

which is true to a point, but they forget that the company doesn't have an existence apart from its customers."⁵¹ While this customer-focussed approach appeared to meet the approval of most in management, it prompted renewed suspicions on the part of the unionists. Some feared the entire TPQ programme was about to be scotched for a more traditional and adversarial approach to industrial relations. At the time of the changeover, for example, two senior Ppwawu unionists approached Leon Cohen, asking him why he had appointed "such a conservative" to replace him. "There seemed to be a clear perception on the part of the union that he was a conservative," he said.⁵² James Smith acknowledged there were tensions in this respect at the time: "The transition wasn't entirely smooth because of difficulties in adjusting from one style to another. Rob Cohen also has a feel for industrial relations and is sympathetic to the kinds of changes that have taken place over the past few years, but he is more inclined towards confronting the unions, and is less driven by human processes than Leon was, and more focussed on the customer."⁵³

Rob Cohen himself, however, saw no contradiction between the two, and argued that an approach making the customer the primary stakeholder had to be premised on sound industrial and human relations, and did not necessarily imply a downgrading of the priority placed on employees. "The role of management is to look after employees - and I don't mean that in a paternalistic sense - but we have to ensure that people are motivated and happy because only if our people are motivated and happy are they going to worry about the customer and look after the customer. The customer finds out pretty quickly if there's a bad vibe in the organisation because it comes through in bad service and bad attitude."⁵⁴ Interviewed a year after taking over as CEO, he argued that as a result of the restructuring process, relations with the unions had remained on a strong footing. "In fact it's been strengthened because we've

worked through issues together. While we don't have an intellectual model which explains it or even an agreed process, the reality on the ground is that there is co-determination taking place. We can't put up a new plant without discussing it with the unions, we can't bring in outside consultants who are helping us re-engineer the whole business without discussing it with the unions, and getting their agreement to participate in it. If they boycott it, or blackball it, it won't happen. So practically, and pragmatically, co-determination in many areas is a fact of our existence."⁵⁵

A related point was that restructuring also had the effect of making negotiations between management and the unions less diffuse than before, and this tended to strengthen the union's position, or at least its potential, while at the same time making it easier and less time consuming for management to gain and maintain union agreement on any issue. As Payne put it in late 1996: "For a long time the unions have been campaigning for industry and company level bargaining, and at PG Bison their task was facilitated by the fact that they were now dealing with a single business entity rather than three businesses broken up into semi-autonomous SBUs, and this has made it easier for both the company and the union to negotiate. It could be said that participation - in this sense - has been strengthened even though most aspects of the previous participative programme have declined and are no longer in operation in most of the SBUs."⁵⁶

Rob Cohen acknowledged that aspects of the TPQ programme had been ignored in the two years after restructuring started, but said this was partly because management's energy went into getting the new structure to function effectively, and that this did not mean that the aims of TPQ had been abandoned. "What we achieved through TPQ more than anything else was

a value system. While I agree that the first stage needed to focus on values, and needed to put people under enough pressure and pain for them to change their behaviour, it placed too much emphasis on values and too little on output. We didn't follow through enough with the hard issues and we were therefore weak on the productivity component involved in its initial conception, and now we're stronger in this area. The underlying values are still there, and I wouldn't say the programme has been sidelined, but it has lost emphasis over the last two years because we've been going through a dramatic restructuring and have been trying to get management into place and redirect the business. As a result TPQ wasn't high enough on everyone's priority list with what we were trying to achieve. The real issue was keeping the business going and satisfying the market, and everyone was running to stand still. Philosophically we haven't changed but the gap between concept and practice has widened. We were trail blazing and innovative at first, but we haven't followed through, and our practice has fallen way behind. We've done far more in terms of participation than most companies, but if you ask me whether I am satisfied, the answer is no. There's certainly a need for better communication and more participation from the workforce."⁵⁷

At the time he said he envisaged new forms of participation developing in the second half of the decade: in-a-group-type work team structures which prioritised production, marketing and overall performance rather than complaints; a revitalised National Forum which involved co-determination on production and investment decisions; an affirmative action programme and, eventually, worker representation on the company's board. "I would like to see three or four non-executive directors representing the workforce, and I feel quite strongly that those should represent everyone - following the German model - and not just the unionised workforce. It has to be a system which will represent every worker in this organisation, and by worker I

mean everyone who is not an executive director, or certainly below a certain level of management. I think this would be a very positive move. However, I think that having worker representation on the executive management board is more difficult - and the Germans don't have that either - because there's an inherent conflict of interest there, and you don't want every management meeting ending up in a conflict between management and workers."⁵⁸ But he insisted PG Bison would resist drawing wholesale from German, Japanese or other models of co-determination, and that the business had to be aware of the relationship between the achievement of political demands and the desire for the achievement of economic ambitions among the black workforce, when drawing up its participative programmes. "I don't think any other country's model is necessarily going to be applicable in this country because of the racial issue."⁵⁹

While the one business programme was still being absorbed, PG Bison introduced a new initiative aimed at improving customer focus, productivity, cost management and employee relations. An external managerial consultancy⁶⁰ was retained and once again, the business was put through a series of seminars, workshops and questionnaires before the 'Ikwezi'⁶¹ programme was introduced, involving, among other things, the introduction of 'Team Rooms' for enhancing employee participation within each business site. The literacy and training programmes were also strengthened and joint management -shop steward structures were introduced at both national and site levels. But, as is discussed below, most aspects of Rob Cohen's vision were either not put into place effectively, or were only partially implemented, and there was a general decline in the momentum of participation. Along with this, though certainly not solely related to it, there was also a marked decline the success of the business as a whole.⁶²

11.4 EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION SINCE RESTRUCTURING

In the period between 1992 and 1996, the emphasis in employee participation shifted from direct forms such as the in-a-groups, to indirect, power-centred forms, with national restructuring forum representing the high point.⁶³ This did not imply a total demise of previous programmes, with in-a-groups, SBU leadership structures and LEAP surviving or being revived in some SBUs, while the National Forum was temporarily resurrected and complemented by national meetings between senior managers and shopstewards and related site-level structures. It is worth looking at these elements of the company's participative programme after restructuring and touching on other aspects which have undergone substantial revision such as the approach to affirmative action and the Corporate Social Investment programme.

11.4.1 The National Forum and other leadership structures

Throughout 1993 the National Forum was suspended by the unions, initially as a response to the announcement that PG Bison was planning the one business initiative, and subsequently because negotiations around restructuring replaced the more general and consensus-oriented focus of the National Forum. The structure used during this period was called the "PG Bison Restructuring Forum" and involved management negotiating with Ppwawu and Uwusa (while separate negotiations were held with Numsa at the Alrode factory), with the agenda limited to issues directly relating to the proposal to merge the three companies into one.⁶⁴ The Forum in its original form was revived in 1994 - but with increased powers because of strengthened position of the unions, the unitary structure of the company, and the agreement

that issues such as job grading should be added to its remit. But it took eight months from the time of agreement on restructuring before it met again. At the June 1994 National Forum it was agreed that the Forum was a management-union negotiating body - a term which had not previously been applied to it - though management continued to press for proposals to include non-union members in forum leadership teams at site level⁶⁵, but the issue was not resolved to management's satisfaction.⁶⁶ In the August 1994 National Forum, much of the focus was on the introduction of skill-based grading rather than the previous system of job-based grading which the unions opposed, with the new system being accepted by management (which was introduced in 1995).⁶⁷

Thereafter, and until October 1996⁶⁸, the National Forum remained dormant because neither management nor the unions motivated for its continuation, which reflected both the weaknesses and pre-occupations of both parties, and the fact that alternative negotiating structures were being established. The most important was the facility for quarterly national meetings between full-time shop stewards and the management executive, and related structures at site level (between site management and shopstewards) - innovations initiated by the unions despite their opposition to Christo Nel's similar scheme five years earlier (which, ironically, had been the cause of the breakdown of TPQ and of the National Forum's birth). The national structure, introduced in 1995, has had some success, at least in terms of meeting with some degree of regularity⁶⁹ and in allowing parties to air ideas and grievances, but it has not met management's expectations in contributing to the company's performance goals, planning and vision. As Payne put it in late 1996: "It has become hamstrung through being a gripe session where union issues, which can be dealt with elsewhere, are brought up to this

level for hopeful resolution. There is little in the way of company vision development or grand planning, but rather a shopping list approach from both sides."⁷⁰

The structures at site levels appear to have had mixed success, with some sites maintaining considerable enthusiasm while in other cases this innovation has been met with apathy and even implicit resistance from management and unionists. The idea behind this initiative was that it would replace the old SBU TPQ leadership committees, and be established at every factory and distribution outlet in the company, with the aim of meeting on a monthly basis. While most sites appear to have made some effort in this regard, at the time of writing there were still outlets without such structures. According to Payne: "The functioning of this form of participative forum is really dependent on management and union interest, which, in practice, has varied tremendously around the country. Some sites meet almost on a monthly basis; others try to ignore the structure and instead use one-to-one contact, 'if there is a problem', as they put it."⁷¹

Finally it is worth noting that from the time of the publication of the draft Labour Relations Bill, senior management have shown considerable enthusiasm for the idea of workplace forums, and at the time of writing were pushing for faster movement in introducing this facility than Ppwawu was prepared to accept.⁷²

11.4.2 In-A-Groups and Team Room Groups

The in-a-groups showed signs of decline from late 1992 onwards at most of the SBUs, and this became even more marked after the merger was announced in early 1993. According to the July 1993 Ppwawu-commissioned SWOP report, in most SBUs in-a-groups "never really

functioned effectively"⁷³, though it acknowledges that where they did exist, "workers used the groups as a way of channelling work related grievances to management."⁷⁴ In some SBUs where this did not happen workers became frustrated and they collapsed, while in others management was responsible for closing them down. According to the report, by mid-1993 the programme had "collapsed almost completely" at all SBUs with the exception of the Laminates factory at Alrode.⁷⁵ But according to management, this perception was off the mark and, indeed, a 1994 article on PG Bison by the SWOP report authors was less emphatic in this regard, noting that, "on the whole 'In-a-Groups' do not meet as they should nor do they deal with matters as intended."⁷⁶

Maxine Hart, who coordinated the groups, said that about 70 percent of all sites within the company had in-a-groups in one form or another in early 1993, though she acknowledged that at several sites these involved no more than information conduits for management⁷⁷. While accepting the union perspective that one of their prime roles was to channel day to day employee grievances and problems, she said they had lost other dimensions of their initial purpose and definition. "There emerged a range of meanings about what in-a-groups were. People applied their own meanings, with the result that there's a lack of consistency group-wise when it is said, 'we're having an in-a-group'. When there's a management meeting some say, 'we're having an in-a-group' or where there's a coordination meeting between different sections in the organisation, they say, 'we're having an in-a-group'. Some call in-a-groups shopfloor groups. The term means different things across the company. What we in the head office say is that an in-a-group is a functional area on the shop-floor level. People working in the despatch area are an in-a-group. People working on a press are an in-a-group."⁷⁸ Through the course of 1993 Hart said the situation had further deteriorated,

to the point where, by early 1994, they ceased to be a central element of PG Bison's operation. "In most SBUs they're not working. They might have communications meetings and there are pockets of genuine in-a-groups in Pietermaritzburg, Alrode and Durban but there are none in Piet Retief, Cape Town or Stellenbosch and at Boksburg they just have meetings which they call in-a-groups, but in reality they're nothing of the sort according to the original, participatory definition."⁷⁹ In February 1995 CEO Rob Cohen said that most of the sites which had initially established in-a-groups, continued to maintain them, but that as a result of the restructuring there had been a "hold up" in the further implementation of these structures, and that the whole process had lost its impetus.⁸⁰

One reason for this loss of focus and momentum was the upheaval of restructuring, but that there was also a deeper rooted problem within the company generally, and some of the SBUs specifically, relating to managerial power structures which proved difficult to challenge successfully. The aim of establishing horizontal lines of communication, and ultimately company decision making, was contradicted by the hierarchical structure within each of the three businesses, and particularly within each of the eight SBUs. This meant that, in several cases, there were vested interests against encouraging innovations which would lead to a reduction of managerial power and manpower. As Hart put it: "One of the reasons for the failure of the in-a-groups in most SBUs is that despite the stated intention to flatten managerial structures, this did not happen. The managerial hierarchies are too deep - there are too many levels of control, and there has therefore been very little genuine empowerment, with the result that where groups exist they function to provide information, and in this way allow some participation, but mostly they do not provide a channel for employees problems

and suggestions, let alone empower them to make decisions about the business and to contribute to its success, which was their original function."⁸¹

Reaching a similar conclusion from a different perspective, Rob Cohen said the problems arose from an initial lack of clarity about their function. This meant there was no single model on which they were based, leading to a variety of different forms emerging, and he made it clear his own preference was for performance-oriented groups along Japanese and US quality circle lines. "We went in without having a very clear vision of what we wanted them to achieve or the mechanisms to structure them. As a result a whole range of different in-a-group processes grew up but there was never a very clear intellectual model of what we expected, so we still find that many of the in-a-groups don't understand their function. They think it's just a bitch session to moan about relationships and hygiene factors, whereas if in-a-groups are going to work, they've got to be more focussed on the TQM model, which says, 'what are we here for?', and the answer is that the only reason we exist is to satisfy the customer."⁸²

11.4.3 Employee education and training

Because of the upheaval of the one business initiative, the LEAP programme lost momentum and by the beginning of 1994 the number of workers involved in classes had fallen to 300⁸³, though according to training and development coordinator James Dingalo, in early 1994 classes were still operational at Alrode, Piet Bontef and Pietermaritzburg.⁸⁴ The SWOP report stated that LEAP was the only element of TPQ still in existence in some of the SBUs, though it noted that in at least one site literacy class had been unilaterally suspended by

management.⁸⁵ A subsequent article by its authors concluded: "the literacy programme has so far had limited success."⁸⁶ At the time, the People Development Coordinator, Joan Lurie, explained these setbacks in terms of the disruption caused to all participative programmes by the merger: "We've been set back by restructuring, partly because it has not been treated as a priority but also because some of the workers involved in literacy classes left the company as a result of the redundancy package. In some areas we've had to start from scratch again."⁸⁷ Hart added that the uncertainty and resulting fear among managers and workers was also a cause. "People were panic stricken in their jobs, so that occupied most of the year, and programmes like literacy fizzled out a bit. People put a stop on everything, saying, 'what's the point of carrying on if we're going to lose our jobs,' so things slipped in all respects."⁸⁸

However, in 1994, once the initial stages of restructuring had been implemented, there was a concerted attempt at emphasising the literacy programme, and the unions and management agreed on an ambitious target of ensuring that all PG Bison employees were fully literate by the end of 1996.⁸⁹ In 1994 training staff conducted assessments throughout PG Bison to determine the demand and need for literacy courses. The programme was developed by an independent education consultancy⁹⁰ and the classes conducted by employees themselves, who were trained to teach their colleagues. The programme's scope⁹¹ was expanded to include mother tongue literacy in Zulu, Sotho and Xhosa as well as basic, conversational and advanced English and Zulu courses (the latter aimed at management, but available to any non-Zulu speakers).⁹² After this the LEAP Adult Basic Education programme was further expanded, with the retention of full-time staff in most regions, and there were attempts to draw a closer relation between LEAP and other aspects of the company's training programme.⁹³

A new 'broadband' skills grading system was introduced in 1995 to replace the old system of job-based grading. It involved bands defined by the skills required to carry out responsibilities, rather than the tasks performed and contained greater emphasis on training and development programmes to provide employees with the skills required for their levels. The company recognised this necessitated long-term planning for training, in order to allow employees to "plot their career development", and to determine the skills they would require to meet this.⁹⁴ Partly as a result of this change, it introduced a computerised system of assessing the skills and training needs of employees. Leon Cohen said this system was part of an "integrated people development programme" first developed at Coca Cola in the US. "Every person in the organisation is in this system, and their position is known, their job is known, and they are evaluated on a quarterly basis, against specific performance goals and as part of an empowerment programme. Then their position and potential would have been noted and their weaknesses defined, and then you design your training programme according to that specific need, and this would be implemented by the Human Resources department on the ground. That person's future would be determined, the structure would be visible, and their ability to develop would be encouraged through the system itself."⁹⁵ This assisted the company in integrating its literacy and training functions, and in providing more directed site-based skills training for unskilled workers, as well as Technicon training for skilled workers and a stronger management training programme, aimed at junior and middle managers.⁹⁶

11.4.5 Communication and Information Sharing

One of the most substantial effects of the restructuring negotiations was to create a more open climate between management and the unions. As discussed in 11.2 above, both Ppwawu and

the SWOP team praised the company for its willingness to supply all information about the business required by the union during their investigation into redundancies.⁹⁷ The SWOP report noted that researchers were granted the access they required and that management representatives interviewed "were very cooperative in answering our questions and giving detailed information on all aspects of the factories and distribution centres."⁹⁸ And in a subsequent article, the authors said PG Bison's approach to information sharing was crucial to the success of the redundancy agreement. "The union's power stemmed not only from its strong organisation, but also from the opportunity to make its own assessment of management's proposals. ... (T)he process involved full disclosure of company information. In the past, unions have tended to demand full financial disclosure when challenging retrenchments. In this case PPWAWU demanded a much broader knowledge of the company's position and management's thinking. ... The process demonstrated that management can benefit from a union assessment of the company's performance, precisely because it offers a different perspective on the firm."⁹⁹ The immediate result was that the flow of information between the company and the union increased, with management more ready to open its books to the unions and the unions more ready to offer proposals and enter discussions about aspects of the business. The effect was that a climate of trust was created at the time which made negotiations around issues of substance, such as job grading, easier to conduct.

Aside from this dimension of information sharing, the company was also changing its own methods of communicating to the managements of the different sites and to employees more generally. In late 1994 it began introducing a computerised information system throughout the organisation, with the aim of creating "an environment where vital information is available at the touch of a key and communication with colleagues on the other side of country will be

via electronic messages ... flashing from one computer to another."¹⁰⁰ While computers had played an increasing part in the company's operations since its formation in 1986, this innovation represented a significant step in terms of expanding the parameters of the company's computer operations, particularly regarding the distribution of information about the business. It involved creating local and 'wide' area networks to allow the immediate transfer of information and messages, the introduction of a uniform electronic mail system to aid communication and provide access to the Internet, to create an integrated distribution system, a new sales base and, later, a 'National Information Repository' which would provide a "comprehensive PG Bison knowledge base".¹⁰¹ While the prime aim was to improve overall performance, it was envisaged that it would have a spin-off in improving access to information about the company, and to make this available to all employees through the participatory structures. As mentioned above, this system, which came into operation in 1995, had implications for the assessment of training needs, and according to Rob Cohen, it also had a "direct link with the in-a-group processes".¹⁰²

11.4.6 Affirmative Action

When Rob Cohen took over in 1994, he recognised the slow pace of black advancement within management as the weakest link in the company's human resources chain, and moved away from the colour blind stance of his predecessor by ending the embargo on external recruitment¹⁰³ and prioritising training. The definition of affirmative action covered "all groups that historically have been at a disadvantage in South African society. This includes people who have been discriminated against by apartheid laws (such as the African, Asian and Coloured populations) and those who have suffered informal discrimination such as women

or the physically disabled."¹⁰⁴ Cohen said affirmative action for women was also a priority. "The company feels that women should make up a greater proportion of our overall workforce than they do at present, and particularly in management. After all they comprise more than half the population."¹⁰⁵ He stressed the weaknesses in the previous approach. "Practically, we've done very little until recently - we haven't had active recruiting and we haven't been putting trainees into the business. There has been some attempt at affirmative action internally but we were handicapped by our past recruitment practices, where we employed the first body at the gate, so in terms of people with real potential, it really wasn't easy, but without making any excuses, we've done close to nothing about affirmative action."¹⁰⁶

Over the previous three years there had been a gradual increase in the number of black people employed in middle management, but no black executive directors and no programme to shift the racial quota of senior management at a more rapid rate. This began to change after 1995. The company advertised internally for wage earning employees to apply for management training positions and started a campaign to attract black management trainees from outside the company. They would be provided with two years of "on-the-job" training in various aspects of the business before being appointed to senior managerial positions. There was also a drive to recruit more experienced black employees in managerial categories.¹⁰⁷ These external dimensions were seen as the priority. As Cohen put it: "We've had a freeze on outside recruitment but there is a real need for it. My view on affirmative action is that the only way you can really make it happen is to go out and head hunt a few top-level people, if you can find them, and then it will start happening naturally".¹⁰⁸ He emphasised this would be organised from the head office and not be left to the SBU leaders alone, as had happened previously. "The practical reality is that people tend to employ people that are

similar to themselves because they feel more comfortable about it. People would say, "well I'll try", and then do nothing, so now we say, "you haven't tried hard enough, keep trying."¹⁰⁹ He acknowledged that the difficulty with this approach was that there was such a shortage of potential black recruits with 'hands-on' experience in the managerial side of the business world. "There might be people with academic qualifications but in terms of experience, most haven't had the opportunity, so if you want an experienced engineer or accountant, and you want an affirmative action appointment, then you have to say we're going to provide the experience here, and support it. But if you're going to say, 'I need 10 years experience as a financial manager,' you're not going to have anyone, so you have to change your criteria. You just have to take a different approach without necessarily having to drop your standards - which is to say, 'this person is going to need more support for the first two years of their job than would otherwise be the case.'¹¹⁰ Despite this commitment, progress in terms of these priorities was not impressive. By late 1996 there was still no official company affirmative action programme, though managerial meetings on the issue had been held, and the new HR Executive Director, James Moaluse, had conducted various 'sensitisation' exercises for management, aimed at winning support for the policy. However, while this was happening, other companies were moving faster in their black recruitment drives, with the result that there was a trickle of resignations by PG Bison's senior black employees, some due to 'poaching' from competitors and others citing 'lack of recognition' as a reason for leaving.¹¹¹ In October 1996 there were 19 black managers (from junior level upwards¹¹²) out of a total of 230, and only two of these were classified as senior managers¹¹³ - both of them in Human Resources functions, with only one holding an executive director's portfolio.

11.4.7 Corporate Social Investment

PG Bison's approach to corporate social investment (or external community support) was altered after 1992, and was included as a dimension of the company's participative processes. In 1993 the PG Foundation was dismantled, and from then on each of PGSI's divisions handled their own programmes. In April 1993 Murphy Morobe was appointed Manager: Corporate Social Investment, with the task of allocating national level funds and coordinating regional projects¹¹⁴, though at the time he said it took several months before this was implemented. "This is not a major commitment by PG Bison yet - last year only half a million was spent, which is a tiny amount, but I took on this portfolio with a view to restructuring it, increasing the financial commitment to it and moving towards greater autonomy at the SBU level on the lines agreed at the October 1992 National Forum."¹¹⁵ After his March 1994 resignation this commitment was taken up by his successor, Kotli Molise, who said the goal of the new Community Involvement Programme was to assist "disadvantaged communities with resources and skills to meet their needs."¹¹⁶ She said the old approach involved no systematic programme and that donations were made on an ad hoc basis, depending on which charities requested help. Following the 1992 National Forum decisions in this area, the new approach required PG Bison to consult workers and communities requiring or requesting assistance.¹¹⁷ "It is the communities themselves who should tell us what their needs are. PG Bison is a community that operates within communities, and the aim of our Community Involvement programme is to get our own employees involved in their communities."¹¹⁸ Community Involvement Committees were soon established at several sites, and were allocated budgets for their community projects. These committees, which comprised management, union and non-unionised employee representatives, were responsible for

identifying viable projects within the communities where employees lived, and to decide whether and how these could be supported.¹¹⁹

11.4.9 Participative Incentive Schemes

Despite Rob Cohen's enthusiasm for the 'hard' aspects of participation (ie, those relating directly to performance), there was little concrete development in this area, particularly regarding material incentives for employer worker directors. In 1995 Cohen had spoken about the future appointment of non-executive worker directors¹²⁰, but by early 1996 none had been appointed, and there had been no introduction of Esops, although, at the time, a "long term incentive scheme" was being negotiated with the unions. However in management's view the problems raised in these negotiations would be difficult to resolve, because, as one manager put it, "both parties are coming to the issue from a fundamentally different philosophical base, with management pushing for an individual or team productivity-linked bonus system and the unions wanting a total company-based profitability scheme."¹²¹

11.5 CONCLUSION

The overall impression of participative management at PG Bison after restructuring, is one involving a downward trajectory of commitment. Despite the fact that in some areas participation was strengthened - particularly regarding national level leadership structures - the programme lacked its previous cohesion, sense of direction and momentum. Some of the reasons for this have been discussed: the lack of focus as a result of the restructuring process; the retirement of Leon Cohen and the displacement of TPQ staff; the weaknesses within the

main trade union and the departure of influential union officials and the managerial view that the 'soft' aspects of TPQ were no longer relevant now that the "whole country is TPQ", as one manager put it¹²². Another dimension of this decline was that in many respects too many externally-derived programmes had been imposed on management and the business as a whole, too quickly. TPQ was swamped by the 'One Business' restructuring programme, which, before it could settle, was soon followed by the Ikwezi programme. Each initiative threw up dust within the organisation and there was an element of 'initiative fatigue' within the business which had the effect of dissipating energies and commitment in this direction. This affected the level of employee participation within the company, and also the performance of the business as a whole. There were other reasons for the decline in performance¹²³ including far more difficult and competitive trading conditions, inconsistency in marketing strategy, deterioration of machinery, insufficient new investment in productive capacity (partly because of the decline in the Rand and the cost of new investments). But the loss of direction and clear leadership within the organisation cannot be discounted as important contributing factors, with the decline in the impetus for participation being related to this. As one senior manager within PG Bison's parent company, PGSI, put it: "For a company to succeed, it needs a clear vision. The establishment of strong participative structures throughout the company represented one vision for the company, but this has not been strengthened or replaced by a clear alternative vision, so aspects of vision of the past remain but have become clouded and uncertain. It's a bit like in politics where sometimes its worse to reform a little bit, than not to reform at all."¹²⁴ Partly as a result of these problems, in early 1997 Rob Cohen and the company's board came to a decision that he would stand down as CEO.

NOTES

1. See chapter seven.
2. Interview, James Smith, April 24 1994.
3. "Negotiating a Corporate Restructuring: PG Bison Case Study", November 1993, p 1.
4. Lael Bethlehem, Sakhela Buhlungu, Owen Crankshaw and Caroline White, "Co-determination vs co-option: Ppwawu and PG Bison negotiate restructuring," SALB, vol 18 no 1, January/February 1994, p 15.
5. Ibid.
6. Interview, James Smith, April 24 1994.
7. Interview, Welcome Ntshangase, April 19 1993.
8. In March 1993. The meeting with Ppwawu happened in February.
9. These took place at the end of March 1993.
10. "Negotiating a Corporate Restructuring: PG Bison Case Study," op cit, p 2.
11. "IR at the Crossroads: High or Low Road for Us," The Manpower Brief, October 1993, p 8, and "Negotiating a Corporate Restructuring," op cit, p 2.
12. This took place from May 24 to 26 at the Johannesburg Sun Hotel. To facilitate communication the company agreed to provide simultaneous English-Zulu translation for this and the two subsequent negotiating forums. This cost the company R15 000 per forum. ("Negotiating a Corporate Restructuring," op cit, p 2.)
13. Interview, James Smith, op cit.
14. Ntshangase quoted in "IR At the Crossroads," op cit, p 8.
15. Ibid.
16. Sociology of Work Programme, "Restructuring and Proposed Redundancies at PG Bison: A Report to Ppwawu", Wits University, July 1993, p 1.
17. Among the areas contested were the contention that the labour force in the pressing, finishing, despatch and warehousing departments at the Boksburg factory could continue doing the same amount of work with only half the workforce and that the company respond to lower absentee rates at the Stellenbosch factory by making some jobs redundant. (SWOP, op cit, pp 38 - 40 and Bethlehem, Buhlungu, Crankshaw and White, op cit, p 16).
18. "PG Bison: Values and Statement of Objectives," 1993, p 6.
19. SWOP, op cit, pp 38 - 39.
20. Ibid, p 39 - 40.

21. Ibid, pp 24 - 28.
22. Ibid, pp 20 - 23 and Bethlehem et al op cit, pp 16 - 17.
23. Quoted in The Manpower Brief, op cit, p 9.
24. "Negotiating a Corporate Restructuring," op cit, p 3.
25. Quoted in The Manpower Brief, op cit.
26. Smith said: "I'd say the report and article were largely accurate. We certainly accepted the report but in some ways the article irritated me a bit. In effect it claimed that SWOP had opened minds at PG to new ways of working, which was definitely an overstatement. It contained little recognition of the history of positive relations between the unions and management, and how this influenced things, or of the history of non-adversarial approach to industrial relations or of the open way we handled information sharing." (Interview, James Smith, April 25 1994.)
27. The severance package, which was to remain in effect until March 1995, included the following terms: Three weeks pay per year of service; one month pay in lieu of notice; all leave pay due paid out; bonus pay of 50 percent if departure was before June 30 1994 and 100 percent if it was between July 1 and December 31; full actuarial reserve of provident fund/pension fund paid to employee. (James Smith, Needs of Retrenched Workers: A Case Study, Wits University MBA dissertation, 1994, pp 30 - 31.
28. On a 'last in first out' basis if the number of volunteers was insufficient. ("Joint Statement of Agreement Between PG Bison Management and the PPWAWU and UWUSA Trade Unions," May 26 1993)
29. For R750 000.
30. James Smith, MBA, op cit, p 31.
31. "Agreement Between PG Bison and Paper, Printing Wood and Allied Workers Union and United Workers Union of South Africa," August 19 1993; "Agreement on Redundancy Package and Selection Process," August 17 1993; Bethlehem et al, op cit, p 17 and "Negotiating a Corporate Restructuring," op cit, pp 4 - 5.
32. Ibid.
33. Interview, James Smith, April 24 1994.
34. About 200 of the 250 departing employees were interviewed (with most of the rest declining to be interviewed), and 177 questionnaires were returned, with the remainder being last in transit. (James Smith, MBA, op cit, p 35).
35. Ibid, p 42.
36. Ibid, p 43.
37. Ibid, pp 43 - 44.
38. "PG Bison Reorganisation: Support Programme Proposal," August 1993, p 4.

39. Services offered included assistance with drawing up CVs, contacting other companies and agencies on the employee's behalf, providing access to phone and fax services, providing counselling services and advise on personal issues, organising labour exchanges/pools and training programmes. (Ibid, appendix, p 12)
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid, and Interview, Murphy Morobe, January 22 1994.
42. Quoted in, The Manpower Brief, op cit, p 9.
43. Bethlehem et al, op cit, p 18.
44. Ibid, p 19.
45. Interview, Roddy Payne, November 6 1996.
46. Christo Nel left in 1991, Thlopheho Modise moved out of the TPQ office in 1991, Rosemary Grealy left in 1990, Leon Cohen and Maxine Hart left in March 1994 and James Smith in early 1995.
47. Interview, Maxine Hart, April 24 1996
48. Questionnaire, Roddy Payne, November 5 1996.
49. As Payne put it: "Ppwawu is in a bit of a mess at the moment". He referred to divisions within its ranks and the departure of key shopstewards and organisers, as reasons for "gripe session" response to joint shop steward-senior management forums. (Interview, November 6 1996).
50. Including former Ppwawu National Education Officer, Welcome Ntshangase - the key figure drawing up the union's generally favourable policy on participation - who took up a managerial position at Nampak. (SALB, vol 20 no 1, February 1996, p 15)
51. Interview, Rob Cohen, op cit.
52. Interview, Leon Cohen, May 2 1994.
53. Interview, James Smith, April 25 1994.
54. Interview, Rob Cohen, op cit.
55. Ibid.
56. Interview, Roddy Payne, September 26 1996.
57. Rob Cohen, op cit.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid.
60. Gemini.
61. The term is described as meaning "The Sun is Risen".

62. This is discussed in chapter seven.
63. See chapter 10.
64. "Memorandum Re Minutes from Mini-Forum 6 September," September 1993.
65. Billbord, volume 1, number 2, Spring 1994.
66. Interview, Rob Cohen, op cit.
67. Ibid.
68. A National Forum meeting was planned for October 1996 but was postponed indefinitely on the unions' request due to "a lack of adequate notice and to a need for them to prepare more thoroughly". (Questionnaire, Roddy Payne, op cit)
69. Between its launch in March 1995 and October 1996 it met five times, an average of three times a year, rather than four. (Ibid)
70. Ibid.
71. Ibid.
72. Interviews: Rob Cohen, op cit; Roddy Payne, November 6 1996.
73. SWOP, op cit, p 19.
74. Ibid, p 20.
75. Ibid, p 19.
76. Bethlehem et al, op cit, p 14.
77. Interview, Maxine Hart, April 5 1993.
78. Interview, Maxine Hart, July 30 1992.
79. Interview, Maxine Hart, January 28 1994.
80. Rob Cohen, op cit.
81. Ibid.
82. Rob Cohen, op cit.
83. Interview, Joan Lurie, January 28 1994.
84. Quoted in Billbord, Volume 1 number 2 Spring 1994.
85. SWOP, op cit, p 19.
86. Bethlehem, et al, op cit, p 14.
87. Interview, Joan Lurie, January 28 1994.

88. Interview, Maxine Hart, January 28 1994.
89. Billbord, volume 1, Number 2 Spring 1994.
90. The Continuing Education Programme.
91. The programme involved classes which were held twice a week, for two hours per class, with one hour coming from the company's time and the other from the employee's personal time.
92. Ibid.
93. Questionnaire, Roddy Payne, op cit.
94. Billbord, volume 1 number 2, Spring 1994.
95. Interview, Leon Cohen, January 26 1994.
96. Roddy Payne, op cit.
97. See SWOP, op cit, p1; Bethlehem et al, op cit, pp 15, 18 and 19; and The Manpower Brief, op cit, pp 8 - 9.
98. SWOP, op cit, p 1.
99. Bethlehem, et al, op cit, pp 18 - 19.
100. Billbord, volume 1 number 3, Christmas 1994.
101. Ibid.
102. Rob Cohen, op cit.
103. Which was never fully implemented. (See chapters ten and 12)
104. "A for the CEO", Billbord, volume 1 number 3, Christmas 1994.
105. Ibid.
106. Interview, Rob Cohen, op cit.
107. Ibid.
108. Ibid.
109. Ibid.
110. Ibid.
111. Questionnaire, Roddy Payne, op cit.
112. In terms of the current job grading system, from grades 13.
113. The term applies to the top three layers of management.

114. Interview, Murphy Morobe, May 9 1993.
115. Interview, Murphy Morobe, January 22 1994.
116. Kotli Molise, "Employee involvement in Social Investment," Billbord, volume 1 number 2, Spring 1994.
117. Ibid, and interview, Kotli Molise, April 26 1994.
118. Billbord, Ibid.
119. Ibid.
120. Rob Cohen, op cit.
121. Questionnaire, Roddy Payne, op cit.
122. Quoted in Roddy Payne, questionnaire, November 5 1996.
123. See chapter seven.
124. Interview, Roddy Payne, November 6 1996.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE IMPACT OF PARTICIPATIVE MANAGEMENT AT PG BISON: AN ASSESSMENT

12.1 INTRODUCTION

Having examined the component parts of TPQ before and after restructuring, it is necessary to consider how the programme worked in practice - its impact on the business units and on the lives of employees. This is approached both by examining its implementation at each of the SBUs, and assessing the opinions of the programme held by managers, workers and trades unions.

There were marked regional and divisional differences in the way management and workers responded to the imperatives of TPQ. These were influenced by factors such as the political ethos in the area, the size of the site, and its proximity to the head office, as well as the enthusiasm or otherwise of the senior management involved. Those factories closest to the head office - Alrode and Boksburg - moved quickest in implementing the programme, though the conservatism of many managers at the two Boksburg factories impeded the process there. This problem was even more marked in the CP stronghold of Piet Retief, where the rightwing attitudes of managers, combined with the physical distance from the head office, meant that the implementation of TPQ was piecemeal and slow. The two other factories, Stellenbosch and Pietermaritzburg were both affected by the peculiarities of the composition of their workforces. At Pietermaritzburg the process was initially slower because of the political tensions related to the conflict between Inkatha/Uwusa and the UDF/ANC/Cosatu in the area,

though this subsequently played an ambiguous role in promoting the programme. At Stellenbosch the predominantly coloured workforce was only unionised in late 1988 - a factor which affected the attitudes of both management and workers. A sixth factory, Plyproducts in Natal, had a brief spell within the PG Bison fold before being closed and therefore had fairly limited exposure to the major aspects of the programme. TPQ was only implemented within PG Wood in early 1989. In some respects the process was more difficult than in the factories because of the number of sites involved, the smaller number of employees in each of them and their geographical spread. There was a considerable variation, from region to region and branch to branch, in the way in which TPQ was implemented in these distribution sites - with the Cape being the most successful, and Natal the least. Some branches of Timber City as well as Pennypinchers were more recent acquisitions and less fully integrated into the process.

12.2 ALRODE AND PIET RETIEF

While each of the SBUs is discussed below, two are focussed on in particular: Alrode (formerly Laminate Industries) and Piet Retief, because they provide the greatest contrast in terms of the success of participative management at PG Bison, with Alrode being widely cited by management and to a lesser extent by the unions as the company's primary success story in terms of participation, and Piet Retief as the prime failure.

12.2.1 Alrode

TPQ was first launched at Laminate Industries near Alberton, and the experience there served as a pilot study for the rest of the company. There were several reasons why this factory was chosen as the most appropriate SBU for initiating the programme, and why it continued to be the site of TPQ's most impressive results. Partly because of the area it was situated in, the management tended to be drawn from Johannesburg and were generally less conservative than, for example, at Piet Retief. Senior management in particular were more enthusiastic about the programme than their counterparts in most other divisions, with the MD at the time, Stuart Wood, factory manager Lawrie Wishart, director Andrew Gilbert, and human resources manager André Michaux, among others, playing a decisive role in ensuring that TPQ was implemented. Also significant was the fact that it was organised by Numsa, which at that stage was less hostile to the programme than Ppwawu. And before initiating TPQ in late 1987 management had extensive discussions with shop stewards and with the union, and received a reaction Michaux described as "generally positive, with some suspicions, but definitely not antagonistic"¹, a view confirmed by the then senior shop steward, Raymond Santos, who said: "Most of the workers were happy with the process when it started."² Another factor was that the factory's close proximity to the PG Bison head office allowed the TPQ team easier access than some of the sites further afield. This meant they had more time to work with conservative elements in management, and to ensure that key aspects of the programme like the value-sharing workshops and the in-a-groups, were working effectively.

But this does not mean the process was entirely smooth at Alrode, nor that there was universal management support for TPQ, despite the uncomplicatedly positive picture presented by some in senior management. In 1991 the then-MD Stuart Wood said that "most white managers responded pretty well" to the non-racial value system of TPQ, and had developed a "good

understanding" about what TPQ was trying to achieve. Between 1988 and 1991 "a solid foundation of trust" was built, aided by the fact that managers recruited from outside the company were first assessed to see if they had the right values. "Differences now don't necessarily lead to an antagonistic approach. Workers take things up with management, and they trust us. Another change is that workers are starting to acknowledge the importance of growth", he said.³ However, two years earlier, another director, Andrew Gilbert, presented a more varied picture of the managerial response and acknowledged some of the difficulties involved. "The directors are very happy with the process, but this is not necessarily the same with all the managers, 95 percent of whom are white, or with the white supervisors. Basically the managers don't have the same authority as before. Now they're having to manage by consensus and cooperation. They can't use victimisation anymore, and some of the guys are not entirely happy with this. Even some of the divisional managers are taking strain. But the process has been going for two years and it is now irreversible. It's going faster and faster. Most of the people who were always going to leave have left now - six of them who just couldn't take it".⁴

A similar view was advanced in 1991 by middle manager Petrus Esterhuizen, a former policeman who joined the company as a dispatch manager and went on to become a production manager. He said when he started at Laminate Industries in 1983 there was little trust between black and white and TPQ had an effect in breaking down this barrier, although this was resented by many of his white colleagues. "When I arrived here we made the rules, decisions, and the workers had no say and no influence. ... When TPQ started I started having a much better life during my working day. Now I am not stressed, I don't have to work overtime, my job became a lot easier, and I got to spend more time on management than on

running around solving others people's problems. But you get managers who don't recognise what has happened. Others call it bullshit, because there are still a few managers who believe that if you go into the system of participative management you are a kaffir boetie ... Certain heads of department or managers are not encouraging that kind of participation. But I think at the end of the day they will have to change because of the dividends we show in our plant. ... One big problem is that we as whites can't even talk together, ... so how the hell do we expect whites and blacks to talk together? At the end of the day it is one of the breakdowns of TPQ that 80 percent of the whites believe that TPQ is only for the blacks. Unfortunately, everything that goes wrong is blamed on TPQ because people feel that the blacks are scoring and the whites are not scoring".⁵

Once the programme shifted from value sharing into the terrain of in-a-groups, literacy and SBU leadership structures, some of its political edge was removed and managers came to accept it more easily. In 1990 Human Resources Manager Andre Michaux said there had been a gradual improvement in the attitude of white middle managers. "Initially there was resistance because it was seen as a political programme in terms of motivating the requirements for change, including the historic background of political issues, and this threatened them. But as it developed, it began to focus more on work-related issues and people became more comfortable". Gilbert added that the use of management-worker committees helped solve production-related problems and ease tensions, and as a result opposition to TPQ from line management and supervisors diminished. "At the treater plant we had a problem with paper being impregnated with resin. Before TPQ was implemented this section was subject to work-to-rule and work stoppages, excessive application of job descriptions, organised absenteeism among key people, which caused high work disruption,

and a range of housekeeping and quality problems. A joint worker-management team tackled the problems. Flip charts were placed in operational areas and workers were encouraged to list issues affecting them. Minor matters were dealt with immediately and major ones were collated under the headings Safety, Hygiene and Reporting. The safety and hygiene problems were dealt with by installing mechanical handling equipment, heat reflective glass and other features. Reporting deficiencies were overcome by workers electing a black foreman who was given more authority and made directly responsible to the production manager, cutting back on several intermediaries. As a result work to rule, overtime bans and absenteeism were virtually eliminated".⁶

All the Alrode union organisers and shopstewards interviewed said the most important gain in the programme was the changed attitudes of white management, both through a reduction in racism and through the less authoritarian attitudes to their roles. In 1990 then-Numsa organiser Sam Ntuli said TPQ had succeeded in getting "different racial groups working together as a team, and this seems to have the effect of reducing racism among the whites". He said the programme was welcomed by union members, and that the response of management to the union had been "very positive." However, he added: "Look, there is still an element of white racism which exists, but I'd say it has done well in integrating whites and blacks on the shop floor, which is positive".⁷ This perception was shared by all the worker representatives interviewed, though none felt that the problem of racism had been entirely solved. For instance in 1991 senior shop steward Raymond Santos, said there had been a "real improvement" in racial attitudes, though this change "didn't take place overnight". He added: "The real problem was with middle management and some of the shopfloor people. Some have improved, and changed their attitudes - probably the majority - but not all. Initially some

were just playing around with words, and soon returned to showing their true colours, but the majority now understand what is going on, and those who didn't like it have left the company. When new people come in they are told about the company's values, but not all of them stick to it - some resist. But in general I'd say that racism has definitely improved. A few years ago the white managers would lock their toilets, but that's changed and most of the racists have disappeared".⁸ In the same interview, Santos went on to say that he felt the TPQ programme had increased the power and influence of workers in the factory's decision making: "These days the workers have more say on a day to day basis. I would say most are positive about it", he said.⁹

Particularly encouraging to management at the factory were the improvements in the quality of their products and the improvement in 'self-discipline' of their workforce, though they found this hard to quantify. Gilbert said productivity had definitely increased¹⁰ but Michaux said the effects of TPQ on productivity were difficult to measure because there were independent variables, like the introduction of new machines, which had also contributed to improvements. The impact on product quality was easier to discern. "What's can been seen is the opening up of a lot more discussion about quality, through, for example, the quality awareness programme. There's also been a reduction in waste. ... Waste covers a wide area including things like leaving the lights and air conditioning on. I'd say there is a lot more awareness of the problem than before and a lot less of a sense of blaming each other".¹¹ Esterhuysen had a similar perspective, noting that definite improvements could be seen three years after the programme was piloted. "I don't know if productivity increased because of TPQ, but I know that the quality of my product is a lot higher. I know that from my customers - there's far fewer complaints. Overall productivity is higher but it might be due

to the fact that the plant now runs a lot faster than the old one. What I can say is that the man hours per kilogram came down. It was .018 in the past but it's now down to .015, so there's less manpower going into the product than before. In the past everybody had his own goal to work to, now everybody is going in the same direction".¹² He said he no longer had to 'manage' workers in the same way, because there was now far more trust on both sides. "Next week I'm going on training for a week. This plant will run for a week without me here. I'm not worried at all. My guys will keep the plant clean and they will do their jobs and that is all I ask. ... If you look at the attendance registers and that type of thing, I can prove that this approach is right. I also have people absent but I know about them being absent before I come to work because they'll phone me at home and tell me the problem so that I have time to organise another guy from another shift".¹³

Both management and workers mentioned improvements in industrial relations - go-slows and work-to-rules were rare, strikes never threatened the collective bargaining process was less protracted. Workers were encouraged by the reduced level of racism from their white bosses and the less disciplinarian and less rigid hierarchy on the factory floor. As Ntuli put it: "Things are not as strict as before, in the sense of managers communicating in a racist way and always trying to show who's boss. It also helps promote skills in the sense that positions will go to people capable of doing the job. Things have definitely improved and my attitude as an organiser is that it certainly has its positive elements."¹⁴ Interviews with workers after a 1989 in-a-group session suggested the changed attitude of white managers and supervisors, was seen as one of the main advantages. As one forklift driver put it: "Before TPQ was introduced the manager used to just tell our team what to do and often we didn't understand what he wanted because he didn't explain in a way we understood. It got to the point when

we didn't care because we were getting no benefits. Now with the new style there's much more teamwork and we make a lot more decisions. But if the manager is not totally involved, its going to be fruitless. He must be able to address the issues".¹⁵ In the same discussion, a black supervisor stressed the shift in the perspective of the white supervisors. "You take Ma Jansen (a white supervisor). When she first came her big thing was that she didn't want the toilets integrated. Now her big concern is over why Stanley (a black worker) didn't get promotion. She's changed a lot you know".¹⁶

John Nkosi, a former packer and later assistant warehouse superintendent, said he had no doubt that the improvement in race and industrial relations had contributed towards raising performance. "Since TPQ began I've seen some movement towards unity, towards understanding one another. ... Before we were not recognised as somebody important in the business. We were here to work and we cared only that the company paid us what we wanted. But through discussions we are coming closer together. If we understand a bit of their culture and they understand a bit of our culture, then we can work together - we can build something for our future. We are performing better than before the process began. Before if I was told to do a job in a certain way, I would do it, even if I knew the project would fail. Today I can say no, it would work better my way; and do a better job. In daily activities a person is not left out about what he is doing. He's part and parcel of the company, so he cares and wants to be proud. If you feel responsible, if you are trusted that you can do something, you feel proud and put all your talents into it. Managers before would give you a job and then supervise you all day long. So the manager is not doing what he should be doing in his office. Now he doesn't waste time watching over me."¹⁷

Christo Nel, however, reinforced the point that not everyone within Laminate Industries changed their racial perspectives in this period, and argued that senior management could not be entirely tolerant on this point. "To take two examples from 1989 on how we've approached things: The first involved a white, rightwing artisan. He got into an argument at the party which was held at the end of last year. He hit three guys - a black, a white and an Indian. But he didn't get fired because afterwards he apologised, and because the shopstewards said he should keep his job, because the offence took place at the party. But at about the same time one of our salesmen came in and pushed a worker. He then gave him an instruction, and the guy didn't carry it out, so he physically abused him. He was fired". Nel felt that overall there had been a very marked change in the attitudes of all levels of management, as well as of workers. "Prior to the introduction of TPQ at Laminates, there were big tensions there between the black workers and the white management - particularly in 1985 and 1986. Management feared losing the capacity to manage, and as a result there was outright antagonism to management from the workers. Most of that has disappeared. For instance in 1989 they had a stayaway on Biko Day, basically as the result of the influence of an Azapo-supporting shopsteward. Numsa agreed there had been intimidation of their members. It was not one of the registered days, so the feeling was that it was an irresponsible action. This led to an agreement by the workers that production had to be caught up. Management didn't discipline the workers, and the union handled the situation responsibly. By the way this crisis was managed relations improved further. It was a values-driven approach from both sides, and it was seen as part of the struggle to get things really moving at Laminates."¹⁸

By the beginning of the new decade it was clear this kind of cohesion was being achieved, albeit with hiccups here and there. It is significant that at the meetings of the National Forum

in 1991 and 1992 management and the shopstewards felt confident enough in each other to present joint reports - the first SBU to do this. At the second forum in October 1991 they reported that the value-sharing workshops had been completed, in-a-groups were functioning and had formulated an alcohol policy for the firm, that there had been adequate information sharing and that on the issue of performance rewards there was agreement that "overall company performance should be rewarded, not individual work unit".¹⁹ After this forum, the then Laminate Industries senior shop steward Jeffrey Mahlangu took the unusual step of thanking Leon Cohen and the subsidiary MDs on behalf of the workers, and went on to say: "The soul of business depends on the people involved in that business. PG Bison is trying to put in place a better strategy to satisfy the shareholders and every employee as well".²⁰ At the third Forum in March 1992 further progress was recognised regarding the implementation of TPQ proposals, with the report noting that a variety of other "creative structures" had been established, including an SBU National Forum group and monthly management/shop steward strategic planning meetings.²¹ The report submitted to the fourth National Forum in October 1992 suggested that management and shopstewards were satisfied with the way TPQ was functioning. They noted that the company performance report and monthly results were thoroughly discussed with all employees (though some workers had some difficulty understanding them); LEAP was functioning efficiently and was expanding its parameters²²; the existing management-shopsteward committee was meeting on a regular basis and reporting back directly through the shopstewards and in-a-groups and that management regarded the facility of the full-time shopsteward, which had existed since 1989, as a worthwhile innovation.²³

But as argued in 12.5, the responses of the union at Alrode, as at other factories, varied according to the attitudes of the local, regional and national organisers. The supportive attitude of Sam Ntuli gave way to the antagonistic attitude of his successor as regional organiser, Elias Monage, and this had an impact on the union response to TPQ. Soon after the fourth National Forum tensions emerged which lasted over a year and which some managers blamed on Monage's influence, and which some workers blamed on the uncertainties around restructuring.²⁴ Furthermore, Numsa chose to negotiate restructuring separately from the other unions, though they went through a similar process with similar results, to that achieved in the rest of the company.²⁵ Numsa also resisted pressure from Ppwawu to hand over its members, which Ppwawu argued was a logical step, because as a result of restructuring, Laminate Industries would no longer exist as a company. However, Numsa members at the factory were comfortable with their union and despite the changes, they did not wish to fall under the banner of another union.²⁶ Relations between the union and management therefore retained a distinct flavour and tended to move at different motions from those in the rest of the company. In early 1994, when other sites were settling down after the disruption of the one business initiative, Alrode workers took part in a one day, wild-cat work stoppage because of discrepancies in the benefits system between two divisions within the factory, covered by different industrial councils.²⁷ While this was soon settled, it was the first full-day work stoppage in the company's history.²⁸

Nevertheless, TPQ showed more resilience at Alrode than at any other site, with most of the participatory structures surviving intact. Despite a short-term drop in support²⁹, LEAP continued throughout the restructuring period, assisted by the fact that the national coordinator was based there³⁰. In-a-groups also continued to function during and after restructuring.

According to Hart, the reasons for this were, first, that successive MDs were each committed to the process, and, second, that the managerial structures facilitated the process. After Butch Watson Smith left as MD (shortly before the restructuring process was announced), Asher Bohbot was appointed to head the factory for the next year³¹, and appeared to be even more committed to their success than his predecessor. "Asher drove the process very hard at the in-a-group level. Management had regular workshops with in-a-group leaders, so there was a lot of momentum, though some of that was lost when he left later in 1993. Also, the structures were right - very flat - and that made it easier to implement," said Hart³² Some aspects of TPQ were expanded upon after restructuring was introduced (for instance in-a-groups were introduced into the Formica production department for the first time in 1993³³), while in other areas its direction shifted. For example, after 1993 the in-a-groups focussed increasingly on performance-related concerns. In the Formica department cross-functional workshops to eliminate 'inclusions' (rejects), involving every employee, were held in late 1994. Employees were shown examples of inclusions and then asked to identify the causes and find solutions. The solutions were then implemented through the in-a-group teams, with each group taking responsibility for the actions required at their section. The result, according to the company, was a significant decline in the reject levels.³⁴ In-a-group leaders within the Company division³⁵ (which included the Formica department) met on a daily basis in designated 'green areas' to discuss the previous day's results and to plan activities. These plans were then communicated to the in-a-groups for further discussion and implementation. They also continued to provide a forum for employees to discuss personal or work-related concerns, including events happening beyond the factory gates, such as transport and accommodation problems.³⁶ A similar process was introduced into the Continuous Decorative Laminate section in 1994. According to the production manager, Lucky Yende, the groups contributed

to productivity and job satisfaction, with a marked improvement in attendance records, stock accuracy and a reduction in rejects being recorded. "Workers come up with suggestions and solutions and are involved in decision making," he said.³⁷

Of all the PG Bison sites, the Alrode factory was the one where TPQ and its successor participative programmes operated with the fewest interruptions and the most consistent level of employee support - an impression which is largely confirmed by the results of various employee opinion surveys conducted between 1992 and 1993, discussed in 12.4 below. Overall, it could be said that the participative programme was deeply rooted at the Alrode factory and was implemented with considerable success throughout most of the period covered by this study, including after restructuring when TPQ showed signs of terminal decline at other SBUs.

12.2.2 PIET RETIEF

The site which differed most markedly from Alrode with respect to changes in management attitudes, and the success of TPQ more generally, was the company's largest factory, in Piet Retief. From the start it was acknowledged by the head office as a problem area, but as TPQ coordinator Maxine Hart put it, "you couldn't simply impose solutions there, unless you wanted to try and remove all the conservative managers and replace them with others - and who wants to go to Piet Retief?"³⁸ The main difficulty faced by the company's head office when it came to instituting changes there was one rooted in the politics and culture of the factory's management team. Most of the individuals were drawn from the conservative and racist culture in that part of the Northern Transvaal and were based in a community which

felt threatened by the prospect of black advancement and was dominated by right wing political parties and cultural organisations. Most significantly, the general manager, Andries Vorster, was an apartheid-supporting member of the local CP-controlled town council (and former deputy mayor). Nel described him as a "powerful voice on the council - an independent who attended CP meetings but at the same time had a big impact in favour of black housing in the area, and agreed to provide company land for this purpose."³⁹ And Vorster was not alone in this regard: virtually the entire management and white supervisory core were drawn from this conservative and insular ethos and many held views and were involved in actions which created barriers to improving relations with black employees.

As Leon Cohen expressed it in 1990: "The problems arise from the external environment. The whites are placed into SADF commandos - which are used in the townships - and they are definitely affected by rightwing external influences which make the TPQ process far more difficult. There is some effort to come along, but the pace is slower."⁴⁰ He said the recognition of this by the head office management prompted a cautious approach, which involved them not being seen to impose their views on the factory management too forcefully. Furthermore, the structure of the company at the time gave each SBU a high degree of functional autonomy - enhanced in the case of Piet Retief by the factory's distance from the head office. As a result the management board turned a blind eye to certain practices and allowed management there to move more slowly with the implementation of TPQ than was the case with the Alrode and Boksburg factories. "What we're recognising now is that the process of change is one involving re-education in the long term," said Cohen. "It can't be a win-win situation immediately. It's only through education that you'll start getting an

acceptance that apartheid must go and that some people will have to make sacrifices in the process".⁴¹

An example of managerial attitudes there arose when the idea of LEAP was first mooted. A senior manager responded incredulously: "But they'd be much better off learning fanagalo."⁴²

A more substantial example was cited by Hart, who said that when she first visited the factory in early 1989 she was pleased to see that all the formerly 'whites only' toilets had been opened. "When I mentioned this to the black employees I was told this was just for the benefit of head office management. As soon as we leave they just put the combination lock back on, and only whites are told the number".⁴³ Despite complaints about this from the TPQ staff and Ppwawu shopstewards, this problem was not remedied until after Andries Vorster's forced departure in 1993. Head office management were aware it but did not forcibly intervene until after the restructuring process was completed. The July 1993 SWOP report stressed this issue: "Workers complained to us that in spite of the company's commitment to racial equality the toilets at the Piet Retief factory ... were still racially segregated."⁴⁴ Other examples of tensions which exacerbated divisions between white management and the black workers, occurred during the political 'unrest' in the late 1980s when some of the Piet Retief factory managers who were most strongly opposed to TPQ, took up positions as prominent members of the police reserve and the local SADF commando, while lower down in the hierarchy several other white employees became active members of the AWB. The issue of white commando members caused some tension in 1989 when one of the workers was alleged to have been shot by members of a commando, although there was no evidence that members of the factory's management were involved.⁴⁵

Thlopheho Modise, who was responsible for the initial implementation of TPQ through programmes the value-sharing workshops, said that Piet Retief was the only site where whites had shown active resistance to his presence as a black man.⁴⁶ A December 1988 memorandum from Modise to Nel regarding the implementation of the value-sharing workshops noted: "It appears ... that Piet Retief may be the problem plant so far as TPQ is concerned. The problem is two-fold, namely: * Andries Vorster being in the Piet Retief Council; * Indifferent attitude toward the process at senior level. ... Andries is now the deputy mayor in the CP Council. My concern is the predicament in which we will find ourselves should it go the Boksburg route with our senior man a member of that Council"⁴⁷. A development of this nature may undo all we have achieved ... This is an issue we have to be proactive about and determine what our action will be in the event of this happening."⁴⁸ He went on to say: "As far as the indifference to the process is concerned I have been told the TPQ process is hardly discussed at management meetings and there is a difference of opinion about its importance. This may be confirmed by the fact that Andries avoids opening the workshops but prefers to brief the whites separately."⁴⁹ In another report at the time he expressed apprehension about the commitment of the Piet Retief management to change but expressed optimism that this could be challenged. "Support from management has been given, especially in the form of briefing the delegates (particularly whites) about the aims and objectives of the value sharing workshops. The commitment of the General Manager is questionable but the pressure from the bottom in the form of shopstewards and employees through regular meetings is having an impact on him. This has been confirmed by shopstewards".⁵⁰

A March 1989 questionnaire⁵¹ submitted to 122 Bisonbord Piet Retief employees who had been through value-sharing workshops - but returned by only 19 (most of them white⁵²), may provide some backing for Modise's view of the generalised acceptance of TPQ, though because of weaknesses in the response and the methodology the results should be treated with considerable caution.⁵³ 80 percent of those who returned their questionnaires felt TPQ was a "fair concept which will create a better future for all Bisonbord employees", and could increase productivity and improve racial relations. The rest felt it was a "waste of time and energy" and/or was a "difficult concept to sell at Piet Retief".⁵⁴ Asked for the main objectives of TPQ, most respondents replied "to create a fair working environment which will benefit every individual irrespective of race". However, the report on the questionnaire noted that "a few whites ... feel that their power and authority will be in danger and that their identities will be taken away by the black majority".⁵⁵ Most felt the company would benefit from TPQ. Reasons advanced included: "Because all employees will work harder, as they will experience a sense of belonging and feel part of a company with better understanding and trust between the different races"..., "everybody will be more productively oriented", and "there will be better communication and employees will work as a team towards the same common goals".⁵⁶ The report stated that most respondents felt that individual workers would benefit from TPQ and it would improve race relations (and all but one felt there was a need to do this⁵⁷) though a minority felt that black and white moral standards differed too much⁵⁸. Three quarters of respondents supported equal opportunities for all races, though 15 percent qualified this in some way.⁵⁹ The majority were in favour of blacks and whites sharing facilities, provided "hygienic" rules complied with.⁶⁰ It noted "a very mixed response" to the presentation of TPQ, with some whites feeling it was too political⁶¹, that "TPQ is not in line with the government and ... is headed by the wrong person, namely

Christo Nel".⁶² The majority felt that politics should be ignored and that there was a need for an impartial presenter.⁶³ 65 percent of white respondents felt they would benefit from TPQ while 100 percent of black respondents felt that whites would benefit, and the majority of all respondents felt TPQ would benefit blacks.⁶⁴ Nearly one third felt management was not fully committed to the enforcement of TPQ.⁶⁵ The majority of felt that the implementation of TPQ had led to slight or marked changes for the better in the workplace environment.⁶⁶

While this flawed survey suggested might suggest widespread white acceptance of TPQ at the Piet Retief factory by 1989, this can be compared with comments of some of those involved in its implementation. In 1991 the-then HR Manager Willie du Plessis said there had been strong resistance from both management and workers: "All levels of the workforce, namely unions, senior management, lower management and lower level employees were skeptical of this new programme which they felt was imposed by Head Office. A large number of employees and managers perceived TPQ to be political by nature as it created a lot of discomfort and fear among almost all groups of employees. Some employees rejected it totally, while others felt it was impossible to be implemented successfully, as it created unrealistic expectations. Mistakes were made which made workers believe that management were not true in what they promised to achieve through TPQ. However, most workers soon realised that there must be room for error, and after a long and painful process of five years, the concept of what management is trying to achieve is now better understood by the majority of the workforce, and managers are beginning to realise that change has to take place and that TPQ is the only way for the future".⁶⁷ He said that race relations and communication between management and workers had improved as a result. "Considering that Piet Retief's

white population is mainly rightwing oriented, with blacks being mainly ANC oriented, the conflict potential was great. However the value sharing process assisted employees in gaining a better understanding of each other's fears and perceptions and created a climate through which people felt free to talk about issues which were previously avoided. The morale among the workforce and management was tense and almost confrontational before TPQ was implemented, but this changed, though it is true that communication and morale improved more in certain areas than in others", he said, mentioning "culture, language and other barriers" as negative examples.⁶⁸ He said there was more openness between management and shop stewards than in the 1980s, and mentioned that while Ppwawu had organised "various strikes at neighbouring companies", Bisonbord had been strike-free. He noted that an average of five percent of the total workforce was disciplined on a monthly basis prior to the introduction of TPQ, while this had been reduced to two percent by 1990. The reason was that "management now approaches mistakes as an opportunity for improvement rather than punishment and employees now feel free to discuss issues of mutual interest without fear of victimisation".⁶⁹ He also noted that the LEAP programme had "exceeded everybody's expectations" and that a performance incentive scheme "introduced as a result of TPQ", was contributing to improvements in productivity.⁷⁰

Chief Training officer Louis Botha showed more ambiguity in his attitude, though by late 1991 position was cautiously optimistic. "I was skeptical at first. Lots of changes never materialised, and some expectations weren't fulfilled. But lots of positive things came from TPQ. There was a definite improvement in relationships between blacks and whites". He went on to add: "Me personally, it didn't influence and it's not such a big change. I am a conservative guy, but a liberal conservative. I've never really had a problem. I speak their

language but I never mix with them socially. It's always been my philosophy that you can't think of apartheid on the shop floor. But we mustn't bluff ourselves into thinking the gap between blacks and whites has been bridged. It's not only whites who don't want to associate with blacks. Suspicion is a two edged sword. But there have been definite improvements".⁷¹ However, Hart said the combination of the political and cultural conservatism of management, and the suspicion and fear of the workers, meant it was difficult to implement TPQ beyond a formulaic level. "Once it got going they did well on things like literacy and housing, not so well on in-a-groups and the mutual suspicions remained."⁷² General manager Andries Vorster shared these perceptions, claiming that TPQ had contributed to industrial peace, but acknowledging that a high level of black suspicion remained: "When the companies around us, with the same union, were having strikes we had none because we have broken the barrier of mistrust. But this is not enough. Blacks still don't believe we are honest, that we want to do something, but it's getting better. We must not stop."⁷³

Two months later Vorster's report to the second National Forum indicated satisfaction with progress made, though he expressed strong opposition to union proposals for a full-time shopsteward and for centralised bargaining (though both of these were implemented in 1992).⁷⁴ "Values have been communicated and are being monitored", he reported, adding that the joint worker-management TPQ committee was meeting once a month to monitor progress, the LEAP literacy programme was flourishing⁷⁵, 75 percent of the workforce had attended workshops on the company's performance reports, the incentive scheme was "working quite well" and there had been major increase in the factory's commitment to training.⁷⁶ The main complaint from the workers was that management was half-hearted in its attempts at keeping them informed about factory and company performance, with, for example, shopsteward

representative Zephania Shongwe noting that the performance report was distributed too late, only in English and not fully explained.⁷⁷ "The sun is rising in the far east. We hope it will shine on everybody", he said.⁷⁸

At the third National Forum in March 1992 management reported they had set up a 'Piet Retief Forum' which they described as a "joint problem-solving body to discuss issues affecting the entire workforce or certain sections which are made of up different interest groups, namely non-unionised and unionised, races, sexes etc; a body to discuss broad company strategy, values and policy; Not a body to negotiate wages and conditions of service". They noted that this form of participation should involve "one body of different interest groups where they act as 'One Team' who jointly discuss issues affecting the team as a whole and reach decisions through means of consensus", stressing that "nobody should therefore be left out of this process!!" (a reference to the opposition from the unions to the separate representation of non-unionised staff). The report went on to acknowledge a point frequently made by worker representatives - that communication between managers and workers needed to be improved, and added that management "plans to commit themselves to support the process of participation".⁷⁹ From the worker representatives, there was a recognition that some aspects of TPQ - such as the LEAP, training, housing provision, skills upgrading and the joint management-worker TPQ committee structure - had been worthwhile, but the more pervasive attitude was negative. For example, while it was acknowledged there had been some improvements in race and worker-management relations compared with the situation at the factory five years earlier, the shopstewards it was noted that considerable tensions remained.

In general, at Bisonbord Piet Retief, it can be said that among senior management there was a far rosier view of progress in implementing TPQ than among the workers. Union organisers and members frequently complained that a fierce resistance on the part of management to legitimate avenues of union activity continued. There were also strong complaints about the belated and half-hearted introduction of in-a-groups. These structures were only implemented within the engineering department, and even then only between 1991 and late 1992 (when the union suspended all TPQ activity other than the LEAP programme). A shopsteward is quoted in the 1993 SWOP report as saying that the in-a-groups at Piet Retief were "used to instruct workers, not to allow them to have a say in planning their tasks. Workers thought that groups would have a full say in production."⁸⁰ This view was reinforced by a comment from the engineering manager who noted that the function of in-a-groups was to be "the channel to communicate to workers, to transmit information." He added that management could not delegate authority to workers in the short term, "because workers do not have the information and decision-making background. Management has got the information."⁸¹

The strongest complaint from workers and their union concerned managerial racism. Aside from the segregation of toilets referred to above, by 1993 workers were still complaining of being called "kaffirs" by some white employees⁸². They also complained that there was de facto job segregation at the plant, with black operators being bypassed for promotion to supervisory positions, and instead, whites being recruited from the outside, contrary to the spirit of the embargo on external recruitment. Until 1993, when three black supervisors were promoted, all positions above the supervisor's grade were held by white men.⁸³ An indication of the attitude of management came with their staff budgets, which were drawn up on a racial basis, with blacks and whites formally separated out.⁸⁴ A related complaint concerned the

over-employment of white supervisors and the under-employment of black workers. The ratio of foremen and supervisors to workers was one for every eight workers (compared with one for every 17 workers in Pietermaritzburg).⁸⁵ But workers also complained that because of under-staffing management was using casuals at times of peak demand.⁸⁶ Another persistent complaint concerned what was viewed as management's lackadaisical attitude to health and safety issues, which shopstewards felt betrayed a racist disregard for the well-being of black workers. This came to the fore in August and September 1992 with the death of three employees in two explosions - the first workers to die in industrial accidents in the company's history. Worker anger over these tragedies was cited by shopstewards as the reason for the decision of the Piet Retief Ppwawu branch to boycott the fourth National Forum in October 1992 and suspend all TPQ processes other than LEAP⁸⁷. However, Ppwawu national education officer Welcome Ntshangase said an additional reason was the right wing attitudes of management there⁸⁸ while group IR and communications director James Smith said other triggers included the slow pace of implementing TPQ, a lack of trust and a deep sense of inequality.⁸⁹ The death of Willie du Plessis - the pro-TPQ HR manager - had a further detrimental effect on attempts to improve relations. While the boycott was not strictly observed (with, for example, ongoing communication and negotiations meetings between management and the shopstewards resuming at the end of 1992), the introduction of the restructuring process in 1993 prompted the suspension of TPQ on a national basis while negotiations over redundancies were proceeding.⁹⁰

Summarising the problems with TPQ at the Piet Retief factory at the time the restructuring process was implemented, Hart stressed that most of the tensions arose from the political ethos in the area: "The difficulty with that factory is the nature of the environment. It's a CP

stronghold, and that effects everything. The result is that management does things mechanically, if at all. They've got a very good literacy programme, but as for the rest of TPQ, I don't think they've internalised it deeply, though they'll go along with the rest of the group because they don't have any option. My impression is that it's been a superficial implementation rather than part of a deeper belief. They do it because they know they have to, and even then major aspect, like in-a-groups have hardly got moving. Of all the SBUs Piet Retief is the weakest when it comes to participatory processes".⁹¹

In late 1993 Andries Vorster was suspended following allegations (from fellow senior managers) of financial impropriety and after a disciplinary hearing he was dismissed.⁹² Subsequent to his departure (partly as a result of the finalising of the one business process) there have been improvements in relations between workers and management. In addition to an expansion of LEAP⁹³, the safety profile was improved and a Corporate Social Investment committee, involving workers and management, was introduced⁹⁴. Management claimed that an improved human relations climate contributed to a major increase in production in 1994.⁹⁵ Plant director Sybrand Visagie, said: "Things like this don't happen by accident. It takes a concerted effort by every employee to make it happen."⁹⁶ However, the politically-rooted tensions did not dissipate entirely, a fact reflected in emergence and growth of the formerly whites-only Yster en Staal Werkers Unie (renamed the South African Allied Workers Union), which, by late 1996 had over 150 members among white artisans and junior managers (and a handful of black members).⁹⁷ PG Bison had previously refused to recognise it because of its racially exclusive constitution, but when this changed the HR department had no option but grant a recognition agreement. As a head office manager put it: "Yster and Staal is one

of the more active unions because they are only based in Piet Retief which is a polarised workplace within a small, racially divided community."⁹⁹

12.3 THE OTHER BUSINESS UNITS

12.3.1 Boksburg

At the two Boksburg factories (Supawood and Upgrading) TPQ was introduced through the value sharing workshops in 1988. Like the Piet Retief site, Bisonbord Boksburg existed in an area where white politics was dominated by rightwing groups, with one senior manager being a member of the highly confrontational CP-led town council⁹⁹, and there was initially strong antagonism to the 'philosophy' and practice of TPQ from some senior managers. In December 1988 the then-TPQ coordinator Thlopheho Modise reported that a scheduled value-sharing workshop at Supawood had been unilaterally canceled by management. "There is a resistance from the top to the process. They are therefore an obstacle to the process despite the fact that middle to supervisory management who attended are sold on the TPQ philosophy".¹⁰⁰

From 1990 this situation improved and most managers curtailed their overt antagonism. Typical of the attitude within Boksburg's senior managerial ranks, was that taken by Supawood general manager, Henry De Villiers, who spoke of his conversion to TPQ 'philosophy' after participating in the senior managerial trip to Zimbabwe and in value sharing workshops at the factory (though he subsequently expressed caution about aspects of TPQ): "I was initially antagonistic. I saw it as political and I was upset by it, but after my Rhodesian trip I definitely changed my mind. I started to see blacks not as a threat but as an opportunity.

At Boksburg it broke down fears. By whites and blacks confronting each other openly, political barriers broke down and people became friends, and now the shopsteward is part of the organisation. But there are some areas where this is not happening in Boksburg.¹⁰¹ As a result of such perceptual shifts Cohen expressed enthusiasm for the changes there: "At Boksburg there have been really meaningful changes. Issues come up which wouldn't have come up previously, and people get exposed to things they wouldn't have without TPQ".¹⁰² But he acknowledged that this was creating tensions between workers and the lower levels of white management - an impression reinforced by Nel, who argued, however, that the TPQ mechanisms were assisting the resolution of these tensions. He mentioned one example: "A white supervisor hit a black worker, so the black man picked up a pipe and hit the white man, who was hospitalised. The rules stated there should be a final warning or firing for both. The whites wanted the black fired, but the disciplinary hearing preferred to sort it out differently. Both were found guilty and warned, and the white undertook not to victimise the black. In the end the whites were happy with the way it was handled, and the shopstewards were happy, and race relations were improved".¹⁰³

The completion of the value sharing workshops in 1990, the introduction of in-a-groups and of the National Forum, and a two day workshop for Boksburg managers and shopstewards in 1991, all helped reduce conflict between black and white employees and between managers and workers. In late 1991 shopsteward Hamilton Modapani expressed support for the process and frustration about the ideas not being followed through: "We have achieved respect from whites. We are now feeling wanted, whereas before we were doubtful that the company thought of us. After TPQ, anyone was able to communicate with whoever they wanted to. Before we were afraid to discuss things with whites, we felt undermined at all times. TPQ

helped to bring whites at all levels closer to us. We have created an atmosphere where we aren't afraid to say something. Before we thought we would get fired. Things are better, but they haven't gone far enough. We feel that if this is going to work out those who are conservative must change. The idea of it is to build a company where we walk hand-in-hand. Management are spending a lot of money on this. If all management do not change and are not committed we would rather get more money at wage negotiations. The problem does not lie with the idea - it is wonderful - it lies with all the employees."¹⁰⁴

Despite the successes of the programme in easing racial tensions, resistance from both top and lower level management continued during this period, with different managerial factions emerging. At the same time many of the workers remained suspicious of managerial motivations and critical of managerial performance in implementing TPQ values, even while acknowledging improvements. This can be seen in the reports from the then-general manager Henry de Villiers, and senior shopsteward Gideon Ntlenzi, to the October 1991 National Forum. De Villiers said: "Relationships deteriorated due to management's bad communication. We have three power blocs and its hard to agree. We felt like the cheese in the sandwich. We had a meeting in September and managers agreed that this management by fear will not occur any longer. We had a two-day workshop with the shop stewards. We found they were fully behind us; all they wanted was to be recognised. We agreed on broad principles".¹⁰⁵ Ntlenzi replied: "Communication between management and shopstewards was very poor until recently. Since the workshop there has been a radical improvement, but management tends to make promises they do not keep. A climate of trust cannot come about if they do not carry through on promises". He said the workers wanted more information on the company's performance, and noted that although training was "commendable", the workers wanted more of it. He also

complained about internal vacancies being advertised and then not being filled from within. "The doors are closed to us because of the skills requirements put forward. We want no secrecy. Some issues remain a closed door, such as job grading and company performance. We want a say in all major decisions and appointments".¹⁰⁶

It took a top managerial shakeup at the end of 1991, and the arrival of the unambiguously pro-TPQ Lawrie Wishart as general manager of both plants, with Thlopheho Modise as the operations manager in charge of the Upgrading plant, before it could be said that most in senior management at the factories were actively supportive of TPQ¹⁰⁷ and before the programme became close to self-sustaining, although as a result of these changes at the top, there was further resistance from several white managers. At the Upgrading plant in particular, fresh antagonism emerged from white managers and supervisors when Modise was placed in charge in 1991, giving him power over 200 employees and making him the most senior African employee within the company. However, within a year these had dissipated, partly because some of those most opposed to the presence of a black boss, left the company or moved to different departments, and there was a positive response from most black employees to Modise's appointment. As Hart put it a year later: "The workers love Thlopheho, and were really happy when he was appointed. One black supervisor told me, 'I've been here 40 years and I've never had a black superior to me, and my only sorrow is that I won't have enough energy to make him successful'. The white supervisors are working with him - in part because they have no option - but one of the workers said to me he thinks the whites are sabotaging, and not listening to Thlopheho. My impression is that the response from whites tends to vary according to their job security. As a result of the move to restructure Boksburg, and bring the two plants closer together, there were several redundancies. Those whites who felt their jobs

were secure - basically the competent ones - weren't upset by Thlopheho's promotion, but for the incompetent ones, this added to their insecurity. So some have taken it in their stride and for others it just adds to their worries."¹⁰⁸

There were considerable differences during this period between the perceptions of management and of workers (or at least their shopstewards) on just how much progress has been made with TPQ. For instance at the third National Forum in March 1992 the Supawood management report noted that the shopstewards felt that "racial discriminatory practices continue to exist", but "on the positive side it can be maintained that all formal segregation ... has been abolished". It went on to say that as "creative structures" or "participation processes" went, the in-a-group process was fully complemented, though "communication and information sharing" had not been adequately improved, and a climate of distrust existed because of protracted wage negotiations and uncertainty about the company's future.¹⁰⁹ The shopstewards report was less sanguine, noting that the values were "inadequate", there were too many creative structures and participative processes which achieved nothing, the factory's community involvement was focussed on whites and communication was bad. Only LEAP, which was termed "progressive" was given a clean bill of health.¹¹⁰ This was also reflected in the Modise's report to this forum: "Progress in the implementation of the values and commitments of the business is very slow in terms of our own expectations. ... The implementation of this strategy ... is not seen to be part of the business but separate. The only area where there is movement is in LEAP, possibly because it is non-threatening as compared to other aspects of the TPQ process. These are understood but there is difficulty in moving from understanding from application/implementation".¹¹¹ There were some improvements during the year, though a joint management/shopsteward 'action plan' presented to the fourth

National Forum in October 1992, noted several areas where more work was required, including the need for the LEAP committee to be made more representative, the need to overcome language difficulties in the in-a-groups and to make the Boksburg SBU forum "more inclusive" of the workforce as a whole.¹¹²

The tensions at Boksburg were reflected in the protracted wage negotiations in 1993, which lasted over three months, and led to a go-slow by workers¹¹³ (a strategy also used, for shorter periods, at Piet Retief, at one PG Wood Transvaal site and among Ppwawu members at the Pietermaritzburg factory). This contributed to difficulties in maintaining TPQ processes, according to Hart: "The atmosphere has been bad partly because of the difficult wage negotiations and the go-slow, because restructuring has made people fear for their jobs and lose interest in participatory structures, and partly because of Boksburg's unfortunate history, which has created a residue of mistrust which surfaces whenever there are conflicts. In the past there was a lot of racism among the white management and a lot of resentment among workers. For example, there was a personnel officer who would recruit people by making them pay for their jobs. Also the union is open about the fact that it has difficulty with its members there and doesn't have much control over them. The workers voted in new shopstewards, and then when they took up their positions, they wanted the old ones back. Things improved slightly when Lawrie Wishart and Thlopheho Modise arrived. Most of Thlopheho's managers are now black, but unfortunately that doesn't seem to have made that much difference."¹¹⁴

By 1994, after the one business initiative had been implemented, there was not much to show of the original TPQ structures. In-a-groups had not entirely collapsed, but had taken on the

form of communications meetings¹¹⁵, while there was only one literacy class in operation, compared with the original three¹¹⁶ and the National Forum structure had been dormant for a year.¹¹⁷ The departure later that year of Modise to head a national PG Bison "Task Force" on job grading, meant the removal of one of the key individuals driving TPQ at the SBU, although both of his replacement in the restructured managerial team, were black.¹¹⁸

12.3.2 Stellenbosch

The experience in implementing TPQ at PG Bison's smallest and oldest factory at Stellenbosch¹¹⁹ was affected by two factors which did not exist at other factories: the predominantly coloured workforce, and the lack of a tradition of unionism prior to TPQ's introduction - a factor which tended to affect the responses of both management and workers. By 1993 almost half of the workers were not unionised (with some belonging to the Employees Association)¹²⁰, and it took three years of union organisation before a full-time shopsteward was elected.¹²¹ A November 1988 report from Thlopheho Modise indicated some of the initial problems in management's perceptions: "Management here profess that relationships are excellent and that there is no need for TPQ. This disregards the fact that they had undergone unionisation a week before I went to introduce the value sharing workshop concept".¹²² Later he reported that the target date for "entrenching TPQ philosophy" at Stellenbosch was September 1989 - two years after this had occurred at Laminate Industries (and the last of the factories to reach this stage).¹²³

At the second National Forum in 1991, General Manager Rusty MacGillivray acknowledged that, "progress is not as rapid as it should be" and that there was a "breakdown in

communications" between management and the workforce. There were problems in conveying company values to the workers, in-a-groups were "supervisor driven" and LEAP was not operating well though workers were given monthly performance reports, an interim performance reward system was in place and there was agreement on a full-time shop steward.¹²⁴ One shopsteward, John Wanza, responded that workers had no problem with values, but that in-a-groups were difficult to maintain because of the three shift system.¹²⁵ Another, Morris Nomatyenge, was more vocal in his criticism: "Our Cape Town colleagues (PG Wood) say the doors are open, but at Stellenbosch the doors are sometimes open only for those favoured by management. For others, the only door open is the main gate. The workers are slow to do the work due to confusion with management. Participation is hard because people are working hard, and management is trying to drive the union from the plant".¹²⁶ Five months later, however, both sides reported progress in a joint report to the third National Forum, noting that a leadership structure involving the management team, two shopstewards, two employee association members and sometimes a Ppwawu official, was meeting on a monthly basis. On the question of 'values', it noted that, "shop stewards have indicated that respect and dignity is not always applied fairly by middle management, and this will have to be addressed". Middle management was "still adjusting" to a participatory style. However, 11 in-a-groups had been established, monthly performance reports were given to employees and discussed by in-a-groups¹²⁷ and there was progress in the provision of financial assistance and housing.¹²⁸ A joint SBU leader/shopstewards report noted that by August 1992 Stellenbosch would have "no more employees who cannot read and write in their mother tongue (Afrikaans)". By late 1992 an English literacy course was available and a majority of the workforce had attended at least one business literacy course.¹²⁹ A reward scheme on the basis of profit sharing was negotiated and accepted by employees.¹³⁰ Later

that year the MD agreed to meet with all employees once a quarter to discuss SBU performance, during which time the factory would shut¹³¹, and agreed that all shopstewards would be invited to attend SBU leadership committee meetings as observers.¹³²

Commenting in early 1983 on TPQ at Stellenbosch, Hart said: "The fact that almost 80 percent of the workforce is coloured and almost half their wage-earning employees aren't unionised, means the ethos there is different from the other factories. It's my impression that they have quite a tame, unmilitant workforce, which allows management more leeway. You can see this by the fact that Ppwawu members Maritzburg, Boksburg and Piet Retief went on go-slows around wage negotiations while at Stellenbosch they chose not to. They tend to go along with what management decides, but their in-a groups are working in their own way, and in other areas they've made significant progress".¹³³ The SWOP report was less complimentary, noting that workers became frustrated with in-a-groups because they were not getting "feedback" from management and therefore collapsed.¹³⁴ It also criticised the factory for allowing the grading system to be abused by under-grading workers, and for understaffing and a lack of training.¹³⁵ In 1994 Hart confirmed this view, noting that said the impetus for in-a-groups had vanished. "What they call in-a-groups are really just meetings for management to communicate with workers, and it's the same with most of what remains of TPQ there. The one feature of Stellenbosch is that they always did things there own way, and this has continued."¹³⁶

12.3.3 Pietermaritzburg

The political context for the implementation of TPQ at the Pietermaritzburg factory was different from that anywhere else in the country because of the strong Inkatha base. The IFP-backed union, Uwusa, had, in the late 1980s when TPQ was introduced, about half the workforce as members, with the Cosatu-affiliated Ppwawu having the rest.¹³⁷ Workers at the factory were obliged to make a choice between these two traditions - a choice which could and did have life and death implications for them and their families. The competition for members created considerable tension within and beyond the factory and initially retarded the potential for participative programmes to flourish. On the other hand, TPQ offered a means towards managing some of such tensions, and much of its success in the factory arose from this role. The implementation of TPQ began with the value-sharing workshop in mid-1988.¹³⁸ Soon after, Modise reported "adequate progress", and went on to note: "Assistance and cooperation has been provided. The process may move slower here than at Laminate Industries, but the level of commitment is the same. I need to spend more time reinforcing the TPQ philosophy".¹³⁹ However, difficulties in this process soon emerged. The political divisions, and their expression in the Uwusa-Ppwawu conflict, meant that the workforce lacked the unity of the other SBUs. Furthermore, the general manager (until 1990), Clive Watkins, and several of his senior staff, proved to be less supportive of the process than Modise's initial assessment suggested.

The factory was initially organised by Ppwawu, but the rise in political tensions in the area led to a concerted drive from Uwusa in 1988, and by late 1990 they claimed over half the total membership (leading to their recognition). A year later, as a result of a counter-drive by Ppwawu, both unions about the same number of members, with Ppwawu growing more rapidly.¹⁴⁰ The tension accompanying these recruitment drives led to periodic incidents of

factory floor violence, and more frequently to violence outside of the factory gates. As the ANC-Inkatha 'war' heated up, so did the conflict among the workers, making TPQ more difficult to implement, and contributing to the cynicism of senior management. The situation improved after 1991 when a new general manager, Nick van Zyl, took over. "It made a very big difference", said Hart. "Clive Watkins had been effectively opposed to TPQ, while Nick van Zyl is very pro. The atmosphere in the factory began to change".¹⁴¹ Uwusa and Ppwawu entered negotiations with each other, leading to the signing of a 'peace accord'. "What it meant," said Hart, "was that they didn't kill each other on site, though they could still kill each other off the site and management couldn't do anything because disciplinary procedure didn't apply off site. They managed the relationship by assuming a 50:50 division to avoid conflict. They were both recognised, each with a part-time shopsteward, and management was the neutralising force".¹⁴² Ntshangase said Ppwawu opted to maintain the 50:50 arrangement, despite the fact that by the time of restructuring it claimed almost 60 percent of the membership, "because it helps to keep the peace".¹⁴³ According to Hart the positive results of the "peace accord" were soon apparent. "The situation there remained tense, but there was less conflict than one would expect. Basically things worked out okay".¹⁴⁴

In late 1991, when only Uwusa was recognised, the then-full-time shopsteward Anton Makhaye complained that the Pietermaritzburg workers "do not all understand the positive aspects of TPQ because they have a tendency of not trusting management". Expressing his own view, he said: "Since TPQ started there has been better communication between workers and management, and some important issues have been addressed like health and literacy and working conditions, and the attitude of white managers and supervisors has improved".¹⁴⁵ At the second National Forum he said further training was needed to encourage workers to

participate in-a-groups. "They are dominated by foremen and the messages are not conveyed up to management". He added that LEAP was "running well, although initial enthusiasm has declined somewhat".¹⁴⁶ IR manager Manie Havemann said the in-a-groups were working "very effectively" and that "we have participation down to the lowest level".¹⁴⁷ By the third National Forum in March 1992, there was enough trust between management and shopstewards from the rival unions, for them to submit a joint report. This noted that most in-a-groups were operating effectively, training was "making good progress" but the Aids awareness programme needed to be "intensified" and information sharing was inadequate. The joint progress report in October 1992 noted that an SBU Leadership Forum had been established and was meeting on a monthly basis; PG Bison's performance reports were explained to workers through small groups; LEAP classes were functioning effectively¹⁴⁸ and all employees were (or soon would be) would be involved in-a-groups, with training provided for their leaders.¹⁴⁹

Commenting on the situation at the factory at the time the one business initiative was launched, Hart said: "The in-a-groups are going particularly well - better than other SBUs - and they have a functioning leadership forum. With literacy there has been a problem because the teacher was taking the learners' money, saving it for them and then drawing it for himself. He's been fired and the company paid the workers back, but they had to start from scratch. The main problem is the tensions between Uwusa and Ppwawu members. Earlier this year Ppwawu went on go-slow over wage negotiations, but Uwusa didn't. Although these problems are well managed, it makes progress with participatory processes difficult".¹⁵⁰ However, the SWOP report stated that the in-a-groups had collapsed at the factory (a consequence of the suspension of TPQ during that period - though Hart said they did not collapse entirely¹⁵¹).

It also criticised the factory's safety record and its use of casual workers.¹⁵² Management defended its safety record, noting they retained their Five Star NOSA rating with elected safety representatives throughout the factory, and two safety committees which met regularly and collated ideas from workers for improving safety.¹⁵³ Relations between the unions improved during restructuring, despite the increased conflict between Cosatu and Inkatha at the time - a situation some in management attributed to the success of participative programmes.¹⁵⁴ Ppwawu and Uwusa united in bargaining with management over the implications of restructuring and the redundancy programme (while Cosatu-affiliated Numsa refused to join the forum).¹⁵⁵ By reaching common positions tensions were reduced. Shortly before her departure from the company in 1994, Hart said the general election campaign had not changed this situation. "There's an amazing maturity in the way it's dealt with by shopstewards. Considering what the equations are there, there has been no war, and I can only attribute that to the maturity of the shopstewards. I saw it on the voter education committee, where Ppwawu was not pushing its political agenda. They understand the realities of life and death."¹⁵⁶

12.3.4 Cape Distribution

The implementation of TPQ at PG Wood Cape¹⁵⁷ began in mid-1989 with the value sharing workshops. Over the next three years it made steady progress and became the only distribution SBU where the programme could be said to be substantially integrated into the day-to-day running of the business.

In 1991, chief shopsteward Selwyn Jean spoke of Ppwawu's caution when TPQ was introduced. "When Christo brought it in we were surprised. We didn't know all about it - he didn't give us a solid ground to see what was the aim - if it was for the benefit of the workers or only in the interest of management. After that the union organisers didn't reject TPQ but said he must come with a clear proposal workers could understand. Now we understand it's a benefit for the workers, the workers want to go forward. A few years back we didn't have all these opportunities we have now. We as the workers couldn't say nothing in the workplace. The supervisor said, 'do this, do that, and no backchat'. Management just said, 'pack your bags if you don't like it'. Now the whole thing has changed. They sit and listen to the workers and we work out a plan. Management now talks to the workers, considers the workers' problems and sorts it out. The doors are open for everyone. It's better because if a worker has a problem then he isn't satisfied in his job and he doesn't do the work. A lot of things are also coming out of the in-a-groups and a lot of things changed with the value-sharings here and I would say the communications system has improved. Nowadays I make my decisions myself, and I can explain why I'm doing it. I would say the performance has improved. The whole process has changed us here. It all depends on the worker - if he wants to improve then it's up to him. I went to management and said I've got five years in the company and I also want to be wearing a two-piece suit and not an overall. Management said, okay. I spent three months on the door section and today I'm running it. The opportunities are definitely there, and if there's an open space they put you in there because no more people are coming from outside. We think we can promote our own people. He said employee relations were significantly better than at other firms organised by Ppwawu in the area. "Some Cape Town factories haven't got these programmes and are still in the old fashioned way, but the PG Group is moving forward and the union here doesn't have a

problem with it. When they suspended TPQ they didn't reject it or say it was bad. They just said there must be a clear proposal. When I became a shopsteward they said just because you're in a union doesn't mean you can do what you want, but for the past three years I don't hear those kind of words anymore. In other words between the company and the union there is a good relationship now. The problem now is only about money. Man, that's a big problem'.¹⁵⁸

The then Cape PG Wood manager¹⁵⁹, Peter Munnik, acknowledged that attitudes within management had shifted as a result of the participative programme, but also made the point that the workers and their union had become more cooperative. He said TPQ had helped to increase understanding and trust on both sides: "Certainly we in management have learned to be more open, and the shopstewards have grown incredibly. They understand our side and we understand their side. We are working toward a culture of give and take through the building of trust. Trust wasn't there in our history, or our society or our business. We had to put that into action, and we still have a long way to go. It has to be passed down from the senior guys and the message has to be consistent. The danger is that one slips back into a paternalistic style - you feel you're doing a lot, but you forget there is a natural conflict between workers and management that requires negotiation and trust to resolve. With the workers the interaction in South Africa just isn't there - we're not in the same club - so you have to work on finding what values you have in common."¹⁶⁰ He went on to stress some of the advantages in terms of the SBU's performance: "Productivity isn't about working more or longer, but smarter. We used to have old-style labour that felt that productivity meant fewer jobs. We are now committing ourselves to working together - how can we all change to grow and do the job better. So productivity has to follow the trust, not precede it. Managers were

open with each other, but not with the workers. We thought about it, but we didn't actually do it. Now we are doing it. It's the only route to follow in this country".¹⁶¹ Jean confirmed the change in Munnik's attitude as well as the attitudes of the then-PG Wood MD, Butch Watson-Smith, and others in senior management: "As far as I'm concerned the managers didn't even greet us. Now they greet us. Mr Watson Smith has changed a lot. ... Mr Munnik used to say we don't want to deal with this (problem) and the shopstewards used to say we didn't want to deal with Munnik. As time went by he changed a lot."¹⁶²

Both Jean and Cape General Manager Mike Revington gave glowing reports to the October 1991 National Forum - though they said no TPQ programmes had been implemented in the George, Outshoorn, Mossel Bay and Queenstown branches and there were no in-a-groups in Port Elizabeth. Revington said a climate of understanding and trust existed and that participation was positive. Literacy was not a problem outside of Port Elizabeth, and the priority was on alcohol and drug counselling.¹⁶³ Jean agreed communication with management was good, and that managerial attitudes had "totally changed". "Every second month we have joint shopstewards meetings with all PG Wood and Timber City branches. We sort out problems there. There is no whites this side, blacks that side".¹⁶⁴ A March 1992 joint management/shopsteward Forum report noted further progress: company values were being discussed and 'Values' booklets distributed in-a-groups (which by then existed in all 12 branches); all employees received performance reports; regular safety committee and shopsteward/management committee meetings were held; and there was cooperation in several other areas, including recruitment, though it was noted that additional training was needed to improve the quality of participation. Business education courses were being provided to workers as well as Aids education classes, while an incentive scheme had been introduced for drivers, sales reps and internal sales staff.¹⁶⁵ However a joint shopsteward-management

'Action Plan' for the fourth Forum in October 1992 said implementation of the programme was difficult within parts of the Cape region for logistical reasons. "PG Wood Cape spans a large geographical areas and it is not always possible to get everybody together immediately. The Continuous Improvement programme is therefore the most advanced in the Western Cape, followed by the Eastern Cape and Border. South Western Districts and Namibia have not been exposed to the process".¹⁶⁶ It noted that to facilitate its coordination a National Forum committee had been set up in Cape Town, with another in Port Elizabeth.¹⁶⁷ Union criticism relating to company values were also noted. Some workers felt that certain jobs were only open to "certain races and sexes", which meant that the grading system needed to be debated "to create better understanding". The format of the performance report was said to be too complicated for many workers and despite the results of a survey showing that all staff at the main branch¹⁶⁸ were literate, both management and the shopstewards doubted this.¹⁶⁹ There was dissension over management's unilateral decision to put an end to the office of the full-time shopsteward - a move justified on the grounds that, "there is not enough work and because of the vast distances between branches," and, "the last incumbent severely abused the position and did not endear management to keeping it open".¹⁷⁰

Interviewed in 1993, Hart also presented an upbeat view. "Things have been going well there. Their in-a-groups are working well. They have no major literacy problem themselves, and in fact are starting to run literacy for the community as a public service. One of the main reasons for their success is that they have a good, relatively liberal management, headed by Mike Revington, who is very pro-TPQ".¹⁷¹ However, the impact of the decision to restructure had a deflating effect on the morale of management as well as workers, and over the next year most aspects of TPQ came to an end. The July 1993 SWOP report noted that the in-a-group

facility had been unilaterally canceled by management at Epping earlier that year. It quoted one shopsteward as saying: "There are no more TPQ meetings here. I don't know why they stopped. Do you think they will bring something useful to us? They say it is useful but they are the only ones who gain."¹⁷² By early 1994, Hart said that most Cape distribution branches no longer had in-a-groups or other TPQ structures except those connected with LEAP¹⁷³, though later that year there was a revival of National Forum structures in some of the sites.¹⁷⁴

12.3.5 Natal Distribution

If PG Wood Cape achieved most success among the distribution SBUs then PG Wood Natal was the SBU which showed the least progress. As with the Pietermaritzburg factory it had to contend with workers who were members of competing unions and political traditions. Unlike Pietermaritzburg it was not assisted by a senior management sympathetic to the process when it was introduced in mid-1989. The majority union, Ccawusa¹⁷⁵ (later Saccawu), was initially positive. Union organiser Mo Alli wrote that the TPQ concept was a "clear move away from the present apartheid style which companies practice at present", adding that its aims were both to improve productivity, quality and profits and to "improve the quality of life of its employees". He commended PG Bison for stating that the system could only work with the presence of strong trade unions.¹⁷⁶ Two years later, the new Saccawu organiser, Gibson Nduli, was less sure about this, noting that the reports from his workers were not encouraging: "In the Transvaal the workers may be more positive, but there are some differences in Natal, which are not fully understood nationally. The Transvaal workers want TPQ to go ahead, but the workers in Natal are not so certain".¹⁷⁷

Some of the causes of this uncertainty were illustrated in the differences in tone and content of reports to the October 1991 National Forum by general manager Tony Kimble and shopsteward Willie Mazangolo. Kimble rose and gave an eloquent, glowing and self-congratulatory report, saying, in effect that industrial relations had never been better. Mazangolo replied that things were not going well, and that management, and senior management in particular, was doing next to nothing. As Cohen put it: "We had a shopsteward denying totally what the manager had said - while accepting he was the manager - and it was true, he had done very little."¹⁷⁸ More specifically Kimble gave a positive version of the establishment of in-a-groups, LEAP, training, business education, information sharing and performance rewards, while Mazangolo replied: "We still lack dignity and respect at our branch. There are problems of trust. Apartheid still exists. When our families come they stay outside in rain or sun, but management's families go to reception and have tea".¹⁷⁹ He complained about health and safety ("strong chemicals from the boards are hurting our eyes") and the bursary scheme, though he conceded that "literacy is coming right - mother tongue is good but English is bad".¹⁸⁰ By the second Forum some progress had been made, and the shopstewards and management submitted a joint report. On the question of 'Values', for instance, it noted: "Shopstewards have pointed out a problem that management is investigating involving double standards in disciplinary action. Shopstewards have also pointed out that whilst respect by management for employees has generally improved, some managers should behave better and show more respect"¹⁸¹. It expressed the consensus view that "the more participation there is, the better it will be for all", and reported that in-a-groups had been set up throughout the SBU, "some working better than others"¹⁸². It also reported that there were monthly meetings between management and shopstewards, with a monitoring committee to evaluate progress.¹⁸³ On the issue of relationships with the union it hinted things were

not working to plan: "It should be noted that both shopstewards and management agree the union official needs to be involved in all facets of the working relationship ... (and) that our people are always involved in making decisions that affect their work life. However this ideal has not been realised to its full potential at PG Wood Natal. To a degree management is still autocratic. However, since the last National Forum a lot of hard work has gone into establishing worker needs/problems and where necessary change has been implemented".¹⁸⁴ It added that, "communication breakdowns often result in deteriorating relationships, trust and respect."¹⁸⁵, and said there were tensions with the SBU leadership: "There is some joint decision making, but this is working in some branches better than others. There is, however, a concern by shopstewards that management is still perceived to be autocratic".¹⁸⁶

But if this indicated growing co-operation between management and the union, it was short-lived. No joint report was submitted to the Fourth National Forum, and there were indications of renewed conflict which intensified during restructuring. One example related to the dismissal of several union members from the Pinetown Timber City branch. This was explained in the Forum's minutes: "(T)he union complained that several ... members from Pinetown were retrenched unprocedurally. Management said the case involved the restructuring of the branch and that the workers became redundant, which is permitted under PG Bison values. Leon Cohen said he would personally visit PG Wood Natal and look into this matter".¹⁸⁷ After a head office investigation Cohen concluded that the SBU head¹⁸⁸ had not complied with company values which did not allow retrenchments, and that the 'redundancy' was unfair, and the workers were reinstated.¹⁸⁹ But, as Hart noted in 1993, such head office interventions did not resolve the endemic tensions there. "To give one example: management unilaterally stopped the literacy programme, arguing that this was

necessary because of restructuring, which wasn't true. Overall the situation there is unhealthy, though some branches have successful in-a-groups".¹⁹⁰ The SWOP report also reserved strident criticism for the Natal distribution SBU, noting that at the Springfield headquarters all in-a-group meetings, as well as literacy classes were unilaterally stopped by management, "because they said customers complained that they were not getting their deliveries on time."¹⁹¹ It also said that overt expressions of managerial racism remained a factor at some branches, mentioning that at Port Shepstone workers had been called "kaffirs" and that the toilets there were still racially segregated.¹⁹² It also complained about understaffing and the employment of casual workers, contrary to company policy.¹⁹³

In 1994 Hart said that the trauma of restructuring had further weakened management's desire to implement participative programmes. "It was always one of the weakest areas in terms of participation and performance, and the focus on restructuring exacerbated the problems. Before they had autonomy - in effect they had a whole business to themselves - but now there is no autonomy. The change has been emotionally traumatic for many in management because they are no longer king of the castle - they just run functions and it's been a serious dampener on participation."¹⁹⁴ Later that year, the individual many of the workers blamed for their problems in Natal, the SBU head Tony Kimble, was made redundant as a result of the removal of layers of management necessitated by the restructuring process.¹⁹⁵

12.3.6 Transvaal Distribution

The implementation of TPQ at PG Wood Transvaal began with the value-sharing workshops in early 1989, several months prior to its launch at PG Wood Cape and Natal¹⁹⁶, but despite

this early start, progress was far slower than at the Cape, though it did not encounter the depth of the problems experienced in the Natal SBU. Reporting to the second National Forum in October 1991, the general manager Grant Parker acknowledged some of the problems. He mentioned that "communications structures are in place in some areas, but elsewhere not so good" and that "values vary greatly - we have a long way to go". He acknowledged the use of casual labour, but "only on absenteeism" and said some redundancies had been necessary. More positively he claimed significant progress in literacy, Zulu classes for management and business literacy classes, as well as incentive schemes for drivers and sales staff, and quarterly meetings between shopstewards and management.¹⁹⁷ Senior shopsteward Joseph Ndluli recognised progress in these areas, but noted that workers had not been approached on performance rewards, stressing that workers "reject being co-opted as supervisors". He also reported that two branches¹⁹⁸ had "problems with management attitudes" and complained about the lack of "team spirit", noting that "management went for two-day river rafting without us". He concluded by saying the workers wanted long service awards after five years not ten because "nowadays we die like flies".¹⁹⁹

A joint management/shop steward report to the third National Forum listed several points of progress and suggested some changes in the attitude of shopstewards. It noted that a senior manager had been appointed full-time to the Continuous Improvement (TPQ) programme because, "with few exceptions our management across the board has received relatively limited training in 'new style' management techniques".²⁰⁰ It added: "From the union point of view the feeling is that certain branch managers manage but do not provide leadership for all employees and need intensive training to change old style habits. On the issue of leadership training, the union urges greater focus on the development needs of emergent

leaders in its own ranks. African workers must be given the same chances to fill in the managerial positions as other races! There have been indications of a willingness by management to involve shopstewards in decision-making and the union supports and encourages these steps".²⁰¹ It noted that employees "know and understand what performance is required from them", but that some branch managers felt that productivity and discipline had dropped and absenteeism increased - which the union denied", while on the other hand it mentioned that the unions believed that on the job training and reward systems were inadequate and that there was insufficient recognition of the roles played by lower-level employees.²⁰² It mentioned progress in literacy, Zulu classes for management and business education courses, but noted union criticism about recruitment outside the company, and conceded that "more attention needs to be paid to the training needs of the average employee".²⁰³ It stated that some branches had not responded well to the programme to improve communication between workers and management, with their managers showing a marked reluctance to share information. The union also argued that management only encouraged participation in decision making when this was demanded by workers and that where in-a-groups existed they were vehicles for communication rather than decision-making²⁰⁴. It concluded that "values have tended to be understood only after breaches have occurred" although some improvement was noted.²⁰⁵ A joint shopsteward/management report to the fourth National Forum noted the appointment of a full-time shopsteward, despite objections from management. It stated there was a need for more uniformity in the implementation of in-a-groups and that while SBU performance reports were given on a monthly basis, these were not presented in a manner which all workers understood, suggesting a need for further business training. It also mentioned an agreement between management and shopstewards to meet on a monthly basis to share information.²⁰⁶

Commenting on TPQ's progress at PG Wood Transvaal during the restructuring programme, Hart said its implementation had been shallow, and stressed in particular that there had been a decline in the presence and affectivity of in-a-groups. While she placed some of the blame on a lack of enthusiasm from management, she also mentioned specific problems from the union side. "One reason is that the new full-time shopsteward²⁰⁷ has not been very effective, though he's relatively pro-TPQ. For instance he will protest about not having a company car on weekends but won't fight for improvements in the literacy programme. On the other hand management are quite good on the values issue and seem to be honest with themselves and the shopstewards about the problems, though not a great deal is being done to solve them."²⁰⁸ Interviewed a year later, she said that while management-union leadership structures were being re-established in some branches, there had not been significant progress with the implementation of in-a-groups in the region as a whole.²⁰⁹

12.3.7 Other factories and outlets

The eight SBUs discussed above formed the core of the company prior to 1993. However, these did not constitute the entirety of the PG Bison portfolio. As mentioned in chapter seven, several Timber City outlets became franchise operations (and therefore fell outside of the ambit of TPQ/Continuous Improvement strategies). In 1991 PlyProducts in Esetebe in Natal was closed after three years within the PG Bison fold, while in 1992 Pennypinchers was bought out by PG Bison (though it remained structurally separate from the rest of the company). The implementation of TPQ at Pennypinchers was still in its infancy at the time of restructuring. Andrew Gilbert, a strongly pro-TPQ former director of Laminate Industries, was appointed its MD in 1991, and immediately took steps to encourage Ppwawu to organise

there.²¹⁰ Thereafter both management and shopstewards participated in National Forum meetings and were exposed to the company's values and aspects of the TPQ programme. However, the TPQ head office team was not involved in helping to implement the process within the Pennypinchers branches, and there was no attempt to take the employees through the value-sharing workshops or to implement in-a-groups.²¹¹ Finally, it is worth noting that the PG Bison head office staff did not operate as a separate SBU and were also not fully integrated into the TPQ process.²¹²

12.4 EMPLOYEE OPINIONS ON TPQ

In late 1992 three surveys were conducted on the attitudes of PG Bison's employees - one by the National Forum committee and the other two by independent analysts retained by the National Forum committee and funded by the company, while another independent survey was conducted for Ppwawu and funded by PG Bison in 1993.

The National Forum survey was aimed at assessing the progress within each SBU in six major areas where the Forum had reached agreement after June 1991: values, participation, information sharing, full-time shopstewards, LEAP and SBU Forum Committees. All managers and shopstewards were asked to fill-in checklists separately, with a positive response eliciting three points, a 'partly' response one point and a negative response no points. Despite significant problems with its methodology²¹³, it provided a sense of employee views on various issues, indicating there were significant differences in the perceptions of management and shopstewards and that employee opinions about participative programmes were far more positive in some SBUs than others, with Alrode, Pietermaritzburg and Stellenbosch scoring highest among workers, and Stellenbosch, Pietermaritzburg, PG Wood Cape and Alrode from

the managerial side. Stellenbosch received the highest overall ranking, followed by Alrode, while Piet Retief received the lowest ranking.²¹⁴ Summarising the findings on values, the National Forum Committee noted that these had been circulated but not sufficiently debated or implemented. The shopstewards felt they used the values more than management when it came to problem solving. They agreed there had not been retrenchments but that there had been external recruitment, contrary to the agreed values. There was disagreement on equality in the workplace with management saying there was no job reservation and equal pay for equal work, and shopstewards saying the opposite, adding that workers were not treated with sufficient dignity and respect. On information sharing it was agreed that performance reports were distributed, but that there was insufficient understanding or discussion. It was also felt there was not enough business literacy training on offer. On participation there was agreement that in-a-groups were not fully in place or that not all employees were involved in them, and that many of those groups which existed were not been used properly. There was also agreement that SBU forum committees were not sufficiently established, with the shop stewards noting that these were not used properly. It was mentioned that half of the SBUs had full-time shop stewards, with shop stewards viewing this facility as more worthwhile than management did. There was also a general acceptance that LEAP committees were largely in place, but not all working according to an "action plan".²¹⁵

Another survey commissioned by the National Forum Committee to gauge how employees felt about the company was conducted by an outside consultant described as "an expert in analysing employee attitudes in companies".²¹⁶ It used a 20 percent sample of employees from Bisonbord, Laminate Industries and PG Wood, drawing from random computer lists, with sampling designed to ensure proportional representivity of all employee grades²¹⁷. The

format allowed five possible answers to each question, ranging from strongly agree (five points) to strongly disagree (one point) - the mean being three points.²¹⁸ 50 questions were asked, grouped into 12 areas: The company lives by its values; Participation and teamwork is practiced; Information is shared openly; Relationships are good; People are recognised and rewarded; People have opportunities for advancement; People can develop their skills; People are empowered; People are committed to the company; People see a secure future; There is equality; People are content in their work.²¹⁹

A positive overall result was returned in all but one category ('equality'), but only 'security' elicited a result over the 3.5 mark. Management had positive answers in all 12 categories, with the questions on values, commitment to the company, information sharing, contentment in work and security drawing responses of 3.5 or over and 'empowerment' drawing a response of over 4. Among workers, eight categories drew responses of 3 or more - values, participation, opportunities, skills development, empowerment, commitment to the company, future security and contentment in work. Three averaged slightly below 3.0 - information sharing, good relationships, and recognition and rewards while one, equality, drew a response substantially below 3 (2.6).²²⁰ The most positive overall response came from PG Wood Cape where all questions drew answers of 3.4 or above, with those on empowerment, commitment to the company and security producing responses of over 4.0. Laminate Industries and Stellenbosch had the second highest positive profiles with questions in five areas - values, skills development, commitment, empowerment and security - drawing responses of 3.5 or above. The lowest average was produced by Pietermaritzburg, followed by Piet Retief. In Maritzburg three sections - contentment at work, future security and commitment to the company produced responses of over 3, while in two sections - participation and teamwork

and equality - the average was under 2.5. At Piet Retief four sections drew responses under 3 - participation and teamwork, information sharing, equality and relationships, with equality producing a 2.3 response.²²¹ The 12 questions drawing negative responses (below 3) were: 1. Employees constantly complain about their jobs and supervisors (2.48) 2. There is racism in the company (2.56) 3. Managers share information openly (2.69) 4. Equal jobs have the same grade (2.8) 5. I experience racism against me (2.82) 6. In-a-groups operate effectively here (2.94) 7. Management acts in keeping with the values (2.95) 8. Employees trust their managers (2,95) 9. Jobs at other tions are available to me (2.97) 10. There is prejudice against women (2.98) 11. My opinion is asked before decisions are made (2.99) 12. I am given the same opportunities for development as others (2.99). The 13 questions drawing positive responses of over 3.5 were: 1. Action should be taken against people violating values (4.14) 2. Employees care about the success of the company (3.87) 3. I am proud to work for this company (3.83) 4. I have the skills I need to do my job (3,82) 5. I feel the company has a good future (3.77) 6. I speak to my supervisor/manager whenever I want (3.73) 7. I am encouraged to learn and improve myself (3.69) 8. My department works together as a team (3.61) 9. I support the company's values and objectives (3.61) 10. On most days I carry out my work happily (3.58) 11. I know who my customers are (3.57) 12. I have more job security here than I would at other companies (3.53) 13. I am encouraged to take initiative (3.51).²²²

Summarising the results the National Forum committee stated: "In general, for the entire PG Bison Group the average results were above the midpoint, but not by much. This means that on average people agreed by a slight margin that we were doing well in the areas measured. Most of these scores were only very slightly positive (above the midpoint). In no area did the average result reach as high as 4 "Agree". Most results were closer to the midpoint (neither

agree nor disagree). ... Of the 12 dimensions measured, the weakest result was in the area of equality. This was the only area where a majority of people disagree that we are doing well. On average people believe racism still exists in PG Bison. This is obviously an important area for attention and action. The area of strongest agreement was "People see a secure future", followed by the dimensions of commitment and empowerment". The committee added that empowerment was the issue where the greatest difference between management and workers was shown with managers agreeing that people are empowered (4,1 out of 5) and workers being less certain (3,2 out of 5)".²²³

A third survey of a different nature - a 'needs analysis' for a shopstewards training programme - was conducted in September 1992²²⁴. This involved interviews with a 'random sample' of eight of the 20 shop stewards who attended the March 1992 Forum. The interviews, conducted by an outside consultant²²⁵, lasted 90 minutes each. Seven respondents were Ppwawu members and one a Numsa member. Three were employed by PG Bison for five years or less, and the rest for over five years. Seven had been shopstewards for five years or less.²²⁶ The report said "all of those interviewed understood their roles and responsibilities as shopstewards, took their positions seriously and felt capable of carrying out their tasks".²²⁷ Most "expressed positive views about the changes that have taken place in the company" and "identified concrete changes in the attitudes and practices of management in the company such as, 'my department manager was anti-union, but now he has changed' or, 'when I came to this company workers used to run to pick up papers; today workers don't have to run if they see the bosses coming'".²²⁸ It added: "Other shopstewards pointed to the benefits that workers have achieved as a result of the changed policy e.g., literacy, and the increased involvement of workers in the decision-making processes. One of the participants

in the study indicated how much he liked the in-a-groups and he felt that he learnt a great deal from others and also mentioned that 'now company figures are no longer a secret'. Another participant felt that the changed strategy 'shows that workers are seen as being part of the company, a team. In the National Forum we show that we talk to each other'.²²⁹ Most shopstewards "did not feel that the changed company strategy was an attempt to co-opt workers and they valued the opportunity to participate in joint discussions", though some saw the changes as a "victory for the workers as they felt that it was their pressure on management which resulted in the changes".²³⁰ While a "positive view prevailed about the strategic change in direction of the company, all participants identified a lack of trust and a general suspicion of management as areas of concern".²³¹ A reason for this was that whites occupied positions of authority in the company and society at large. It mentioned significant variations in perceptions of the programme between regions and plants in the same areas, and between departments in the same plant. However, among the general points to emerge were that management was open to listen at the National Forum but did not implement the changes recommended, that directors were more responsive than the managers, and that in-a-groups did not address worker grievances. Most shopstewards said their rank and file members did not fully understand the objectives of the National Forum, though most said they obtained mandates from workers before National Forum meetings and reported back to them. All but one said their lack of proficiency in English was a major barrier to their participation in meetings, though most had more than a functional level of literacy.²³²

This point - about educational disparities limiting the involvement of workers and shopstewards in participatory structures - was stressed by senior human resources staff, who saw the literacy and business education courses as a means to solving these problems.

Referring to the conclusions of the surveys, and the company's response in a 1993 article, Smith and Hart wrote: "Research showed that while most of the shopstewards held leadership positions as well as in the workplace, they found the experience of participating in a large forum intimidating. Shop stewards felt that weak English skills were a barrier to their ability to contribute verbally, and their limited education was a stumbling block to coping with the voluminous written documents generated by such a participative forum".²³³

As discussed in chapter 11, subsequent research, based partly on interviews with management, workers and shopstewards, was conducted in mid-1993 by SWOP for Ppwawu.²³⁴ Its aim was to provide an assessment of the company's restructuring proposals and its analysis of TPQ was therefore only one aspect of its focus. This section was limited by its impressionistic nature and the fact that the researchers did not cover the Alrode factory (organised by Numsa) nor did they interview shopstewards from Uwusa. Their interviews concentrated primarily on a selection of branches and factories, with the result that some conclusions were not entirely accurate. Piet Retief was the only site noted as having literacy classes, while it stated that in all Ppwawu-organised factories TPQ had "collapsed almost completely", adding that in-groups had collapsed or had never functioned effectively.²³⁵ While there were tendencies in these directions during restructuring, this is an overstatement of the case, with the decline of TPQ at Pietermaritzburg, Alrode, Boksburg and some of the other distribution sites, being less absolute than this suggests. However, its account of shopsteward and worker opinions provides additional pointers to the state of participation at that stage. While the authors of the report and a subsequent article on it complemented the company on its willingness to share all information with the union, and its preparedness to negotiate restructuring and the redundancies in good faith, they reinforced some of the negative impressions gained from

previous employee opinion surveys. In addition to emphasising TPQ's downgrading since the one business initiative was devised, they mentioned examples of overt managerial racism and presented the view that management in some SBUs were violating the company's values in several other respects, including the use of casual labour and of retrenchments disguised as redundancies.¹³⁶

12.5 TRADE UNION RESPONSES TO TPQ

While the responses of trade unions within a company tend to be guided by their members, and particularly the representatives of their members (shopstewards), the two can not be conflated, and therefore need to be dealt with separately. The union is seldom simply the sum of its members' views because its organisers and other officials invariably have a marked independent influence on policy, strategy and day to day tactics. Considerations influencing policy, strategy and tactics include national and regional political influences, national union policy, and, most particularly, the individual perspectives and even personalities of the organisers and other office bearers. As a result the perspectives put forward by union officials may, at times, differ substantially from those held by their members at a particular company, and this certainly applied at PG Bison. There were several significant changes in the responses to it taken by the three Cosatu-affiliated trade unions in the years covered by this study. Some of these shifts related to changes in national policy, but more important were the changes in the regional and branch organisers dealing directly with the different SBUs.

Partly as a result of the shifting influence of various union officials, Ppwawu shifted from having no clear policy on TPQ (with some organisers supportive and others opposed), to

ensuring its suspension for over six months, to being critically supportive after developing a national policy on participation after changes were introduced, to instituting a suspension of some TPQ structures at the start of the one business process, to strongly endorsing a reconstituted participative programme as a result of the one business negotiations. The influence of individual officials was even more marked with Numsa. Its branch was strongly pro-TPQ when the regional organiser was Sam Ntuli, but adopted a far more antagonistic stance when Elias Monage took over. Similarly, former Saccawu organiser Mo Alli was pro-TPQ whereas his successor Gibson Nduli was less so. Some changes related to day to day developments at the SBUs, but they also reflected attitudes and socio-political views of individual union officials, as well as their level of awareness about the existing programmes. This caused considerable frustration for management, and particularly those dealing directly with the union organisers. They frequently complained that each new organiser who arrived took several months to understand the company's participatory processes, and once this point was reached he was invariably replaced by another who with little knowledge of the agreements which have already been reached or the history of the process, and needed to go through the same process again.²³⁷

What was acknowledged by the TPQ team, and stressed more strongly by the unions, was that an initial mistake in implementing TPQ was that the focus on winning the support of the shopstewards was not complemented by a drive to get the union organisers and other officials more actively involved.²³⁸ Nel stressed from the outset that if TPQ was to succeed it would need the active participation of the workers, and to get this the shopstewards had to become key players in the plan. What he did not sufficiently recognise until the process began to break down three years later, was that the shopstewards had to maintain a relation both with

their union members and with the union organisers, who, in turn, required the backing of their regional and national offices. As a result the consultations with the unions was not sufficient to draw them in beyond the shopsteward level, and in some cases the organiser level. In particular, the national offices were not integrated into the process, and despite the initial, cautious go-ahead from the unions, this contact was not sufficiently maintained, with the result that as union staff changed, so the assumption developed among new officials that TPQ had been unilaterally imposed. At the same time the shopstewards, most of whom were aware of the history of the process, were drawn in on a day to day basis. What happened over time was that while many developed positive responses to TPQ, particularly during its early, value-sharing stages, these were not shared by all their organisers, nor by all the officials in the regional and national offices, some of whom saw TPQ as nothing more than an anti-union scheme to disempower workers and boost productivity. In Ppwawu in particular, this tension became acute and led to the active intervention from the union head office to stall the process.

As mentioned above, the SBU which had the most positive response from its union - both from shopstewards and organisers - was Laminate Industries. One reason was that during the first four years of TPQ, the Numsa national and regional offices were less antagonistic to worker participation schemes of this nature than their counterparts in Ppwawu. It was particularly important that for the first three-and-a-half years of TPQ's implementation there, the union's organiser, Sam Ntuli, viewed the process in a more positive light than most. In addition, because of the relatively liberal views of senior management, the TPQ process was implemented with more enthusiasm at this factory than at most other SBUs. The result was a generally positive response from the workers and their shop stewards, which tended to influence the officials directly involved. Interviewed in 1990, Laminate Industries HR

manager Andre Michaux, spoke of a constructive relationship with the union. "We couldn't embark on the programme until it had been discussed with the shopstewards and the union. Some of the initial reaction was suspicious, but not antagonistic. At one stage in negotiations we had a situation where the union officials were not available so the shopstewards reported back to the workers, and the reaction was very positive. The union is particularly happy about the literacy programme. ... In general there has certainly not been any major rejection of TPQ, though I'd say Sam Ntuli is still suspicious about aspects of it".²³⁹ Interviewed soon after, however, Ntuli showed little suspicion: "We don't have a policy on TTQ because Laminate is the only PG factory where Numsa has a presence. On the shopfloor workers welcome TPQ, and my attitude as an organiser there is that it definitely has positive elements. It helps promote skills in the sense that positions will go to people capable of doing the job, it gives the workers a chance to participate in it democratically, and to take part in open debate with other racial groups. I would say the situation at Laminate is definitely different - more positive - from that at other companies".²⁴⁰

Ntuli, an East Rand UDF civic leader, was assassinated in 1991. Shortly before, he moved to the union's regional office and his position as organiser was taken by Elias Monage, who showed strong antagonism to any form of participatory management, and like several other union organisers interviewed, seemed to have little knowledge of the history of the process or the experience with TPQ prior to his appointment. Interviewed in late 1992 he said it was introduced by management at a National Forum in 1989, with the aim of undermining the unions and minimizing worker militancy²⁴¹, whereas in fact, the National Forum only came into existence in 1991 and TPQ was initiated in 1986, and first implemented at Alrode in 1987 - at a time when the unions were weak and the workers far from militant. He explained

his opposition to TPQ: "My personal feeling is that it's a negative thing for the workers, in the sense that the introduction of TPQ undermines the structures of a union at a particular plant. It should be stopped, but this depends on the militancy of the workers because it's aimed at coopting the leadership. What you need to understand is that some workers still need education about this thing of TPQ".²⁴² Asked how TPQ undermined the union he gave the following example: "When we were negotiating wages, whatever we were discussing with management the shopstewards will report back to the workers. But management themselves can report back to anybody, even our own members. The workers then don't want to attend our report backs because they've heard it from management. When we challenge management on this they just say this is policy".²⁴³ He conceded however that it could have advantages for workers. "Sometimes the workers use TPQ to challenge management. For example, the transport workers got rid of this particular manager who they didn't like, and used the TPQ structures to do this, so it can be turned around to be used for the workers advantage. It's a complex thing: if the workers are not militant they won't be able to use it to their advantage. The problem is that TPQ tends to make workers less militant".²⁴⁴

As mentioned with reference to PG Wood Natal there were similar shifts in perspective between Saccawu organisers, although here a major influence was the negative experience with management. During the first two years of TPQ, the union organiser, Mo Alli, was supportive. "TPQ is definitely a positive step towards a non-racial and democratic South Africa. The company is correct in saying that this system can work only with the participation of a strong trade union movement to guide the system in the right direction. There is still a lot of suspicion about this system because workers always feel that management have something up their sleeves when they offer a system which seems like an answer to many of

their problems. I personally feel that the TPQ system is progressive and can work with the total cooperation and commitment from both parties".²⁴⁵ However he said the union needed to develop "a clear policy on this whole TPQ system", adding that some issues needed careful planning and research: "1. We need to know clearly, how we could dismantle apartheid on the shop floor 2. As a trade union we need to have a clear vision or aim as to what do we want to achieve out of this system 3. Will we be compromising any of our principals and policies? 4. What is the long-term political implication of TPQ? 5. How do we take advantage of this to strengthen the unions? 6. The whole issue of democracy and participation of workers in decision making 7. How do we negotiate profit sharing? 8. Centralised Bargaining and how it can strengthen or weaken the trade union. 9. What structures do we set up in order to achieve the above?".²⁴⁶ When Gibson Nduli, took over in August 1991 he took a more critical stance: "Management has been trying to bring up a lot of issues, like at the last National Forum the big issue was the presence of non-unionised, white collar employees in this structure because they were saying their interests were not represented because they didn't identify themselves with either the workers or with management. Management pushed hard for it because they said they weren't negotiating wages and they wanted to create teamwork. But for us it was a very dangerous thing because the union fought a struggle with management to get where it is, and now management wants to let these people take a short cut. Some things in this TPQ thing I find really dangerous to us as a union movement. What we need is proper guidance because it could sway the struggle of our trade union movement".²⁴⁷

There were no significant shifts in the perspective of Uwusa to TPQ. Throughout the period of their presence within the company, their representatives were largely in favour of the

programme, though their active response tended to vary according to their relation with Ppwawu. Their Pietermaritzburg shop steward Anton Makhaye said the main problem with their membership was that the workers "did not understand the concept of TPQ". He complained they had a "tendency of not trusting management", adding that he personally was in favour of it because it "helped to create a better understanding between employers and employees".²⁴⁸ Uwusa sent along two officials to the 1989 shopstewards conference, and its union organisers also participated in the National Forum and seldom made complaints about management. Only on the question of the presence of non-unionised workers at the National Forum did one of their representatives take a stand against management at a national level.²⁴⁹ And within the Pietermaritzburg factory they also tended to go along with management's perspectives. For instance, when the Ppwawu workers went on a go-slow around wage negotiations in 1993, Uwusa workers refused to take part. As Hart put it at the time: "There certainly hasn't been any opposition to TPQ from Uwusa in any form. The problem has more been one of them not being critical enough".²⁵⁰ As mentioned above, in 1993 they joined Ppwawu in the negotiations around restructuring, rather than taking the independent route followed by Numsa.

But while Numsa, Saccawu and Uwusa each had an influence within the company, Ppwawu was the union with by far the most powerful presence, and therefore the greatest impact. Until developing a national policy relating to TPQ in 1993, their responses varied from SBU to SBU, from organiser to organiser, and from time to time. In late 1989 a more concerted rejection emerged, with, ironically, the catalyst being the ostensibly pro-union three day national shopstewards conference in October that year. While this was viewed by management as the ultimate expression of its commitment to trade unionism, Ppwawu's head office viewed

it as an attempt to divide shopstewards from the rest of the union. The national organiser, Rob Reece, was particularly critical. He was initially involved in negotiations around the implementation of the literacy programme, attending a workshop on the issue where he expressed strong opposition to TPQ and subsequently helped to influence union policy on the programme.²⁵¹ He felt, however, that he had not been sufficiently involved. Asked in March 1992 about his attitude to TPQ at PG Bison, he said: "If I had been there I can assure things wouldn't have turned out like they did".²⁵² Another official who expressed strong opposition was assistant general secretary Sakhela Buhlungu, who took over from Reece in the negotiations around LEAP. He wrote: "Ppwawu ... has noted serious problems since the introduction of TPQ by PG Bison. Chief among these are that the company in fact brought TPQ in unilaterally and only agreed to negotiate when it became clear that the programme might fail. In addition the union noted serious organisational problems arising out of the introduction of TPQ. For example, PG Bison shop stewards were becoming very weak and were drifting away from the union's constitutional structures. This led to serious, and, in my view, justified suspicions about the intentions of 'management'".²⁵³

These views were not shared in their entirety by the union organisers dealing with PG Bison on a daily basis. Interviewed in July 1990 Ppwawu Southern Transvaal branch secretary, Kenny Fihla, argued a policy of engagement was the correct one to follow. "Initially our union adopted an attitude of outright rejection, but we have been evaluating this attitude and have come to the conclusion that we will not solve the problems through rejecting it. This is because TPQ is very attractive to the workers, so therefore we can't just reject it. Then we would have a situation where only the union officials are opposed to it when the workers are supporting it on the factory floor. Now we have realised that we need to be part of it and at

the same time make our position strong and make sure that some of the more dangerous elements in it are rejected". He acknowledged the programme had positive dimensions for workers. "They work in a way to ensure employee participation. For example, with stayaways and strikes they discuss these things and then they have developed an advanced management team to handle things".²⁵⁴ Among the "good aspects of TPQ" was its effect in combating white racism. "We've come to realise that it can be used by the union to improve race relations through things like joint seminars of white and black workers which they run. In terms of race relations, yes, it is good. In the past some of the management, like the line management, and those lower down, were hostile, but since the inception of TPQ there has been a change in their attitudes. But this has also had the effect to an extent, of demobilising the workers on the factory floor. I would say that TPQ is certainly not bad in total. You could say it's been ambiguous for the union. It improves race relations, which is good, but it tends to demobilise workers, which is bad",²⁵⁵

Despite such perceptions, those taking a more cynical approach won the day at the time. In August 1990 union officials informed management they believed TPQ had been unilaterally imposed, and that the entire package had to be renegotiated. While contact between management and the unions continued, it was only in March 1991, after a meeting between management and officials from each of the unions and shopstewards, that TPQ was allowed to resume (as a result of the establishment of the National Negotiating Forum, which became the National Forum). Interviewed after the introduction of the National Forum, Ppwawu national organiser Musa Bhengu was positive about the process. "TPQ is just at the beginning of being implemented. Until quite recently it wasn't implemented properly and was more of a theory. The literacy programme was always good but had some shortfalls. But negotiations

with PG about TPQ have been fruitful, and the programme has a lot of potential for workers. The National Forum is the first of its kind in South Africa and could have very positive results. They have a work culture which is geared to eradicating racism, though it continues to some extent from the lower level of management. But in general PG Bison is totally different from other companies in the wood and paper industry. There is no longer the same antagonism between workers and management, whereas in other companies there still is".²⁵⁶

In his concluding remarks at the second National Forum meeting, his fellow Ppwawu national organiser Elijah Masinga, was even more glowing in his commendation. "What we have done here is not small; it is very big. We are makers of history, of the new South Africa. This is not easy. There are not set rules, no precedents to follow. We are the pioneers of the new industrial order in South Africa. None of us should feel we are not making a contribution. We should look forward to the day when other companies feel at liberty to copy what we are trying to do here", he said.²⁵⁷ Likewise, in his opening speech at the third National Forum in March 1992 Ppwawu regional organiser Phineas Masombuka showed considerable enthusiasm. "In the past, business was characterised by a master-servant relationship. It is quite encouraging for PG Bison to opt for a different route - away from confrontation, toward giving workers a say. Others want to follow suit, so the new ideas auger well. PG Bison will go down in history for setting an example on how to change labour relations. This doesn't mean it will always be smooth running - we need to look for common ground".²⁵⁸ In another speech at the same event Ppwawu general secretary Siphso Kubheka was more cautious, but still hopeful, in his endorsement. "The path in which we walk is not easy. There has been resistance in different working situations, where those opposed to the new order don't want to lose their privileges. We have to contend with the old habits of imposing

unnegotiated decisions. In 1989 within PG Bison there was still suspicion. After years of difficulty at the workplace there was a new approach, brought about by struggle. It is important to note where we are today - the mere fact that within PG Bison there are discussions. There is a vigorous attempt to dismantle apartheid through education, discussion and understanding. We have agreed with management to tackle literacy, skills training and full-time shopstewards. The mere fact that there are forums at plant level to discuss problems is real progress. Before, a decision was a decision; an order was an order. Within the South African context, PG management has taken bold steps. There are still other companies which are refusing to read the writing on the wall. Still, there are areas we need to elaborate on. Participative management, joint decision making, need elaboration. What do they mean in practical terms?"²⁵⁹

Despite this enthusiasm, there remained a level of caution, and an element of confusion, in how to respond to TPQ, and how to understand it. This was exacerbated by some of the tensions at the second and fourth National Forum meetings. The former was dominated by a lengthy debate between management and the unions as to whether non-unionised employees should be allowed separate representation at the forum²⁶⁰ - an issue of contention that continued to fester for several years. The latter involved the boycott by Piet Retief shopstewards of TPQ structures including the National Forum (initiated by the local Ppwawu organiser as a result of specific grievances there) and of the unprocedural retrenchment of the Pinetown Timber City workers, and provided the first indications of a breakdown in the TPQ programme.²⁶¹ Also, as the union acknowledged, it had not had to deal with such an initiative before - a form of participatory management in which the unions were central to the process. The result was that in July 1992 union representatives attended a seminar run by the

Sociology of Work Programme at Wits University. Its aim was to examine forms of worker participation and develop a coherent response to participatory schemes initiated by South African managements. Following this, two union representatives, national education officer Welcome Ntshangase, and Western Cape branch chairperson Apollis Solomons, were given a research fellowship by SWOP, to produce a position paper on worker participation. This was completed in November 1992. It is worth considering this paper, as the position of "adversarial participation" it advocated subsequently became dominant (though by no means universal) within Cosatu and had a considerable impact on the negotiations which followed at PG Bison around restructuring.

It begins by noting that it is no coincidence that moves away from apartheid towards a non-racial democracy, should be accompanied by the introduction of "worker participative schemes of one form or another", adding that "management is trying to draw an artificial line between apartheid and the capitalist system".²⁶² The question of winning the co-operation of workers is a "survival" issue for South African companies, and "in the face of stiff international competition South African companies will have to increase the quality of their products", but that the development of the productive forces and the growth of trade unions make it impossible for management to do this through coercion. "Instead, management must elicit the co-operation of workers to achieve increases in productivity, by creating a working environment which encourages workers to use their brain power and initiative".²⁶³ Capitalists "are constantly driven to revolutionise the techniques of production", but this creates "internal contradictions ... which are seen in an intensification of the class struggle". The authors criticise what they regard as the anti-union premises of Japanese and American participative schemes, and write admiringly of the Swedish system. They note, however, that none of these

systems can be imported directly into South African industry.²⁶⁴ It says South African industrial relations since the early 1970s involved three phases - the first characterised by union bashing, the second by the recognition of unions the formation of collective bargaining forums, and the third, "still in its infancy", by the formation of "participative structures which encourage worker participation in limited decision making on the factory floor". It adds, however, that these tend to co-exist, depending on labour's position in a given situation.²⁶⁵ The participative schemes were introduced "to improve worker productivity in the context of an economic crisis, through increasing the intensity of work, increasing worker loyalty to the company and diminishing confrontational actions", as well as to support the "project of free enterprise".²⁶⁶

It compares the relatively pro-union, value-centred approaches of PG Bison and Nampak with that taken at Carlton Paper which, it says, focussed on improving quality and efficiency through better production flow, team work and quality improvement. Both approaches aim at increasing productivity "by developing workers' skills and by transferring a limited amount of responsibility onto workers and work teams", that both stress improving quality, efficiency and competitiveness in a world market and both "fail to define clearly a role for trade unions on the shop floor". It concludes that both approaches "have the potential to break the bond between individual workers and their collective organisation, and replace it with a company or enterprise union", and adds: "The main weakness of management's participation schemes is firstly, that it arises as a response to a crisis, and as such becomes not a philosophy, but a strategy to be used under certain conditions which can be disposed of easily should another strategy more favourable to the employers be found. Secondly, worker participation seeks to institutionalise change, and ... assumes that behaviours and attitudes which have developed

over many decades can immediately disappear. This assumption tends to ignore the fact that change does not take a leap from one situation to a new one; it develops gradually".²⁶⁷

Echoing the words of SWOP coordinator Judy Maller²⁶⁸, it tackles the issue of whether unions have an interest in productivity: "Increases in productivity are not necessarily bad for workers. In fact they may very well benefit labour if management was serious enough to negotiate this with the union through collective bargaining, with an emphasis on increasing overall productivity and not just labour productivity. Through collective bargaining, the union can ensure the increased social wealth that is created, is directed into productive investment, expanding job creation and higher wages".²⁶⁹ It says management's separation between participation and collective bargaining "is artificial and unnecessary", and argues for a direct link between them²⁷⁰ and for broadening the content of collective bargaining. "It should not be confined to negotiating wages and working conditions, but rather should extend workers' influence into areas of policy and company planning which have previously been regarded as the sole prerogative of management".²⁷¹ This is tackled at national level through influencing economic policy, at industry level through influencing wages, working conditions, industry restructuring and training and at company level through influencing investment, the production process, product development, workers' welfare, and access to financial information.²⁷² While management would like to "create an artificial line" between collective bargaining and participation, this is inadvisable because it means "workers will not be able to use their collective strength to fight for things like housing, training or education".²⁷³ For unions even to consider participation, "collective bargaining must be taken to its fullest stage: centralised bargaining."²⁷⁴

Finally it examines three options for unions facing participative schemes: "stand back and let it happen", obstruct or become centrally involved. The advantage of the "stand back" option is that the union will not lose its identity, but the weakness is that the members and shopstewards may participate without union guidance, and the union will become invisible to the workers. The advantages of the obstruction option are that the union will be fighting the bosses to further its members' interests, and the option "further puts to rest the myth that the contradictions between labour and capital can be reconciled". But the schemes may have drawn in many members and shopstewards who will resist the union's attempt to obstruct. "When the bosses present their schemes with the motivation that they want to democratise the workplace, give the workers a say, recognise the contribution of workers, ensure that the workers get training, education, literacy and housing, it becomes very difficult for the union to convince members not to accept these. In fact this has been our practical experience as the union".²⁷⁵ The alternative option of becoming centrally involved can have two paths: one driven by management, where the union accepts and participates in pre-designed structures, and the other where the union "becomes part and parcel of the very process of defining participative structures themselves". The advantage of the latter is that the workers can push management further than they originally intended, but the disadvantage of both is that "it assumes that the union has accepted the process as legitimate" and may "end up identifying itself with the goals of the company".²⁷⁶

Arguing for "adversarial participation" it states: "By engaging with participation schemes through extending our collective bargaining structures, we would advance workers' control over the labour process, the labour market and investment processes. ... The option the union takes must build from the union's collective strength, its structures, and its tradition of

report-backs and taking mandates. However, this does not suggest that we are undermining the need for individual workers to be treated like human beings and not like machines, as has been the case up until now. It will therefore be important when to consider both the need for our collective strength and the individual's recognition of his ability to think and acquire skills in the work environment".²⁷⁷ It re-stresses the "irreconcilable contradiction between the interests of labour and capital", but notes there is "no contradiction between our collective strength through our union structures and the individual worker's satisfaction or ability to participate in decisions affecting his work and life". Therefore co-operation is possible as long as it does not come at the expense of the union or the "class interests" of its members. Unions should engage, but on their own terms. Collective bargaining should be extended to include medium and long-term company visions, development, training, investment, technology, strategy formulation and organisational structuring, as well as operational issues which were previously the prerogative of line management. Furthermore participative structures should be led by workers' representatives, not by workers as individuals.²⁷⁸ The paper warns against TQM and in-a-group-type schemes: "We are informed by the experiences of participative initiatives which have created natural or permanent work teams, but which ignore the role of the union structures within those teams. If left unchallenged, these schemes have the potential to destroy the ability of workers to see themselves as part of organised labour and will undermine workers' chances of safeguarding their long-term interests".²⁷⁹ It adds that such structures "are not negotiated with the union, and are often set up to undermine the union", but notes that if the union extends its collective bargaining arrangement into these work groups, "we can ensure that union organisation is strengthened and workers are able to influence the way in which work is organised, with the collective power of the union behind them".²⁸⁰

A 1993 Ppwawu workshop endorsed this paper's conclusions and developed a set of principles to guide negotiations on the issue of participation: "1. There should be no agreement or principles or involvement that should compromise the union's independence from the employers or from the government. 2. There should be no strings attached to whatever information we need to facilitate that engagement or negotiations. 3. The democratic accountability, both of union officials to members and of members to democratically adopted union policy, should be maintained."

Ntshangase stressed this final point: "At times workers get taken up by these schemes in a particular company. The union, as a union with a national perspective, can decide that this route is wrong. Should such a decision be taken by democratic structures of the union, workers at PG would be bound by that".²⁸¹ He questioned the separation between collective bargaining and the National Forum, and despite the fact that the Forum was the product of seven months of negotiations with the unions, and had been specifically demanded by Ppwawu, he said it was imposed by management. "We were confronted with this, but we have indicated to PG that we would like to have a meeting that would revisit the whole question of structures because we don't believe in this. It is too artificial".²⁸² The overall affect of TPQ on the union was ambiguous. "From the company point of view, TPQ is successful. It's won key shopstewards over. Very key shopstewards identify themselves with the company. Each time you want to analyse PG, senior shopstewards at PG are too defensive. It has tended to make shopstewards have a narrow view of trade unionism. In fact, unless the union intervenes, TPQ has the potential of turning unionism there into enterprise unionism. You might not have changed the name, Ppwawu, but already to me it is an enterprise union. When you talk of worker control, those workers there see themselves as PG workers, first of all. But definitely there are some gains and successes. One is that the whites are less racist than

before. This means that workers there have opportunities of taking up more responsible, demanding positions. Opportunities for training and learning have improved and PG is looking at a bursary scheme for employees and their children. Those are gains. One of the most important values is that workers won't be retrenched as a result of economic downturns. The mere fact that you are having workers who, under normal circumstances, cannot be retrenched is positive. The company can't say we are retrenching and going on skeleton staff, though they can say we are removing this work, and making this person redundant".²⁸³

As discussed in chapter 11, Ppwawu, subsequently acknowledged it had shown confusion responding to management's restructuring proposals and had made the mistake of prevaricating and then considering strike action, before deciding to enter negotiations, after which a far more positive perspective emerged. This was expressed by Ntshangase: "We have been through a paradigm shift. We've realised for the first time that we need to work with facts, that we can use the same resources that management can use. We accept that old reactive approaches have to go. ... We recognise that the employer is trying to involve the union; they pressed us to respond. We're being included to effect change. We now know that we mustn't take a back seat approach again."²⁸⁴

12.6 CONCLUSION

What stands out in assessing PG Bison's participative initiative is the unevenness in its implementation - both between SBUs and in terms of the different dimensions of the programme. While all SBUs made some progress, and were clearly influenced by it, it was only at Alrode, Pietermaritzburg, Stellenbosch and Cape Distribution where the process

become self-sustaining to any degree. It is also clear that the responses of management tended to be more positive than that of workers, although in general the workers at most of the SBUs maintained a cautiously positive attitude to the programme, particularly prior to 1993.

The area where most progress was made was in combating racism, yet throughout the period covered, this remained the site of most contention and dissatisfaction among the workforce. Shopstewards and other black employees who had been in the company prior to the introduction of TPQ tended to be positive about its effects in combating racism and improving communication between management and workers, whereas those who joined PG Bison at a later stage were more critical of inadequacies in this regard. As Dr Leila Patel noted with reference to her study of shopsteward attitudes: "The length of employment of participants seemed to influence their perception of the extent of change that has taken place in the direction of the company over the past few years. They also had a yardstick against which to measure the nature and extent of change".²⁸⁵ Overall, there were significant and far-reaching changes in the cultural and political attitudes and approaches at all levels of management - despite stubborn anomalies at Piet Retief and Port Shepstone - as a direct result of TPQ. However, progress was far less impressive when it came to black advancement. The company's rhetoric about equal opportunities and non racialism created high expectations, which were seldom met. This was one of the main reasons why 'equality' was the area with the lowest score in the opinion surveys.

In the early stages of TPQ conceptualisation, Nel, Cohen and others described it as a programme designed to introduce industrial democracy to PG Bison. Nel spoke of the need to "promote work-place democracy"²⁸⁶ and to create a "just and democratic workplace"²⁸⁷

through involving the unions in the company's change process. Cohen said a key component of the process was that from the start the "principles of democracy are essential within the business". Elaborating on this, he went on to say: "You need to consciously measure whether people in the business, especially from management and at shopsteward level, have accepted it, and there must be a real awareness that you are really negotiating the values, the policies, the vision of the company, and have total clarity in your human resources strategy. You need to ensure that your business structures are in line with what you say - that you don't have hierarchical structures on the one side and participative talk on the other side. You have to change the structures of the business to allow for participation - and education becomes the critical factor in how you communicate within the business itself".²⁸⁸

By any conventional (rather than syndicalist or Marxist) conception of industrial democracy (let alone of the broader notion of the "principles of democracy") the term would imply a degree of equality of power, or at least potential access to power, as well as a means of expressing this power being available to all within the organisation. Based on this criterion it goes without saying that PG Bison fell far short of it, and did not even come close to meeting Cohen's criteria. The ownership structure of the company did not change in favour of employees and there was no concrete attempt to introduce any form of employee share ownership, let alone the "25 to 30 percent" postulated by Nel.²⁸⁹ And despite CEO Rob Cohen's indications of an intention to introduce employee representation on the company's board²⁹⁰, there had been no practical moves in this direction, nor had there been significant developments in terms of introducing employee power or even influence over major investment and marketing decisions. Without labouring the point, it should be apparent that the term 'industrial democracy' was a misnomer when applied to the kind of participative

programme applied at PG Bison. It would be more accurate to say that there had been a gradual and uneven shift away from previous managerial practices which were routinely described by workers and managers as "autocratic" and "unilateral", and towards a limited form of shared decision making at various levels. Initially this involved a pruning of some of the powers of line managers and supervisors, prompting them to move away from past managerial styles which often involved officious, conflictual behaviour. What emerged in its place was a more consensual form of decision making in certain respects. This was achieved primarily through the value sharing process, which challenged managerial perceptions of their prerogative and of their position in society as white subjects, and through the in-a-groups, which, ostensibly, were given limited powers over hiring of new staff, though these were seldom applied in practice. However, as is indicated above, this varied markedly from SBU to SBU, with previous styles of management surviving virtually intact at some of the sites.

Subsequently a more representative form of employee involvement in decision making was achieved through the implementation of joint management-worker leadership structures, and particularly the National Forum. Worker representatives were given powers they did not previously enjoy in a number of areas of concern to them: the application of company values (which included 'hard' issues such as the ban on retrenchments as well as issues such as racism); corporate social responsibility programmes, housing policy, LEAP, training and business education, the communications policy and a range of issues not covered by collective bargaining agreements. Together with the initial impact of the more direct forms of worker participation (value sharing workshops and in-a-groups) this increase in the power of the workers and their representatives contributed to industrial peace at the company, with no declared strikes taking place during its history. In those SBUs where participation was deeply

rooted (particularly the Alrode factory) there were indications that it contributed to improvements in product quality, and perhaps productivity.

TPQ, as a specific participative initiative, began to decline in significance within the company from late 1992. While aspects of the programme were maintained in some SBUs - LEAP, in-a-groups, and leadership structures - the original aim of establishing forums to enhance direct employee involvement in decision making, dissipated. What emerged in its place, through the National Forum and through negotiations around restructuring, and through the structures which emerged from that, was a less direct but more representative form of participation, with unions enjoying more power than before, but with workers less involved in day-to-day decision making, despite the subsequent implementation of team room groups in most SBUs. This was expressed in particular through the direct impact of union involvement in the company's restructuring programme, which had a significant effect on shifting some of its parameters. This power was maintained by the union and became institutionalised within the company's operations, particularly through the facility for quarterly shop stewards-senior managerial meetings. The practical effect of this was considerable. Not only was the information available to the unions about the company's operations increased, but the power to use it to prevent any further restructuring which would affect worker interests was entrenched. In this way a system of "adversarial participation" emerged which moved away from the original Nel model which drew from the experience at Cashbuild, and moved closer to that at VW, though it is likely that the future implementation of the workplace forums proposed by the new Labour Relations Act will allow a shift away from the bipartite negotiation forums favoured by the unions, and towards the more broadly representative

manager-employee forums (including non-union representatives) long proposed by management.²⁹¹

Looked at in terms of the stakeholder approach favoured by management, it could be said that the power of the workers and their unions was increased in the indirect, representative sense, after the introduction of the National Forum in 1991, and more particularly after restructuring in 1993. However, the level of direct participation of workers in day to day business decision making was reduced in most SBUs after 1993 as a result of the decline of TPQ. The scope of the managerial 'prerogative' was reduced because in a variety of areas co-determination was introduced through the National Forum and related structures and later the management-shop stewards structures. The power of the shareholders, or rather their willingness to wield it, did not shift substantially, despite the changes in ownership. While it is difficult to conceive of the customer as a 'stakeholder' in the same sense that employees, management and shareholders are, it could be said that the centrality of the customer in management conception of its 'mission' was significantly advanced after restructuring and particularly after Rob Cohen took over as CEO. However, despite these developments, the momentum of the participative initiative dissipated after 1993 because of the problems faced by the business as a whole, weaknesses in the leadership of both management and the unions and a related shift in managerial priority away from the value-centred approach to employee relations and towards a market-centred approach.

This raises the question of whether the participative root chosen at PG Bison was appropriate. In contrast to the approach adopted at VW, and later other companies like Gencor and Iscor, PG Bison's participative structures were established parallel to, rather than as an aspect of,

collective bargaining. The reason for this decision related more to the currents of influence, both local and international, which Cohen and Nel took into account, rather than a specific desire to avoid the collective bargaining root. The main advantage of the parallel approach for management came in its facility for constant innovation and adaptation, and its potential for broadening the remit of participation beyond the traditional industrial relations realm. This was seen in the introduction of initiatives such as the value sharing workshops and the managerial education programme which fell outside of even the broadest potential realm of collective bargaining at that stage. Certainly these aspects - which were crucial to TPQ's subsequent development - could not easily have been implemented as an extension of negotiations between management and unions which was traditionally concerned with wages and conditions of employment. The example of VW's failure to introduce an anti-racist educational dimension to its programme, or to establish the kind of intimate forums for small groups of black and white employees (such as value sharing workshops and in-a-groups) which challenged cultural perceptions, is instructive. A related advantage is that it allowed a stronger non-union dimension to participation, which, again, was important in the early stages. The tendency with participative agreements centred on collective bargaining machinery is to focus narrowly on the concerns of unionised workers vis a vis those of senior management, and to exclude concerns of employees outside these categories. But with TPQ, much of the early emphasis came in confronting prejudices of white employees, particularly from middle managerial and supervisory ranks. Subsequently, however, this advantage fell away, when the unions successfully blocked management's attempts to allow non-union employee representation in the National Forum.

The weaknesses of the parallel approach were revealed once the programme was extended beyond the small group realm. The success or failure of each innovation became subject to the whims of those in positions of power at different levels - the CEO, SBU leaders, union organisers and shopstewards. One example would be the National Forum which, while established at the prompting of the union officials in 1991, and operating as a collective bargaining structure in all but name, was referred to by subsequent union officials as an initiative forced on the union by management. The point here is that as a parallel structure it did not have the status, in union eyes, that an innovation arising out the formal collective bargaining machinery might have had, and therefore its origins were open to constant revision. At a different level, the success of structures negotiated between unions and management at the national level, such as the SBU forum committees and the in-a-groups, became dependent on the willingness of SBU leaders and to a lesser extent shop stewards and local union organisers, for their success. Where there was not a consistently energetic commitment to them from the SBU leaders in particular, they soon faded or became redundant. This is not to say that had these been negotiated as part of the collective bargaining machinery, their implementation would have been guaranteed, but certainly from the union's perspective, they would have had a firmer basis of existence and would have been easier to impose on recalcitrant management, such as that at Piet Retief. The danger for the unions, stressed by Solomons and Ntshangase²⁹², of participative management being a strategy easily dispensed of when conditions and priorities change, is also greater when participative structures are separated from collective bargaining structures. While this risk could not be said to have been fully realised at PG Bison, the rapid shifts from TPQ to the one business initiative, to the Ikwezi programme, had the effect of undermining confidence in participation, both from management and the unions, and certainly contributed to the loss of momentum - something

that might not have happened had the participative structures been rooted in the collective bargaining agreements, because it would then have been less absolutely dependent on the particular priorities of the CEO. The result of this shift in priorities from one CEO to the next was that while some participation initiatives continued and others were replaced by new ones, the company lost its 'cutting edge' in this regard, and certainly fell behind later entrants into the participative field. Its revitalisation would seem to depend both on changes to the company's leadership and on the development of more coherent goals and strategies for the business and most particularly for the position of the employees within it.

NOTES

1. Interview, Andre Michaux, July 17 1990.
2. Interview, Raymond Santos, October 28 1991.
3. Interview, Stuart Wood, September 26 1991.
4. Interview, Andre Gilbert, November 28 1989.
5. Interview, Petrus Esterhuysen, May 2 1991.
6. Andrew Gilbert, op cit.
7. Interview, Sam Ntuli, July 18 1990.
8. Raymond Santos, op cit.
9. Ibid.
10. Andrew Gilbert, op cit.
11. Andre Michaux, op cit.
12. Petrus Esterhuysen, op cit.
13. Ibid.
14. Sam Ntuli, op cit.
15. Interview, Jeff Radebe, November 16 1989.
16. Interview, Tiego Ntshingila, November 16 1989.
17. Interview, John Nkosi, August 8 1991.
18. Interview, Christo Nel, July 20 1990.
19. Information Bulletin: Second PG Bison National Forum, Hunter's Rest, 13 - 15 October 1991, p 12.
20. Quoted in "Memorandum: To all National Forum Delegates re Report on Valley Lodge Forum," March 30 1992, p 14.
21. National Forum SBU Progress Report, Laminate Industries (Pty) Ltd, March 11 1992, pp 1 - 2.
22. With 37 students attending classes regularly and five managers learning Zulu.
23. "National Forum Joint Action Plan," Laminate Industries report to Fourth National Forum meeting, October 20 1992, p 1.
24. Interview, James Smith, January 26 1994.

25. Interviews: Maxine Hart, January 28 1994; James Smith, January 26 1994.
26. Interviews: Elias Monage, August 24 1992; Welcome Ntshangase, April 19 1993; Andre Michaux, January 19 1994.
27. The Compan division and the Continuous Decorative division.
28. Interview, Andre Michaux, January 19 1994.
29. While the programme had lost some members over the previous 18 months, by late 1994 it still had two classes doing basic English and conversational English. (James Dingalo, quoted in Billbord, Spring 1994, Volume 1, number 2).
30. James Dingalo.
31. As Operations Director within the new structure.
32. Interview, Maxine Hart, January 28 1993.
33. Billbord, Christmas 1994, Volume 1 number 3.
34. One press showed a 26.7 percent improvement and another a 60 percent improvement. (Ibid)
35. The Compan division produces laminates such as formica, melamine-faced board and "value added" component products from particle board.
36. Billbord, Volume 1 number 3 Christmas 1994.
37. Lucky Yende, in Billbord, volume 1 number 2, Spring 1994.
38. Interview, Maxine Hart, July 7 1991.
39. Interview, Christo Nel, July 20 1990.
40. Interview, Leon Cohen, July 16 1990.
41. Ibid.
42. Interview, Joan Lurie, September 9 1991.
43. Interview, Maxine Hart, March 13 1989.
44. Sociology of Work Programme, "Restructuring and Proposed Redundancies at PG Bison: A Report to Ppwawu," Wits University, July 1993, p 23.
45. Interview, Maxine Hart, February 13 1990.
46. Interview, Thlophoho Modise, July 16 1990.
47. A reference to a Boksburg's manager's position on the CP-led City Council and the problems this caused in 1988.
48. Quoted from, "To Christo Nel from T Modise," December 12 1988, pp 2 - 3.

49. Ibid.

50. Thlopheho Modise, "Synopsis of Value Sharing Workshops to Date," November 1988, pp 2 - 3.

51. "Bisonbord Limited: Piet Retief - Results on TPQ Questionnaire," March 1 1989.

52. The report on the results of the questionnaire states that 15.5 percent of the 122 employees who were given the questionnaire, completed and returned it. It noted that this included, "mainly whites", adding that, "fewer blacks completed the questionnaire which therefore makes it difficult to judge how employees feel about TPQ in general." (Ibid, p 1).

53. First, the questionnaire was submitted by the TPQ team, rather than an independent consultant. Second, only those who had been through the value sharing workshops were questioned. Third, a minority of whites and an even smaller minority of blacks responded. It is possible that the views of the non-respondents may have been far more critical than those to did respond.

54. "Results on TPQ Questionnaire", op cit, p 1.

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid, p 5.

58. Ibid, pp 2 - 3.

59. Ibid, p 3.

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid, p 5.

62. Ibid.

63. Ibid, pp 6 - 7.

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid, p 11.

66. Ibid, p 8.

67. Interview, Willie du Plessis, October 1 1991.

68. Ibid.

69. Ibid.

70. Ibid.

71. Interview, Louis Botha, August 3 1991.

72. Interview, Maxine Hart, September 27 1991.

73. Interview, Andries Vorster, August 3 1991.
74. "Information Bulletin: Second PG Bison National Forum," October 13 - 15 1991", November 1991, p 9.
75. It stated that 12 managers were studying Zulu and 51 percent of the LEAP worker-students had either completed mother tongue literacy or were busy with it.
76. It stated that 1 937 man-hours per month were being devoted to training, compared with 102 hours in 1987.
77. "Information Bulletin," op cit, pp 8 - 10.
78. Ibid, pp 9 - 10.
79. "Bisonbord Piet Retief Reportback to National Forum," March 11 1992, pp 1 - 2.
80. SWOP report, op cit, p 20.
81. Ibid.
82. Ibid, p 23.
83. Ibid, p 28.
84. Ibid.
85. Ibid, p 27.
86. Ibid, p 26.
87. "Message from National Forum Steering Committee," November 6 1992, p 3.
88. Welcome Ntshangase, interview, April 19 1993.
89. Interview, James Smith, March 21 1993.
90. Interview, James Smith, January 26 1994.
91. Interview, Maxine Hart, April 5 1993.
92. Interview, Maxine Hart, January 28 1994.
93. Interview, Joan Lurie, January 28 1994.
94. Billbord, volume 1 number 3 Christmas 1994.
95. On August 17 1994 the factory set a "new all-time production record" of 857 cubic meters. The previous record, of 838 cubic meters, was set on October 3 1989. (Billbord, volume 1 number 2, Spring 1994.)
96. Ibid.

97. Interview, Roddy Payne, September 9 1996.
98. Ibid.
99. According to Modise, this caused considerable problems for the workers. ("To Christo Nel from T Modise", December 12 1988, pp 1 - 2)
100. Thlopheho Modise, "Synopsis of Value Sharing Workshops Conducted to Date," December 1988, p 1.
101. Interviewed in, "PG Bison: Total Productivity and Quality," PG Bison Management Videos, 1990.
102. Interview, Leon Cohen, July 16 1990.
103. Interview, Christo Nel, July 20 1990.
104. Hamilton Modapani, interview, August 5 1991.
105. "Information Bulletin: Second PG Bison National Forum," op cit, p 11.
106. Ibid.
107. During this period the pro-TPQ financial director, Rob Cohen, took over as Bisonbord MD. At the end of 1991 another TPQ enthusiast, former Laminat Industries director Lawrie Wishart, took over as overall head of Bisonbord Boksburg as well as taking the position of head of the Supawood factory, thereby beginning a process of integrating the two plants. Henry de Villiers, who, despite being won over to the aims of TPQ, was more ambiguous about some of its implications, resigned as general manager of Supawood, while former TPQ coordinator, Thlopheho Modise took over as general manager of the Upgrading plant.
108. Interview, Maxine Hart, April 5 1993.
109. "Supawood Management Report to Third National Forum", March 11 1992, pp 1 - 2.
110. "Memorandum to all National Forum Delegates," March 30 1992, p 16.
111. "Upgrading National Forum Report," March 1992, p 1.
112. "Bisonbord Boksburg: National Forum Action Plan," October 18 1992.
113. This took place in March 1993.
114. Interview, Maxine Hart, April 5 1993.
115. Interview, Maxine Hart, January 28 1994.
116. Interview, Joan Lurie, January 28 1994.
117. Interview, James Smith, April 24 1994.
118. There was no longer a general manager for the Upgrading plant. Molefe Mathibe was appointed Customer Services manager for the site, while Ramnand Dukraj served as Production Manager for the Upgrading plant. (Billbord, volume 1, number 2, Spring 1994.)

119. The factory, which employed 210 people after the one business programme, was established in 1972 to utilise waste material from a sawmill, and in 1978 became part of Bisonbord, manufacturing particleboard, with an additional upgrading facility. (Bilbord, volume 1 number 3, Christmas 1994).
120. Interview, Maxine Hart, April 5 1993.
121. "Bisonbord Stellenbosch: Action report by SBU leaders and shop stewards," August 1992, p 2.
122. Thlopheho Modise, "Synopsis of Value Sharing Workshops", op cit, p 3.
123. Thlopheho Modise, "To Christo Nel", December 13 1988, p 4.
124. "Information Bulletin," op cit, p 10.
125. Ibid, p 11.
126. Ibid.
127. "Bisonboard (Cape) SBU Progress Report to National Forum," March 1992, pp 1 - 3.
128. The report mentioned 149 cases of housing assistance, and 173 employees being given other forms of financial assistance.
129. It noted that 352 "working time mandays" were dedicated to training" of which 84 percent was of an educative nature".
130. This was first implemented in 1993.
131. Except for the continuous operation section.
132. "Bisonbord (Cape) SBU Progress Report", op cit, pp 1 - 4.
133. Interview, Maxine Hart, April 5 1993.
134. SWOP, op cit, p 20.
135. Ibid, pp 24 - 26.
136. Interview, Maxine Hart, January 28 1994.
137. Interviews: Anton Makhaye, September 26 1991; Welcome Ntshangase, April 19 1993; James Smith, January 26 1994.
138. By the end of that year seven workshops had been conducted. (Modise, "Synopsis of Value-Sharing Workshops," op cit, p 2.)
139. Modise, "Synopsis of Value-Sharing Workshops," op cit, p 2.
140. Interviews: Anton Makhaye, September 26 1991; Welcome Ntshangase, April 19 1993; James Smith, January 26 1994.
141. Interview, Maxine Hart, April 5 1993.

142. Interview, Maxine Hart, July 30 1992.
143. Interview, Welcome Ntshangase, April 19 1993.
144. Interview, Maxine Hart, May 18 1993.
145. Interview, Anton Makhaye, September 6 1991.
146. Quoted in, "Information Bulletin," op cit.
147. Ibid.
148. With 33 students involved in LEAP classes at the time.
149. "Bisonbord National Forum Decision Action Plan," company document, October 1992, pp 1 - 2.
150. Interview, Maxine Hart, April 5 1993.
151. Interview, Maxine Hart, January 28 1994.
152. SWOP, op cit, pp 19 - 30.
153. Billbord, volume 1 number 2, Spring 1994.
154. Interview, James Smith, January 26 1994.
155. "Negotiating a Corporate Restructuring: PG Bison Case Study," company document, October 1993, p 2.
156. Interview, Maxine Hart, January 28 1994.
157. After restructuring PG Wood ceased to exist as a separate company and its branches fell under PG Bison Distribution.
158. Interview, Selwyn Jean, July 28 1991.
159. He was subsequently appointed PG Bison Cape distribution director.
160. Interview, Peter Munnik, July 28 1991.
161. Ibid.
162. Selwyn Jean, op cit.
163. "Information Bulletin," op cit, p 8.
164. Ibid, pp 8 - 9.
165. "PG Wood Cape Progress Report for March 1992 National Forum," pp 1 - 2.
166. Ibid, p 4.
167. Ibid.

168. At Epping.
169. "PG Wood Action Plan," October 10 1992, pp 1 - 4.
170. Ibid, p 2.
171. Interview, Maxine Hart, April 5 1993.
172. SWOP report, op cit, p 19.
173. Interview, Maxine Hart, January 28 1994.
174. Interview, James Smith, April 24 1994; Billbord volume 1 number 2, Spring 1994.
175. The other union represented there was Uwusa.
176. Mo Alli, "What does TPQ mean to Trade Unions - some issues and questions," Uhuntu, November 1989, p 7.
177. Interview, Gibson Nduli, October 21 1991.
178. Interview, Leon Cohen, November 1 1991.
179. Quoted in, "Information Bulletin," op cit, p 8.
180. Ibid.
181. "PG Wood Natal Joint Shop Steward/Management Report for Third National Forum," March 1992, p 1.
182. 31 in all, according to the report. (Ibid, p 2)
183. Ibid.
184. Ibid, p 3.
185. Ibid, p 4.
186. Ibid.
187. "Message from National Forum Steering Committee: Summary and Detailed Report", November 6 1992, p 4.
188. Tony Kimble.
189. Maxine Hart, interview, April 5 1993.
190. Ibid.
191. SWOP report, op cit, p 19.
192. Ibid, p 23.
193. Ibid, pp 26 - 27.

194. Interview, Maxine Hart, January 28 1994.
195. Interview, James Smith, April 25 1996.
196. Thlophoho Modise, "Synopsis of Value Sharing Workshops Conducted to Date," op cit, p 3 and Christo Nel, interview, June 17 1989.
197. "Information Bulletin," op cit, p 9.
198. Pretoria West and Building Supply.
199. "Information Bulletin," op cit.
200. "PG Wood Transvaal: Report to Members of 3rd National Forum," March 1992, p 1.
201. Ibid.
202. Ibid, p 21.
203. Ibid, pp 3 - 4.
204. Ibid, p 4.
205. Ibid, p 5.
206. "PG Wood Transvaal Action Plan," October 1992, pp 1 - 3.
207. Joseph Ndluli.
208. Interview, Maxine Hart, April 5 1993.
209. Interview, Maxine Hart, April 25 1994.
210. Interview, James Smith, August 28 1992.
211. Interview, Maxine Hart, April 5 1993.
212. Interview, James Smith, April 24 1994.
213. Among the problems with this survey were the following: the 'scoring' system was neither precise, nor statistically valid; no indication was given of the number of managers or shop stewards who responded and there was a lack of clarity and precision with certain questions, with some asking opinions ("is your Leap committee effective?", for example), and others requesting factual responses without reference to attitude (for example, "is there a full-time shop steward?"), yet the answers were graded in the same way. As a result, at some SBUs there was agreement between workers and management that a full-time shop steward was not desirable, but the negative answer reduced the total approval score. Furthermore, each section was graded equally, despite the fact that some contained more questions than others, which tended to provide a skewed impression of the overall perceptions at some SBUs.
214. The score totals of the eight SBUs ranked as follows in terms of management and shop steward replies to the questions offered (with higher scores indicating a more favourable response): Management - 1. Bisonbord Stellenbosch (86) 2. Bisonbord Pietermaritzburg (75) 3. PG Wood Cape

(71) 4. Laminate Industries (67) 5. PG Wood Natal (59) 6. PG Wood Transvaal (54) 7. Bisonbord Boksburg (47) 8. Bisonbord Piet Retief (39). Shopstewards - 1. Bisonbord Pietermaritzburg - Uwusa (68) 2. Laminate Industries (59) 3. Bisonbord Stellenbosch (58) 4. PG Wood Transvaal (46) 5. Bisonbord Pietermaritzburg - Ppwawu, Bisonbord Boksburg (44) 7. Bisonbord Piet Retief (41) 8. PG Wood Natal (40) 9. PG Wood Cape (33). The management average was 62 and the shop steward average 46. The overall average ranking went as follows: 1. Bisonbord Stellenbosch (72) 2. Laminate Industries (63) 3. Bisonbord Pietermaritzburg (62) 4. PG Wood Cape (52) 5. PG Wood Transvaal (50) 6. PG Wood Natal (49,5) 7. Bisonbord Boksburg (45.5) 8. Bisonbord Piet Retief (40). The average was 52. (Appendix to "Fourth PG Bison National Forum Report," company document, October 1992.)

215. Ibid.

216. The consultant was Craig Donald. ("Report on the PG Bison Group Attitude Survey," October 1992, p 2)

217. It received 766 replies from 800 people surveyed (95,75 percent). 501 employees (68,7 percent) were wage earners from grades six and below, 136 (18,7 percent) were from grades seven to 12 and 92 (12,6 percent) were managers (from grades 13 and above). 88,4 percent were male and 11.6 percent female. They were not asked to put their names on the questionnaire.

218. Ibid, pp 2 - 10.

219. Ibid, appendix.

220. Ibid.

221. Ibid.

222. Ibid, p 8.

223. Ibid, p 5.

224. Between September 11 and 25.

225. Dr Leila Patel.

226. "PG Bison National Forum Steering Committee Shop Stewards Training Programme of Needs Analysis," October 1992, pp 1 - 3.

227. Ibid, p 3.

228. Ibid.

229. Ibid, p 4.

230. Ibid.

231. Ibid, p 5.

232. Ibid, pp 6 - 7.

233. James Smith and Maxine Hart, "Educating for Worker Participation," Financial Mail education supplement, May 12 1993.

234. SWOP report, op cit, and Lael Bethlehem, Sakhela Buhlungu, Owen Crankshaw and Caroline White, "Co-determination vs co-option: PPWAWU and PG Bison negotiate restructuring," SA Labour Bulletin, vol 18 no 1, January/February 1994, p 15.
235. SWOP, op cit, pp 19 - 20.
236. SWOP, op cit, pp 18 - 20 and 23 - 27; Bethlehem, Buhlungu, Crankshaw and White, op cit, pp 14 - 19.
237. This complaint was regularly made in interviews with, inter alia, Leon Cohen, Christo Nel, Andre Michaux, James Smith and Maxine Hart, all cited above.
238. For instance, this view was put strongly Welcome Ntshangase, April 19 1993 and Maxine Hart, April 5 1993.
239. Interview, Andre Michaux, July 17 1990.
240. Sam Ntuli, op cit.
241. Interview, Elias Monage, August 24 1992 .
242. Ibid.
243. Ibid.
244. Ibid.
245. Mo Alli, Ubuntu, op cit, p 7.
246. Ibid.
247. Interview, Gibson Nduli, August 21 1991.
248. Interview, Anton Makhaye, September 26 1991.
249. "Information Bulletin," op cit, p 5.
250. Interview, Maxine Hart, April 5 1993.
251. Joan Lurie, interview, April 20 1993.
252. Interview, Rob Reese, March 16 1992.
253. Letter to SA Labour Bulletin, vol 16 no 4, March/April 1992.
254. Interview, Kenny Fihla, July 17 1990.
255. Ibid.
256. Interview, Musa Bhengu, October 10 1991.
257. Quoted in "Information Bulletin", op cit, p 14.

258. "Report on Valley Lodge Forum," March 1992, p 6.
259. Ibid, p 9.
260. "Information Bulletin," op cit, pp 3 - 6.
261. "National Forum Summary," November 2 1992, pp 1 - 2.
262. Appollis Solomons and Welcome Ntshangase, "Worker Participative Schemes: A Trade Union Response," Sociology of Work Programme, Wits University, November 23 1992, p 1.
263. Ibid, pp 1 - 2.
264. Ibid, pp 5 - 9.
265. Ibid, p 9.
266. Ibid, p 10.
267. Ibid, pp 11 - 12.
268. In her dissertation on participative management she wrote: "(I)ncreases in productivity are not necessarily bad for labour ... in fact they very well benefit labour. ... Although the intention behind such a strategy is one of institutionalising and containing conflict, it has the contradictory effect of opening up greater space for labour - to push back the frontier of control in the factory and to increase its claims on social wealth." (Judy Maller, Participative Management: A New South African Corporate Strategy?, Masters dissertation, Wits University, pp 14 - 15.) Interviewed in 1993 Ntshangase mentioned that this new perspective had been influenced by the SWOP industrial sociologists. "The people who had the information were the people who were facilitating the workshop, by virtue of the research they were doing", he said. (op cit)
269. Solomons and Ntshangase, op cit, p 12.
270. Ibid.
271. Ibid, pp 12 - 13.
272. Ibid, p 13.
273. Ibid.
274. Ibid.
275. Ibid, p 15.
276. Ibid.
277. Ibid.
278. Ibid, p 16.
279. Ibid, p 17.

280. Ibid.

281. Interview, Welcome Ntshangase, op cit.

282. Ibid.

283. Ibid.

284. Welcome Ntshangase quoted in, "IR at the Crossroads: High or low road for us?", The Manpower Brief, October 1993.

285. "PG Bison National Forum Steering Committee Shop Stewards Training Programme of Needs Analysis," op cit, p 2.

286. Interview, Christo Nel, June 7 1989.

287. Ubuntu, vol 2 no 1, April 1990.

288. Interview, Leon Cohen, February 26 1992.

289. Interview, Christo Nel, July 20 1990.

290. Interview, Rob Cohen, February 6 1995.

291. Rob Cohen, op cit.

292. Solomons and Ntshangase, op cit.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

CONCLUSION

13.1 CONCLUDING INTRODUCTION

The primary focus of this study is to consider why a significant proportion of South Africa's leading corporations introduced a participatory dimension to their managerial programmes in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and more specifically, why this development occurred at PG Bison Limited during this period. While the approach taken to answering these, and a range of related questions, is essentially an empirical one, this bias requires a defence. And this, in turn, demands a discussion of the implications of an alternative approach - one in which the facts are framed by one or another branch of social theory - in order to demonstrate why an overdeveloped theoreticism will usually lead to obfuscatory hubris, beneath which will frequently lie the wrong conclusions.

However, it is worth stressing that the aim here is not to carry any brief for the polar opposite approach, empiricism - that is not the purpose behind this study - but rather to establish a basis for answering the key questions posed at the outset; that is, an approach which makes no a-priori assumptions about cause and effect and which uses theoretical abstractions as tools to be embraced or discarded with eclectic sensibility rather than with theological obeisance. And to achieve this, some attention needs to be devoted to the more grandiose of these various social theories, and to consider their application to disciplines covered here - economics, political science, managerial science and industrial sociology, to mention a few, as well as to consider the way they have been applied both in their international dimension and to understanding South African politics and business.

Therefore before rounding up the key contentions of this thesis, it is worth taking a step back by recapping on the territory covered, in order to trace the main contentions from the two parts of the study - part one dealing with the national and international context and part two with the main case study - and to draw them together, both in order to give a clearer sense of the flow of the argument and to emphasise its implications.

13.2 FACTS AND THEORY REVISITED

The first set of issues to consider relates to the question of whether the PG Bison experience and that of the other companies discussed fits into the definition of participative management established at the outset of this study.

The starting point in this discussion is to decide what, if anything, is meant by the term 'participative management'.¹ Here a case is made for an expansive definition; one based on common coinage within both business and labour circles. Following from this it is necessary to explain the kinds of managerial practices covered, and divide them into loose but workable categories: task and power centred, direct and indirect. While it is acknowledged that in its common usage, participative management means different (and sometimes contradictory) things to different people within different national contexts and at different times, the generic working definition offered is one covering practices which set the basis for expanding involvement in decision making and in information sharing beyond the realm of the executive directors and in the direction of subordinate employees (although it does not necessarily imply a substantial shift of real power in this direction). This suggests recognition of the organisation as a community with a plurality of interests that extend beyond those of the shareholders.

A tendential element is also built in here - one which considers the changes from previous approaches to management at a particular business, rather than offering a static set of criteria against which any company's approach may be judged regardless of context. In this sense, it is suggested that within the South African milieu the term be extended to cover managerial programmes aimed at improving and expanding the ability of employees to participate in decision making, and to remove obstacles to this end. Related to this consideration, it is also argued that there is a historical dimension to the definition, which is stressed particularly when applied in South Africa; that precisely because it represented a primarily political response to a set of problems facing business, it should be considered as a phenomenon as well as being a loose description of various managerial practices.

At PG Bison this shift in the direction of decision making from the executive directors towards subordinate employees occurred in a number of different forms, with varying degrees of success. It began with direct but non-power centred forms of participation, such as those aimed at improving

communication between management and workers (value sharing groups in particular) and at creating a more open managerial style (information sharing programmes) as well as at creating a more participatory work organisation (in-a-groups). Each of these innovations was introduced, and for the most part driven, by management, with some union acquiescence, and therefore could be considered as devolved forms of participation rather than fuller expressions of collective decision making.

Subsequently, however, the process evolved - primarily through attempts at the resolution of management-union tensions - to include representational forms of power centred participation, (albeit on a confined scale which did not extend to the more robust forms of participation discussed in particular with reference to Germany and Sweden). At PG Bison these included company-wide negotiating structures, which operated parallel to the collective bargaining machinery, and in particular the National Forum (which entailed negotiations around company policy on issues such as literacy, training, bursary programmes, community involvement, racism at the workplace, redundancies and job creation programmes, among others) and the subsequent Restructuring Forum (which involved more intense negotiations around redundancies and job creation).

By the mid-1990s there had been a shift away from the direct forms of participation mentioned here, although in one respect the indirect and representational form had been consolidated (and formalised) through the recognition of the National Forum as a management-union *negotiating* structure. And at another level, the apparent successes of the "change process" in altering aspects of the relationship between management and workers through challenging the overt racism inherent in the white employee culture, and, in some business units, in increasing the level of employee identity with company goals, can also be said to be consistent with the thrust of the participative management definition established at the outset.

It is acknowledged that there are several grey area managerial practices that do not fall easily into the loose definition offered here, but which nevertheless can be considered in tandem with practices that could more legitimately be called participatory. An example here would be employee share ownership (Esop) schemes, which, in themselves do not advance participation, even in the indirect sense, but, if significantly expanded upon, have the potential to do so if used as part of employee collective power. In a different sense, a similar observation could be made about affirmative action programmes: they might increase the potential for participation but do not, in themselves, ensure it

It is also acknowledged that participatory management cannot be equated with notions of industrial democracy – a term which implies equality of power and decision making, or at least in the de jure access to this power. It might be said, however, that in some, rare cases, participative management might be part of shift in the direction of more democratic employee-employer power relations. At the same time, however, participative practices may exist side by side with an overarching, top-down slash-and-burn approach to management. Again, the point to stress is that one is talking about a tendential phenomenon and not just a collation of practices. The question to ask, is do these innovations result in increased employee participation in decision making or at least expand its potential, or, conversely, would their removal reduce the scope of employee participation?

This consideration of the applicability of definitions is built on by presenting a set of arguments for what is essentially an empirical approach to answering the key questions raised by this study: why did a critical mass of South African business leaders launch participative management programmes within their corporations in the mid-to-late 1980s? what were the influences that moulded the approaches adopted at these companies and particularly at PG Bison? and what effect did these programmes have on PG Bison and other companies?

In most of the examples of South African companies covered, and certainly at PG Bison, it is suggested, the answer to the first question is found primarily, although by no means exclusively, within the realm of the country's national political conflict - as a business strategy for dealing with politically and culturally related divisions and disparities within its own domain - rather than primarily considerations relating to, for example, the labour process or the class struggle more generally. However, the point is also stressed that there is no given hierarchy of causation and that in each case a range of pressures and influences come into play, particularly once the initial decision had been taken to pursue such a path.

This argument is initially constructed by taking a step away from the world of industrial relations, and instead considering some of the implications of the recent, rapidly shifting legacy of various branches of social theory, which, prompted partly by events related to the ending of the Cold War, tended to move away from teleological historical perspectives and towards more open ended and consciously eclectic points of departure. On a variety of competing terrains, social facts came to contradict the abstract premises of worldviews that were rooted to the notion of a single force

running through history.

The previously prevailing theoretical currents were challenged on several fronts which need not be reiterated here, suffice to say that the decline of communism laid bare some of the key premises both of the Hegelian and Marxian dialectic, where history was viewed as a conflictual progression (rooted in "recognition" for Hegel and production relations for Marx), as well as of neo-classical liberal political economy with its faith in enlightened self-interest and the inherent rationality derived from the invisible hand of the market contributing to the common good and indeed to the advancement of society. In each case the development of human society was not seen as open-ended, and indeed notions of the end of history are prevalent.

More particularly, with respect to Marxism, the challenge came not only from removal of the penultimate point along the road of historical progress (socialism), but also in the relative global decline of history's agents in the prior stage of capitalism (the industrial proletariat) and from evidence of the blurring in the relationship between who owned and who produced, and more specifically between managers and workers.² Indeed it is in this recognition of the decline of old class categories that the inclusive "stakeholder" notion, implying reciprocal claims and obligations, emerged in certain business and later political circles as an partial alternative to either aggressive individualism or class-based collectivism (or at least as a way of trying to encapsulate the "third way" putative alternatives being claimed).³

With respect to neo-classical political economy the challenge has come not only in policy failures (which, for instance, bolstered the neo-Keynesian case for establishing a link between inflation, fiscal policy and the general level of economic activity and in some quarters reduced faith in the self-regulating potential of economies), but also in the wider recognition of the roles played by culture - in the form of political history, religion, ethical codes, community structures and particularly pre-capitalist forms of social capital - in influencing the development of capitalism in different societies. This recognition is suggestive of a diminution in the potential of markets to produce linear political or economic trajectories and implies an awareness of the centrality of non-market forces in creating economic prosperity. It also strengthens the challenge to the philosophical premises of neo-classical economics - based on the notion of "man" being, by nature, a trader, and therefore on the assumption that the economic world is governed by the same supposedly cohesive, harmonising laws as the natural world, leading to predictable outcomes when these laws are not

interfered with. In contrast, the argument presented is that consumer choice is seldom rational, markets have no in-built logic towards the best and most stable outcomes, they are invariably shaped by cultural and political forces and are frequently given to "illogical" but self-perpetuating results. Indeed, prognoses for the expansion of capital beyond the West, and perhaps within it, show little sign of conforming to the homogenising assumptions implicit within the absolutist world of *laissez faire* (and in particular the utopian notion of a single, efficient, wealth-generating, socially conforming, global market), but in many respects appear to moving towards the converse: a world engulfed in endemic geo-political and regional conflicts, descending towards the anarchic on the peripheries.⁴

The decline in the faith in global, single cause views of history has encouraged a move away from theoreticism and towards less prescriptive and deterministic perspectives on how the world works. These could be said to include the relativism of post-modernism, the application of notions of chaos from the natural sciences to the social sciences, and, within the sphere of economics, by the revival of Keynesian-oriented analyses with their acknowledgement of the inherent disorder of markets.⁵

What these trends in the social sciences seem to share is recognition (not always in an approving sense) of fragmentation, disorganisation and complexity in the contemporary world, as well as of the value of methodological doubt in interpreting it. The result is an acceptance - particularly appropriate to the current fluid state of world affairs - that history is more open-ended and volatile, and therefore far less predictable, than the 19th century social theorists and their twentieth century disciples, would allow. The point made here is that contrary to deterministic views of societal development (and therefore of history), there is no overarching pecking order in terms of forces initiating change which can be applied without reference to spatial and temporal context, and, for that matter, in contrast to teleological world views, there is no pre-ordained end point either. While the possibility of extended chains of causation cannot reasonably be dismissed, it is not assumed in any instance either, and the historical importance of individual actors and of abnormal, unforeseeable and fortuitous circumstance is recognised.

Such notions of disorganisation, complexity and chaos have also been embraced in diffuse forms within some currents of the rather more theoretically lightweight world of managerial theory over the past decade.⁶ Indeed, they have been used both to explain, as well as to influence, the rise to the theoretical model of the highly innovative late twentieth century corporation, shorn of layers of

middle management, far less hierarchical in structure, driven by self-managing teams of 'brain workers', more responsive to the needs and ideas of core employees as well as of customers, and with a greater emphasis on continuous training and retraining. Much of this was a direct product of the requirements of more flexible, more international and more rapidly changing markets, which in turn have been rapidly changing employment patterns - eliminating the job for life ethos and replacing it with sub-contracting, contract employees, doing away with the full-time company man and often replacing him with the part-time, contract women.

It is worth reiterating that some of the ideas canvassed here had a direct impact on the main players within PG Bison, and influenced the way in which participative management emerged there. The trades unions, for instance, were influenced by ideas derived from Marxism and struggled to come to terms with management's idea of a stakeholder company, preferring to see the relationship as one rooted in inherent class antagonism.⁷ On the other hand, the notion of the "stakeholder company" captured the imaginations of the managerial progenitors of participative management at PG Bison. This was an essential part of Christo Nel's and to a lesser extent, Leon Cohen's, *raison d'être* in introducing the initial conceptual package and a significant motive force influencing the way in which TPQ subsequently emerged. It was of crucial significance for these members of the company's senior management that they did not see themselves as class actors, and did not see the unions and their members as class enemies, but viewed them all as playing a vital role in building the company's future. The pluralist notion of each stakeholder having distinct and sometimes conflictual interests was wedded to the unitary notion of the company as a family with a common identity of purpose and destiny.⁸ In this sense, the understanding of the relationship between shareholders, managers and workers implicit in the Anglo-American tradition (itself drawing from neo-classical political economy) was being challenged. PG Bison's participative architects also absorbed some of the currents in American business science at the time, influenced by what passes as managerial chaos theory and by interpretations of Japanese and American managerial practice through innovations like Quality Circles which ostensibly placed employees at the centre of the organisation as well as by notions like "continuous improvement", suggesting constant innovation and regeneration. The amalgam they came up with gave rise to their Total Productivity and Quality programme.

But while companies like PG Bison, Premier, Cashbuild and Volkswagen undoubtedly drew from international experience and theory, these global trends in managerial theory and practice have not,

as it is frequently portrayed, simply cut through national and regional barriers without regard to culture, politics and history. This is particularly significant when considering the origins of participative management and the ways in which it emerged internationally and even within given national contexts. The point to reiterate here is that rather than a global strategy of capital, as it is sometimes portrayed (particularly by its more conspiratorial critics on the left), participative management has taken on distinct national and regional forms which sometimes bear only superficial resemblance to each other. And this, again, relates to the specific reasons for its adoption and progress in different geographical and social contexts. These include factors such as the relevance of ties of trust within families, clans, community networks and religious traditions in influencing the size and forms of firms as well as the role played by political culture in influencing managerial parameters and the impact of war and social conflict in influencing the balance between adversarial and co-operative practices. This is illustrated with reference to national examples.

The system of lifelong employment in Japan and the related development of TQM, was rooted both in its post-war political and economic ethos as well as in deeper-rooted cultural and community traditions which reinforced conventions of deference, loyalty and co-operation at an industry and enterprise level.⁹ It is worth mentioning, however, that these traditions, it should be stressed, are being battered by the deregulating 'logic' of the global market, with what are, by Japanese standards, alarming economic and cultural consequences, which are endangering the entire edifice of the system.

The origins of Germany's system of statutory co-determinism at the enterprise level and corporatism at the national industrial level, are found within the context of that country's social market economy which emerged as part of the post-war political settlement. It is also found within the traditions of a more co-operative form capitalism, historically rooted in firms with family origins, and still reliant on long-term working relations between industry and banks.¹⁰ Again, these relations are under threat as a result of globalisation, and particularly, at this time, the austerity moves informing the single European currency plans.

In Sweden the historic strength of the union movement, the early organisation of civic society and the deeply rooted liberalism of the capitalist class contributed to the forms of class compromise behind the development of Scandinavian social democracy, out of which that country's system of co-determinism eventually emerged.¹¹ Even more dramatically than in Germany, the breakdown of

this class compromise in the 1980s was responsible for weakening of the system, particularly at the industry-level.

In the United States, the more diffuse traditions of participation were often premised on a narrow, core-employee base.¹² Unlike the Japanese and more particularly the European experience, many of the companies involved tended to be suspicious of any form of collective employee involvement, particularly where unions were involved. And unlike Japan and Europe these experiments emerged within a highly competitive and flexible form of capitalism, dominated by the short term exigencies of share prices, by a far higher degree of labour mobility than existed in the other advanced capitalist states and a corporate approach to 'downsizing' which severely exacerbated job insecurity (although this has been balanced by the federal political system and particularly the strength of state-based banks, which have allowed for a high level of inward investment and decentralisation, and has aided job-creation). These traditions also emerged within a political and cultural context marked by declining traditions of community and civic organisation, a breakdown of a cohesive national culture, a weakening of the union movement and a lack of a strong and sustainable social democratic political history. In this regard it is significant that the origins of some US participative innovations can be traced to the cultural upheavals and generational pressures of the 1960s.

In Britain, the more limited parameters for "stakeholder" management were set within the context of a highly centralised form of capitalism, dominated by the City, with the interests of banks and institutional investors fostering a short-term approach to investment without the mitigating features of the decentralised US political or banking system.¹³ At the same time the historic rigidity of class relations, both in the economic and status senses, and of the Westminster political system, as well as the adversarial approach of the union movement, impeded the development of co-operative traditions, at least until the change in political culture in the late 1990s.

In South Africa the economic conditions of the 1980s, when participative management 'took off', were not, in themselves, conducive to the emergence of participative management.¹⁴ With a highly centralised and racially confined base of wealth ownership, a stock market dominated by a handful of companies and institutional investors and a weak and declining manufacturing base, the economy lacked the industrial base, co-operative traditions and cultural homogeneity in which participation flourished in Europe and Japan. Instead, the prime motivating forces were situated within the country's political conflicts that were finding their way onto the shopfloor. With white management

being equated with the white state in the eyes of black workers and their unions, there was little sense of common purpose between black and white employees, nor was their sufficient worker commitment to the aims of the enterprise - factors exacerbated by expressions of white racism and by the cultural divisions which existed between black and white employees.

It is primarily for this reason that the relation between business and the broader political arena is examined.¹⁵ Again, the approach taken is to avoid the traps of assuming an a-priori form to this relation. In particular it is argued that the political relationship between capital and the state was neither inherently cohesive, as the Marxists assumed (although at several points, and with many companies, it did indeed take on this form), nor inherently antagonistic as liberal theorists assumed (although it also took on this form). But while business, in itself, has no particular politics, in South Africa the parameters of the political actions of business were set largely by those of white society, at least until the late 1980s. This was true not only because business and the state might have had the same or at least complementary class interests at various periods, but also because, for reasons of cultural and political history, businessmen tended to see themselves as whites first and entrepreneurs second.¹⁶ However, contrary to perspectives which viewed business in South Africa either as the handmaiden of the apartheid state (or vice versa), or being in a state of perpetual and in-built conflict with it, the relationship tended to shift between these poles - a point established by looking at some of the most pertinent developments in the history of business's political response to politics since the advent of apartheid, and particularly in the period under review.

While congruence was the more typical form, dissonance became increasingly prevalent once the logic of apartheid conflicted with the needs of capital (by becoming bad for business). In this regard it is argued that there was an indirect and direct relation between the forms of macro-level political activism of elements within the business community after the mid-1980s and internal thrust which saw the advent of a range of programmes which fell under the participative management banner. It was out of this discord, and particularly out of the need to counter the negative effects from apartheid on employee relations, that the first moves towards participative management were made. In this respect it could therefore be considered as a pre-emptive strategy to increase employee identity with the organisation, at a time when the national political pressures, which most of these companies were resisting, were pulling employees in the opposite direction.

While the CEOs and chairmen of some major companies, such as PG Bison, were attempting to

influence the national political situation to their advantage, several also moved to reduce the effects of the political conflict on their own performance through various forms of participative management - value sharing forums, task-centred co-operative work groups, joint employee/management-run literacy and training programmes, workplace forum structures involving unions and management, profit sharing and Esops, and, later worker representation on management boards and boards of directors - as well as related approaches, such as affirmative action programmes aimed at shifting the racial complexion of management (although, significantly, it was only after the mid-1990s, when the cultural and political pressures in this direction grew exponentially, that affirmative action on a racial basis became a key element in the national agenda of business).¹⁷

The subjective element is worth emphasising here: in each case discussed, and certainly at PG Bison, the impetus owed a great deal to the political perceptions of chief executives and managing directors, and the way these were viewed as affecting the company, and indeed there was invariably a direct relation between the implementation of in-house, participatory programmes and what was often termed as "pro-active" involvement in the broader political sphere. In essence, the senior managements of several larger companies found that in addition to encouraging moves towards political liberalisation, they needed to reform their own relations with their employees, and particularly with their black workers - most pertinently by offering them the stake, or at least the appearance of a stake, in their companies' futures.¹⁸ In many cases this was attempted in order to mitigate the damage that the political conflicts within the broader society were causing to their performance and to the longer-term future of the organisation concerned.

It could therefore be said that the main influence behind South African participative management was located within its national political conflicts and within the divisions found within the related cultural milieu. However, the point is reiterated that a political impetus for participative management in South African companies cannot simply be assumed. One consideration here is that politics, in the broadest sense of this word, affected different companies in diverse ways, and there were invariably other factors, not directly related to the political arena, which played a role.

This then returns us to the question of the way various managerial programmes are understood. Why did managements at a significant number of large South African companies embark on participative management programmes in the late 1980s and the 1990s, and in particular, why did

PG Bison adopt and continue with this strategy? The significance of the prior discussion is that if one adopts a unilinear view of history - that, say, class struggle, or market forces are its motive force, then it follows that one should look in that direction to understand managerial innovations of one kind or another.

Of particular historical relevance here are the perspectives of the Labour Process school which had a direct influence on the way South African trades unions understood participative management.¹⁹ Its premises, revolving around the notions of the privileged position of the capital-labour relation, of the production process being perpetually revolutionised by the logic of accumulation and of the centrality of the control imperative and the necessity for structured antagonism, gave little ground to the idea of genuine managerial innovation or even to the possibility that post-fordism could represent a significant departure from the old fordist system. Such views also made little space for the possibility that forces outside of the capital-labour relation might have been responsible for these developments. Instead, they were viewed either as a co-optive ruse to increase the exploitation of workers or as a direct response to the supposedly inherent antagonism built into the capital-labour relation.

In arguing against this kind of determinism, the point is made that capitalist relations of production are not intrinsically antagonistic and in fact cannot be said to have a given form in any general sense.²⁰ The result is that changes in the labour process, and more particularly post-fordist innovations, cannot be read off as inevitable results of a set of general stimuli. In particular, the narrow focus on the labour process limits the appreciation of profound cultural and political influences, and of the unpredictable impact of the ideas of individuals in positions of power.

On the other hand, if one adopts a more eclectic approach to understanding history, with no given hierarchy of causation, then one will have to look without prejudice at a wide range of potential stimuli. In this respect, co-operative and adversarial approaches are seen as alternatives influenced by the constraints, choices and influences faced by management and labour, both individually and collectively. Here, again, the significance of political, cultural, intellectual and economic constraints and influences is stressed, particularly in relation to the South African situation. Furthermore, in contrast to theories of change in managerial practice which place overwhelming emphasis on structural dimensions to causation, it is suggested that the subjective element, and particularly the influences on individuals in central decision making roles, such as the chief executive officers of the

companies involved, need to be considered as crucial independent variables, and the ad-hoc and reactive way they frequently make decisions which impact upon their employees, needs to be acknowledged. The examples of individual South African companies tend to reiterate this point.

At Cashouid the motivating factor behind its participatory programme was the recognition by an innovative MD of a considerable political and cultural gulf between white managers and black workers.²¹ Influenced by his reading of Japanese co-operative traditions, and without the presence of a strong trade union to constrain or shift his goals, he set about introducing the CARE programme, aimed at challenging racism and at promoting employee participation in company decision making structures - particularly through an innovation called Venturecomm, which comprised elected employee representatives who were given the responsibility for a range of managerial decisions, including hiring and firing, and through a national structure, known as the Great Indaba. The company attributed its generally healthy performance and its strike-free history to this system.

In contrast, the origins of Volkswagen South Africa's system of co-determination lay in a combination of the strike waves of the 1980s (themselves strongly influenced by the political culture in the region) and in the benevolent influence of its German parent company.²² In periods of peace, management gradually and haltingly won union support for aspects of the German model, including a joint management-worker committee and several subsidiary structures to promote co-operation, but the system was undermined by the racism of white employees (and the absence of programmes to counter it) and by the union's over-readiness to resort to the strike weapon. However, an industry-wide agreement covering VWSA led to the implementation of a new stakeholder programme in 1994, involving a joint union-management executive committee to discuss company strategy and a programme aimed at combating managerial racism and promoting black advancement. Since then the company's labour history has been free from major strikes.

At Premier Foods participative management was influenced by perspectives developed by successive liberal senior managerial boards in the 1980s.²³ Then, faced with falling productivity and periodic troubles, and strongly influenced by Japanese writing on participation, a new CEO worked with the main union in introducing value sharing and political education workshops, an affirmative action programme, an Esop and joint management-worker committees to consider issues of common concern.

In contrast at Nampak²⁴ and South African Breweries²⁵ the participative programmes were premised on violent and highly politicised strike action, which effectively forced their managements into reassessing their approaches to industrial relations. In both cases they involved union-approved value-sharing workshops aimed at eliminating racism, affirmative action programmes, union participation in drawing up literacy and training programmes, and later, joint management-union structures at factory and national levels to decide on issues affecting employees and the business.

At Nedcor²⁶, with its weak union presence, the prime aim of the change programme was to upgrade customer relations, and one of the methods was to improve employee motivation. Among the ways this was attempted was to eliminate some of the politically inspired impediments to employee well being. So, for instance, the Gateway programme was launched to eliminate racism within the group. It also involved managerial and other staff going through a series of educational and discussion forums. This was accompanied by affirmative action and training initiatives aimed at shifting the racial balance within the group's management, but its minimalist participatory managerial programme offered little of substance in terms of ongoing stakeholder initiatives.

What is common in the origins of each of these cases - and in the others discussed more briefly, such as First National Bank²⁷, Gencor²⁸ and Eskom²⁹ - was the strong South African political overtone to their initial motivation for increasing employee participation: in most cases with the primary aim of challenging racism, bridging the communications gap between white managers and black workers and reducing conflict in industrial relations, and with the ultimate aim of improving performance.

When this discussion is related to PG Bison's case, the point of departure is an empirical consideration of the constraints and choices available to management at the time of its formation in 1986.³⁰ Here it is argued that until the SAB-PGSI take-over five years later, the constraints from shareholders on the CEO were far less restricting than with most other public companies. This was partly because it was an unlisted public company with no dominant shareholder, giving management the balance of power and therefore a relatively high degree of autonomy. This, in turn, gave the CEO the slack he needed to implement the innovations that the TPQ programme involved. The point illustrated here is that there is no inevitability about its (or any) managerial course, and that in this case the process was dependent primarily on options taken by individuals in positions of

power, and particularly the CEO.

As a result, the personal, business and political perspectives of the main managerial actor at this stage, the CEO Leon Cohen, and the person he chose to design and implement the TPQ initiative, Christo Nel, are of considerable significance.³¹ Particularly important here were their views of the effects of the apartheid political economy on the business.³² They argued, for example, that there were few perceived benefits within the company for workers, and that the business's ability to advance was undermined by apartheid education and housing policies and by the living conditions fostered by apartheid. These factors were seen as contributing to sluggishness in performance. What was required, they concluded, was decisive cultural change. While trades unions had little direct influence over the decision to embark on a participative programme, Cohen and Nel argued that because of the political conflict in society more generally, unless unions could be drawn into a more co-operative process, shop floor relations would inevitably become more conflictual and performance would decline accordingly.³³ In this sense, the role played by politics in influencing managerial strategy was channelled through a few key decision-makers, without whom, a different direction would certainly have been followed. There was no inevitability about the process, and the prime motivating factor had little to do with pressure from or conflict with organised labour, or for that matter, with any severe crisis of profitability.

The question of why managements embark on various employee programmes is not necessarily the same as why these programmes take on the forms they do. There is no simple relation between cause and result because, for example, a programme conceived in the mind of a chief executive officer does not often turn out in the way he anticipated. Once it has been through the grill of managerial recalcitrance, trade union antagonism, shareholder scepticism and the like, it tends to take on different guises over time, if indeed it survives. So it was at PG Bison, where the ability to set the TPQ change programme in motion, and either sustain or to alter it, was directly influenced by the existing political culture within the business, involving, on the one extreme, white employees who were members of far right formations, and on the other, ANC-supporting workers.³⁴ Furthermore, most managers, almost all of whom were white, wanted to retain their powers while at the same time the unions were suspicious about hidden, co-optive agendas which they perceived to be at the heart of the TPQ approach. Finally the content of the programme was influenced both by the reading of those in power of various international precedents as well as the assessment of other South African examples, such as Cashbuild, and the understanding of the political and

economic situation more generally.³⁵

The extent of the politicisation of the initial process at PG Bison - both in terms of the programmes devised by management and the reaction to them by employees - is illustrated by the content and implementation of senior managerial and value sharing programmes.³⁶ Here the relation between the in-house "change programme" and the company's external activism can clearly be seen. The former, which included meetings with the then-banned ANC in Zimbabwe, involved attempts to wean the company's top brass away from the racist perceptions they held about their black employees and from the apartheid conceptions of their country's future. One of the elements of this drive involved exposing almost all of the company's employees, including managers, to education sessions and workshops where cultural perceptions of each other were swapped.

These programmes met with considerable hostility from a substantial proportion of white employees but were welcomed by most black employees but once they were completed, TPQ's tone changed and it became less overtly politicised - again illustrating the fluidity of the process. This was partly because of the departure of key individuals, but also because the programme shifted from confronting values towards challenging perceptions on employer-employee relations. The most significant early innovation came at the task-centred level, with the in-a-groups, involving natural work teams within each strategic business unit, aimed at initiating ideas, eliminating bottlenecks and improving employee relations, in order to raise performance.³⁷ At the same time, at the power-centred level, leadership structures, initially involving shop stewards and managers were introduced. However, instead of helping to consolidate the process, this innovation proved to be the catalyst for strong union objection, although the union activism in turn later led to more direct involvement in 'driving' or at least co-piloting the process.³⁸ The result was that for the first time, power relations within the company shifted substantially. This occurred mainly through the introduction of the National Forum - a structure involving senior management and shop stewards together with union representatives. It was set up to decide company policy in a range of areas, from training and bursary programmes to redundancy policy - with similar structures being introduced at the factory and branch level.³⁹ Unions were also directly involved in organising and implementing literacy and internal community involvement programmes, as well as setting corporate social responsibility priorities, while a policy of information sharing (from management to the unions) was introduced with some success.

After 1992 some aspects of the TPQ programme went into a temporary decline while others died - initially as a result of the decision to merge the three subsidiary companies into one.⁴⁰ The in-a-groups in most S&BUs were discontinued, partly because attention was focussed on restructuring but also because they had never succeeded in their original role as a horizontal conduit for information and ideas relating to performance. At the same time the National Forum was suspended by the unions, and temporarily replaced by a negotiating forum to decide on aspects of the restructuring process, particularly regarding redundancies. The result, however, was that at this power-centred level, union involvement was increased and management agreed to alter its approach to redundancies and deepen its commitment to information sharing, while the major union shifted its perspective towards one of embracing union-centred forms of participation. When the National Forum was temporarily reintroduced, the scope of its powers was increased to include a decision-making role over issues like the form of the job grading system.

After Leon Cohen's temporary retirement from the CEO position, the impetus to strengthen the participatory structures dissipated as the priorities of the market became more pressing, and therefore less emphasis was placed on employee relations, although some innovations were made. Under the 'Ikwesi' programme in-a-group-type 'Team Room' structures were established, with limited success, and at the same time the facility for quarterly national level meetings between full time shop stewards and senior management was put in place, with similar innovations being introduced at some sites. Furthermore training and literacy programmes were stepped up and a stronger rhetorical commitment to affirmative action was made, albeit with little practical success at that stage. Overall, the participatory programme lacked direction and lacked strong managerial commitment, both considerations reflected more generally in the performance of the business, which in turn led to the return of Leon Cohen to the helm of the organisation. Again, in PG Bison's case at least, this illustrates the decisive impact of individuals in positions of power, in affecting the direction of the programme.

But it would also be true to say that the successes and failures of PG Bison's participatory programmes were dependent not only on the desires of executive directors but on the willingness of those below them to implement their desires. Here, as is illustrated with reference to the different business units, the issue of political culture was of considerable importance.⁴¹ At the Alrode laminates factory in Alberton, which was close in proximity to the head office and was headed by a liberal managerial team and with supportive shop stewards, most aspects of the TPQ and

subsequent programmes were implemented as their creators had intended. In contrast at the Piet Retief factory, headed by a politically conservative management and involving an over-abundance of white managers and supervisors, many of whom were of rightwing persuasion, the programme had little success. Most of the other business units fell somewhere between these extremes, with successive surveys of employee opinion indicating that while employee relations, and human relations more generally, had improved as a result of TPQ, and managerial attitudes had shifted in most sites, in several pockets of the company managerial racism and hierarchical attitudes had still not been effectively challenged. The ability to implement the programme successfully was also influenced by the constantly shifting attitudes of officials from the four trade unions within the company, with changes in the individual organisers frequently having a marked effect on how the programme was received.

Overall, when considered as a ten year process, PG Bison's participative programme could be said to have played a role in securing a decade of strike-free industrial peace, in breaking down managerial racism in most SBUs, in shifting styles of management and encouraging worker commitment to and identity with the company in some SBUs. In these senses there is some indication that it succeeded in both its immediate goal of changing the political culture within the company, and in its more long-term priority of improving performance, at least during its high point at the turn of the decade. It was at its most successful where its focus was value-centred - suggesting some of the strengths of the innovative approach which, while union centred, were not confined by the parameters of the collective bargaining process.

Where it failed, however, was in creating the basis for genuine 'continuous improvement' in these areas, and most particularly in developing the kinds of horizontal, non-hierarchical structures that its originators had intended for it at the outset. Certainly its early boast of being a programme aimed at building industrial democracy at the level of the firm was never realised. It relied too heavily on the commitment of the CEO and a few chosen officials and was never sufficiently integrated into the ethos of the organisation. The result was that when senior management changed and business priorities shifted, it lost momentum and direction - reflecting some of the limitations of an approach not centred on the collective bargaining agreement. While still widely cited as one of the prime examples of participative management in South Africa, it had, in fact, been overtaken in this respect by the experiences at several other companies.

13.3 Implications for the future of participative management

At the start of the post-apartheid era, the range of influences and pressures affecting participative management began to change substantially and rapidly.⁴² With the South African economy integrated more directly into the global system, business leaders tended to pay more attention to developments within the country's major trading partners - on the one hand exposing them more intensely to, for example, German co-determinism and Japanese TQM, but also to the 'down-sizing' corporate heroes of the Anglo-US experience (and the more cautious versions of this ethos in recent European and Pacific experience). With both local and overseas competition in most South African industries expanding and thereby intensifying the struggle for survival, the temptation to slash costs by cutting jobs has been hard for most companies to resist, although the weakening Rand tended to slow the moves to replace employees with imported machines in some industries. At the same time, several of the more overt political pressures for participation dissipated, with the result that managerial political education schemes, value-sharing workshops and anti-racist drives, were no longer a central element - with some managements feeling that these were being dealt with by the non-racial ethos of the country more generally. Certainly, aspects of this diffusion of managerial energy for these dimensions of participation can be detected at PG Bison during this period.

However, there was a paradox in the implications of the changing of the political guard, because in other respects the less direct forms of political and cultural pressure favouring participation increased. With majority rule having been achieved at the political level, the contradistinction between non-racial government and white dominated business became starker than ever before, prompting a degree of urgency about programmes designed to give black employees a greater stake in the business - particularly after the government and the ruling party began making a political issue of this concern in the late 1990s. This significantly boosted affirmative action and training programmes, and also placed pressure on business to tackle racially-related power and earnings discrepancies by conceding to various forms worker representation on company decision making structures, usually through their unions (on management committees, through national forum-type structures and even on company boards). In some companies these considerations also provided impetus towards task-centred participatory structures along the lines of the Japanese and American quality circles, although this was not a generalised development.

But the politics of participative management became far more overt in another sense: through direct government intervention. The historical alliance between the ANC and Cosatu, and the greater access to government which the trades unions enjoyed, particularly in the initial two years of democratic rule, contributed to several policy initiatives favouring a stakeholder approach in industry, of which the most significant was the Labour Relations Act. In addition to provision for corporatism at the industrial bargaining council level, and for mediation and arbitration of disputes at the enterprise level, it provided for the establishment of elected workplace forums, to represent the interests of all employees in companies employing 100 or more employees, at the instigation of representative unions. The powers of these forums were defined to cover a number of issues that in many companies would previously have been regarded as part of the managerial prerogative.

Aside from resistance from smaller employers or those without representative unions, this drew a mixed response from the unions themselves, with some offering enthusiastic endorsement, others regarding it as worthwhile only where structures involving direct management-shop steward bargaining on these issues could not be established, and a few expressing outright opposition. Overall, the conditions favouring the spread of participative management at most levels, were strengthened considerably, but it would clearly be a mistake to assume that the momentum has been secured through legislation, or that the countervailing pressures and influences (from international precedent, from elements of the business community hoping to reassert their assumed prerogative, and from trade union resistance, and, indirectly, from the falling Rand) did not have the potential to undermine the process successfully.

It is worth noting here that in countries where employee participation was not provided for by legislation, such as the US, Britain, Brazil and South Africa prior to the introduction of the 1995 Labour Relations Act, such strategies were never more than options for managements and unions, and contrary to some theories of industrial relations, seldom became 'typical'. In practice they formed part of a shifting continuum between absolutist managerial rule and co-determination - these alternatives being polar extremes within modern capitalism, with most organisations adopting aspects of both co-operative and adversarial forms. And even when a measure of participation was compelled by law, as in Germany and Sweden, the element of managerial choice and of conflict over choice was seldom eliminated, with the directions chosen tending to shift over time, influenced by economic, political and cultural considerations. In both of these cases the effects of globalisation generally, and of fiscal austerity more specifically, contributed to pressures favouring a more

flexible and deregulated labour market. And, as happened to some degree on the micro-scale at PG Bison, this in turn placed intense pressure on aspects of the co-determinist frameworks - as can be expected within South African industry more generally once the implications of the new legislation are more fully absorbed.

13.4 Concluding conclusion

This sense of uncertainty about the future of participatory 'stakeholding' management, both in South Africa and internationally, reinforces the point that it cannot be regarded as a coherent, global, ubiquitous strategy in the class struggle on the part of capital. As is outlined above, its critics, particularly on what remains of the 'left' of the political and industrial spectrum, have tended to regard it in conspiratorial terms, as an international programme to defuse worker militancy, undercut trades unions and reinforce a deregulated, neo-liberal agenda. On the other hand, its management school and political proponents have viewed it hopefully as the way of the future which, in time, all successful commercial organisations will have to follow, aimed at empowering employees along with other stakeholders. Neither of these perspectives seems to fit the picture presented here of diversity, disorganisation and uncertainty.

When considered through the inexact prism of PG Bison Limited and other South African companies the picture that emerges reinforces some of these prior arguments about the nature of the beast, the reasons for its arrival in South Africa, as well as its origins and impact on a global scale. Several points that emerge from this experience are worth stressing in this regard because they appear to be more broadly applicable.

First, that the most significant general impetus for the emergence of the TPQ "stakeholder" approach in South Africa was the national political conflict within the country. More specifically, it was, in this sense, a business response to the implications of the historic legacy of apartheid. Certainly in most of the cases studied, and particularly at PG Bison, the decision to adopt such strategies can be seen to have been motivated primarily by a desire to overcome the problems politics had placed in the way of the business, and in this way to reduce conflict and improve performance. In this sense it is appropriate to describe participative management in South Africa as much as a political initiative as an economic one.

Second, there was a range of related cultural considerations, invariably framed in racial terms, which affected both the decisions made to introduce participatory programmes and the forms these programmes took. At PG Bison, as in other companies, this included the chasm between black workers and white managers in terms of language, family structure and size, religious tradition and belief, home-life experience, education levels, spatial assumptions, distance from work, legal status and community traditions, as well as political attitudes and financial standing. One of the central aims of TPQ, particularly during its early, value-sharing phase, was to bridge these gaps between black and white employees through encouraging a better understanding of each other's life experience.

Third, despite these overarching observations about a general political and cultural impetus, in most cases this did not amount to anything approaching compulsion. Put differently, there was no inevitability about employee participation as a managerial strategy, and PG Bison, along with most of the minority of South African companies which chose this path, had its own peculiar reasons for doing so. Certainly it could be said, for example, that the union-induced pressure informing the initial experience at SA Breweries and Nampak, and in a different sense at Volkswagen, did not exist at PG Bison, Premier or Cashbuild, where there was a higher level of voluntarism involved.

Fourth, in all the cases considered, the balance between, on the one hand, the constraints placed on management (by shareholders and company boards of directors) and, on the other hand, the scope for managerial innovation, was an important consideration. Here the subjective element - through the role played by individual CEOs and MDs - was crucial in determining both the initial decisions to adopt change programmes and subsequent decisions about the direction and maintenance of such innovations. At both PG Bison and Cashbuild, a key consideration was the level of autonomy enjoyed by the CEO from the company's shareholders. In each example studied, and particularly PG Bison, the initiative of the CEO was a necessary though not sufficient condition of the programme getting off the ground. Related to this consideration was the question of the scope the company's board offered for ongoing executive level innovation, and also of the ability of the CEO to win the backing or at least acquiescence of management, as well as of the workers.

Fifth, international precedent, usually filtered through local agencies and example, helped establish a 'critical mass' momentum among the larger South African companies. It also directly influenced the content and direction of the programmes adopted, although, as is stressed throughout this study,

the unique cultural, political and economic circumstances meant that the forms taken by participative management in South Africa often bore only superficial resemblance to the models adopted in other countries. In fact, of the companies studied, only Volkswagen SA, as a wholly owned subsidiary of the German corporation, could be said to have introduced its participative managerial programme directly as a result of foreign impetus, and even there this was mitigated and altered largely by local conditions. In most cases, and certainly at PG Bison, there was a sense of dipping into international managerial experience and theory rather than being led by it.

Sixth, once the decision was taken to introduce a more participatory form of management which devolved power and information in the direction of subordinate employees, the progress and indeed the fate of the programme was dependent to a significant degree on the response of these employees. In this respect, the level of worker organisation and, in particular, the response of the trades union leadership was of crucial significance. In some cases, such as Volkswagen, unions played a major role from the start, both in trimming management's ambitions and, later, in setting aspects of the programmes direction. In other companies, including PG Bison, Nampak, Premier and SA Breweries, the trades unions were less involved in the initial conception but later came to play a significant and occasionally determinant role in its progress.

Seventh, in certain respects, a similar observation could be made about the response of subordinate managerial employees, although in most cases this proved to be less crucial than that of the unions because of the general nature of South African industrial relations they tended to have less structural and organisational independence than the workers. However, as illustrated at PG Bison with the Piet Retief example, in some instances white management had the scope and power to disrupt the programme and even to short-circuit it. Again this illustrates one of the conundrums at the heart of South African participative management: the way in which social attitudes forged through the apartheid political inheritance were both a cause of 'IPQ's introduction, and in some cases, of its failure too.

Eighth, where implemented vigorously, most of the participative management programmes seemed to succeed in their own terms - through playing a significant role in reducing conflict in industrial relations, in improving communications within the business, and defusing racial conflicts on the shop floor, and therefore indicated at least the potential to improve performance. In this sense, in most of the examples cited, it proved to be an appropriate response at the level of the firm to the

social and political conditions which business found itself in during the late 1980s and early 1990s.

And ninth, it became apparent that when the immediate cultural-political impetus for participative management changed as a result of the 1994 South African general election, its nature and momentum began to shift accordingly. In some companies, such as PG Bison, this was one of the reasons for what amounted to a downgrading in the priority given to participatory programmes. Restructuring the business to cope with a more vibrant market became the central priority and the participatory structures were used for getting the unions "on board" with this initiative, but here the immediate aim was to make the business more competitive rather than shift the basis of managerial decision making. However, in other companies, such as Eskom, the shift in political power in the early 1990s was a significant motivating force in prompting senior management to review their methods of running the company and, in particular their relation with their black employees generally and their trades unions specifically. Many other companies were effectively forced along this road by the 1995 Industrial Relations Act, particularly with respect to the provisions for workplace forums. And in most companies, including, belatedly, PG Bison, one of the immediate implications of the 1994 election was to encourage management to speed up affirmative action programmes for black employees.

These observations once again help establish some of the general premises for understanding participative management set out above: that it cannot properly be understood as an industrial relations development which can simply be read off the post-fordist production systems⁴³; nor necessarily as a response to worker organisation with the aim of increasing productivity and institutionalising, containing conflict and undermining trades unions.⁴⁴ Motivational considerations, when examined nationally and even more so globally, have to be treated with caution because in each case the specificity of the political, cultural and economic factors involved tends to defy generalisations which are overly assertive.

Certainly, it is appropriate, and indeed essential, to consider what is common between different examples within a national and regional context and between different national and continental examples, and here certain developments within the world economy falling under the convenient, catch-all heading of 'globalisation' are significant because, on the one hand, they have contributed to an increased need for innovation from core employees, for less centralised managerial structures and to alternative approaches to job design and work organisation, but on the other hand have

added to job insecurity for the middle classes, to the phenomenon of 'downsizing' and , particularly within the Anglo-American model and to a greater gap in power and income between chief executives and other employees.⁴⁵

However, the extent of the distinctions between the paths taken by participative management in the various national examples considered - Japan, Germany, Sweden, the United States, Britain and Brazil - illustrates the point that considerations of national history, politics, language, religion and culture are often more significant than the cloning potential of global economic trends. And certainly in pre-1994 South Africa, with its overdeveloped polity and underdeveloped international economic integration, the forms and trajectories taken by participative management owed more to political and cultural alienation and discord than it did to production systems. Until 1995 decisions in this regard usually rested with a small coterie of senior managers and often the CEO himself, which is why the points made by the likes of Poole⁴⁶ and Salamon⁴⁷ on the importance of managerial choice and restraint in the balance between employee control and consent are apposite.

Now that participative management has been placed more squarely within a national legislative framework, some of this power to decide has been removed from the reach of individual chief executives. The implication, however, is that the constraints and choices have become part of the political decision making process, where business collectively has started to find its voice. One can expect therefore that the relation between business and politics will be the prime fronts where the future of South African participative management will be decided, with the direction taken being influenced by the sometimes conflictual interplay between the political imperatives of redistributing power within South African corporations, which may favour a continuation along the European stakeholder model, and the seemingly more powerful neo-liberal economic imperatives of flexibility and deregulation which will favour moves to non-union forms of participation along US TQM lines, or, alternatively, the abandonment of the project altogether. In this respect one can certainly expect continued pressure to be brought on legislators to dilute the regulatory content of recent labour legislation, such as the Industrial Relations Act, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act and the Employment Equity Act.

ENDNOTES

1. See 1.1, pp 1 – 7.
2. This discussion of Marxism is covered in 2.2.1, pp 27 - 32 and 2.3.3 pp 73 - 77.
3. See 2.2.1, pp 32 - 37.
4. Challenges to neo-classical social theory are discussed in 2.2.2, pp 37 - 46.
5. See 2.2.3, pp 46 - 56.
6. See in particular 2.3.1, pp 57 - 61.
7. See in particular 2.3.4, pp 82 - 88.
8. See 8.3, pp 439 - 445 and 8.6, pp 464 - 468.
9. See 4.3.1, pp 189 - 197.
10. pp 197 - 205
11. pp 205 - 212
12. pp 212 - 221.
13. pp 221 - 230.
14. Discussed in particular in 5.1, pp 247 - 258.
15. In chapter 3, pp 114 - 178.
16. As David Welsh put it in "Politics and business in South Africa," *Optima*, vol 36 no 3, September 1988, p 162.
17. See 5.2, pp 258 - 273 for the generalised discussion of the forms in which South African participative management emerged.
18. See 5.1 and 5.2, pp 247 - 273.
19. See 2.3.3 and 2.3.4, pp 67 - 88,
20. See Ernesto Laclau, New Reflections on the Revolution, Verso, London, 1990, p 9 and 16.
21. 5.3.1, pp 274 - 283.
22. 5.3.2, pp 283 - 294
23. 5.4.2, pp 305 - 311.
24. 5.4.1, pp 299 - 305.

25. 5.4.3, pp 311 - 315.
26. 5.5, pp 317 - 326.
27. 5.5.1, pp 318 - 320.
28. 5.6.1, pp 327 - 328.
29. 5.6.2, pp 328 - 330.
30. This is discussed in particular in 7.2 and 7.3, pp 394 - 399.
31. Their individual roles are highlighted in 8.2, pp 432 - 439.
32. See 8.3, pp 439 - 445 and 8.4.2, pp 449 - 453.
33. See in particular, 8.5, pp 459 - 463.
34. This political culture is the focus of 8.4.1, pp 446 - 449.
35. See 8.6, pp 464 - 468.
36. Discussed in 9.3, pp 488 - 496.
37. See 10.3, pp 517 - 521.
38. 10.5.2, pp 529 - 532.
39. The early stages of the National Forum and its subsidiary structures are discussed in 10.5.3, pp 532 - 536.
40. Chapter 11, pp 582 - 610.
41. The impact of TPQ on the different business units is discussed in chapter 12, pp 617 - 698.
42. See chapter 6, pp 357 - 385.
43. For an elaboration of this point, see Robin Murray, "Fordism and Post-Fordism", in Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques, New Times: The Changing Face of Politics in the 1990s, Lawrence and Wishart, 1989, pp 47 - 48.
44. This is argued in particular by Judy Maller in, for example, Conflict and Co-operation: case studies in worker participation, Ravan, Johannesburg, 1992, p VI and Participative Management: A New South African Corporate Strategy? University of the Witwatersrand Masters dissertation, pp 14 - 15.
45. See 4.2, pp 180 - 187.
46. M Poole, "Management strategies and industrial relations", in M Poole and R Mansfield (eds.), Managerial Roles in Industrial Relations, Gower, London, 1980, pp 38 - 39.
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Chris Ball (former Barclays SA CEO): October 15 1993

Pat Barker (wife of former Nampak director, Adrian Barker): February 5 1992

Ian Bernhardt (director of Ian Bernhardt and Associates and housing consultant for PG Bison): March 7 1990

Musa Bhegu (former Paper Printing Wood and Allied Workers Union regional organiser - died in road accident, December 1991): October 8 1991

Tony Bloom (former Premier CEO): October 16 1993

Richard Braithwaite (Nampak legal representative): February 4 1992

Halton Cheadle (senior partner, Cheadle, Thompson and Haysom and chairman of committee which drafted 1995 Labour Bill): February 11 1995

Leon Cohen (Chairman, PG Bison Limited, 1996 - ; CEO, PG Bison, 1987 - 1994; executive chairman PGSI 1987 - 1994; former deputy chairman PGWI and CEO, PG Wood; ANC member of Gauteng provincial legislature): November 28 1989, July 16 1990, November 1 1991, February 26 1992, January 26 1994, May 2 1994

Rob Cohen (CEO PG Bison Limited; former managing director Bisonbord Limited, former financial director, PG Bison): August 17 1989; February 6 1995

Colin Coleman (former National Programmes Director, Consultative Business Movement): February 22 1990; August 25 1992; May 1 1994

Gavin Duffy (Nampak spokesman): February 3 1992

Willie du Plessis (former Bisonbord Piet Retief Human Resources manager - died February 1993):
September 30 1991; October 1 1991

Kenny Fihla (former Ppwawu Southern Transvaal branch secretary): July 17 1990

Andrew Gilbert (former Laminate Industries director; currently Penny Pinchers managing director):
November 29 1989

Rosemary Grealy (former PG Bison TPQ facilitator and CBM Consultative team member):
February 17 1989, April 20 1989

Maxine Hart (former PG Bison Organisation Development Coordinator; previously PG Bison TPQ
facilitator; currently Human Resources Consultant, Nedcor Limited): March 7 1989; February 13
1990, March 3 1990, July 7 1991, September 27 1991, February 26 1992, July 30 1992, August 18
1992, January 16 1993, January 18, 1993, March 29 1993, April 5 1993, April 20 1993, May 5
1993, May 18 1993, January 28 1994, April 25 1994, November 28 1994, February 11 1995, May
25 1995

Penny Hyde (former Human Resources Manager, South African Breweries): May 13 1993
(informal)

Mkhuseleli Jack (former marketing manager, Volkswagen SA): January 7 1994, February 14 1995

Kyle Joynt (manager, First National Bank): March 15 1992, February 11 1995 (informal)

Joan Lurie (PG Bison Development Coordinator; former PG Bison LEAP coordinator): September
9 1991; September 30 1991; April 20 1993; January 28 1994

Anton Makhaye (PG Bison Pietermaritzburg UWUSA shop steward): September 26 1991

Debra Marsden (former CBM National Economics Director seconded to the National Economics
Forum): November 19 1992

Themba Mfeka (Ppwawu assistant general secretary): February 12 1995

Andre Michaux (PG Bison Alroad factory Human Resources director; former Laminate Industries
Human Resources Director): July 17 1990, July 27 1992, May 11 1993, January 19 1994

Tlhophoho Modise (PG Bison Training and Development director; former PG Bison Boksburg
Upgrading factory operations director, former Plyproducts general manager, former PG Bison
TPQ group manager): July 16 1990; February 24 1991

Elias Monage (former Numsa regional organiser): August 24 1992

Murphy Morobe (former PG Bison Group Manager: Job Creation; former PG Bison managerial

consultant and TPQ team member; former United Democratic Front publicity secretary; former Provincial Secretary: Gauteng Legislature): July 22 1992; May 9 1993; January 22 1994; April 25 1994

Gibson Nduli (former Saccawu Natal regional organiser): August 21 1991

Christo Nel (former Executive Director, TPQ, PG Bison; currently Itisa CEO): August 6 1988, September 3 1988, February 3 1989, June 17 1989, July 20 1990

Welcome Ntshangase (former Ppwawu national education officer): March 3 1993, April 19 1993

Tiego Ntshingila (former PG Bison supervisor and Numsa member): November 16 1989 (informal)

Sam Ntuli (former Numsa regional organiser - assassinated November 1991): July 18 1990

Washington Okumo (Kenyan political mediator and former diplomat): April 27 1994

Roddy Payne (Manager: Corporate Intelligence and Development, PGSI and former Personal Assistant to Leon Cohen, subsequently based in PGSI head office): July 3 1996, September 26 1996, November 6 1996

Ken Pinchuck (Volkswagen SA manager): May 11 1993 (informal)

Mark Phillips (legal adviser to the Gauteng Premier): April 17 1996 (informal)

Jeff Radebe (forklift driver and PG Bison Numsa member): November 16 1989 (informal)

Annemarie Rademeyer (Gencor literacy programme coordinator): February 7 1995 (informal)

Rob Rees (Ppwawu national organiser): March 16 1992 (brief telephonic discussion)

Dan Retief (former PG Wood manager): March 19 1993 (informal)

Alan Roberts (former Faawu national organiser; later Cosatu Western Cape general secretary): March 10 1992, February 22 1995 (informal)

Mike Roussos (Gencor Group Strategic Planning director): August 25 1992 (informal)

Joe Slovo (former South African Communist Party chairman and general secretary; former ANC National Executive Committee member; former South African Housing Minister): July 2 1989

James Smith (former PG Bison communications and industrial relations director; currently Business Report editor): July 7 1991, November 1 1991, January 10 1992, January 17 1992, July 20 1992, August 28 1992, January 10 1993, January 13 1993, March 21 1993, April 2 1993, April 6 1993, January 26 1994, April 24 1994, May 1 1994

Tony van der Schyff (New Products Laboratories director): July 22 1991

Gerhard van Niekerk (Old Mutual Chief Operating Officer): October 22 1990

Stuart Wood (PG Bison Executive Director: Sales; former Laminate Industries managing director):
September 26 1991

Interviews conducted by others

Louis Botha (former Bisonbord Piet Retief Chief Training Officer): August 3 1991 (conducted by James Smith)

Petrus Esterhuizen (former Production Manager, Continuous Decorate Laminates Division, PG Bison Alrood factory - formerly Laminate Industries): May 2 1991 (conducted by Maxine Hart and Pippa Kapelas)

Selwyn Jean (former PG Wood Cape senior shop steward): July 28 1991 (conducted by James Smith)

Hamilton Modapani (PG Bison Boksburg shop steward): July 28 1991 (conducted by James Smith)

Thophheho Modise (former PG Bison Boksburg Upgrading Operations Director): August 4 1991 (conducted by James Smith)

Peter Munnik (former PG Bison Distribution Director: Cape; former PG Wood Cape manager):
July 28 1991 (conducted by James Smith)

John Nkosi (PG Bison warehouse superintendent and Numsa shop steward): August 8 1991 (conducted by James Smith).

Andries Vorster (former PG Bison Piet Retief Operations Director; former Bisonbord Piet Retief general manager): August 3 1991 (conducted by James Smith)

RESPONCES TO QUESTIONAIRES SENT BY AUTHOR

Kevin Lowe (Human Resources Manager, Casbuild Ltd): March 15 1994

Judy Parfitt (Volkswagen SA industrial relations manager): August 14 1994 (written responses to questionnaire)

Claire Densham (Manager, Public Affairs, Nedcor): November 25 1994

Neil Cumming (Group Human Resources director, Nampak), August 18 1995

Douglas Band (Chairman and Chief Executive, The Premier Group), April 1 1996 (letter in response to questionnaire)

Velaphi Ratshefola (Personnel Manager, South African Breweries Beer Division), July 30 1996

Roddy Payne (Manager: Corporate Intelligence and Development Department, PGSI, and formerly PA to PG Bison chairman Leon Cohen), November 5 1996

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Author: Evans, Gavin.

Name of thesis: The politics of participative management in South Africa - a case study of PG Bison Limited, 1986-1996.

PUBLISHER:

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

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