

in any depth - and should perhaps be the subject of further investigation and research - are:

- the question of community guards. The Act provides for a Community Council to manage and control such a guard in its area. How do these guards function? What is their relation to i. private police forces (such as Thebehali's notorious All Nation Police Force); ii. SAP; iii. Makgotla (a very neglected subject; and iv. Bantu Commissioner's Courts;
- the internal organisation of CCs. How do the committees appointed function? What is the role of opposition parties? This leads on to ...;
- regional and national organisation of CCs. On national organisation, UCASA was formed in October, 1978, and has 1 000 out of 1 500 councillors as members (organised regionally) at present. It holds regular conferences, chats now and again to Koornhof and his functionaries, and considers itself a 'major spokesman for urban blacks' (RDM, 22.07.80). At its most recent meeting, the Association resolved to tackle issues like finance of the Councils; deficits; 99-year leases and leasehold in general; housing shortages; unemployment; and transport. Its activities should be monitored;
- the question of financing of Councils has not been considered at any length here. The Brown Commission's first report seemed to duck the issue somewhat, and it remains an important pre-occupation of Councils - and the opposition to them. UCASA, for instance, outlined in April six steps the state should take: to give annual grants to Councils (as is the case with bantustans); to write off deficits of all councils immediately; to take white Admin Board officials from the payroll of CCs; to give interest free loans to Councils; to establish a development fund for urban african areas; to phase out Admin Boards;
- the relation of Councils to NAFCOC, Soweto Chamber of Commerce and Industry, etc. This relation often appears to be a somewhat problematic one, given the Councils' penchant for issuing trade licences to their family and friends. What will be the effect of the recent announcement by Louis Rive that limited

- industrial development can occur;
- the relation of Councils to the whole Louis Rive/ECONPLAN, etc, initiative should also be considered. And, also, of course, that to the Urban Foundation;
- finally the location of the CC strategy to the entire restructuring of urban control in the 1970s has not been adequately theorized and detailed. The Council-Admin Board relation is vital here, as is that of the Councils to CAD (and, most relevantly, Koornhof). The entire chain of command needs some urgent attention.

With Louis Rive's 'fantastic mission' (and indeed it is) coming to fruition, with Community Councils drawing up wild and extravagant budgets to 'run' their own townships, and with the popular resistance to the operation of the Councils on the increase, all these questions are worthy of some attempt at an answer. For, in spite of the strategy being in somewhat of a state of flux at the moment, the legislation the state is cooking up for CCs for 1981 will be of some relevance to contemporary struggle.



# Community Organisation - a response

## INTRODUCTION.

WHAT IS progressive community organisation? An article on this topic in Work In Progress 11 suggests that such organisation is the opposite of what is usually called 'community development'. The article further argues that the progressive organisation of communities has to move into the realm of political struggle - away from helping the poor and towards organising the working class against exploitation. The 'problems of the poor' are the

"logical outcome of a weak and disorganised working class which because of its lack of strength is unable to win the victories necessary for it to improve its lot in the short term, and to gain political power in the long term" (WIP 11:36).

The WIP 11 article therefore points out the need to 'restructure the system'. The major problem with what is referred to as 'community development' is that it ignores

"the basic prerequisite for any such improvement in the quality of life of the working class: its organisation as a political force" (WIP 11:36).

But how is this political organisation to occur? How is the system to be restructured? The WIP 11 article suggests activity, which

"aims at providing the working class with the organisational strength to look after its own interests, to win higher wages, better working conditions and....to win from the state the kinds of services and amenities necessary to ensure a healthy and human living environment, an environment which is controlled and determined by the working class itself" (WIP 11:39, my emphasis).

This seems to suggest that the political organisation of the working class should follow the lines of Western European social democracy where through the organisation of a strong labour movement, the working class tries to force concessions from the capitalist class. These concessions are sometimes implemented through a particular type of state, namely the 'welfare' state.

Where does organisation of the working class in the community fit into this social democratic view? The WIP 11 article takes note of the importance of trade unionism in organising workers at their place of work. It then goes on to suggest that there are other areas where organisation can be progressive, and gives two reasons why organisation in the community is important: firstly, the article argues that political organisation of the working class in the community is important because of the state's inadequate provision of basic services to the working class. For example,

"it is only as a collectively organised force that the working class will be able to demand a well run national health service that provides adequate care for all" (WIP 11:40).

Political organisation of the working class in the community thus exerts pressures on the state for better conditions outside of the factories.

Secondly, the article argues that community organisation is important because it aims at people controlling their own lives and institutions - creating a living embryo of the new society in the womb of the old.

In response to all this, I will argue that the WIP 11 article's assumptions about political organisation of the working class are possibly reformist, and therefore limited. I will further argue that this is because the article lacks a clear outline of the relationship between workplace, community and the state - and that as a result it offers little direction as to how community organisation relates to 'restructuring the system'.  
'COMMUNITY ORGANISATION'.

Community organisation covers a wide range of issues - including poor housing, high rents, bad health facilities, low standard municipal services, busfares, etc. Organisation around these issues is grouped together as community organisation because it involves problems and organisation outside of the workplace. Because these issues are outside the workplace, they often affect more groups than just the working class. And because community organisation is organisation in communities, it often combines these different groups, with their different problems and demands, into one body.

Problems like rent increases and high busfares affect mainly the working class. The bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie can usually afford to pay rent increases, and avoid high busfares by using their own cars. Quite often the demands that these two classes make in community organisation are

not aimed at changing the ghetto, but at getting themselves out of it! For example, the demands for blacks to buy property in any area is clearly not a demand which would benefit workers already struggling to buy food and clothing, let alone being able to buy private houses. Different classes will thus feel the same problem in different ways, and will have different types of demands.

In analysing community organisation it is therefore important to see whose problems an organisation takes up, and which classes directly control the organisation. It is important to see whether the strategies and methods of community organisation bring large sections of the working class into mass political organisation - or whether initiative and struggle is taken into the hands of a small leadership involved in top-level negotiations and costly legal battles. Finally, it is important to see how the organisation of the working class in the community relates to organisation in the workplace.

COMMUNITY AND WORKPLACE - THE DIVISION.

In everyday life a line is drawn between the workplace and the community. This division in fact reflects the structure of capitalist society, and mirrors the distinction between the 'political' and the 'economic'. Pre-capitalist societies had little physical or social division between workplace and community. Economic exploitation took on a more directly political form than it does within capitalist production.

This was because the pre-capitalist exploiting classes usually did the exploiting directly through the state. Capitalist

society is different because although the state helps in exploitation, it does not itself do the exploiting of labour. The state helps, for example, to force peasants off their land in order to create a labour force for the capitalist class. This gets the system of capitalist production going. In South Africa, the state helps in exploitation by distributing workers to certain economic sectors (farming, mining, construction) by using the pass laws, influx control and labour bureaux.

The state also safeguards exploitation by protecting private property and keeping 'law and order', as well as fostering economic growth, building roads and railways, and printing and controlling money.

But despite all this, the state in capitalist society is outside the basic way that exploitation takes place. In capitalist society, the exploiting class does not have to directly use the state to carry out the exploitation of the direct producers. The workers - having been separated from their land and other means of subsistence - can only survive by selling their ability to work to those who own the farms, mines and factories.

The employers buy the workers' ability to work, and make surplus value and profit by not paying for all work performed. Because workers have no other way to make a living, they have no choice - within the system - but to sell their labour and be exploited.

Under capitalism, then, there is a separation between exploitation and the state - a separation between the economic and the political. This is what is behind the division of workplace from community.

Exploitation takes place in the workplace and looks as if it has nothing at all to do with the state; in contrast, community problems are seen as the fault of the state. This often gives rise to separate and parallel working class struggles: trade unions try to win more from bosses; civic associations try to win more from the state. Such struggles accept this separation as a given fact of life, and assume conditions in the workplace and in the community can be improved by pressure in both areas.

#### COMMUNITY AND WORKPLACE - THE LINKS.

Under capitalism, working class reality is split between the seemingly 'apolitical' workplace and 'political' civic and community life. But although there is this basic separation, the two areas are also linked and interdependent. It is within this basic framework of the separation and the links between workplace and community issues that progressive community organisation can be grasped and understood. Progressive community organisation deals with those issues outside of the workplace which affect the working class. But because the working class is also directly involved and affected by what happens in the workplace, the two spheres are interlinked.

Firstly, problems like high rents and busfares in the community are directly affected by the exploitation in the workplace through the wage which has to meet rent and transport costs. Poverty in the home is caused by exploitation in the workplace. Certain working class problems experienced outside of the workplace are therefore directly related to relationships within the workplace - and the grievances can lead to

organisation for a better deal in both workplace and community.

Secondly, many other working class problems in the community and also - in the last resort - caused by the relationships in the workplace, but less directly. Poor sanitation and health services; and bad roads, street lights and recreation/sports facilities seem at first to be the fault of the state. Through these sorts of community issues, working class grievances often focus on the state rather than on relationships in the workplace. But a closer look shows the reason why the state has come to provide these services - and why it gives them so poorly - is because of the nature of capitalist production.

Historically, the capitalist state has developed a 'welfare' role where it acts to make sure that individual capitalists, in cut-throat competition with each other, do not exploit the working class so much that it cannot reproduce itself. In its responsibility to reproduce the working class and keep the system going, the state may sometimes bring in minimum laws for wages and maximum working hours. It may also do things like provide housing, education and transport. But these services cost money, and will ultimately mean that there is less money for capitalists' profit and reinvestments. So it is not surprising that, even with working class pressure on the state, these services are usually little more than the barest minimum needed to keep workers alive, get them back to work each day, with a basic education and in a certain minimum state of health. (This is the reason why, in capitalist society, organisation to win concessions from the state - as suggested

by the WIP 11 article - tends to be reformist)

Given the 'apolitical' nature of immediate workplace grievances, and the inadequate welfare role played by the state outside the workplace, it is only to be expected that civic issues and the state have become important arenas of struggle under capitalism. Workers' struggles - although caused in the last resort by the failure of capitalist production to reproduce and fulfil them as humans - are not only against employers in the workplace, but also aimed at the state in the community.

THE STATE, WORKING CLASS ORGANISATION, AND THE COMMUNITY.

If working class problems in the community are caused in the last resort by exploitative relations in the workplace, then organisation against the state that leaves workplace relations intact is reformist organisation. The question is then whether community organisation has any role to play in moving beyond the struggle for concessions and reforms, and whether it can develop into a struggle to transform the very nature of the state and system.

This question of transforming the state raises the issue of participation/non-participation in local structures of administration and control, and I will discuss how this issue relates to working class organisation in communities.

Reformist community organisation argues for participation in bodies ranging from local councils to municipal health clinics in the belief that there is no need to transform the state. It is seen as a neutral body, and the issue is only who rules within the state. For reformists, the capitalist

separation between the state and exploitation is taken as a given fact of life - only the government within the state needs changing. On this argument, it is possible to use state structures to win better conditions in the community.

Against this, a second view of community organisation has steered clear of state bodies. Instead, non-state bodies have been set up to counter official institutions - eg residents' associations to fight management committees; civic associations to oppose community councils. The here seems to be to try to build a second state - an independent working class controlled state structure - alongside the first, but still often reflecting its separation from exploitation. Sometimes this decision is made after assessing the tactical limits of participating in certain state bodies. But sometimes it stems from a hardline principle of non-collaboration.

This non-collaboration approach often misunderstands the nature of the capitalist state. In this view, the state is only and totally an arm of the capitalist class. Certainly the capitalist state is not a neutral body which can be used to achieve the goals of any social class which might - in theory at least - be able to gain control of it. But it is also inadequate to see the state as a simple tool of the ruling class which it uses at will. Rather the state is itself an arena of struggle and conflict. It must then be asked, if community organisation hopes to promote working class struggle within the state, what are the limits and possibilities for 'restructuring the system' through this arena of struggle?

I have argued that the organisation of

the working class in the community faces the problem of leaving exploitative economic relations in the workplace intact. Does this mean there is no importance in organising workers in the communities - that community organisation has no role, and is doomed to reformism? .

I suggest that the community organisation of workers is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, in terms of support for workplace struggles, community organisation is clearly important. The success of the Fattis and Moni's strike and boycott bears this out. And the financial support, pressure on township butchers, red meat boycott, and community appeals to the unemployed not to scab on the strikers, were all important parts of the Cape Town meat strike.

It is in this light that one can understand the meatworkers' slogan, "the struggle of the meatworkers is the struggle of the community". The slogan would here be understood to be calling for solidarity with the demands of the meatworkers. The assumption in this understanding is still that there are two parallel struggles, one in the community, and one on the factory floor.

There is, however, a second way of understanding the slogan. Instead of two parallel struggles, the slogan could be read as referring to one struggle - that of the working class. Thus the struggle of workers in the community is essentially the struggle of this same class in the workplace - but a struggle which requires victory in the workplace in order for a successful change in communities to occur. In this understanding, community support

for workplace struggles would not be based on moral conviction and sympathy with a 'separate' struggle, but based on an awareness of the very real preconditions for success in community struggles.

But there is more to community organisation than simply providing support for the more fundamental workplace struggles. Rather than falling away once workplace struggles have been won, organisation of the working class in the community is important in its own right, and with long-term significance.

This is firstly because class relations do not only exist in the workplace, but also exist - and need to be changed - in the community. Secondly, a new state structure cannot simply be a structure based only on mass democratic organisation in the workplace. A state structure based only in the workplace cannot provide for the collective needs of the community like health, housing, public transport and recreational facilities. This is where community organisations form "the embryo of the new society in the womb of the old".

#### CONCLUSION.

It would seem from all this that establishing a new social order which thoroughly serves the working class would involve not the (limited) use of the capitalist state (which is external to exploitation) - but rather its radical transformation into a new mass democratic organisation which unites workplace and community organisation. It is thus working class struggle which organisationally combines workplace and community issues that provides the germ of a new social order.

In the light of this goal, participation in capitalist state structures cannot be an end in itself. The capitalist state remains outside of relations of exploitation and cannot therefore be used to transform these relations. But a new state structure that unites democratic workplace and community mass organisation cannot be built overnight. Neither can it simply be built next to the capitalist state. It is necessary, then, for working class organisation to make tactical use of the capitalist state in order to advance the cause of building new structures which span workplace and community.

Participation in and winning concessions from the capitalist state can play an important role in building up working class organisation and confidence - and finally in demonstrating the structural limits of the reforms granted by the capitalist state.

Organisation of the working class in the community is, according to this argument, a vital part of social transformation. Much research needs to be done on the role of community organisation in linking community and workplace, state and production relationships.

# Categories of Resistance

IN THE past, Work In Progress has featured summaries of political trials, as well as some in depth investigations of specific trials. Other contributions in WIP, such as the "Chronology of Conflict" in number 13, have relied on court records to present material on forms of resistance in current South African society.

This focus has, in general, not concerned itself with the strictly legal or procedural basis of trial proceedings, and there are a number of reasons why political trials have provided material of interest to people not professionally involved in the legal process. Some of these reasons are dealt with below.

The availability of information on the activities and directions taken by the dominated classes in South Africa is severely limited. This lack of information is partly due to the fact that a large number of resistance organisations have been banned, and their publications, statements and debates may not be legally distributed within the country. Where such groups are active in the organisation of popular resistance, as in the case of the ANC, SACP and to some extent the PAC, large gaps in the analysis and understanding of conflict exist within even informed political circles. To some