I.C.U. in Potchefstroom], 27 March 1926.
[701] *Workers' Herald*, "Batinina Abasebenzi? [What About the Workers?], 28 April 1926.

the struggles that Mbeki was experiencing while trying to recruit members and address location residents,

> The Transvaal secretary [Mbeki] has been based in Mahlotshane (Potchefstroom). No, he found that the place was still really really a Boer house.[702]

With the overall efficacy of the branch flailing, Peter Wickens notes that "Potchefstroom appears to have been a very weak branch and may even have died soon after [its establishment in 1926]".[703]

The growing presence of a wide array of national organisations drew a response from the town council in 1927, which then illegally banned meetings which did not have the "necessary permission".[704] The culture of the South African Police and law enforcement in Potchefstroom were part of a state apparatus that abused their power. Makweteng Superintendent Andries Weeks was both a symbol of, and a key role player in, this culture. He was against the formation of an Advisory Board in 1912 and according to Makweteng residents had not reported an incident where he knew "fifteen people had died".[705] He "ran roughshod" over location residents where he broke up meetings, led searches into people's houses,[706] and "went out of his way to insult and antagonise black people".[707] In late 1927, 1232 residents in the Potchefstroom location signed a petition calling for his removal.[708]

[702] *Workers' Herald*, "Izinto Ngezinto [Various Things]", 15 May 1926.
[703] Wickins, p.337, footnote no.1.
[704] Jansen van Rensburg. "Protest by Potchefstroom", p.32.
[705] *Ibid.,* p.28.
[706] *Ibid.,* p.28. Also see footnote no. 37 for further issues regarding law enforcement.
[707] Robert Edgar. *The Making of an African Communist,* p.6.
[708] *Ibid.,* p.6.

Thomas Mbeki

Thomas Mbeki was a Communist Party member and an ICU organiser. He was born in the year 1905/1906 (having been 20 years old in May 1926) and was Xhosa speaking. Mbeki worked as a general labourer before he entered the ranks of the ICU and CPSA. Over time he became increasingly educated and even pass exempted. Mbeki together with Stanley Silwana and Gana Makabeni were the first black members in the Communist Party. He was part of the Young Communist League and attended night school classes in Ferreirastown, Johannesburg. In his time working for the ICU, Mbeki organised workers throughout the Transvaal and while he did organise in Pretoria and the Western Transvaal, he was most prolific in the Eastern and Northern Transvaal. In May 1926, the *Workers' Herald* gave the following description: "Comrade Mbeki is one of the most dashing organisers of the I.C.U., At the time of writing he was busy organising the miners in the Collieries of the Northern Transvaal. A fluent speaker who fearlessly advocates the rights of his people, he is now making rapid progress in this district".

Mbeki had considerable success in the Eastern Transvaal in places like Middelburg, Standerton, Barberton and Bethal and gave fiery and exciting speeches wherever he organised. In 1926, Mbeki led a campaign demanding the right for black people to walk on pavements and he claimed "blacks are on the same footing as whites". In 1928 Mbeki was expelled from the ICU for drunkenness, although according to Bradford, it was rather because of his fiery reputation rallying workers which jarred with the ICU's reformist trade unionism. After the split of the ICU, Mbeki was charged with embezzlement and jailed in September 1929. Having served a prison sentence, Mbeki was employed as a police informant in 1930, only to return to the fold working for the Independent ICU in 1932. Mbeki remained loyal to Kadalie and the ICU, but lost his effectiveness through bouts of drunkenness, which eventually led to his death in the early 1940s.

References:

Bradford, Helen. *A Taste of Freedom: the ICU in Rural South Africa, 1924-1930* (New Haven Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1987).

Bradford, Helen. "Mass Movements and the Petty Bourgeoisie: The Social Origins of ICU Leadership, 1924–1929", *The Journal of African History* 25, 3 (1984): 295-310.

Cobley, Alan Gregor. "Liquor and leadership: Temperance, drunkenness and the African petty bourgeoisie in South Africa." *South African Historical Journal* 31, 1 (1994): 128-148.

Image: Workers' Herald, (profile of Mbeki), 15 May 1926.

Despite warnings not to hold meetings and the aggressive nature of the SAP at Potchefstroom, both the TNC and CPSA held meetings in Makweteng. In May 1927, the TNC held a meeting attended by 100 people and spoke about issues relating to land and the government.[709] In March 1928, TW Thibedi (a CPSA organiser who headed the party's Ferreirastown night school) held a meeting in Makweteng which drew over 400 people.[710] After he was arrested for holding the meeting, members of the audience marched to the magistrate's office in protest, where "blows were exchanged" in a confrontation with over 100 whites opposing the meeting.[711] Thibedi was charged under the Native Administration Act of 1927, but the case was ruled in his favour as the judge noted that the CPSA's struggle was between the "haves and the have-nots and not on the subject of race".[712]

The conflict between the location residents and the white town inhabitants became increasingly violent, evidenced by the army being present at a meeting held by CPSA Chairman Sidney Percival (SP) Bunting and Molly Wolton (CPSA member and activist in the 1920s) in April 1928.[713] By May 1928, the CPSA had gained a local membership of 700. Edwin Mofutsanyana, who was a prolific CPSA activist in Potchefstroom, was tasked with running the branch with fellow CPSA member Shadrach Kotu in June 1928. While Mofutsanyana and Kotu did not get along particularly well, their running of the branch was met with repression by superintendent Weeks who tried to get them ejected from Makweteng while continually harassing and arresting them.[714] This spurred Mofutsanyana on to fight with tenacity over lodgers' permits and to use the courts to fight evictions.[715]

Josie Mpama was another "key leader" of the CPSA in the struggle against lodgers' permits in Potchefstroom.[716] Mpama engaged in "gendered politics", was a "disciplined" CPSA member

[709] NASA, JUS, 918, 1/18/26, vol.9 – vol.12. Report by the District Commandant of Potchefstroom, 25 May 1927.
[710] NASA, JUS, 919, 1/18/26, vol.13 – vol.15. Report from the Criminal Investigation Department at Potchefstroom to the District Commandant of the SAP at Potchefstroom, 23 March 1928.
[711] NASA, JUS, 919, 1/18/26, vol.13 – vol.15. Clipping of *Rand Daily Mail* article on 28 March 1928 and NASA, JUS, 919, 1/18/26, vol.13 – vol.15. Letter from the District Commandant of the SAP at Potchefstroom to the Deputy Commissioner of the SAP at Pretoria, 28 March 1928.
[712] Jansen van Rensburg. "Protest by Potchefstroom", p.33.
[713] NASA, JUS, 920, 1/18/26, vol.16 – vol.18. Report from the Criminal Investigation Department to the District Commandant of the SAP at Potchefstroom, 30 April 1928.
[714] Edgar. *The Making of an African Communist,* p.9.
[715] *Ibid.,* p.9.
[716] See Jansen van Rensburg. "Protest by Potchefstroom", p.29.

and a community activist.[717] Women employed a variety of tactics to challenge the incessant badgering by Weeks over the lodger's permits. Julia Wells describes the stayaway of location residents during the months January to May 1930 in *The Day the Town Stood Still*, where women fought against the imposition of lodgers' permits forcing men to not to go to work.[718] When Mpama was asked why women were more politically active than men, she responded saying: "because men are cowards. They are afraid of losing their jobs!" By 1931 the lodgers' fee was abolished, only to be recouped in other forms.[719] Mpama was also instrumental in leading anti-pass campaigns from 1928 through to 1930. At a meeting in 1930, both Mpama and Mofutsanyana addressed a crowd and urged people to burn their passes.[720]

It was around the time when Mofutsanyana was first gaining a foothold in Potchefstroom, in May 1928, that the ICU began holding meetings. On 6 May 1928, ICU organisers Samuel Rampoumanie and P.R. Kutu addressed a meeting whose purpose was, in Kutu's words, "not to destroy, but to build". Both Rampoumanie and Kutu tried to distinguish the ICU from the CPSA arguing that the ICU was "entirely a native organisation" while the CPSA was, by contrast, a "white organisation".[721] Kutu suggested that "a telegram had been received here from the communist headquarters telling the natives not to attend the I.C.U. meeting".[722] Speaking to *Umteteli Wa Bantu*, a communist spokesperson denied that any such telegram was sent, and stated that "we encourage our members to join the I.C.U.".[723] *Umteteli* noted that while the newspaper disagreed with the CPSA's policy of "securing freedom by force", Kutu should not be exonerated for his false utterance.[724]

Rampoumanie and Kutu urged the audience at the meeting to unite in "one voice", embark on collective action and reject tribalism.[725] Much of the call for "one voice" regarded wages, as Kutu spoke about how white farmers treated their labourers poorly and how wages should be

[717] Robert Edgar. *Josie Mpama/Palmer: Get Up and Get Moving* (Ohio University Press: Athens and Ohio, 2020).
[718] Julia Wells, "'The Day the Town Stood Still': Women in Resistance in Potchefstroom 1912-1930" in Belinda Bozzoli eds., *Town and Countryside in the Transvaal: Capitalist Penetration and Popular Response* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983): 269-307.
[719] Robert Edgar. *The Making of an African Communist,* pp.12-13.
[720] NASA, JUS, 924, 1/18/26, vol. 29 – vol.31. Report by the Potchefstroom SAP, 21 December 1930.
[721] NASA, JUS, 920, 1/18/26, vol.16 – vol.18. Report of the SAP at Potchefstroom to the District Commandant at Potchefstroom, 9 May 1928.
[722] *Rand Daily Mail*, "Communists versus I.C.U." "Propaganda work at Potchefstroom", 8 May 1928.
[723] *Umteteli Wa Bantu*, "The Communist Party and the I.C.U.", 2 June 1928.
[724] *Ibid.*
[725] NASA, JUS, 920, 1/18/26, vol.16 – vol.18. Report of the SAP at Potchefstroom to the District Commandant at Potchefstroom, 9 May 1928.

increased: "we know that the white farmers treat their natives like dogs… natives should be paid 8/6 a day, both for inside and outside work".[726] Other matters which were spoken about were passes, which Kutu explained the ICU proposed to do away with.[727] A *Rand Daily Mail* article reported

> Kutu announced the intention of the I.C.U. to establish an office here [in Potchefstroom], but a call for recruits found the natives lukewarm. When they were asked for a 2s. entrance fee and 2s. a month subscription, one of the audience suggested that some people were getting rich on these amounts. Only three names were handed in before the meeting dispersed.[728]

Kutu noted to the *Rand Daily Mail* that he had held two meetings in Potchefstroom (one on 6 May 1928 and another prior) and that "forty-seven natives enrolled as members and paid their subscriptions".[729]

Keable 'Mote (see biographical profile, p.168) was mentioned as having been travelling to Potchefstroom in May 1928,[730] but it was not until June 1928 that he arrived there and gave a speech. This was a month-and-a-half after Kutu and Rampoumanie, on 25 June 1928, and 'Mote arrived full of the energy from the strike in Grasfontein. Initially he spoke to an audience of between 100 and 150, but as his speech continued, the crowd grew to between 200 and 250 people. He railed against the injustices of diggers in Grasfontein, whom he regarded as "thieves" for not paying their workers properly. He then turned his attention to Potchefstroom saying that the ICU are "going to give these buggers [the Potchefstroom authorities] hell" and accused the superintendent Weeks of being a "damnedest fool" who "hits women".[731] 'Mote then spoke to the growing rift between the ICU and the CPSA, saying that the "ICU is good and the Communists bad". He spoke against the pass laws and decried the pass as a "dog licence".[732]

The ICU's brief stint in Potchefstroom was but a speck in this contested political space. The CPSA continued to have a substantial presence. On 16 December 1929, they held a rally remembering the struggle against white domination and the battle between the Boers and

[726] *Ibid.*
[727] *Ibid.*
[728] *Rand Daily Mail*, "Communists versus I.C.U." "Propaganda work at Potchefstroom", 8 May 1928.
[729] *Rand Daily Mail*, "The I.C.U. at Potchefstroom", 9 May 1928.
[730] *Workers' Herald*, "Tsa Transvaal (Keaubona) [Transvaal (I See You)]", 17 May 1928.
[731] NASA, JUS, 920, 1/18/26, vol.16 – vol.18. Report from the Criminal Investigation Department in Potchefstroom to the District Commandant of the South African Police at Potchefstroom, 25 June 1928.
[732] *Ibid.*

Dingaan. The meeting was addressed by CPSA activist Sammy Marks and there were many white people present in the crowd.[733] Marks' speech incensed the white members of the crowd who began hurling insults and interrupting him. Joseph Weeks, brother of superintendent Andries Weeks, then fired a gun injuring four black members of the audience. One man, Herman Lithipe, died a few days later.[734]

The meetings and struggles over rents and passes continued into the early 1930s in Potchefstroom, where Mpama showed "strong and sound leadership" and Mofutsanyana held rallies. [735] Yet, ideological and factional battles undermined further CPSA involvement in Potchefstroom. The issue started in 1928 when Comintern ordered the CPSA to adopt the Native Republic Resolution. While this led to an upsurge in African membership, the party's Central Committee rejected the resolution on the grounds that it was "prioritizing rural struggles and … unduly alienating white workers, thus undermining CPSA's stress on interracial class unity".[736] As with the ICU, the CPSA's internal schisms did not immediately impact on the ground organising (although like the ICU, they eventually caught up with the organisation).

Helen Bradford suggests that the ICU failed to make inroads in Potchefstroom.[737] The reasons for this are linked in part to the organisation having "limited resources", which meant that they "could not bring test cases to courts" or devote resources and time to the area.[738] Another factor was the failure of the ICU to understand the areas' political economy and engage with Makweteng residents on issues that affected them, specifically lodger's permits and evictions. Josie Mpama admitted that the CPSA "only got started after the unrest over lodgers' permits had begun"; this points to the CPSA's strategy in Potchefstroom which looked to the residents' grievances before giving political advice.[739] Another factor, from 1926, was the ICU's continued antipathy towards communism and communists. This meant that ideological divisions inhibited the formation of political alliances with the CPSA. In Potchefstroom, this

[733] Edgar. *The Making of an African Communist",* p.10.
[734] *Ibid.,* p.11.
[735] Jansen van Rensburg. "Protest by Potchefstroom", pp.29-33. See meetings held by Mofutsanyana in 1930: NASA, JUS, 923, 1/18/26, vol.25 – vol.28. Report compiled by the Commissioner of Police to the Secretary of Justice, 30 April 1930.
[736] Allison Drew. "Communist Party of South Africa, 1921-1950" in Immanuel Ness eds., *International Encyclopaedia of Revolution and Protest* (Massachusetts: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), p.832.
[737] Bradford. *A Taste of Freedom,* p.164.
[738] Edgar. *The Making of an African Communist,* p.8.
[739] Julia Wells, "'The Day the Town Stood Still'", p.286.

antagonism does not seem to have been an astute political move by the ICU, given the CPSA's popularity.

Rustenburg

Towards the end of the 1920s, the ICU tried to arrange meetings in Rustenburg, but unlike other areas in the Western Transvaal, they struggled to ignite people's imaginations. Graeme Simpson, who wrote his Masters on political struggles in the Rustenburg district, argues that the area was characterised by "resilient peasant economies" which in general meant that rural peasants could avoid wage labour on white farms, and thus would not be fertile ground for ICU organising.[740] In this sense, he suggests that the ICU generally failed to "articulate the local material concerns" of Tswana peasants which, rather than being related to exploitation by white farmers or national oppression, were based on the "unequal distribution of tribal control".[741] The struggles in Rustenburg were "introverted" and "localised", and the ICU was unable to tap into and articulate local grievances.[742]

Simpson also regards the influence by the TNC (an SANNC affiliate), which had been organising in Rustenburg since 1917 (to the extent that they were rumoured to be planning a chiefs' rebellion) as at best "sporadic and haphazard".[743] The meetings between the TNC and chiefs centred around land and created widespread panic among white residents in Rustenburg. By 1919 the TNC was radicalised and took up issues relating to pass laws, which soured their relationship with chiefly authority. In 1923 a challenge by a rebel faction within the Bafokeng chiefdom at Phokeng, led by David Mokgatle, to the "illegitimate" leadership of Chief August Mokgatle created widespread discontent among members of the chiefdom. The Department of Native Affairs tried to bolster the authority of August Mokgatle and noted with suspicion the influence that black political organisations like the ANC, CPSA and ICU had in stoking the rebels. By far the most successful organisation in Rustenburg at this time was the ANC, but the fuel for the rebellion lay in ordinary members of the BaFokeng.[744]

The Transvaal African Congress (TAC) (also an affiliate of the by then ANC) continued sporadic activism in Rustenburg relating to issues in the location. In February 1930, S. P.

[740] Graeme Simpson. "Peasants and Politics", p.307.
[741] *Ibid*., p.307.
[742] *Ibid.,* pp.307-308.
[743] *Ibid.,* p.183.
[744] Manson and Mbenga. *Land, Chiefs, Mining,* pp.69-75.

Matseke of the TAC held a meeting in Bethlehem location where he decried the "night passes" that African women were forced to carry and also spoke against the pass controls applied to those attending the meeting.[745] Ten months later, in December 1930, the TAC held another meeting with about 60 people present. The pass burning in Pretoria, a campaign by the ICU and CPSA to oppose the exclusion of African people from political participation, was a topic of the meeting, but this failed to convince the crowd to take tickets and become members.[746]

While the ANC had a presence in Rustenburg, there is only a smattering of evidence relating to the ICU in the Rustenburg District. Wickins notes that the ICU set up a branch in Rustenburg in 1928. Farmworkers around Rustenburg did not take to the ICU too kindly. Ramakgelo Dinkebogile, a farmer who lived in Kafferskraal (a farm east of Rustenburg), remembered the ICU visiting the area in the second half of the 1920s. Dinkebogile farmed mealies and sold grain for money at Kafferskraal (it is not clear from the oral sources what type of land ownership structure existed at the farm).[747] He recollected how the community refused to entertain the presence of ICU organisers as they approached Kafferskraal: "we refused. One day we were going to hit them. They said we must throw away our passes … We hit them. They ran away".[748] Dinkebogile thought Kadalie was a "great cheat" who "ate [black peoples'] money while pretending to be [their] spokesman". Here, the ICU was not associated with freedom, it was perceived as corrupt:

> They wanted to put us into trouble. How did they help us? How many did he [Kadalie] help? What? He took away a lot of money from people. Mh! Many people lost their things because of him. He said to others they must refuse, refuse. Whites hit those people.[749]

Kadalie, as well as the former ANC president Sefako Makgatho, who had been present in the Rustenburg area during the chiefs' revolt in 1917, were perceived as part of a political elite that was using organisations like the ICU and ANC to make money: "Kadalie. He was a cheat of a Kaffer, man. He used the Makgathos to collect money… I'm telling about Makgatho and

[745] NASA, JUS, 923, 1/18/26, vol.25 – vol.28. Report by the SAP at Rustenburg, 16 February 1930.
[746] NASA, JUS, 924, 1/18/26, vol. 29 – vol.31. Report from the SAP at Rustenburg to the District Commandant of the SAP at Rustenburg, 22 December 1930.
[747] There were two portions of the farm Kafferskraal which were owned by black people. In his interview, Ramakgelo Dinkebogile suggests they were staying on a farm which they owned. See Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Dinkebogile, Ramakgelo, interview conducted by T.Phiri. Phokeng, 28 July 1981. Tape no. 294. Transcript no. 48.
[748] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Dinkebogile, Ramakgelo, interview conducted by T. Phiri. Phokeng, 28 July 1981. Tape no. 294. Transcript no. 48.
[749] *Ibid.*

Kadalie. They were cheats. They were *skelms daardie mense* [they were thieves those people]".[750] ICU organiser Cecil Sehlabo experienced a similar sentiment when he visited Rustenburg in October 1929. Sehlabo wrote about his experience in the *Workers' Herald* and noted that although he encountered a "great human spirit", he had four meetings and they "did not want [him] to stay there".[751]

The anger of Dinkebogile towards the ICU is perhaps understood best through the regional politics in Rustenburg at the time. As already noted, national political organisations had very little purchase in the Rustenburg district, and their presence was regarded with suspicion. Ernest Penzhorn, who was a missionary at the Hermannsburg mission station to the BaFokeng chiefdom, noted in 1930 the disregard for national politics in the district was from the top as well: "chiefs will not have anything to do with these Native Congresses ... when they [Congress people] come here they send them away ... the ICU will never come here. The chiefs would not allow them for one minute".[752] Another important factor which would have shaped Dinkebogile's view were the countless and countrywide cases of embezzlement and mismanagement of funds that ICU officials were involved in. As seen above, Jonga was accused of corruption in Klerksdorp, as was Thomas Mbeki (and, as will be discussed below, there was also corruption in Mafikeng). These stories certainly filtered down to ordinary people and shaped their understanding of the ICU.

The ICU did appeal to some farmworkers living around Rustenburg both at Kafferskraal and another farm Tlhabane (west of Rustenburg). Ntemo Mokgatle was the son of a Bafokeng chief; he claimed to have known Kadalie personally and encountered him on several occasions in Johannesburg. He remembered Kadalie speaking in Johannesburg in 1927 about "passes, low wages, colour bar … the way the boers treated us, Kadalie wanted to get rid of that". In Tlhabane, Mokgatle had received wages of five shillings a week amounting to £5 every six months. In the words of Mokgatle: "five shillings a week, for seven days you work for five shillings. What can you do with five shillings?".[753] Despite the Kadalie never visiting Tlhabane, according to Mokgatle "his ideas were known" and had an impact on people's consciousness.[754]

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[750] *Ibid.*
[751] *Workers' Herald*, "Tsa Rustenburg [In Rustenburg]", 15 October 1929.
[752] Quoted in Graeme Simpson. "Peasants and Politics", p.184.
[753] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Mokgatle, Ntemo, interview conducted by J. Phiri. Phokeng, 12 September 1981. Tape no.306 and 309. Transcript no.280.
[754] *Ibid.*

Dinkebogile described the ICU's ideology as follows: "Boers should go away, […] this is not their land. [Kadalie] said Boers should go to Holland. They must go back to Holland. Their land is Holland".[755] Israel Mathuloe was a sharecropper in Modderfontien and Kafferskraal and worked as a migrant worker in Johannesburg in the off season. He remembered the ICU sending letters to Kafferskraal calling for people to attend meetings in Johannesburg.[756] Mathuloe was unimpressed with the vacuous ideology of the ICU. Providing access to land was the only way the ICU was going to better the position of sharecroppers, and for him, the ICU never really effected proper change:

> This is what everybody was saying. ICU never got rid of any Boer. The number of Boers increased until they had occupied every available land. You see, these lands had no single Boer living on them. You could walk a very far distance without seeing a single Boer farm.[757]

Despite the ICU's inability to challenge the dominant patterns of land ownership, Motholoe noted that the ICU "worked hand in hand with lawyers" and they helped people who were getting paid poorly. The "ICU helped there. These boers did not want to pay. ICU started harassing them until they had to pay. It helped there".[758] Furthermore, in cases where farmers fired workers for not honouring or fulfilling their contract, the ICU also spoke on their behalf.[759] He also remembered a time in Kafferskraal when Kadalie visited and urged people to throw away their passes. On his travels, Mathuloe worked in Johannesburg and attended ICU meetings at the Malay Camp (in the suburb of Fietas, near Vrededorp) which spoke about liberation and the oppression of the Boers.[760]

Dinkebogile saw the impact of the ICU as problematic in that it caused farmers to become more organised as a class during the second half of the 1920s. He witnessed white farmers trying to evict black sharecroppers and farm dwellers in the Rustenburg district for over 20 years and thought that the ICU merely strengthened their resolve: "that's those people, Boers combined because of them [the ICU]. Their society. Congress. Boer Congress". The ICU "made the Boer

[755] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Dinkebogile, Ramakgelo, interview conducted by T. Phiri. Phokeng, 28 July 1981. Tape no. 294. Transcript no. 48.
[756] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Mathuloe, Israel, interview conducted by T. Phiri. Phokeng, 29 July 1981. Tape no.304 and 307. Transcript no. 318.
[757] *Ibid.*
[758] *Ibid.*
[759] *Ibid.*
[760] *Ibid.*

to be clever" and thus made life considerably more difficult for black people.[761] Mathuloe made a direct link between the way Afrikaners used to organise captured black prisoners and the white farmers' response to the ICU, who "said ICU is not good. They said they [ICU] thought it can liberate others. The Boers said we should be 'spanned' just like in Paul Kruger's days. They used to 'span' black people".[762] "Span" referred to how workers or prisoners were organised, which would ensure a correct distribution of labour into work groups/teams or "spans" (here too, it probably refers to forced labour).

As Simpson suggests, the ICU could not to grow a mass constituency in Rustenburg because of the plain fact that the majority of black people were peasants based in Native Reserves. This represents a weakness in the ICU's strategy where they failed to articulate the grievances of peasants in Rustenburg, whose primary concern was about the "unequal division of tribal control". Yet, migrant workers, farmworkers and sharecroppers on farms interacted with the ICU and helped spread the union's ideology onto farms in the Rustenburg district, where the ICU spoke about wages, passes and land. Despite some limited success, notably in campaigns against passes and for increased wages, corruption within the ICU and suspicion by chiefs of the ICU's motives bred distrust among workers who rejected visiting parties of ICU organisers.

Mafikeng

Mafikeng falls in the then Cape Province, west of the Western Transvaal. Sue Parnell notes that there are two features of Mafikeng's late nineteenth-century history which make it exceptional. The first is that it was declared an extra-territorial administrative centre for the British Protectorate of Bechuanaland. The second feature was the 292-day siege of the town which occurred from 1899-1900.[763]

The first people to move into the area which today is Mafikeng were the Molema section of the Barolong, who settled on the banks of the Molopo River in 1850. The first traditional Tswana settlement was known as "Molema's Stadt". In 1895, a white town was laid out immediately adjacent to the "Stadt" on land which was leased from the Barolong chief. Sol Plaatje and Modiri Molema chronicled how black people living on the banks of the Molopo

[761] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Dinkebogile, Ramakgelo. interview conducted by T. Phiri. Phokeng, 28 July 1981. Tape no. 294. Transcript no. 48.
[762] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Mathuloe, Israel, interview conducted by T. Phiri. Phokeng, 29 July 1981. Tape no.304 and 307. Transcript no. 318.
[763] Susan Parnell. "From Mafeking to Mafikeng: the Transformation of a South African Town." *GeoJournal* 12, 2 (1986), p.204.

were declared squatters after the introduction of the 1913 Land Act.[764] Other than the Barolong living in the Stadt, there were two main reserves in the Mafikeng district: the Molopo and Setlagole Reserves occupied by sections of the Barolong chiefdom. As was the case in other chiefdoms, poor rain, bad soils and plagues ravaged any agricultural promise. Distinct about the Mafikeng Reserves was that the NAD had incorporated rival factions of the Barolong; for at least half a century (1870-1920) the Ratshidi BaRolong and Rapulana BaRolong "locked horns" over a place called Lotlhakane (25 kilometres from Mafikeng), and similarly, the Ratshidi BaRolong and the baThlaro had conflict over Disaneng (30 kilometres from Mafikeng).[765]

While some black people managed to maintain ties to an agricultural and pastoral lifestyle, many people were forced into wage labour at the turn of the century. With the growth of an urban black population, in the early twentieth century Mafikeng adopted segregation along similar lines to other towns in the Transvaal. By the mid-1920s, the white authorities had proposed to set up a location (that was separate from the Stadt) which hinged on white fears of "black peril" as well as the "crime" and "immorality" prevalent among the black population. The presence of the Stadt delayed the establishment of the location until 1927. By the 1930s, approximately one thousand black people lived in the location (excluding the Stadt) "mainly as labourers for the railways, municipality or as domestic servants".[766] In the inter-war years, the discovery of gold and diamonds in the area provided temporary economic benefit for the town which had most of its jobs in the administration for the Bechuanaland Protectorate and the railway.[767]

The ICU set up a branch in Mafikeng in 1926 which lasted at least until 1929.[768] In an article in the *Workers' Herald* entitled "Mafikeng Moving" published on 15 June 1926, it was noted that,

> It is only two months ago since the Transvaal Provincial Secretary [Henry Tyamzashe, see biographical profile] opened a new branch of the I.C.U. at Mafikeng, yet we have already

[764] *Ibid.,* p.203-204.
[765] *Ibid.,* p.204 and Manson and Mbenga. *Land, Chiefs, Mining*), pp.93-102.
[766] Peris Jones. "Mmabatho,' Mother of the People': Identity and Development in an 'Independent' Bantustan, Bophuthatswana, 1975–1994." PhD diss., Loughborough University, (1997), pp.81-82.
[767] George Cowley. "Mafeking to Mmabatho: Village to Capital City", Geographical Association of Zimbabwe, 16, December 1986, pp.46-47.
[768] Wickins. "The Industrial", pp.384-388.

> received news that they have opened negotiations, and actually fixed up an agreement to buy a stand with a big home on it in the location.[769]

One of the people at the launch of the ICU's branch in Mafikeng was Bennet Gwabini (see profile below) who joined the union and went on to become Kadalie's private secretary. The establishment of the Mafikeng branch was important for the overall trajectory of the ICU in the Western Transvaal. As shown in chapter two, Modiakgotla had used Mafikeng as a base to research the conditions in Lichtenburg and obtain legal advice (from lawyers Keiser and McLaren), which eventually led to an increased ICU presence.

The visit also appealed to a "strong I.C.U. enthusiast" who called for the "co-operation and organisation of the Coloured races of Africa". An article in the *Workers' Herald* reported the "enthusiast" as saying: "your visit to Mafikeng has really been of great benefit to both Coloured and Native people. Your address removed a lot of the false beliefs regarding the I.C.U."[770] He promised to spread the word of the ICU, suggesting that he "would advise to all our coloured friends to 'roll up' and support the I.C.U. in its noble endeavours." In the same article, the author pointed out that "seven million black men … [ought to have] the right to live and labour in his own country", and then noted the hypocrisy of the government:

> Now that many natives have become skilled artisans, the Colour Bar stops them from following their trades, and they are told to 'go back to the land' – WHERE IS THE LAND! It is mere humbug! Let us proceed with our legitimate trades [sic] union movement.[771]

[769] *Workers' Herald,* "Mafeking Moving", 15 June 1926.
[770] *Workers' Herald*, "Enthusiasm at Mafeking", 15 June 1926.
[771] *Workers' Herald*, "Mafeking Moving", 15 June 1926.

The focus on land in Mafikeng was pronounced at the time. Manson and Mbenga note that the Ratshidi Barolong, who lived on farms in southern Bechuanaland and had been managing an internal political battle within their chiefdom, had sent a delegation to protest the incoming 1927 Native Administration Act.[772]

Bennet Gwabini

Gwabini Joined the I.C.U. April 1926 at Mafeking when the ICU opened a branch there. For some years he worked as a clerk at Todd's [store] in Durban. From 1914/1923 he was in the railway service. He was educated at High Mission School Mafeking. Here he had private tuition and learned shorthand, typing and became an expert interpreter in all South African languages. He also is able to speak English fluently. Gwabini was appointed Private Secretary to the I.C.U. General Secretary at the 1928 Bloemfontein Annual Congress.

Full extract taken verbatim from the *Workers' Herald*, "Black Man in the Labour World", 29 September 1928.

The quote by the "ICU enthusiast" suggests that there were two main grievances of African people in Mafikeng; land and the colour bar. It was the latter that the ICU attached to, as they took up the case of Dr Silas Modiri Molema (who was a Lovedale student, medicine graduate at Glasgow University, author and member of the ANC). The case concerned white nurses and matrons at the Victoria Hospital in Mafikeng who in 1927 refused to work with Dr Molema based on the colour of his skin. There is no evidence that the ICU organised any on-the-ground support for Dr Molema's plight, but it published a number of articles in the *Workers' Herald* criticising the racist nurses and rallying behind Dr Molema. One article read:

> Why should a human life be placed in jeopardy just because those white nurses of Mafikeng object to the colour of the skin of the saviour of such life? The action of the matron and her nurses is a blot on the dignity and humanity of the whole medical and nursing fraternity.[773]

Dr Molema's case was on Kadalie's agenda as he prepared to go overseas to Geneva for the 1927 International Labour Organisation (ILO) conference (Kadalie was the first African

[772] Manson and Mbenga. *Land, Chiefs, Mining,* p.104.
[773] *Workers' Herald*, "Fruits of Folly", 15 August 1927. Also see *Workers' Herald,* "LiNese Tsa Mafikeng [the Mafikeng Nurses], 15 August 1927.

delegate). In a *Rand Daily Mail* article, Sam Dunn[774] argued for exposing the hypocrisy of white South Africa and the government in creating racial antagonism. He noted that Dr Molema had been "boycotted by the nursing staff of a hospital, because he is merely carrying out the work of a humanitarian" and promised that the affair would be taken overseas and "through our ambassador, Mr. Kadalie, we will exploit this scandal throughout England and America – aye, the civilised world."[775]

In another article in August 1927, the newspaper outlined the hypocrisy of the government's Sedition Bill and suggested that the nurses "have caused friction between white and black and ill-feeling between the two races".[776] A review of a book titled *Social Work in Saint Louis* compared Dr Molema with Dr Carver (a talented American scientist):

> One of the finest qualities in science is that no truly scientific man is ever a bigot, either on racial or religious matters … here in South Africa we have a gifted native surgeon – these are imperishable chords which are breaking down racialism in the world.[777]

While the ICU had taken the conflict overseas, and reported on it regularly in the *Workers' Herald*, the conflict was also increasingly polarised by the racist hierarchy of South African society. South Africa had a firmly entrenched colour bar protecting white jobs and skills. In 1927 the Transvaal Executive of the South African Labour Party (SALP) had passed a resolution stating that African workers were still in a state of "semi-savagery" and were thus not fit, unlike coloured workers, to join forces with the white labour. The *Workers' Herald* criticised the SALP resolution as emanating from a "hotbed of racial prejudice" and disguising their words under the banner civilisation:

> It is not a question of the Natives being uncivilised, but simply and purely the unbridled prejudice of the white workers. Dr. Molema's case with the Mafikeng nurses is an undisputable demonstration of the snobbery, jobbery and robbery underlying the attitude of white workers of this country.[778]

With much attention drawn to Dr Molema's case by the ICU, little had been done to practically help the doctor. Dr Molema took the nurses to court over their strike action and received a

[774] Who was a middle-class ICU organiser and had worked as an Acting Provincial Secretary in Durban as well as General Secretary in 1928 before he got arrested for embezzlement.
[775] *Rand Daily Mail*, "'The first black ambassador'" "Kadalie's mission to Geneva" "Passport hitch" "Ready to plead for whites", 30 April 1927.
[776] *Workers' Herald*, Oupa, "Sedition Jottings", 15 August 1927.
[777] *Workers' Herald,* "The Book Shelf", 15 June 1927.
[778] *Workers' Herald*, "A Scandalous Resolution", 15 August 1927.

settlement of £85, of which by 15 August 1927, only £11 was paid. The Mafikeng Town Council had questioned whether the Victoria hospital should be closed down and subsequently a Commission of Inquiry was set up by the Minister of the Interior, D.F. Malan.

It seems that the reason for such great newspaper coverage was that the ICU had hit a hurdle in trying to establish the Mafikeng branch.[779] In October 1927, the Mafikeng Branch Secretary, Alfred Sidzumo, regarded the salary he was receiving, which was £3 a month, as "unsatisfactory" (Sidzumo had been the Port Elizabeth Branch Secretary in 1922 where he had worked with Samuel Masabalala and Selby Msimang). He told the ICU's head office in Johannesburg that he would prefer to go to the Lichtenburg diggings rather than work for the low wage paid in Mafeking. He suggested that a different branch secretary be employed at Mafikeng within fourteen days, because he was no longer willing to work there.[780]

There is little else to report on the ICU's activities in Mafikeng for over a year. In June 1928, there seems to be evidence of a visit to Mafikeng by Kadalie following the strike at Grasfontein, Lichtenburg. It is most likely that his visit was impromptu as Mafikeng is just 70km from Lichtenburg and he may have gone there just after organising at the strike. The speech appears on a police report dated 21 June 1928, but it is not clear if this date referred to when the speech was delivered. Kadalie spoke against the government noting that they are "enemies of the people" and suggested that he wanted pass laws to be suspended for six months. He then spoke about the value of black labour to the economy of South Africa,

> Without us things would be at a standstill, no trains would run. Let us organise and through organisation we will get bread and butter … Don't work for the whites, let them do their own work. Don't work for the railways. The wage you are getting is not enough to live on. Look, your wives and children are starving. If you joined the ICU you would not have to work for a starvation wage …[781]

Kadalie's reference to the railways probably sought to speak to the experiences of many black workers employed in this sector in Mafikeng. His speech appears inspiring, but together with

[779] University of Cape Town (UCT) Library, Special Collections (Manuscripts and Archives), Lionel Forman Papers, B 2.32 Letter from Champion to A.H. Todd re Mafeking Branch. Durban, 17 July 1926; University of Cape Town, Lionel Forman Papers, B 2.35 Letter from Champion to A.H. Todd re Mafeking Branch, Durban, 20 July 1926.
[780] UCT Library, Special Collections (Manuscripts and Archives), Lionel Forman Papers, B 3.138, Letter from Alfred Sidzumo to the ICU Head Office, 31 October 1927.
[781] NASA, JUS, 920, 1/18/26, vol.16 – vol.18. Report received by the Divisional Officer at Kimberly from the SAP at Mafeking, 21 June 1928.

the ICU's activism in the *Workers' Herald*, it hid the fact that their Mafikeng branch was in dire straits.

In the *Workers' Herald Weekly Newsletter* noted that in November 1928 "work [at the Mafikeng branch] had been at a standstill for several months".[782] This was because Sidzumo, who was still branch secretary, had been embezzling funds. According to *Weekly News*, the ICU's administrative secretary Joe Kokozela had visited the Branch and ascertained that "the cause of friction [within the Mafikeng branch] was due to the mismanagement of local branch funds by the secretary [Sidzumo]". Sidzumo had been manipulating branch funds to "pay himself", the manner of which was "unconstitutional".[783] Following the shocking revelations, branch funds were withheld by the ICU's head office and Sidzumo was transferred. Notably, in 1923, when Sidzumo had been the ICU's branch secretary in Port Elizabeth, he was accused of stealing over £150 (although he was never convicted in a court of law for the charge).[784]

In May 1929, six months after the ICU had supposedly "transferred" Sidzumo and despite his corruption of the branch, it was reported that the Mafikeng branch was being "worked up and Mr. Alfred Sidzumo is out Branch Secretary there".[785] Joining Sidzumo were Ballinger and Gwabini who were "with the workers of the I.C.U."[786] The visit of Ballinger and Gwabini inspired the ICU's headquarters to prepare "a memorandum on the conditions in the Molope Reserve diggings". The memorandum included an "application for a minimum living standard" which had been sent to the authorities at Mafikeng".[787]

ICU activity in Mafikeng was unlike towns in the Western Transvaal. A large portion of it was conducted through articles in the *Workers' Herald* rebuking the white nurses who refused to work under Dr Molema because he was black, . It is difficult to say whether the ICU's sustained campaign in the *Workers' Herald* in support of Dr Molema had any practical impact, but it is sufficient to say that the ICU played a role in spreading the news and perhaps even in escalating the issue to the government. The Mafikeng branch was plagued by mismanagement and this severely limited the ICU's efficacy and continued work in the town. The fact that Sidzumo, who had been found guilty of embezzling branch funds, managed to retain his position in

[782] Wits HPRA, Saffery Papers B2, *Workers' Herald Weekly News Bulletin*, "Branch News", "Mafeking", 21 November 1928.
[783] *Ibid.*
[784] Wickins. "The Industrial", p.194.
[785] *Workers' Herald Weekly News Bulletin*, "News in Brief", 5 May 1929.
[786] *Workers' Herald Weekly News Bulletin*, "Izinto Ngezinto [Various Things]", 5 May 1929.
[787] *Workers' Herald*, "Notes of Interest", 15 June 1929.

Mafikeng points to the inability of the ICU to adequately deal with corrupt officials, much to the detriment of the branch. Speeches and research visits by Kadalie, Ballinger and Gwabini did help speak to issues experienced on the railways and on the diamond mines in Mafikeng, but they were few and far between and could not sustain momentum.

Taung

Taung is a town situated in the then Cape Province and fell within the Thakwaneng Reserve, which was occupied predominantly by the baTlhaping ba Phuduhutswana. The Thakwaneng Reserve was proclaimed in 1897, and was never proclaimed under the Urban Areas Act of 1923.[788] The strong power of chiefs in relation to reserve politics is foundational to understanding Taung. The Tlhaping, had been experienced economic and social disruption as a result of the diamond discoveries in Kimberly.[789] Pauw describes that after the years following the diamond discoveries, the Tlhaping's "subsistence economy based on herding and shifting cultivation was replaced by a money economy, in which migrant labour [was] an absolute necessity" and "peasant farming [was] still pursued".[790]

One of the most important features of Taung is the London Missionary Society mission established in 1868. Many of the BaTlhaping lived near the mission station, with the Maidi Tlhaping on the eastern side of the reserve and another Tlhaping grouping near Phokwane in the south. By 1885, a Native Independent Congressional Church was started by the Maidi section just south of Taung, and indicated a strong tide of religious conversion. Independent African churches blossomed in Taung and contributed to ideologies of black resistance to white rule, with some prophets suggesting they would "destroy all white people" towards the turn of the century.[791] Religion was thus a strong determinant in the social milieu of Taung and continued to be so throughout the twentieth century.

Manson and Mbenga suggest that life in the Bechuanaland Reserves (of which Thakwaneng was one) was difficult. They suggest that low average rainfall (as low as 38mm) in Taung

[788] Taung's early history was dominated by the South African War. Taung served as a "refugee camp" for black soldiers and then turned into a forced labour camp. Garth Benneyworth did archaeological research in the area and found that over one thousand of the black soldiers who were based Taung died in a "catastrophe" and were buried in a series of graves there. For further reading see: Garth Benneyworth. "Land, Labour, War and Displacement: A History of Four Black Concentration Camps in the South African War (1899 1902)", *Historia* 64, 2 (2019): 1-20.
[789] Shillington. "The Impact of Diamond Discoveries", pp. 99-118.
[790] Berthold Pauw. *Religion in a Tswana chiefdom* (New York: Routledge, 2018), p.5.
[791] *Ibid.*

meant that "droughts were frequent" and the area was not "suitable for arable production". They also note that locusts devastated the reserves in 1925 and again in 1933.[792] Workers thus migrated to the Kimberly diamond mines and, as Charles van Onselen notes, they used to flood in from Taung for seasonal work after which they would "retreat into the Taung reserve to wait until communal hunger drove them out again".[793] Reserves were governed by communal tenure and characterised by increasing pressures over land. The harsh conditions in Taung continued throughout the 1930s and 1940s despite the setting up of a widespread irrigation scheme for smallholder farmers.[794]

While migrant labour was central to the economic prospects of residents in Taung, the town did have its own diamond rush in 1920. Clynick discusses how the diamond rush in the area elucidated the dynamics of ethnicity and class unfolding in the context of reserve politics. The control over the proclaimed diamond digging in Taung reflected the power of two interest groups: powerful chiefs linked to the NAD and elite diggers on the one hand; and ethnically heterogenous working classes perceived as "immoral".[795]

The above account of Taung gives three features through which to analyse the ICU's presence: religion, chiefly politics and poor farming and environmental conditions. Doyle Modiakgotla was the first ICU organiser to visit Taung in May 1928. He had a fairly good rapport with many of the elites in Taung including the "court interpreter, Native Schoolmasters, the Chief and his Councillors". Modiakgotla gave a speech in Taung on 12 May, when he posed a series of rhetorical questions regarding peasants' control over their produce, exploitative white landowners and how "at towns, payments are small and taxes are going up". He adopted a critical perspective towards the churches and in his first point stated that they were organised by white people and that they "make people cry"; he went on to rhetorically ask: "should we agree that we are spoilt by the ministers and churches?"[796]

Modiakgotla received a lukewarm response from the people of Taung. The report given by the police of Taung did not raise an alarm. The policeman on duty noted that after speaking to the

[792] Manson and Mbenga. *Land, Chiefs, Mining*, p.93.
[793] Van Onselen. *The Seed is Mine,* p.140.
[794] Jacobus Klopper. "Mainstreaming of Smallholder Irrigators: the Case of Taung Irrigation Scheme, North West, South Africa." PhD diss., University of the Free State, (2009).
[795] Tim Clynick. "Chiefs, Diggers and African Labour: The Tlaping Diamond Rush, 1920–1921", *African Studies* 54, 2 (1995): 73-93.
[796] NASA, JUS, 920, 1/18/26, vol.16 – vol.18. Report given by the SAP at Taung to the District Commandant of the South African Police at Vryburg, document is undated (but most probably in May 1928).

chief and commoners in Taung, he gathered that Modiakgotla wanted to start a local branch of the ICU. His overall appraisal did not express much concern for this, "I do not think he was very successful as the BaTlaping tribe are a very easy-going lot and do not care for agitators amongst them".[797]

Yet it was not merely the "easy-going" nature of the BaTlhaping that shaped the lukewarm response. It seems that Modiakgotla failed to articulate grievances on the terms of the BaTlhaping, be it the dynamics of reserve impoverishment; the power of chiefly authority; or within a worldview that takes religion and Christianity as a means for struggle. As shown in Chapter One, in Pondoland the ICU managed to articulate ideologies of freedom and struggle through Christianity rather than being overtly critical of religion. The experience of the ICU in Taung points to lack of understanding of this context by Modiakgotla, who on the other hand presented a great challenge to the Schweizer-Reneke municipality against municipal by-laws.

Vryburg

After Modiakgotla left Taung he visited Vryburg on 15 May 1928. In the nineteenth century, Vryburg was the capital of the Boer republic Stellaland, after which it became an administrative centre for the Bechuanaland Protectorate along with Mafikeng.[798] The Klein Chwaing reserve was situated just west of the town. Vryburg had a pastoral economy and was a railway centre, connecting the north-south line (from Cape Town to Bulawayo) to the north-east and north-west. Many Africans were engaged in migrant labour, including in Lichtenburg and to work on farms in adjacent districts, and it was commonplace for men to be "absent from their homes".[799] Its status as a railway and administrative centre meant that it had a skilled white population who ran stores for the surrounding towns.

Modiakgotla tried to hold meetings on 15 and 16 May 1928 but was unsuccessful. He eventually managed to hold a meeting on 20 May and addressed a crowd of 50 people, many of whom were women. Modiakgotla suggested that the purpose of the ICU was to "agitate for higher wages and not fight the white man". To this end, he criticised the cost of living in

[797] *Ibid.*
[798] Themba Mgadla. "Of Botswana's Administrative Centres and their Movements: Vryburg, Mahikeng and Gaborone, 1885-1966." *Botswana Notes and Records* 48 (2016): 23-35.
[799] Manson and Mbenga. *Land, Chiefs, Mining*, pp.92-97.

Vryburg and suggested that it was "more expensive [to live in Vryburg] than in Bloemfontein or Kimberly", thereafter offering to buy food for the audience at other centres.[800]

In connection with wages, he suggested that he would visit all the storekeepers in town to negotiate a better wage for their "servants", and if they refused, he would "tell them what to do". Failing these measures, he threatened to have the wage board involved due to the poor wages paid in Vryburg. He declared that he wished to open a branch in Vryburg and wanted people to "buy tickets".[801] At the meeting, Modiakgotla noted that a local organiser, Andrew Petsana, had done a poor job and that he would be replaced. This followed what the police report declared as a "quarrel" between Modiakgotla and Petsana.[802]

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the range of difficulties that the ICU faced in the late 1920s in towns of the Western Transvaal where the local economy gravitated towards Native Reserves or the Rand. These issues included corruption, antagonism towards communist ideology, competition with other political organisations and the repression by local administrations. The cases of Mafikeng, Potchefstroom, Klerksdorp and Rustenburg show that corruption decreased the trust that workers had in the ICU. Similarly, in Potchefstroom and Klerksdorp, ICU leaders railed against communism, and instead adopted a discourse of negotiation and moderate action. This highlighted the contradictions within the ICU and prevented a unified ideology from being presented to prospective members.[803]

Political rivalry with other organisations (particularly in Potchefstroom and Klerksdorp) also inhibited the ICU's effectiveness and alienated it from being part of broader front against white domination with other national organisations. A further issue that the ICU faced in these towns was the inability to articulate the specific local grievances that black people experienced. In Potchefstroom, for example, the CPSA attached to an already present struggle of location residents against the much-hated lodgers' permits, something which the ICU failed to do. In

[800] NASA, JUS, 920, 1/18/26 vol.16 – vol.18, Report from the South African Police at Vryburg to the District Commandant of the SAP at Vryburg, 21 May 1928.
[801] The topic of low wages was not just rhetoric; in 1931, J.B. Crutse (who rose to prominence in the ICU after Ballinger arrived), working for Ikwezi le Africa, noted a similar situation when he criticised the low wages paid to domestic employees and store workers, and accused employers of using the "onset of the depression to cut their wages in half". Limb. *The ANC's Early Years*, p.372.
[802] NASA, JUS, 920, 1/18/26 vol.16 – vol.18, Report from the South African Police at Vryburg to the District Commandant of the SAP at Vryburg, 21 May 1928.
[803] Bonner. "The Decline and Fall", p. 118.

Rustenburg, Taung and Vryburg, on the other hand, the ICU was unable to fully articulate issues over land and the politics within Tswana chieftaincies. Lastly, as in the South-Western Transvaal, it is crucial to highlight that the ICU's struggles in the towns discussed here were directly linked to repressive town administrations and malevolent white farmers who wanted the ICU to be stamped out. Considering the organisational issues that the ICU was experiencing, repressive town administrations greatly curtailed the chances of the ICU in these towns.

Despite these difficulties, the ICU did manage to hold meetings, give speeches and win some limited gains for residents in the towns discussed in this chapter. These included support for women who were forced to carry a six-day pass in Klerksdorp, activism through the pages of the *Workers' Herald* on behalf of Silas Modiri Molema in Mafikeng, demands for better wages in Mafikeng, Klerksdorp and Vryburg, as well as for farmworkers in Rustenburg. Speeches given by ICU organisers focused on low wages and spoke to black people's aspirations of freedom. Lesser-known ICU activists predominated in these towns, which highlights capacity for the union to develop local activists. Yet ICU leaders in these towns were marred by corruption and political controversies, they did not have the equivalent stature of Jingoes, Makhatini or 'Mote who carried the ICU in the South-Western Transvaal.

Chapter five provides a thematic discussion of the ICU's ideological message and its impact on spatial and political realities across the Western Transvaal.

Chapter Five – Reflections On/Of the ICU: The ICU's Impact on the Ideological, Spatial and Political Realities in the Western Transvaal, 1926-1934

The ICU was a dynamic movement and had a number of exciting, and at times, inventive influences during its tenure in the Western Transvaal from 1926 to 1934. While chapters two, three and four focused on the spread of the ICU in the political and economic context of the Western Transvaal, this chapter reflects on the ideological character of the ICU and its impact on the political and spatial landscape of region. The title of the chapter gestures towards the dynamism of the ICU in the Western Transvaal. There are two types of "reflections" that concern, or were generated by, the ICU. The first is the ICU's own thinking on the economic and political situation in the Western Transvaal, and the second are the analyses by intellectuals and academics on the character of the ICU.

The ICU has been variously labelled in the scholarship as a general trade union (Roux), a rural movement (Bradford), and as part of the national liberation movement, which it injected with a "radical democratic" politics (Neame). This versatile character helps explain its longevity and widespread appeal in the Western Transvaal. Sylvia Neame has argued that the ICU developed a radical-democratic character in the countryside (which is a politics which calls for the radical distribution of equality and freedom).[804] The chapter discusses how the ICU embodied this character, which appealed to a mass audience and called for the extension of freedoms and democracy to all African people and relies on the scholarship of Bonner, Michael Neocosmos and David Johnson. I have given the ICU the label union-cum-protest movement because of its fluid character.

Helen Bradford has framed the ICU as a "rural movement" which rallied workers on farms and in the countryside. While this has been shown in chapters three and four, a secondary feature of the ICU in the Western Transvaal, which is analysed here, is that the ICU acted as a rural intermediary, providing legal counsel in civil cases and helping represent ex-Reserve-based peasants.

The ICU played an important role in democratising access to legal counsel, space and public discussion which the chapter explores by drawing on the work of Keith Breckenridge. Finally, the chapter discusses how the ICU helped disrupt spatial barriers between town, farm, location

[804] Neame. *The Congress Movement vol. 1-3,* p.xviii.

and diamond digging thus contributing to the transformation of spatial politics in the Western Transvaal. At the same time, however, the same spatial politics were an obstacle to the ICU's political organising.

Each section of this chapter starts by laying out the theories of different authors (Bonner, Breckenridge, Neocosmos, Johnson, Jingoes, Lefebvre) which is then supported by primary evidence from the Western Transvaal. Interviews with farmworkers from Charles Van Onselen's Sharecropping and Labour Tenancy Project frame the discussions on the ICU's language of freedom and their language of subversion. Documents from the NASA chronicle the ICU's meetings and civil cases, and this forms the primary evidence in the first three sections. The discussion over the ICU's use of spatial politics includes some use of primary sources, but it is mainly concerned with the application of Henri Lefebvre's theory of the production of space to the changing context of the Western Transvaal.

The ICU's Language of Freedom

Many farmworkers, sharecroppers, workers on the diggings, labour tenants, unemployed location residents and other labourers heard ICU organisers speak of "freedom" as they travelled throughout farming districts and small towns in the Western Transvaal. Michael Neocosmos regards freedom in Africa as the act by African people of "thinking beyond their social location and of thinking an excess beyond the simply given extant of the social division of labour and its corresponding social identities".[805] For Neocosmos, emancipation is where the "expression of the objective is transcended or punctured", and throughout this section, examples are quoted of the ICU and its constituency thinking beyond the limits of their objective situation.

At times, ICU organisers would stand on their wagon platforms and prophesise a better and freer world. At a meeting in Schweizer-Reneke sometime in the late 1920s, Kadalie gave the promise of freedom to come, "the time will come gradually, it cannot be today but a year or fifty or ten, twenty years, but we will be freed".[806] The message of freedom was also found in booklets and pamphlets that were sold for between 2s and 5s each. The publications outlined the ways in which "the boers were ill-treating blacks" and how the ICU promised to strive for

[805] Michael Neocosmos. *Thinking Freedom in Africa: Toward a Theory of Emancipatory Politics* (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 2017), p.27.
[806] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738.Maine, Kas, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng, T. Couzens and G. Relly, 2 July 1980, Tape Nos.204 and 205. Transcript No.30.

a "better world for blacks".[807] More simply, in the memory of Sellwane Legobathe (Kas Maine's sister) the books were "saying that we shall get freedom".[808]

David Johnson suggests that the ICU developed multiple formulations of freedom, and his central focus is whether any of these multiple forms were "distinctive" and did not "defer to external models".[809] Johnson identifies three distinct and "indigenous" conceptions of freedom:

> millenarian cries for freedoms promised by African prophets; appeals for economic self-sufficiency to complement political freedoms and more everyday demands, like the freedom to walk on pavements of white South African cities, or the freedom to be in whites-only designated urban areas.[810]

The question posed in this section is: what was the ICU's language of freedom in the Western Transvaal? And further, how did this relate to the local political economy?

The words "freedom" and "liberation" stuck in sharecroppers and farmworkers' minds after ICU organisers gave speeches, and were in turn associated with their opposite evils of "oppression" and "slavery". The lexicon of "freedom" as opposed to "slavery" had both historical and contemporary significance among farmworkers in the Western Transvaal. Fred Morton argues that following the Boer declaration to suspend slavery in 1852, Boers continued to conduct slave raids until 1870 and kept women and children as slaves for domestic and "plantation" work.[811] Charles van Onselen has used American slavery as a reference point to understand paternalism and violence in the same region, arguing that it was a deeply entrenched social practice which was challenged during the tumultuous introduction of agrarian capitalism.[812]

In *A Taste of Freedom*, Helen Bradford regards the whole second-half of the 1920s as being characterised by contestations between masters and servants on white farms across South

[807] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Molohlanyi, M, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng, Wolmaransstad, 19 April 1984, Tape No. 468, Transcript No.100.
[808] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Legobathe, Sellwane, IASR, interview conducted by M.T, Nkadimeng, 9 July 1986, Gannalaagte, Tape No. 554. Transcript No.152.
[809] Johnson. "Clements Kadalie", p.58.
[810] *Ibid.,* p.56-62
[811] Morton. "Slave-Raiding and Slavery", pp.99-118.
[812] See for example Morton. "Slave-Raiding and Slavery", pp.99-118. Charles Van Onselen draws the parallels between American slavery and paternalism in: Van Onselen. "The Social and Economic Underpinning", pp. 127-160.

Africa. She goes on to suggest that relations between masters and servants amounted to a "stunted approximation of paternalism" and that many Africans regarded labour tenancy, which was the predominant relationship in the countryside, as "approximated slavery, forced labour or serfdom".[813] While understandings of freedom in the Western Transvaal do not explicitly draw from these historical arguments, agricultural workers in the Western Transvaal had a direct experience of Master and Servants Laws – which bound labourers to follow a behavioural code entrenched by their masters and was supported by the law.[814] In the interviews conducted with farmworkers themselves, reference is made to the "Boers" (and their role) as being central to African people's oppression.

Insofar as the ICU organisers' articulations of freedom are concerned, Johnson suggests that a Garveyite discourse was adopted by the ICU related to the liberation of black slaves in the United States.[815] Robert Vinson argues that black South Africans saw African-Americans as "role models and potential liberators" who were "essential to the goal of African independence".[816] In addition, African people shared a common history of oppression, albeit in different forms, with African-Americans, and Marcus Garvey himself was seen as a "modern-day Moses" who would lead Africans "out of virtual slavery".[817] Vinson argues that African Americans were seen as "alternate models of modernity" where black South Africans "admired their remarkable journey from slavery to freedom, their educational and socioeconomic advancement, their extraordinary cultural production, their urbane modernity…".[818] Neame suggests that Garveyism played an important part in the ICU and its role in the Congress movement.[819] Again, while this discourse predominated in speeches given by ICU officials across South Africa, there is no conclusive evidence that sharecroppers and farmworkers themselves identified with the historical example of American slavery.

Mmereki Molohlanyi recalled Kadalie speaking in Wolmaransstad in the years 1927 or 1928, and in the speech Kadalie gave, "he said it was essential that we should be free" and that "it

[813] Bradford. *A Taste of Freedom,* p.40, p.43.
[814] For information on Masters' and Servants' laws see: Jack Simons and Ray Simons. *Class and Colour,* p.23-24.
[815] Johnson. "Clements Kadalie", p.57.
[816] Vinson. *The Americans are Coming!",* p.2.
[817] *Ibid.,* pp.3-4.
[818] *Ibid.,* p.2, p.6.
[819] Neame. *The Congress Movement vol.1",* p.111.

was high time that we should rid ourselves of the chains of slavery".[820] ICU organiser Cecil Sehlabo visited Rustenburg in October 1929, and he encouraged the people of Rustenburg, whom he regarded to live in "slavery", to remember the struggle of Israel in their struggle as workers.[821] Sharecropper Andries Seiphetlo remembered Jingoes talking in Makwassie sometime in 1929, who said to the crowd that "he was going to liberate [them] from bondage".[822] Baefesi Maine also heard Jingoes speaking in Makwassie during the early 1930s, saying that "he was a black representative who would liberate us from slavery".[823] Sellwane Legobathe listened to Jingoes draw a sharp analogy between the South African situation and its links to slavery,

> He talked about the South African Laws on Blacks, about Blacks enslavement by the whites even about [how] Blacks slavery works. He went on to ask why whites are handling blacks like slaves yet they are the ones working for them. They don't eat well, stay well yet they work for them.[824]

The discourse of slavery was often counterposed in ICU organisers' visions of the freedom to come. George Lephadi heard Kadalie and 'Mote address a crowd in the Klerksdorp location, and he specifically remembered them speaking of freedom. In Lephadi's words,

> they were talking about freedom. They were fighting for our liberation. They said how long had we been slaves, and when would we get a better life. We have been under the Boers, oppressing us.[825]

'Mote, who was a Christian, drew a link between religion and the abolition of slavery which had Christian millenarian undertones,[826]

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[820] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Molohlanyi, Mmereki, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng, Wolmaransstad, 19 April 1984, Tape No. 468, Transcript No.100.
[821] *Workers' Herald*, "Tsa Rustenburg [In Rustenburg]", 15 October 1929.
[822] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Seiphetlo, A, interview conducted by T, Matsatela and E. Kgomo , Klipkuil (Makwassie), 9 September 1987. Tape No. 588. Transcript No.166.
[823] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Maine, Baefesi, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng, Mareetsane, 22 April 1986. Tape No.545. Transcript No.146.
[824] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Legobathe, Sellwane, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng, 9 July 1986, Gannalaagte, Tape No. 554. Transcript No.152.
[825] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Lephadi, George, interview conducted by T. Matsetela, Ikageng, 27 May 1987. Tape No. 572. Transcript No. 238.
[826] Millenarianism is the belief that there will be a fundamental and wholescale change to society, and Christian millenarianism refers to the belief that the change will come through Christian means.

> women and men you have a big message to carry, don't play with it; the message is to be free from slavery I shall speak until Jesus Christ sees upon me, we want to kick the slavery away.[827]

There were also ideas about how to become free from oppression and slavery. The proposed "way to liberty" suggested by Kadalie in East London in 1930 "passes through gaol, thorns, aeroplanes, big flying machines and Great Government Authorities".[828] In a less flamboyant way, Samuel Rampoumanie, an ICU organiser in Potchefstroom in May 1928, suggested: "comrades, we cannot expect to get freedom without persecution".[829]

The solutions proposed to the slavery and oppression that black people experienced ranged from constitutionalism to collective action, but in the end related to basic economic and political freedoms. For Lephadi the solution to "slavery" espoused by the ICU organisers was "revolution" which, however, would be non-violent: "their liberation, they said it would be obtained through verbal negotiation. They did not encourage war".[830] At a meeting in Makwassie, Robert Makhatini echoed the constitutional approach to fighting for freedom, "he said that whites were treating us badly, the law would free us".[831] In contrast, when ICU organiser David Leeo spoke in Klerksdorp in 1928, he suggested collective action was key to achieving freedom: "everybody has his freedom in his own hands. We must organise and speak in one voice. Hertzog will give you damn little. He will give you a damn sjambok".[832]

One of the distinctive languages of freedom that Johnson identifies within the ICU is freedom in the economic dimension, often related to socialist liberation. In the society of the future where slavery would be abolished, fair wages were crucial. Motlagomang Maine heard Jingoes talk "about freedom, the whites must free blacks and pay them".[833] The same was the case for Baefesi Maine who recalled Jingoes saying that "the whites are oppressing the blacks and that

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[827] NASA, JUS, 922, 1/18/26, vol.22 – vol.24. Report compiled by SAP Constable Brewis at Bloemhof sent to the District Commandant of the SAP at Potchefstroom, 28 November 1928.
[828] Johnson. "Clements Kadalie", p.56.
[829] NASA, JUS, 920, 1/18/26, vol.16 – vol.18. Report of the SAP at Potchefstroom to the District Commandant at Potchefstroom, 9 May 1928.
[830] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Lephadi, George, interview conducted by T. Matsetela, Ikageng, 27 May 1987. Tape No. 572. Transcript No. 238.
[831] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Maine, Kas, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng, T. Couzens and G. Relly, 2 July 1980, Tape Nos.204 and 205. Transcript No.30.
[832] NASA, JUS, 920, 1/18/26, vol.16 – vol.18. Report from the SAP at Klerksdorp in Charge to the District Commandant of the SAP at Potchefstroom, 3 July 1928.
[833] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Maine, Motlagomang, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng, Hertzogville, 23 October 1986, Tape No. 555, Transcript No.154.

they were underpaying the blacks".[834] For Thabiso Bogopane, who moved between Rustenburg and Johannesburg, "Kadalie spoke for every black man … he wanted every black man should be paid. He must also be free".[835] In other words, economic freedom was central to the ICU's vision of freedom.

Another way in which discourses of freedom were advanced was through to the link between the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC) and the ICU. In 1929 Sellwane Legobathe stumbled upon an ICU meeting after an AMEC Sunday service she attended in Bloemhof. [836] At the meeting she found Jason Jingoes giving a speech and she remarked in her interview that the language espoused by Jingoes was not particularly different to that of the AMEC. Some of the preachers at the AMEC (several of whom came from the United States) were also ICU members, and this for Legobathe was evidenced in the kinds of topics which they both spoke about. Discourses of freedom overlapped between the church and the ICU and, in addition, Legobathe saw the singing of *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* as part of a joint call for liberation,

> They talked about freedom. They said that if we pray whole heartedly, God will free us. During concerts we sang "Nkosi Sikelela". That is why I am saying that those priests were working together with the ICU.[837]

The singing of *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* has long been a call for liberation and, as Coplan and Jules-Rosette suggest, the song occupies a position at the intersection of "public religion and popular culture".[838] Also according to Coplan, it "symbolize[d] more than any other piece of expressive culture the struggle for African unity and liberation in South Africa".[839]

In July 1928, Robert Makhatini gave a speech at Makwassie where the audience began the meeting singing *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika*. As mentioned in chapter two, after he gave his speech,

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[834] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Maine, Baefesi, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng, Mareetsane, 22 April 1986. Tape No.545. Transcript No.146.
[835] David Johnson. *Dreaming of Freedom in South Africa: Literature Between Critique and Utopia* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 2020), p.66; Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Bogopane, Thabiso, interview conducted by T. Phiri, Phokeng, 11 September 1981, Tape No. 313, Transcript No. 55.
[836] Legobathe speaks about Tambusa arriving in 1929. This placed her experience of the ICU in Bloemhof in that year. Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Legobathe, Sellwane, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng, 9 July 1986, Gannalaagte, Tape No. 554. Transcript No.152.
[837] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Legobathe, Sellwane, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng, 9 July 1986, Gannalaagte, Tape No. 554. Transcript No.152.
[838] Coplan and Jules-Rosette. "Nkosi Sikelel'iAfrika", p.285.
[839] David Coplan. *In Township Tonight!: South Africa's Black City Music and Theatre* (Chicago: Chicago Press, 2008 [1st edition, 1985]), p.46.

he opened for questions. Makhatini then began getting into an argument with a white farmer, Wentzel, who had attended the meeting. The conversation is quoted in full below:

> Mr. Wentzel: What is the ICU's highest ideal?
>
> Robert Makhatini: We want to be free.
>
> Wentzel: Be free … But how exactly do you want to be free, because there are many ways?
>
> Makhatini: White people had flown – they have nice clothes and machines and money and so on. And black people have no nice clothes, nor do they have money and black people also want their women to wear smart dresses
>
> Wentzel: But how can you say this, black people had worn animal skins before…
>
> Makhatini: […] It is true that we wore animal skins, but everyone wore animal skins. We ate tripe and lived good lives.
>
> Wentzel: Did black people have money and nice clothes which they are all now talking about?
>
> Makhatini: We didn't know what money was, but we had many cows; had much milk to drink and ate meat, we moved around to where we wanted. Now we must work very hard for a pound and for our assignments.
>
> Wentzel: Why don't you work for cattle anymore?
>
> Makhatini: Back in the days we had a place for our cattle, and nowadays we don't have a place for our cattle, here at Maquassi, black people have land which is only good enough for two animals. [840]

This fascinating exchange brings to light a new character of the ICU's claim to freedom. Makhatini articulates two different conceptions of freedom; the first linked to the freedom African people had in precolonial society through economic stability, and the second is the freedom to enjoy the benefits of industrialising society, like fair wages. In both instances, they are the freedoms to take full part and be equal members in society. While Makhatini's comments could be seen as limited to freedoms within white society rather than thinking "beyond their social location",[841] they present a pragmatic view of the changing economic and

[840] NASA, JUS, 921, 1/18/26, vol.19 – vol.21. Report compiled by the Maquassi police Sergeant, 29 July 1928.
[841] Neocosmos. *Thinking Freedom in Africa,* p.27.

social space as a result of colonisation.[842] According to Makhatini, reverting back to a precolonial life was not possible considering the extent of colonial conquest and land dispossession, and of the controls placed on stock ownership. He viewed full participation in the "new" society and community as the way to freedom. Makhatini's desire for black women to wear "smart dresses" relates to Vinson's argument on the Garveyist influence and African aspirations of urban modernity.

For some workers, the ICU invoked a race consciousness which aimed to secure self-determination and political freedom. According to Andries Seiphetlo, for example, this "freedom" meant, that "we […] rule ourselves".[843] Israel Matholoe claimed the ICU was fighting for "freedom from whites".[844] Neame has argued that different ICU leaders exhibited a race consciousness, which was partially informed by Garveyist influence, and that the Congress movement had self-determination as a central aim.[845]

Motlagomang Maine's idea of freedom was inspired by a speech Jingoes gave in 1930 linking freedom to education,

> I have heard that Jingoes at one of the meetings was telling the Blacks that the blame must be put on them [black people], because they have given themselves to the whites for they lack education. I learned he said to them "look at me, I am educated, I know everything about the world and I am free. I learn you are called bobbejaans [baboons]". I learn when he spoke the last words he turned his back to them and pulled up the sledge of his jacket and said "look they said we have tails, where do you see one on me?" I learned the white audiences bowed their head in shame when they heard that, and he went on to say that blacks must feel free and become wise, and they must get out of the dark …[846]

[842] Some philosophers from Africa argue that freedom comes *through* community. The concept of "freedom" thought by Makhatini here is thus similar to authors like John Mbiti or Kwame Gyekye. See for example Isaias Ezekiel Chachine. "Community, Justice, and Freedom: Liberalism, Communitarianism, and African Contributions to Political Ethics.", PhD diss., University of Uppsala (2008).

[843] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Seiphetlo, A, interview conducted by T. Matsatela and E. Kgomo, Klipkuil (Makwassie), 9 September 1987. Tape No. 588. Transcript No.166.

[844] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Mathuloe, Israel, interview conducted by T. Phiri, Phokeng, 29 July 1981. Tape no.304 and 307. Transcript no. 318.

[845] Sylvia Neame. *The Congress Movement vol 1*, p.36, pp.400-401.

[846] Motlagomang suggested in a later interview that it was actually 'Mote who gave this speech, but there is no other evidence to decisively say it was one or the other. Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Maine, Motlagomang, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng, Hertzogville, 23 October 1986, Tape No. 555, Transcript No.154.

The ICU managed to bring about a political consciousness, which was crucial for most black people as they were "still blind".[847] For Motlagomang Maine the key to this was education: "blacks must become wise … and must get out of the dark and take away the *hoogklap*" (a "hoogklap" is something that covers a person's eyes, almost like a sleep mask).[848] She saw the impact of the ICU as educative, helping black farmers like herself "have a clear understanding about life" as the ICU "brought light to us".[849] Another prominent theme in Motlagomang's interview is how Jingoes called out the dehumanising language of white people. Jingoes' description of himself aims to show how black people can overturn white racist stereotypes.

The rich oral history material presented shows how pervasive the theme of freedom was in people's memories of the ICU. This freedom had multiple conceptions including the extension of basic economic and political freedoms like better wages, education and the suspension of the pass laws, but also appealed to people's collective consciousness of oppression akin to slavery. The influence of Garveyism is clear and showed the aspirational side of black South Africans to have the same status as white people. Each of the messages and calls to freedom gestured towards a more equal society based on political and economic freedoms.

Languages of Subversion and Ridicule

As much as ICU organisers spoke languages of valour and imagination, they also ridiculed, were at times foulmouthed, and resultantly articulated a further language of "shock", ridicule and subversion. This kind of language is notable because it equally stuck in the memories of workers who went to ICU meetings. Time and again, this language has been referred to by scholars of the ICU: Bradford discusses the ICU's "flamboyant" and "inflammatory speeches", La Hausse suggests the ICU had a "rich, syncretic, subversive language" and Beinart and Bundy refer to the "belligerent" and "bombastic" speeches of ICU organisers.[850] In Phil Bonner's insightful unpublished paper " 'Home Truths' and the Political Discourse of the ICU", he argues that "the power of the spoken word" was a central feature of the ICU's appeal and longevity. Bonner's case study focuses on the Witwatersrand, and he suggests that

[847] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Maine, Motlagomang, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng, Hertzogville, 25 November 1986, Tape No. 555, Transcript No.155.
[848] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Maine, Motlagomang, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng, Hertzogville, 23 October 1986, Tape No. 555, Transcript No.154.
[849] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Maine, Motlagomang, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng, Hertzogville, 25 November 1986, Tape No. 555, Transcript No.155.
[850] Bonner. "Home Truths'", pp.1-2.

> language itself, excessive or otherwise, was one of the chief political weapons in the arsenal of the ICU - perhaps its single most potent resource. Public oratory was used by ICU speakers to rouse passions, to voice outrage, to stir indignation, to inspire confidence, to register a flat collective refusal, to kindle hope and to predict a better future.[851]

ICU organisers would often target their anger at "those responsible for their plight", including a range of government officials. Under the Native Administration Act, all of the ICU's speeches were collected and studied for seditious material, but as Bonner notes, the ICU ingeniously and "consciously" used those (members of the police) responsible for jotting down the speeches "to relay sentiments of dissatisfaction, grievance or outrage to their political masters".[852]

"Subversion" and "ridicule" reflect the two main oratory styles used by the ICU in the Western Transvaal to highlight contradictions and points of contestation between black workers, white farmers and state officials. "Subversion" refers to the ICU's use of language to undermine the assumed structures of power and authority, and "ridicule" speaks to the ICU's use of contemptuous and mocking language. The themes which frame the ICU's subversive language range from the exploitation of black workers to calls for equality and dignity. Sellwane Legobathe remembered Jingoes giving a speech in Bloemhof where he said

> You whites eat butter forgetting that it it's the black man who is milking for you, herds your cattle. He has not time for rest, he stays out in the storm, in the rain, you care less when he gets wet out in the rain.[853]

The crowd present at Bloemhof "remained in silence and listened". Jingoes' comment hit at the heart of the myth that a generation of white farmers had been successful without the labour and expertise of black people, and he recognised the rightful historical position of black sharecroppers who, as Keegan suggests, kept white farmers afloat from the early 1900s.[854]

Modise Tsubane was an ICU member who stayed on a farm in the Wolmaransstad district. He used to attend meetings in Wolmaransstad town and return to his farm to tell his family about the ICU. On one occasion, his brother Petrus Tsubane remembered him speak about how

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[851] *Ibid.,* p.10.
[852] *Ibid.,* p.12.
[853] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Legobathe, Sellwane, interview conducted by M.T, Nkadimeng, 9 July 1986, Gannalaagte, Tape No. 554. Transcript No.152.
[854] Keegan. *Facing the Storm,* pp. 29-31

> there is no Apartheid [segregation], and that the boers and blacks must be one thing. We must share the same meal on the same table. But we never became one thing. The boers did not like the blacks on top of them.[855]

Petrus' use of the word "apartheid" related to the context in which the interviews were conducted: 1986, in apartheid South Africa. There are two ways in which Modise's words can be read as subversive; the first relates to the fact that white farmers had an aversion to having black people "superior" or even equal to them. The second is the antipathy of white farmers to be physically close to black people, who rejected Modise's idea for black and white people to "be one thing".

When Kadalie gave a speech in Wolmaransstad in 1928, he turned towards some white women who had attended the meeting and, "while pointing to them with his fingers", said,

> We have wives who are working for you instead of working for us, their husbands. How will you feel when they will no longer work for you and you are forced to carry a bucket full of water yourself. I can make it happen that you should carry a bucket full of water for yourself.[856]

While Kadalie's remark was subversive by suggesting white women should be doing the work of their black domestic workers, it did reflect the prevailing patriarchal norms of society among both white and black people. Van Onselen suggests that this message appealed to "beleaguered black patriarchs who were in danger of losing their control over family labour".[857] The comment aimed to shock and ridicule and the net effect on the crowd, as recalled by Mmereki Molohlanyi, was that workers "cheer[ed] aloud and clap[ped] [their] hands at such bold speeches".[858] When Kadalie left the strike in Lichtenburg in June 1928, he gave a speech in Mafeking which ridiculed the opulent lifestyle of white people:

> Look, your wives and children are starving. If a person came to me and told me to go to church when I was hungry, I would tell him to go to hell. The white people have got on their tables; pork, beef, mutton, turkey and some of the damn fools are too lazy to get up and eat it.[859]

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[855] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Tsubane, P.K, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng, Barberspan, 1 June 1986, Tape No. 549, Transcript No.149.
[856] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Molohlanyi, Mmereki, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng, Wolmaransstad, 1984, Tape No.530, Transcript No.136.
[857] Van Onselen. *The Seed is Mine,* p.150.
[858] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Molohlanyi, Mmereki, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng, Wolmaransstad, 1984, Tape No.530, Transcript No.136.
[859] NASA, JUS, 920, 1/18/26, vol.16 – vol.18. Report received by the Divisional Officer at Kimberly from the SAP at Mafeking, 21 June 1928.

As well as mocking, there were more aggressive and antagonistic remarks. Ramakgelo Dinkebogile remembers Kadalie visiting a farm Kafferskraal near Rustenburg and comparing white people to pigs,

> he would say 'if you want to see how a Boer is like, you must get a pig. After scrubbing it you must fetch a boer; you will see that these people are pigs.'[860]

At times Kadalie had a particularly foul mouth. Ishmael Moeng remembers him visiting Makwassie and "shouting" and "swear[ing] at policemen".[861] George Lephadi also notes that he simply remembered ICU organisers "swearing at whites wherever they go".[862] As mentioned in chapter three, when Robert Makhatini was interrupted during a meeting Brewis by a court interpreter, Makhatini retorted by calling him a "snake". Bonner notes that black audiences enjoyed the "verbal excesses" of ICU organisers and, as Doyle Modiokgotla remarked "audiences rejoiced when the speaker cursed the white man".[863]

The ICU saved their most aggressive insults for the government. As Bonner notes, the "words used by ICU leaders stung and offended the political establishment […] from the Prime Minister down". After a meeting given by 'Mote in Potchefstroom in June 1928, the policemen present noted that "every member of the force present is ridiculed" and that

> most of ['Mote's] speech was full of abuse for ministers and officials in general […] Mote abuses the Ministers, Police Officers, Magistrates, Municipal Officials and Europeans.[864]

At a meeting in September 1928, 'Mote opened the meeting by ridiculing the Minister of Agriculture, General Kemp, and his role in the 1914 rebellion: "when they [Kemp and the rebels] were running all over the country like monkeys".[865] At a speech held in Lichtenburg in October 1928, Kadalie claimed that he would electorally "contest" JBM Hertzog's seat as Prime Minister, arguing that, as a Malawian immigrant, he "could appeal to the Dutch

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[860] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Dinkebogile, Ramakgelo, interview conducted by T. Phiri, Phokeng, 28 July 1981. Tape no. 294. Transcript No. 48.
[861] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Moeng, Ishmael, interview conducted by T. Matsatela, Oersonskraal, 31 March 1987. Tape No.563. Transcript No. 258.
[862] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Lephadi, George, interview conducted by T. Matsetela, Ikageng, 27 May 1987. Tape No. 572. Transcript No. 238.
[863] Bonner. "Home Truths'", p.16.
[864] NASA, JUS, 920, 1/18/26, vol.16 – vol.18. Report from the Criminal Investigation Department in Potchefstroom to the District Commandant of the South African Police at Potchefstroom, 25 June 1928.
[865] NASA, JUS, 921, 1/18/26, vol.19 – vol.21. Report compiled by the SAP at Maquassi to the District Commandant of the SAP at Potchefstroom, 10 September 1928.

sentiments probably better than Tielman Roos or General Hertzog".[866] Kadalie was suggesting that Roos and Hertzog were incompetent even in fulfilling the parochial needs of their constituency. In September and October 1928, 'Mote twice threatened to give both the government and Prime minister Hertzog a "sjambok".[867]

As much as the ICU's colourful language conformed to patterns identified by Bonner in the Witwatersrand, ICU organisers in the Western Transvaal spoke to the particular political economy of the region. The ICU used subversive language to show the contradictions of spatial segregation, the unequal division of resources relating to the sharecropper-farmer relationship and the use of black family labour by paternalist white patriarchs. Furthermore, they ridiculed the gluttony and selfishness of white farmers and mocked Nationalist Party politicians who stoked the racist sentiments of poor white workers in the Western Transvaal. This is precisely what Bonner argues; that the ICU survived because of their expert and exciting use of language which appealed to a mass audience. In the two sections above, leaders of the ICU espoused radical-democratic speech which called for the extension of freedoms and equality to black people.

The ICU as a Mediator and a Substitute for the Chieftaincy

The ICU played a role in local affairs as a mediator and a guide for their constituency. This was done in two ways: the first was by giving verbal and legal counsel to workers, and the second was through the mediating of civil and domestic disputes between employers and workers and between workers themselves.[868] Jingoes suggested that in much of the Western Transvaal people could not "go to their Chiefs easily" and there was a complete absence of chiefs in the South-Western Transvaal, with most "native reserves" north of Lichtenburg. Jingoes remarked that: "members of the ICU often came to our offices asking us to mediate in preference to going to the police", and the ICU was thus seen as a kind of "substitute for chiefs".[869]

There is literature that substantiates the claim made by Jingoes. Peter Delius on Sebatakgomo, the migrant workers organisation among the Pedi, and Patrick Harries on the Tonga in

[866] *Umteteli Wa Bantu*, "The Lichtenburg Outburst", 3 November 1928.
[867] NASA, JUS, 921, 1/18/26, vol.19 – vol.21. Report compiled by the SAP at Maquassi to the District Commandant of the SAP at Potchefstroom, 10 September 1928.
[868] Jingoes. *A Chief is a Chief by the People*, p.111.
[869] *Ibid.*, p.111.

Mozambique.[870] One central theme that is present in both Delius and Harries is how migrants amalgamated institutions and practices from their African polities with their new social worlds. A similar argument is made by Capps and Mnwana who show how contemporary land claims involving groups independent of the BaKgatla-ba-Kgafela chiefdom reproduced similar patterns of organisation to that of the chiefly authority.[871] In the Western Transvaal, migrant workers, labour tenants and sharecroppers had lost their ties to "reserves" and these workers and the ICU forged new social relationships. By performing some of the roles traditionally associated with chiefs, the ICU also took on a paternal function. Below, a few anecdotes are assembled to show the ICU's intermediary and paternal role in local politics.

In his autobiography, Jingoes recounted a story of two men: Jobere Mokuoane, a man with a sick child, and Seabata Kaoho, a *ngaka*.[872] The agreement was that Jobere would pay Seabata a heifer for the services of tending to his sick child, but in the course of treatment, Jobere's wife became sick and Seabata also attended to her. Seabata then asked that Jobere pay him amounts for his child and his wife. Jobere did not see this as custom, but Seabata noted that their agreement stated otherwise. Both Jobere and Seabata were members of the ICU, and occupied positions as the chairman of the Leeudoringstad branch and a member of the Makwassie branch executive respectively. Jingoes along with other ICU officials organised a committee to deal with the dispute, and assembled witnesses and evidence. The evidence corroborated Seabata's version of events and the committee resolved that Jobere must pay a young ox to settle the dispute.[873]

In another case in Makwassie, Jingoes remembered women bringing many cases towards the end of each month as their husbands were not paying them their dues. In one case, Jingoes and an ICU committee were tasked with solving a civil dispute between a woman, MaMabebe, her husband, Ben, and a mistress, Moroesi. MaMabebe, Moroesi and Ben were all ICU members and this allowed them to use the services provided by the ICU to solve disputes. MaMabebe was claiming that Ben was not taking care of her and the money instead was going to Moroesi.

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[870] Peter Delius. "Sebatakgomo; Migrant Organization, the ANC and the Sekhukhuneland revolt", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 15, 4 (1989): 581-615; Patrick Harries. *Work, Culture, and Identity: Migrant Laborers in Mozambique and South Africa, c. 1860-1910* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 1994).

[871] Gavin Capps and Sonwabile Mnwana. "Claims from Below: Platinum and the Politics of Land in the Bakgatla-ba-Kgafela Traditional Authority Area", *Review of African Political Economy* 42, 146 (2015): 606-624.

[872] Jingoes. *A Chief is a Chief by the People,* pp.111-112. A *ngaka* is a traditional doctor.

[873] *Ibid.,* p.112.

Jingoes and the committee intervened to ensure that MaMabebe was paid by threatening Ben he would be expelled from the ICU if he did not.

Jingoes suggests that these kinds of cases were "common" and took up "a lot" of the ICU's time.[874] They extended beyond simple disputes between members,

> If a member lost his job and was having a hard time making ends meet, we [the ICU] would try to give [him] one pound ten per month while he was unemployed. If an employer approached us to find someone to fill a vacancy, we did our best to find a suitable worker for him.[875]

Traditions were being reconfigured in the context of colonisation and the unfolding of a capitalist economy in the countryside, and the absence of chiefly structures were filled by the ICU on farms and in urban areas. Yet, Jingoes notes that the "foremost" duty of the ICU was to protect workers and this meant "interceding most often between black and white".[876]

Typically, cases between white employers and black workers were the outcome of unequal power relations and/or an inability to reach a peaceful resolution. In June 1929, Robert Makathini represented a man named Brown Cinai against his employer, Gert Pretorius in Schweizer-Reneke. Pretorius had taken Cinai's wife's musical organ as a repayment for debt that was incurred by Cinai. When Pretorius was told that the organ was not owned by Cinai, he "was not prepared to discuss anything with the wife".[877] The case was referred by Makhatini to the Sub-Native Commissioner for adjudication, where no response was received. The Magistrate of Schweizer-Reneke then intervened, and Pretorius decided to take a legal route; he handed the organ back to Cinai and summoned him in court for the debt.[878]

In Schweizer-Reneke, between 1931 and 1932, the ICU was involved in mediating a case where two men had laid claim to the same horse. The two men, whose surnames were Kashe and Vooi, both argued that a horse with the mark "C.J." was theirs. Kashe sued Vooi for the horse and also invoked the help of the ICU. Because of the inability to reach a peaceful resolution, on this occasion Schweizer-Reneke branch secretary Henry Maleke had tried to

[874] *Ibid.,* pp.112-113.
[875] *Ibid.,* pp.113-114.
[876] *Ibid.,* p.114.
[877] NASA, JUS, 517, 6044/29, 6180/29, 6175/29. Letter from Robert Makhatini, the Secretary of the ICU for the Western Transvaal, to the Secretary of Justice, 17 June 1929.
[878] NASA, JUS, 517, 6044/29, 6180/29, 6175/29. Letter from the Magistrate of Schweizer-Reneke to the Secretary of Justice, 2 July 1929.

involve the Secretary of Justice, but the matter was referred back to a "judicial officer" because it was a "civil case". The end outcome of this case is unclear.[879]

The ICU acted as a "rural intermediary" and helped plug the gaps relating to the erosion of the traditional order in and outside of the Reserves. In this way, it can be suggested that the ICU organisers acted as quasi-chiefs and intermediaries in civil disputes. Evidence of the ICU helping members of their constituency lodge civil cases with the government and playing an advisory role may support this suggestion. This was especially the case with Jason Jingoes who, as seen in his biographical profile in chapter two, had grown up in a family that had close ties to the Basotho chieftaincy. An equally plausible suggestion is that the consolidation of the white state in the 1930s and the ICU's growing political weakness meant that the union pursued mediation rather than protest.

Democratising Public Discussion: the ICU and the Public Sphere

A second feature of the ICU in the Western Transvaal was its ability to give informal verbal advice to its members and to facilitate open discussion. Keith Breckenridge has argued that during the 1910s and 1920s something similar to German philosopher Jurgen Habermas' definition of public sphere was emerging among African people in South Africa. This public sphere "defied ethnic and class differences" where African men "addressed each other as confederates and equals".[880] Breckenridge notes that through public meetings and the press, there was a "levelling force of political speech, logical argument and the real power of debate". Breckenridge suggests that the ICU was a key part of the public sphere which characterised black politics in the early twentieth century.[881]

Phil Bonner argues that there was little "equality" within the public sphere between the ICU and their audience. He notes that the ICU "harangued" their audiences and public participation was "for the most part limited to listening and then approving or withholding support".[882] The supposed equality of the public sphere is also brought into question through the exclusion of women. While Breckenridge and Bonner both disagree on the character and extent of the public

[879] NASA, JUS, 517, 6044/29, 6180/29, 6175/29. Letter from the Magistrate at Witbank to the Secretary of Justice at Pretoria, 15 April 1932.
[880] Breckenridge. "'We Must Speak for Ourselves'", p.73.
[881] *Ibid.,* pp.73-75.
[882] Bonner. "Home Truths'", p.10.

sphere, both agree that the Native Administration Act of 1927 spelled the end of any form of public sphere.[883]

The notion of a public sphere applies to the ICU's presence in the Western Transvaal in a few instances. Baefesi Maine remembered that in Makwassie farmworkers managed to raise certain issues during meetings. Farmworkers were able to express issues "concerning their lives, the way they lived and also the way whites treated them and underpaid them".[884] Maine further described how farmworkers were able to "ask [ICU organisers] how they should live in the world", which "the ICU people explained to them".[885] Rather than simply "haranguing" their audiences, on some occasions the ICU's meetings took on the form of a public sphere.

At the July 1928 meeting in Makwassie discussed earlier, Robert Makhatini opened the meeting for questions after his address. A range of questions were flung at Makhatini from white members of the audience which he either denied or refused to comment on. Wentzel asked: "Is it true that black people are teaching to drive white people into the sea?"; "Is it true that Kadalie said he would hit [Minister of Justice Tielman] Roos with a sjambok?". Black audience members, one of whom was a municipal official from Bloemhof named Saayman, asked whether ICU members still needed to carry passes, "What must we make of the "red tickets? Can we now walk without passes?" (see Figures 11 and 12). Saayman aired his views on the desires and aspirations of black people,

> We don't have the power to fight with the white man. We must try to be one [people], then we can do a lot, we must wear beautiful clothes and then we can be like the white people. White people don't disregard us, it is black people that do.[886]

Although the conversation did not go much further, Saayman's comments were echoed by Makhatini in his own view of freedom who spoke about how black women should "wear smart dresses" and live like white people in his exchange with Wentzel. There was an interplay between the views of the audience (Saayman) and those of the speaker (Makhatini), and this reflected the egalitarian character of the meeting. As the meeting continued, questions from different sections of the audience were flung at Makhatini, white farmers complained about

[883] Breckenridge. ""We Must Speak for Ourselves", p.93; Phillip Bonner. "Home Truths'", p.18.
[884] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Maine, Baefesi, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng, Mareetsane, 22 April 1986. Tape No.545. Transcript No.146.
[885] *Ibid.*
[886] NASA, JUS, 921, 1/18/26, vol.19 – vol.21. Report compiled by the Maquassi police Sergeant, 29 July 1928.

black people not adhering to the pass laws, the economic recession and other matters; "do you know the country has plenty debt", "are you against the pass law?" After Makhatini deflected a number of questions, white farmers turned to making statements "you want to make war, right?", "you talk too much, why not rather pay your dues". Makhatini then interjected "I will be pleased if the [white] bosses stop asking questions". At this point Saayman complained about the treatment of black people by white farmers,

> Saayman: We get nothing from white people, we walk with clothes in tatters, they say that they plough for us, just two acres – not even enough to pay for the tasks that we do.
>
> Robert Makathini: I will come here [in] two or three weeks, because I see you have it difficult here. I will come see how you work, I will come and hear your complaints and difficulties [...] I will go to Johannesburg and say that Maquassi is a bad place.[887]

The meeting opened up a space for people to publicly voice their views and concerns which, as Makhatini notes, the ICU listened to. The discussion included black workers, white farmers and Makhatini deliberating across their differences – in terms of opinion, class, race and political affiliation. Makhatini chaired the meeting and skilfully directed it to include the views of black audience members.

There is some evidence that the ICU was able to hold meetings in an egalitarian way which allowed for debate between ICU organisers and their audience, both black and white, thus creating the conditions for the making of a public sphere. Rather than calling for the democratisation of freedom and opportunity, the ICU presented real alternatives to the inequalities of legal counsel and public participation in politics. This is evidence of the ICU's radical democratic politics in practice.

Space and Spatial Politics: Rethinking the ICU's Impact on Space and Spatial Relationships in the Western Transvaal

This section seeks to analyse the ICU's impact on the space of the Western Transvaal. It asks the following questions: what role did the ICU play breaking down the norms and controls of the traditional farm space? How did towns change as a result of the influx of workers from farms following the change from tenant to wage labour? What kinds of new political ideologies did farm and town people engage with? How did the ICU use space during the strike in Lichtenburg? The account below uses Lefebvre's theory of space in order to locate some of

[887] *Ibid.*

the spatial changes brought to the Western Transvaal by the ICU. In the preceding chapters, an argument for the fluidity of space between town and countryside has been advanced. In order to study the impact that the ICU had on social space and spatial politics in the Western Transvaal, this section will discuss Lefebvre's theoretical reflections on space in relation to the following: the character of farms in the Western Transvaal and their spatial outlay; the spatial organisation of towns, diamond diggings and locations; and the ICU's use of, and impact on, the spatial politics of the Western Transvaal.

The ICU contributed to the integration of town, location, farm and diamond diggings (as shown in chapters two, three and four). Lefebvre views the interconnection of space as essential to political struggle, both practically, in how society is ordered, and theoretically, in how society is understood. He observes:

> The answer to separation and dispersion is unification, just as the answer to homogenisation is the answer to the forced discernment of differences and their practical realisation. Struggles directed towards these goals, whether implicitly or explicitly, are waged on many fronts – and along many frontiers; they need have no obvious links with each other; they may be violent or non-violent in character; and some combat the tendency to separate while others combat the tendency to confuse. A politics that separates (by dividing and dispersing space) and fosters confusion (by conflating peoples, regions and spaces with states) continues to be opposed by political means.[888]

What Lefebvre argues here is that the illegitimate splitting of space ought to be combatted. By adopting Lefebvre's theory, this section argues that the ICU helped combat practical divisions of space by white town administrations.

That the ICU was active in urban areas is important in terms of Lefebvre's theory of spatial-political struggles. He argues that "the city and urban sphere are thus the setting of struggle; they are also, however, the stakes of that struggle".[889] It is within the urban sphere that the ICU held meetings, and drew residents of towns, locations and farms to listen to their speeches and rally workers. This movement did not only have a practical thrust, i.e., enabling workers to attend meetings, it was also ideological and threatened the established (and segregated) order of towns. Evidence of the "stakes" of this movement from farm into town or location and diamond digging can be seen in the contestations between the ICU and workers on one hand,

[888] Lefebvre and Nicholson-Smith. *The Production of Space*, pp.418-420.
[889] *Ibid.,* p.386.

and white town administrations on the other. Lefebvre acknowledges that conflicts are predetermined to erupt in urban areas

> […] as the appropriation of space, the development of the urban sphere, the metamorphosis of everyday life, and the transcendence of the conflictual split between city and country all clash head with the state and with politics.[890]

These "clashes" were particularly pronounced both in towns across the Western Transvaal and at the Lichtenburg diamond diggings. In trying to pursue Lefebvre's argument that political change is "as much a matter of politics as it is a matter of space".[891] Lefebvre's theory is applied in what follows to the spatial organisation of the Western Transvaal, starting with the spatial character of farms.

The Spatial Politics of Farms

The peculiar character of farms in the Western Transvaal related (and still does today) to their remote and isolated position. Farms were spread out in-between towns, and during the 1920s their size could range from 1,000 to 7,000 hectares. Throughout the Western Transvaal, the isolated nature of these farms gave rise to insular ways of social organisation. Charles Van Onselen has shown that paternalist relationships predominated on farms in the South-Western Transvaal and were maintained through youth socialisation, shared language, the granting of material gifts and the integration of servants into the family of the master. On farms, paternalism played a key role in maintaining social order; as Bradford argues "[paternalism] clearly linked individual Africans to their families in ways which inhibited the development of tenant protest and independence". Van Onselen suggests that most studies of paternalism in South Africa emphasised its "recessive potential", whereas paternalism was in fact characterised by violence from both the master and servant's side. In his study of the paternalism and violence on farms in the South-Western Transvaal, Van Onselen suggests that there were times when "the black dependent [was] predisposed to question the social reach of the white patriarch".[892]

A second feature of farms was the violence meted out by a farm owner onto a farmworker. Speaking to the general make-up of farms in South Africa, Bradford suggests that it was "a

[890] *Ibid.,* p.387.
[891] Makhulu. "The 'Dialectics of Toil'", p.551.
[892] Bradford. *A Taste of Freedom*, p.43; Van Onselen. "The Social and Economic Underpinning", p.38.

brutal and bloody world that black farm labourers inhabited in the 1920s".[893] John Higginson argues that the Western Transvaal countryside was characterised by violence which took on multiple forms; legal or "formal" violence which was sanctioned by the state, and extra-legal violence committed by white farmers aiming to protect their often precarious economic position.[894] In the context of changing countryside conditions, which included proletarianisation, poor world markets and increasing struggles between farmworkers and farm owners, both "legal" and "extra-legal" violence was used by white farmers to discipline farmworkers. The experiences of Andries and Lydia Leeu, sharecroppers in the Western Transvaal, was one of extreme violence by the white farmer they worked for. In one instance, Andries was hit with an axe for being late for work:

> On my arrival he had accused me of coming late, when they had chopped four to five trees. I told him that he took his time in eating his lunch and therefore I deserved the same right too. He kept quiet. He was on top of the wagon chopping wood. [Another] Sotho [worker] was helping him. I took the other axe and started chopping the other trees. I heard something strike me very hard whilst doing this.[895]

Summarising the position of farmworkers throughout most of the South African countryside, Bradford notes that farmworkers were living in "quasi-jail conditions" on white farmers' property.[896]

Perceptions of Spatial and Political Divisions in Town and Countryside

Farmworkers themselves also perceived a separation between town and countryside, and saw the ICU as a specifically urban phenomenon. The oral testimonies of farmworkers shed some light on this. M. Motete worked both as a farmworker throughout the Free State and Western Transvaal and on road constructions. He was not a member of the ICU, but heard about it while working on farms near Bothaville in the Free State and in Bloemhof and Makwassie. He suggested that the ICU and other political organisations were not for people on farms and he did not know much about the ICU:

[893] Bradford. *A Taste of Freedom*, p.55.
[894] Higginson. *Collective Violence*, p.6.
[895] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Leeu, Andries & Lydia, interview conducted by B. Moeketsi, Atemelang, Delareyville, 24 February 1980, Tape Nos. 147 & 148. Transcript Nos. 191 & 192.
[896] Bradford. *A Taste of Freedom*, p.50.

> Now, most things came with people from towns. […] They knew about them – we were farm people, farm people are farm people. All those things were not there, we knew nothing…[897]

Farm dwellers viewed themselves as somewhat separate from the political cultures that were developing in towns. The ICU and ANC were seen as urban phenomena and farmworkers did not take to them immediately. When Sellwane Legobathe spoke about the ICU's growth in Bloemhof, she noted that "we the people on farms don't get the news in time. We hear it later".[898] Kas Maine claimed to not know much about the ICU because he "was staying on the farms" and "did not worry much about it".[899] He also felt the ICU's spread towards farms was suspicious "we were there at the farm, what are they [the ICU] doing?"[900]

The separation also affected how the ICU was perceived and the kinds of politics farmworkers engaged with. Kas Maine remembered the red membership cards that the ICU gave out at meetings, but he decided not to become a member because "I was a man of the farm and as such didn't want a quarrel with the whites. The whites would fight you if they found you in possession of one".[901] Maine was referring to the threat of retaliatory violence that came with engagement with the ICU. Both paternalism and violence, which related to the insular and isolated spatial organisation of farms, inhibited collective organisation. Bradford notes that "the norm amongst farm labourers was not overt collective resistance but subterranean individualistic protest".[902] Van Onselen suggested that the "racial order" in the Western Transvaal was

> being challenged by smart-talking city-folk from the outside, and time-honoured social practices on the farms [were] being questioned by previously loyal quasi-kin from the inside […] [903]

Van Onselen's depiction of protests by ICU organisers who were "smart-talking city-folk" suggests that there was a clear spatial dimension in the way that new political cultures were

[897] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Motete, M, interview conducted by T. Matsetela and E. Kgomo, Leeudoringstad, 10 September 1987, Tape No. 590. Transcript No. 168.
[898] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Legobathe, Sellwane, interview conducted by T. Nkadimeng, Gannalaagte, 27 March 1986, Tape Nos. 543 & 544. Transcript No. 145.
[899] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Maine, Kas, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng, T. Couzens and G. Relly, 2 July 1980, Tape Nos.204 and 205. Transcript No.30.
[900] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Maine, Kas, interview conducted by Charles Van Onselen, Ledig, Rustenburg, 24 February 1982. Tape No.264. Transcript No.45.
[901] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Maine, Kas, interview conducted by M.T. Nkadimeng, T. Couzens and G. Relly, 2 July 1980, Tape Nos.204 and 205. Transcript No.30.
[902] Bradford. *A Taste of Freedom*, p.49.
[903] Van Onselen. "The Social and Economic Underpinning", p.28.

perceived. The ICU not only challenged the racial order, but was ushered in a new brand of politics, one centred on collective organisation, primarily based in urban areas. When Kas Maine was asked about the possibility of striking on farms, he questioned

> How could they [farmworkers], call for a strike where they had no social standing? How will you be able to strike and you're inside a man's home? Strike inside man's house, you cannot do that![904]

This quote informed Charles Van Onselen's position, which recognised that "strategies of industrial resistance were unsuited to farms, where a paternalistic ethos governed day-to-day relationships".[905] The expansion of the Lichtenburg diamond diggings in 1926, the process of proletarianisation on farms and the growth of black political organisations like the ICU brought about changes in the spatial politics of the Western Transvaal. These were associated with a concomitant rise in collective political organisation – examples of which are the meetings held by the ICU in rural towns and the June 1928 Lichtenburg strike.

Transforming Space

The social space of the diamond diggings was entirely different to that of farms. As noted by Van Onselen, much of the Western Transvaal was characterised by "mixed farming", which was most often farming supplemented by diamond digging. Large cohorts of farmworkers absconded from work because of non-payment of wages on farms and/or violence and took up jobs in the off-season at the diamond diggings. On the diggings sprawling informal settlements contrasted the isolated dwellings of black farmers on the property of a white farmer. The paternalist nature of farms meant that violent sanctions could be immediately dispensed by farmer onto farmworker. The diggings were relatively unregulated and informal economic activities like beer brewing, gambling and crime were commonplace.

As seen in chapter two, workers from all over the Western Transvaal and beyond flooded to the diamond diggings, and this movement according to Clynick "threatened to break down the existing structures of white domination".[906] Spatial segregation, violence and paternalism constituted these "structures of white domination" which were partially disrupted on the diamond diggings. Incessant police persecution and violence characterised the location and

[904] Wits HPRA, IASR, Collection A2738. Maine, Kas, interview conducted by Charles Van Onselen, Ledig, Rustenburg, 24 February 1982. Tape No.264. Transcript No.45.
[905] Van Onselen. "The Social and Economic Underpinning", p.147.
[906] Clynick. "The Lichtenburg Alluvial Diamond Diggers", p.7.

threatened to establish a new order of domination over workers, which was premised on arresting African people for pass law contraventions, failure to meet tax payments and beer brewing.

The division between town, farm and diamond digging was partly eroded by the less regulated spatial outlay of Lichtenburg. The location was characterised by a sudden influx of workers, the growth of political organisations like the ANC and ICU and large cohorts of migrant workers. As argued in chapter two, when workers embarked on a strike in June 1928, the movement of workers between the diggings and the location meant that the scope of the strike included a wide set of grievances, including wages and conditions in the location. Drawing on Lefebvre, Nieftagodien refers to the "ambiguous continuity" and interconnectedness of space. This theoretical insight enables a broadening of the site of struggle (i.e., both the diggings and the location) and explores new spatial connections.

In order to suppress the strike, white diggers and the state reinforced spatial segregation on striking workers. This was done through creating divisions between workers who were based on the diggings and those who were "loafers" in the locations. In chapter two, a digger Jooste was quoted,

> regarding the reasons of the strike which originated at Grasfontein 31. which has the largest locations and was the first camp to decide that boys wages be reduced to 12/6 per week, the opinion is that the I.C. Union together with the loafers in the locations stirred up bad feeling which exists today.[907]

Another digger Swanepoel suggested that

> Diggers are very opposed to recognise the I.C. Union and assurance was given that it was not the old diggers boys who were instigators of the strike but the loafers in the locations; many of the old boys who worked regularly were quite willing to resume work at a reduced wage but the agitators chased them and forced them to follow them. These loafers are parasites on the boys who attend work regularly. Diggers want the assurance of the authorities for the protection of the working native and that the strike be declared off.[908]

[907] NASA, NTS, 2092, 215/280. Lichtenburg Alluvial Diggings, Native Strike. Minutes of meeting held at the South African Police Station on Wednesday the 20th June 1928, convened for the purpose of coming to some finality on the question of the native strike, 20 June 1928, p.4. Comment by Jooste.
[908] *Ibid.,* p.3. Comment made by Swanepoel.

Looking at the diggers' comments from a spatial perspective highlights the importance of the spatial location where the "[claim] boys", "loafers" and ICU organisers were from, even if all workers experienced the drop in wages, the location's poor amenities and violence of the police.

The ICU had a similar effect when organising workers in rural towns. Urban areas, including rural towns, were defined as white spaces which condemned black people to being "temporary sojourners" as declared by the Urban Areas Act of 1923. When the ICU began holding meetings in Western Transvaal towns during the second half of the 1920s, the ICU used the spatial flows between town and farm, for example by holding their meetings after church services on a Sunday. ICU meetings, generally held on Saturdays and Sundays, could draw hundreds of farmworkers into town thus reinforcing the links between town and countryside. ICU organisers spoke to the difficulties and plights of workers both on farms and in towns. When farmworkers returned back to their farms from ICU meetings, they spread the message of the ICU to their families. As shown in chapter three, farmworkers like Modise Tsubane and Mphaka Maine brought the ideology and news of the ICU back to farms. ICU meetings both relied on and created new spatial connections between isolated farms and towns.

Workers who had been evicted from farms because of proletarianisation or left farms because of violence and low wages, made their way into towns. As seen in chapters three and four, these workers moved into locations looking for work, where they also attended church and ICU meetings. Local administrations used the Urban Areas Act and other legislative measures to enforce urban segregation and the divisions between town and countryside; they harassed workers for passes and special passes and deliberately barred the ICU from holding meetings. The policing of movement was central to controlling of space. Thinking in Lefebvre's terms, the town was both the "site" and "stake" of struggle. In this regard, while it was within towns that the contestations took place between workers and the ICU, on the one hand, and town administrations on the other, the reason for the struggle was the right to be in urban space. While black workers and the ICU fought for this right, segregation meant that the town was exclusively white, and policing this was of utmost importance to local town administrations.

For example, on 5 May 1929, Doyle Modiakgotla noted that in Schweizer-Reneke workers were arrested by the local authority for not having special passes which allowed them to attend a meeting. A few days later, on 6 May 1929, the Sergeant of the SAP at Schweizer-Reneke reported that "some 12 natives were arrested for contravening the pass law … they were

apparently on their way to the location".[909] The ICU took town administrations to task; they held meetings rebuking the racist laws (like the special pass, discussed in chapter two) which were being used to control the movement of Africans, they challenged town administrations through the courts and fought against the pass laws. In this way, the ICU fought to transform the social and political space; they made towns and locations the locus of black political activism, and made these into spaces where black people – farm labourers, the unemployed and location dwellers – could interact with and exchange political ideas.

While the ICU had a degree of success in challenging the existing spatial regime, their inability to eradicate this spatial organisation eventually led to broader issues for them. Bonner argues that labour tenants, a central constituency of the ICU, were the "Achille's heel" of the ICU, in that they were "scattered across thousands of square miles of countryside [and] were virtually impossible to protect".[910] This was especially the case in the South-Western Transvaal where labour tenants formed a large constituency. Equally so, government repression maintained the spatial divisions between town, diamond digging and countryside through the pass laws and this greatly inhibited the ICU's capacity for consistent organisation.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown the varied and versatile character of the ICU, including its radical democratic politics. In this respect, Bonner suggests that the aims of the ICU were clear: "they wanted a fundamental redistribution of economic and political power", and in this section their languages of freedom and subversion evidenced this desire. Their effect on democratising access to public discussion and informal legal counsel constitute practical examples of radical democratic politics.

This chapter has shown that the ICU impacted the ideological, discursive, social and spatial character of the Western Transvaal. The ICU's languages of freedom, subversion and ridicule sparked workers' dreams of freedom and turned racial and class norms on their head. The ICU contributed to the creation of a public sphere through public discussion and informal legal counsel. It also played a role as a substitute for traditional leaders for Africans outside the

[909] NASA, JUS, 517, 6044/29, 6180/29, 6175/29. Letter from the Sergeant of the SAP at Schweizer-Reneke to the District Commander of the SAP at Potchefstroom, 6 May 1929.
[910] Bonner. "The Decline and Fall of the ICU", p.116.

reserves, and ICU organisers like Jingoes and Makhatini played a role mediating civil cases and giving counsel to members of their constituency.

Finally, the union had an impact on the spatial politics of the Western Transvaal, which was characterised by the isolated position of farms, a violent paternalist culture on the farms and extreme government repression. The ICU was able to partially disrupt spatial barriers between farm, town, location and diamond digging. Farmworkers travelled between farms and towns to attend political meetings and contributed to the spread of ICU ideas. The politics of farms, which had been limited to individual acts of farmworker protest slightly broadened, giving way to a mass politics in town, location and diamond digging.

Conclusion

This dissertation has traced the history of the ICU in the Western Transvaal and northern parts of the Cape Province. It has located the ICU's presence in the following towns, all of which are in today's North West Province: Bloemhof, Makwassie, Ottosdal, Schweizer-Reneke, Wolmaransstad, Lichtenburg, Mafeking, Rustenburg, Potchefstroom, Klerksdorp, Vryburg and Taung. During the years 1926 to 1934, the ICU was able to rally workers on a range of issues. The ICU had varying degrees of success in these towns relating to the uneven unfolding of the segregationist state (locally and regionally); capitalism (particularly in relation to processes of proletarianisation, class divisions and paternalism on farms); the character of local towns (connected to the economy of these towns and the nature of local administrations) and both the ICU's organising capacity (linked to the commitment and integrity of leaders and the union's research capacity) and their internal issues (corruption, internal splits and ideological divisions).

The presence of the ICU in the Western Transvaal has been somewhat overlooked in the scholarship. Peter Limb argues that by the 1930s the "ANC marched forward past the ruins of the ICU", Graeme Simpson suggests that the ICU failed to "articulate the local material concerns of Tswana peasants [in the Rustenburg district]" and Bradford argues that the ICU "had great difficulty in maintaining itself in the region, and the Congress Movements and the Communist Party certainly had greater support in a number of districts here".[911] Bradford notes they had a handful of ICU campaigns in the Western Transvaal which were characterised by "reformist trade unionism" which focussed on "working conditions rather than land issues" but concludes that the ICU was overwhelmingly impacted by organisational issues of embezzlement, factional battles and internal splits.[912] This dissertation establishes a clear chronology and extent of the ICU's presence in the Western Transvaal.

Following land dispossession in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the mineral revolution, South Africa was developed through a system of racial capitalism, supported by the state. The unfolding of this system was uneven; in the Western Transvaal black people who

[911] Peter Limb in Manson and Mbenga. *Land, Chiefs, Mining,* p.71; Helen Bradford, "'A Taste of Freedom': Capitalist Development and Response to the ICU in the Transvaal Countryside" in Bozzoli, eds., *Town and Countryside*, p.144; Simpson. "Peasants and Politics", p.185; Van Onselen. *The Seed is Mine*, pp.146-157. Van Onselen does not diminish the ICU's presence but focusses mainly on the South-Western Transvaal.

[912] Bradford. *A Taste of Freedom*, p.156-170; Simpson. "Peasants and Politics", p.191.

been dispossessed of land formed sharecropping and labour tenant relationships. By the 1920s these labour arrangements were prevalent in much of the Western Transvaal and attached to these were social relationships characterised by paternalism, violence and capitalising farmers. Many workers were also employed on alluvial diamond diggings which had variable production relating to the prevalence of diamond-rich gravel and the manipulation of the diamond market by De Beers and state legislation. The ICU emerged in South Africa in the context of this changing political economy after the economic depression that followed World War One, and throughout the 1920s, they fought battles on behalf of black workers in town and countryside. From 1924 the ICU was up against the Pact government, which was committed to segregation through the 1923 Urban Areas Act and to the elimination of dissent through the 1927 Native Administration Act. The growth of the ICU in the Western Transvaal is linked to the move of their headquarters to Johannesburg in 1926 and their turn to the countryside around 1925-1926.

The ICU began to establish a presence in the Western Transvaal in 1926 through their Transvaal provincial secretaries, Thomas Mbeki and H.D. Tyamzashe, who had been expanding the union's reach following the relocation of the union's headquarters to Johannesburg. They opened branches in Potchefstroom and Mafikeng. While both of these branches struggled to root themselves at this early stage because of repression, a lack of sustained leadership and the inability to make pragmatic alliances with organisations such as the CPSA and ANC, the Mafikeng branch enabled the ICU to visit Lichtenburg late in 1927. This dissertation has built on Van Onselen's argument that the ICU's subsequent rapid growth in the Western Transvaal was sparked by the June 1928 strike in Lichtenburg. The strike was a response to a reduction in black workers' wages, with roots in broader problems that workers faced, including police persecution and poor conditions in the location. The ICU played a role during the first three days of the strike; they picketed workers, held meetings and negotiated with employers and the state for better wages. Owing to the large amounts of "farmer-diggers" and seasonal labourers at the diggings, the message of the ICU's activity was spread throughout the Western Transvaal.

The growth of the ICU in the Western Transvaal was also spurred on by a rural revolt (described by Bradford and Neame) unfolding during 1927-1928 in South Africa's countryside districts. At the heart of the revolt was land dispossession and the restructuring of labour relations on farms, whereby labour tenants and sharecroppers were being forced into wage labour. In the context of land dispossession and proletarianisation in the South-Western

Transvaal, the ICU was able to give a voice to people's daily struggles and grievances and thus gained a considerable following in this region. Diamond diggings and farms were the central areas of employment in Bloemhof, Ottosdal, Makwassie Schweizer-Reneke and Wolmaransstad the ICU undertook struggles for better wages, land, the increasing of sharecroppers' shares, against the pass laws (and the "special pass") and for improved living conditions in towns' black locations.

During the same period, the ICU was also active in towns like Klerksdorp, Potchefstroom, Rustenburg, Mafikeng, Vryburg and Taung, but failed to make real inroads because of the variegated and complex political economies of these towns (like in Rustenburg, Taung, Vryburg, Potchefstroom and Klerksdorp). In Klerksdorp and Potchefstroom many workers worked on the Rand, and this meant the locus of their economic issues, relating to conditions on the mines like low wages and poor living quarters, were played out there rather than in these towns. Towns like Rustenburg, Taung and Vryburg were adjacent to Reserves and this meant that African people to a certain degree were shielded from wage labour through limited access to land.

Throughout the towns discussed in chapters two, three and four, the ICU engaged in public political discussions and provided legal support as well as domestic and civil counsel to its members. At meetings ICU organisers spoke to farmworkers about freedom; freedom from oppression and economic freedom, especially relating their messages to the land question and wages. They ridiculed white people in their speeches and wowed audiences with their creative and bombastic oratory. Fearing the impact of the ICU, racist and Nationalist-aligned local administrations throughout the Western Transvaal policed the movement of workers between farm and town and used the law, and often outdated legislation, to prevent the ICU from holding meetings and stop ICU organisers from entering towns (seen most strikingly in Klerksdorp, Ottosdal and Bloemhof). The violence of white farmers dissuaded workers from joining the ICU in places like Wolmaransstad and Makwassie and attempted to keep the union's influence at bay.

In these towns, despite the best efforts of the white farmers and the local administration to separate the ICU from workers, and further divide farmworkers from those in urban areas, the ICU managed to disrupt the spatial order that the segregationist state sought to impose in town and countryside. In the South-Western Transvaal, workers flooded into towns to attend meetings and the ICU used already present spatial connection like the Sunday church services

to engage with workers. In Lichtenburg, the ICU challenged the enforced spatial divisions between diamond digging and location and helped mobilise workers against low wages, pass laws and police persecution. The ICU's activism helped change the spatial politics of the Western Transvaal's farming districts from one of individualised protest to collective protest.

During 1928-1929 the ICU experienced a general organisational decline linked to internal splits, corruption, the infiltration of white liberals into the movement and ideological tensions, particularly in relation to communism. Corruption in Lichtenburg and Mafeking, ideological conflicts in Klerksdorp and Potchefstroom, the lack of research capacity linked to mismanagement of funds in Vryburg and Taung, internal divisions (in Lichtenburg) and antagonisms with other political organisations (Potchefstroom and Klerksdorp) crippled the union's ability to grow. In these contexts, it also suffered from a lack of capable leadership: while some local ICU activists held meetings and struggled for better wages, others engaged in ideological disputes, sided with particular factions that had emerged within the organisation and ultimately were unable to speak to the needs of their constituency.

To a certain extent, the ICU managed to avoid the trappings of this general organisational decline in the South-Western Transvaal, not least thanks to the commitment of individual leaders like Mote, Modiakgotla, Makhatini, Kadalie, Jingoes and Maleke. Through their shrewd and committed organising they kept the ICU alive in the South Western Transvaal until at least 1934. 'Mote and Kadalie's oratory ability generated excitement among workers, while Makhatini, Maleke and Jingoes fought local battles against repressive town administrations, low wages on farms, proletarianisation and for better conditions in locations. Modiakgotla and Tyamzashe helped the ICU generate insight into local contexts through research work. They spent many months living in locations surrounding towns, and this experience enabled them to organise workers and location residents and ensured they were well attuned to local contexts. Yet, with the exception of Schweizer-Reneke, where the leadership of the branch was passed from Makhatini to Maleke, the dependence on these individual leaders to continue fighting local struggles left them vulnerable to the repression of local administrations as well as their own personal faults and ambitions, evidenced by the experiences of Kadalie, Jingoes, 'Mote and Modiakgotla.

The regional focus of the ICU was one of its greatest assets, seen most strikingly in Helen Bradford's work. In the Western Transvaal, in rural and peri-urban areas outside of South Africa's main urban centres, the ICU tenaciously followed up on disenfranchised farmworkers,

location residents and workers on the diamond diggings. While Bonner suggests that ICU's work in rural areas dried up funds, their expanded regional reach was perhaps a strength in light of the disintegration of the ICU at a national level. The attention of the ICU to rural contexts is best illustrated in the links they developed to ordinary workers, like in Makwassie, Schweizer-Reneke and Wolmaransstad, where the ICU joined with pre-existing struggles and workers joined the ICU in their hundreds.

This dissertation has shown how remarkably dynamic and diverse the ICU's character was. In the Western Transvaal, it displayed at best a hybrid character, which has been termed union-cum-protest movement; during the Lichtenburg strike, the ICU took up the work of a trade union, and when fighting against proletarianisation and paternalism on farms, they looked more like a rural movement. Yet their character stretched beyond these two markers; they also fought everyday political battles, trying to improve living conditions in locations, resisting police persecution of ICU leaders and ordinary location residents and fighting against passes. Their language, which called for freedom and subversively ridiculed the state and their white oppressors, generated mass appeal and called for the radical extension of political and economic freedoms. As mentioned throughout the dissertation, Helen Bradford has posited the ICU as a rural movement, Neame argues that it was radical democratic and by the ICU's own determination it was a trade union. While Roux conceptualised the ICU as a "general trade union", and as explored in the introduction, Dee has raised the question of what the label "general union" entails. As has been argued in this dissertation, the ICU engaged in a wide range of struggles which traversed the labels of "rural movement", "radical democratic", "trade union", "general union". The nature of the constituency that the ICU was representing and engaging with meant that it always had to be more than a union, more than a rural movement, more than a general union. It was this fluidity, captured in the term union-cum-protest movement, which was crucial to the ICU's success and a feature which spread it too thin.

Where do "I See You" today?

The North West Province today still feels the pinch of land dispossession and the massive changes wrought throughout the countryside in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The North West, including all the towns discussed in this dissertation, are currently characterised by de-agrarianisation and overcrowded townships. White commercial farmers own large swathes of land where farmworkers are employed on a temporary contract and have little or no access to the land that they work. Corrupt local administrations fail to provide services and

location residents are still persecuted for informal economic activities like beer brewing. The failure of the ANC government to actualise economic freedom has left most black people vulnerable, and this especially so in the case of underfunded and ignored rural districts. Unionisation of agricultural workers remains very low and, much as in the past, is related to fears of persecution, of souring the relationship with employers, of victimisation and the remoteness of farms - similar to those experienced in the 1920s. It is in the economic dimension that the ICU's message of freedom is most pertinent today; a call for economic freedom based on land redistribution, adequate housing, fair pay and the end to exploitation.

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NTS: Secretary of Native Affairs (1880-1975)

TPB: Director of Local Government, Transvaal (1897 - 1973)

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