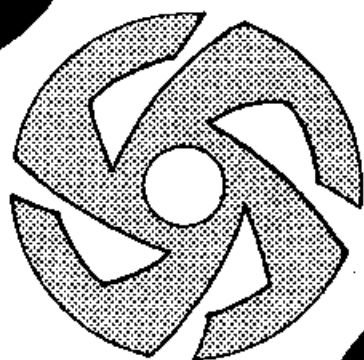


British Leyland

in Britain



and in South Africa

This pamphlet sets out the facts about the operations of British Leyland in South Africa, the conditions under which black workers exist, the continuing attempts by the black unions to gain recognition and basic rights, and the reactions of the Company and the South African government. It shows why workers must support their colleagues in South Africa, not only in terms of human rights, but also because the fortunes of both are inextricably linked. The only adequate response to international companies is international solidarity.



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December 1977

British Leyland in Britain and in South Africa

What are the issues ?

1. The trade union movement in Britain has won a degree of control over some of the activities of the multi-national corporations for which their members work, through strong collective organisation. At British Leyland the trade unions long ago won the struggle over recognition for collective bargaining purposes; and now exert some control over wage rates, productivity, mobility, victimisation and sacking. The company has to fight hard at times to maintain its overall control over the process of production.
2. In South Africa the black trade union movement has no such means of defence or of control over the companies which employ them. British Leyland (South Africa) refuses to recognise the black Metal and Allied Workers Union; black workers have no right to participate in any form of collective bargaining. They are victimised, sacked and arrested for union activity. Wage rates are fixed by the company and most black workers live little above the bread line. They have no control at all over productivity, mobility or hiring and firing policies.
3. The black unions are continuing to fight for their basic rights, in spite of constant threats and repressive measures taken both by the company and the government. This dual repression makes it vital for them to be given international support through trade union action.
4. The future of British workers is closely tied up with that of black workers in South Africa. As multi-national companies today operate on a world-wide basis it is vital that workers should do the same. Multi-nationals, with their flexibility of investments and their political muscle, are in a position to ignore national boundaries. This means that having unorganised workers in South Africa is like having an unorganised plant in Britain. It weakens the position of trade unionists everywhere.
5. The British government now virtually owns British Leyland and therefore controls the company's operations in South Africa. Yet it has done little in practice to press for the rights of black workers to organise through trade unions, or for the recognition of the unions for collective bargaining purposes.
6. The British Leyland unions and the T.U.C. have taken some steps to support their fellow workers in the South African plants. They have so far had little success in changing the company's policy, or in bringing effective pressure to bear on the British government. The campaign will have to be stepped up and extended in order to win these basic rights for South African workers.

Apartheid and why it means high profits

Whites form only one-fifth of the total South African population. Yet the policies of the government (which this white minority controls), the law and the employers, all discriminate against the four-fifth majority of non-white South Africans.

Racialism in South Africa is brutal and crudely repressive: but it is also highly sophisticated. To underpin the state's legislation, the ruling white minority has, over the years, attempted to divide the working-class and provoked internal struggles within the workers' own ranks. This has diverted energy from the common fight against the regime.

The ruling class in South Africa has maintained power by dividing the working class both economically and politically. This has led to the establishment of three basic divisions in the working class:

1. White, Coloured (Mixed Race) and Asian workers. These have basic trade union rights and this has allowed them to dominate the skilled and semi-skilled jobs. However, this group is itself divided on political grounds. The ruling class has made a political alliance with white workers which has allowed them to attain a standard of living considerably above that of the rest of this group.
2. Black workers who are legally allowed to live and work permanently in the urban areas. These workers, although denied political and trade union rights, have been able to get semi-skilled jobs and subsistence wages.
3. The mass of black workers who are classified as "contract labour" with no rights to live permanently in the cities. These are segregated in compounds and hostels in the so-called townships, forced to re-register for work each year. They occupy the unskilled jobs in mining and manufacturing at below subsistence wages, to be hired and fired at the whim of the employers. This group has no political or trade union rights of any kind. These workers form the "reserve army" of labour for South African industry. They are on call when required, and forced to return to the "homelands" or bantustans when laid off or sacked. There they join the other unemployed blacks and the non-productive poor - the young, the old and the sick, who live literally at starvation level with practically no State support.

Average Wages (£) in November 1976 (including overtime) as between Whites, Coloureds, Asians and Blacks					
Sector	Whites	Coloureds	Asians	Black (Bantu)	Wage Gap Between White and Black
Mining	495	128	169	62	433
Manufacturing	394*	110	130	91	303
Construction	390	157	206	77	313
Electricity	413	127	N/A	104	330
Transport/Communications	428	109	172	98	330
Overall	415	119	137	80	335

N/A = Not Available



The Pass Laws

The regulations which enforce the removal of black workers and their families from the white areas, force them to live in compounds and black townships, and force them to return to the bantustans (homelands) every year to re-register for work.

Prosecutions under the Pass Laws are running at about 100,000 a year.



South African Police in Sowetho, 1976

Young worker in Sowetho defending himself from Police invasion.

Prisons and Executions

South Africa has the highest rate of judicial killing in the world. In the years 1972-74, 91 Africans, 32 Coloured, 4 Whites and 2 Asians were executed. In the first six months of 1975 36 prisoners were executed at one prison alone.

Since March 1976, 19 African prisoners have died from unusual circumstances while in prison or under interrogation.

Under the Terrorism Act, South African police can detain and interrogate any person without charging them. Detention without trial can be indefinite. Any person suspected of being a terrorist may be detained without trial. Any act may be seen as an act of terrorism. The Dean of Johannesburg was alleged to have committed an act of terrorism by providing a pair of spectacles to an old lady.

Sources: Workers in Chains, pub. S.A.C.T.U.
Guardian, 22.2.77.



5.

The Overwhelming Majority of Black Worker are :-

- * Denied all political rights, e.g. they cannot vote in central government elections.
- * Denied recognition of their trade unions.
- * Denied the right to any part in collective bargaining - their wage rates and conditions are set by white employers and white unions.
- * Victimized for joining the unions and often sacked for membership of a union.
- * Liable to arrest and imprisonment - even execution - for trade union activities.
- * Denied by law the right to strike, sit-in or go slow.
- * Liable to arrest, imprisonment and banishment from the cities for any form of strike activity.
- * Unprotected in case of redundancy, unemployment or sickness.
- * Liable to be forcibly moved from one part of the country to another.
- * Liable to be sacked at any time, to join the two million black workers now unemployed out of a total black workforce of seven million.

(Source: South African Congress of Trade Unions Memorandum to 63rd Session of the ILO in Geneva, June 1977)



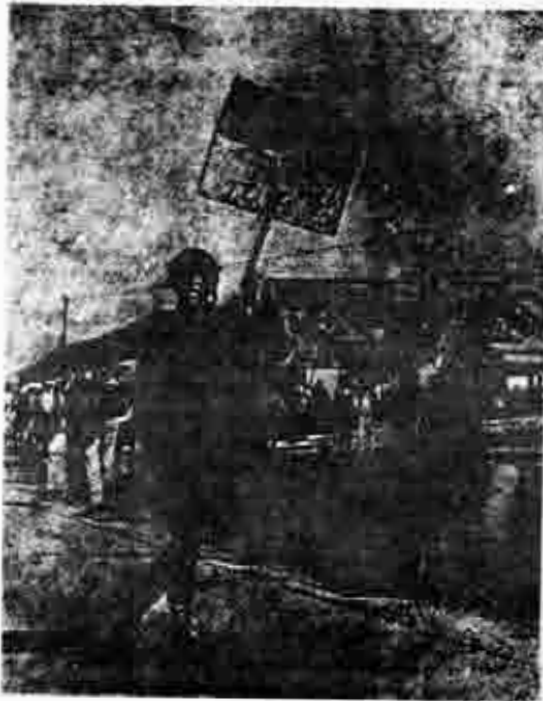
This means that multi-national companies can draw on an unorganised, repressed division of workers to whom they can pay the lowest possible wages.

The companies are able to achieve a high rate of exploitation because of:

1. The low wages paid to black workers
2. The lack of control over the work process exercised by these workers (leading to increases in the speed of the line, reorganisation of work etc.)
3. No control by workers over the level of technology used in their plants (leading to redundancies, lay-offs etc.)

In other words, workers are faced with the same conflicts that workers have been fighting here in Britain, without the support of the trade union movement!

24 PEOPLE HAVE BEEN BANNED BY THE APARTHEID REGIME FOR TRADE UNION ACTIVITIES



THEY WERE ALL GENUINELY INVOLVED IN DEVELOPING AFRICAN TRADE UNIONS THROUGH EDUCATIONAL AND ORGANISATIONAL ACTIVITIES

BUT THE VORSTER REGIME IS DETERMINED TO STRANGLE THE AFRICAN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT:

to maintain the African workers in a permanent state of subservience receiving starvation wages, subject to arbitrary dismissals, denied means of advancement.

THE FOLLOWING ARE THE VICTIMS OF THE BANNING AND DETENTION ORDERS:

Eric Tyacke, Secretary - Urban Training Project (Johannesburg)

L. Douwes-Dekker, Chairman - ditto -

Jean Tyacke, Administrative Secretary - ditto -

Sipho Khubeka - Metal & Allied Workers' Union (Johannesburg)

Gavin Andersson - ditto -

Jenny Curtis - Industrial Aid Society (Johannesburg)

John Copelyn, Secretary - Trade Union Advisory and Coordinating Council (Natal)

Jeanette Murphy - ditto -

Mike Murphy - African Transport Workers' Union

Chris Albertyn - African Textile Workers' Union

Alpheus Mithethwa - Metal and Allied Workers' Union (Natal)

M. Ndlovu - ditto -

Pat Horn - Institute for Industrial Education

Charles Simkins - ditto -

Judy Favish - Western Province Workers' Advice Bureau (Cape Town)

Jeremy Baskin - ditto -

John Frankish - ditto -

June-Rose Nala - National Union of Textile Workers (Natal)

Omed Zuma - ditto -

Zora Mehloakhulu - Western Province Workers' Advice Bureau (Cape Town)

Alpheus Ndude - ditto -

Helford Ndzotyane - ditto -

David Sikobi - ditto -

- **HAS YOUR UNION PROTESTED ABOUT THESE BANNINGS?**
- **IS YOUR UNION SHOWING SOLIDARITY WITH THE AFRICAN WORKERS?**

MAKE SURE IT DOES.

7.

The South African Publicity Machine and its supporters :

One important way the white minority maintains its elite position is through a strong army and police force. These can only be financed by maintaining a stable and expanding economy. (Spending on arms alone has increased from £229 million in 1972/3 to £900 million in 1976/7 - Source: Statistical News Release 15.2.77. Department of Statistics, Pretoria.) Economic expansion is being maintained by constantly increasing the exploitation of the black working class, thereby keeping profits high and conditions attractive for investments from overseas.

These requirements dovetail with the needs of the multi-national corporations who are searching the world for the most profitable opportunities for investment. Together the multi-national corporations and the South African regime form an unholy alliance. But unfortunately for both of them their trade is becoming increasingly difficult.

On the one hand the country's economy is no longer as healthy as it was in the late 60's and is now in deep trouble. A 9-10% annual rate of growth in the 60's (measured by the annual increase in the Gross Domestic Product) was down to 7.1% in 1974, 2.1% in 1975 and 1.4% in 1976. It could well be zero in 1977. (Source: South African Congress of Trade Unions' Memorandum to 63rd Session of ILO, Geneva, June 1977). In addition, inflation in 1977 is running at over 17% a year.

On the other hand black resistance is increasing and the true facts about the regime are becoming far more widely known.

Both the regime and the multi-nationals have to find ways of maintaining credibility and confidence among financiers, shareholders, and ultimately workers in other countries. Both are now working increasingly hard to reassure Western public opinion not only that conditions remain favourable for capital investment, but also that the working and living conditions of its black workers are "morally acceptable".



Striking African workers march into Cape Town demanding the release of their leaders

The Propaganda uses several arguments :

1. The most common claim (used by British Leyland (U.K.) among many others) is that it is not correct for investors to try to influence the internal politics of countries where their money is invested. More blatantly (if more honestly) it is also claimed that it is against the interests of investors to endanger their investments in South Africa by applying pressure for reform in human rights. But South Africa today trades upon the fact that it is an ex-British colony and a past member of the British Commonwealth. And Britain bears some responsibility for South African internal policies, investment apart. For example, when the Union of South Africa was established, the British did not insist that Africans should have a vote. Had they done so, South Africa would be very different today. South Africa's internal politics are therefore very much our business. Other regimes with whom we might well differ have a relationship with the U.K. which is purely a trading one. But every link with South Africa strengthens its claim to be a part of the Western World - and as such gives workers and investors in the U.K. a major right to criticise, condemn and campaign for change.
2. A similar argument used by companies is that they can only have a small impact on conditions in South Africa. This is quite inaccurate. Britain has vast investments in South Africa. By the end of 1973 the total direct foreign investment in South Africa was £3,585 million, with U.K. based corporations accounting for £2,150 million of this. These investments mean that British bosses have an immense say over the lives, job opportunities and working conditions of a considerable proportion of South African workers.

The British government recognises the importance of this investment and seeks to protect it from anything that might radically alter the South African situation. This was expressed quite blatantly by Sir David Scott, British Ambassador to South Africa early in 1977.

From a broadcast on the S.A.B.C. by Sir David Scott, British Ambassador to South Africa, made in Cape Town on 24th March 1977.

"South Africa's friends and trading partners spend an appalling amount of time and energy in international bodies trying to achieve an image which will minimise the damage caused by these (United Nations) resolutions to internal trade, to sport, to what you will It is because we have so many interests in common with you which we want if possible to maintain, because we have enormous investments in your country - the biggest investments of any country in South Africa, which we hope will remain profitable and remain sound - because we buy from you more than any other country does and we would like to go on doing this, even because we would like once again to play international cricket and international rugby with you and, as evidence of our good will we thought it right to take a line in the United Nations and Security Council which, let me say frankly, has brought down very much criticism from the rest of the world. In particular I must remind you that the only four occasions on which my Government, Britain, has exercised the veto in the Security Council during the life of the present Government has been in favour of South Africa."

3. The most common recent argument is that living and working conditions for blacks are improving all the time. Companies with plants in South Africa point to the way they have increased black wages since 1973 (when the facts about conditions became widely known in the U.K. as a result of newspaper campaigns and the work of the Anti-Apartheid movement and others).

What the companies fail to point out is that despite improvements in wage rates, black wages are still losing ground both in their actual purchasing power (because of inflation) and in relation to the wages of white workers. And living and working conditions most certainly have not improved - the aftermath of Sowetho proves this beyond any doubt. Wages are only a part of the problem, for the black working class still hasn't the smallest degree of control over their own lives.

Between 1970 and 1975:- average white family incomes rose from R398 per month to R419 per month. Average black family incomes rose from R36 per month to R71 per month. So over these five years the wage gap rose from R362 to R348 per month.

Source: South African Financial Mail. 13.2.76.



Unemployed Black Workers, Durban, 1976.

Taken from "A Window on Sowetho" by Joyce Sikakane published by the International Defence and Aid Fund, 104, Newgate Street, London, 1977



The Soweto landscape. (Photo by John Seymour)



In some parts of Soweto there exists only one water tap for every block of houses. (Photo by John Seymour)



Pinville, the oldest part of Soweto. (Photo by John Seymour)

British Leyland in South Africa

British Leyland is now virtually government owned. Yet so far it has operated no differently from the privately-owned multi-nationals in seeking opportunities for investment wherever it can increase its rate of profit, whatever the consequences. As a British-based company with massive economic and political commitments in the U.K., it will go on investing in Britain in the foreseeable future. At the same time, however, it is rapidly increasing its overseas investments, particularly in countries where labour is cheap and easily controlled.

The British Leyland Motor Corporation of South Africa (BLSA) is a wholly owned subsidiary of British Leyland International which is a subsidiary of British Leyland. (Source: British Leyland 1976 Report and Accounts). BLSA has 41 subsidiaries in South Africa whose activities range from foundry development to vehicle sales, and include property and finance companies. The main activity is in the manufacture and assembly of cars at the Blackheath plant near Cape Town and of commercial and heavy transport vehicles at the Mobeni plant in Durban and the Elandsfontein plant in Transvaal. In 1974 British Leyland employed 5,600 people and made a net profit in South Africa of £2.1 million - in the same year it made a loss of £24 million in the U.K. (Source: Financial Mail Top Companies, 6 June 1975). Over the past five years British Leyland has made five times as much profit from each of its workers in South Africa as it has from its workers in Britain.

The South African "branch" is Leyland's biggest operation in the world outside the U.K. At present it is the 8th largest car manufacturer (holding approximately 5% of the market) and the 7th largest commercial vehicle manufacturer (holding approximately 5.5% of the market) in South Africa. Despite the depressed condition of the South African market it sold 1959 vehicles in January-February of 1977 alone. (Source: Financial Mail, 18 March 1977).

Leyland is continually expanding its operations in South Africa. In 1975, as the British government was taking over the company to save it from collapse, BLSA announced expansion and modernisation plans in South Africa worth well over £20 million. Nowhere is the multi-national character of Leyland demonstrated more clearly than with this investment. For example the funds for the new plant to produce the Rover 3500 are being provided by the American Bank through an organ of the South African State (the Industrial Development Corporation) while the actual press tools will be manufactured in Japan! (Source: Windheok Advertiser, 14 April 1977).

It would appear that the Sowetho resistance in 1976 and 1977 have not affected Leyland's belief in its ability to make profits in South Africa. They remain committed to their investment programme, saying: "Despite short term uncertainty, we have long term confidence in our investments here." (Source: South African Financial Mail, 4 March 1977).

The Fight Against The Company

British Leyland treats its black workers no better or worse than most other employers in South Africa. In this the Company is complying with the Employers' Organisations more than with the law. Although the legal system is vicious, and allows for harassment, victimisation, arrest, torture and execution for activities which British workers now have as absolute rights, it is possible within the law for companies to recognise black unions, to negotiate with them, and to pay a living wage. There is a black trade union within BLSA - the Metal and Allied Workers Union (M.A.W.U.). BLSA refuses to recognise it for any purposes.

G.E.C. with nearly 4,000 black employees, adopts the same position. Its black workers have no say in determining their own wage rates, and there is no structure for direct negotiations of any kind between management and the black union which is attempting to organise workers in at least two of G.E.C.'s eleven wholly-owned plants. G.E.C. management in the U.K. claims that the union could be recognised under certain circumstances; but this apparently positive attitude has not been reflected by the South African management, which has made no such statement to the black union.

Both B.L.S.A. and G.E.C. are powerful members of the Employers Organisations in South Africa, whose attitude is very clear - black unions are not to be recognised in any way. Neither company has chosen to exert its not inconsiderable influence to get this policy changed.

Black Unions ARE Legal

The favourite argument used by British companies against critics in the U.K. is that recognition of black unions is illegal. This is simply not true. Black unions are not recognised by the South African government, but this in no way stops companies from recognising these unions and from negotiating with them on every issue. A number of companies now do recognise black unions. The 15,000 strong black National Union of Clothing Workers has for years dealt with management in the clothing industry in the Transvaal. 'Pick and Pay', one of the largest food retail chains, has recognised the union its 3,000 black workers belong to. Even a few U.K. controlled companies such as Smith and Nephew and Glaxo have followed suit.

SOUTH AFRICA

Pact with black union scrapped

BY QUENTIN PEEL

JOHANNESBURG, July 19.

THE FIRST British-owned company in South Africa to negotiate an agreement with a black trade union—the wholly-owned subsidiary of the Smith and Nephew pharmaceutical group — has decided to scrap the deal.

The Durban-based company to-day released the text of a letter to the multiracial National Union of Textile Workers (NUTW), announcing that the three-year agreement with the union, which expired yesterday, is not to be renewed. Instead, the company plans to negotiate a new deal with an in-works committee of employees.

The surprise move comes at a time when an increasing number of companies have announced their intention to recognise black unions, in spite of the fact that they are not recognised by the Government. Car manufacturers Ford, General Motors and Volkswagen have all agreed in principle to recognise any union

which has more than 50 per cent membership of their workforce, as has AECL, the South African subsidiary of ICI. Earlier this year the Pick N Pay retail group, employing 3,000 recognised an unregistered black union.

However, Mr. Kenneth Lunn, managing director of Smith and Nephew in South Africa, which employs about 700 workers in its Natal factory, said that while his employees were free to become members of any trade union or other organisation off company premises, trade union officials would no longer have any legal standing on the site.

He said that the present agreement would continue and be honoured by the company until a "new and improved agreement" had been negotiated with employees.

Mr. Lunn was not available to-day to explain the reasons behind the decision. However, it was strongly criticised by the secretary of the 5,000-member textile union, Mr. Obad Zuma, who said that shop stewards had agreed to report back to the workers before deciding on further action.

The original agreement was negotiated by Smith and Nephew in 1974 with two trade unions, the official Textile Workers Industrial Union (TWIU), with white, Asian and coloured (mixed race) members, and the NUTW. But earlier this year the two unions, which had previously shared offices, parted company, following the banning of several leading unionists by the Government. All the Indian members of the TWIU at Smith and Nephew subsequently joined the NUTW, which now has about 500 members in the 700-strong work force.

The company's decision not to renegotiate the deal is likely to be welcomed in Government quarters, where the idea of in-works committees is being encouraged. The recently established Commission of Inquiry into labour relations is expected to come down strongly in favour of in-house labour relations and against the concept of multiracial and black unions.

The Times, 20th July, 1977



Heeding the call by Minister of Police, Mr. Jimmy Kruger, for businesses to arrange their own protection from attacks was the white staff of Lawson Motors in Park Central, Johannesburg. Last night they turned out with rifles, pistols, and clubs. The firm's management is to mobilise 16 men - divided into two shifts - every night this week "just in case". Among the firm's employees who last night doubled as guards "on normal overtime rates" were, from left to right - Mr. V. Walter, Mr. P. George, Mr. L. Langley, Mr. S. Odendaal, Mr. B. Tintinger and Mr. J. Howard. RAND DAILY MAIL 14.9.76.



March on Cotton Textile Factory, January, 1974, near Durban, South Africa.

The M.A.W.U. struggle for recognition

The right to belong to a recognised trade union has had to be fought for in Britain through a long period of struggle. Indeed that struggle is not yet over as the Grunwick strike in North London over trade union recognition shows. Black workers in South Africa are involved in the same struggle - but against even greater odds.

The fight at the Leyland plants in South Africa is being carried on by the Metal and Allied Workers Union (M.A.W.U.). The following diary records their struggle over four years, as reported by M.A.W.U. in bulletins and correspondence to British Trade Unions.

April 1973: M.A.W.U. formed as a union for black workers at B.L.S.A.

June 1973: 95% of the black workers at the Mobeni plant had joined. Union formally requested recognition. B.L.S.A. refused recognition or negotiation on the grounds that the law prevents the recognition of black unions. (This is untrue. Such unions as we noted, can be recognised by companies even if they are not recognised by the State.)

July-October 1973: Union adopted a fall-back position of trying to revitalise the plants' "works committee" set up by management. Union organised elections for black workers' representatives on the committee. Although a major step back, the union saw this as a first move towards recognition. Management refused to recognise black representatives on this committee.

January 1974: Management tried to set up a "liaison committee", to be dominated by management. Workers boycotted it, and reiterated demands for union recognition; "refusing to be partners in a system of labour relations which tolerated the arrest and victimisation of members of liaison and works committees.

February 1974: Union meeting passed a resolution demanding from management a referendum to find out the true feelings of workers. Resolution ignored by management. Workers demanded a reply. Management rejected referendum.

Workers went on strike - the first black workers' strike for many years over the sole issue of recognition. Workers on strike all sacked. Attempts by union leaders to conciliate rejected. Requested Donald Stokes, in S.A. for company's Annual General Meeting, to speak to the union. Refused. Company threatened to close Mobeni plant and move work to Blackheath where there was "no black militancy".

March 1974: Meeting between union and B.L.S.A. Finance Director led to union having to back down. Most sacked workers re-employed, no recognition of union. A period of lay-offs and re-engagement followed (reason given was the 3-day week in U.K.). However; "it was patently obvious that the management were careful not to re-employ workers who were strong and influential union supporters." Action by union members however effectively prevented B.L.S.A. from taking on new workers while some of those previously laid off had still not been re-employed.

November 1974: Union recognised need to confront B.L.S.A. on the basis of a national union within the plants. Next step was to organise black workers at Elandsfortein plant. Union secretary went there and started recruiting.

Union secretary arrested by Security Branch: interrogated and threatened with a variety of charges. Pamphlets already distributed to workers confiscated. Union assistant in Johannesburg detained and interrogated at same time.

As a result of the action by the company and the Security Branch, recruitment at Elandsfortein had to become more "discreet". Union continued to recruit members by word of mouth and personal contact. This led to the sacking of one worker (France Mabotsa): "The two white personnel officers made it quite clear to the workers that Mabotsa had been fired because he was recruiting workers for the union. Further, it was indicated that he had been made an example of in order to deter other workers from joining the union."

Union recruiting set back; but membership still rising slowly since that time.

June 1975: After the virtual nationalisation of British Leyland (which led to B.L.S.A. effectively coming under the control of the U.K. government), black workers expected a radical shift in management attitudes. However B.L.S.A.'s vice-chairman in South Africa (Basil Landau) stated that Leyland's labour policies in South Africa were "accepted in good faith" by the parent company, and that there was no cause for pressure to amend this.

1976: B.L.S.A. maintained its refusal to recognise M.A.W.U. The company claimed that black workers had no cause for grievance, since its wage rates for black workers were "progressive" by comparison with other companies.

The union fought on and appealed to the British government and British workers for support in their campaign for recognition.

The union continued slowly recruiting members at Elandsfortein and other plants. Elections were held at Mobeni for a new shop stewards committee, and management approached again on recognition question.

October 1976: B.L.S.A. decided to "reorganise" its Mobeni plant and to move production of its truck range to Elsiesriver. M.A.W.U. protested strongly against this move.

November 1976: Denis Bexson, B.L.'s personnel director visited South Africa as a result of T.U.C. pressure.

18th November, Alpheus Mthethoua, (secretary of M.A.W.U.) Siphon Kubekha and Gavin Anderson (M.A.W.U. organisers) were served banning orders by the police. This prevented them from taking part in any union activity for five years as well as placing them under a number of other restrictions.

Denis Bexson's visit cancelled. It is announced in December that he is to visit South Africa again early in 1977.

1977: Despite bannings and intimidation union activity continued. Black workforce has declined because of the ending of truck production at the Mobeni plant, yet workers continue to organise.

Why Leyland refuse to recognise the union

B.L.S.A. has refused to recognise M.A.W.U. for a number of reasons. Officially it states that it has no objection to its black workers joining unions, but that it is not "advisable" to recognise black unions in advance of a general move in that direction by S.A. industry". (Source: Financial Mail 22 October 1976)

That "general move" is now under way in South Africa so that even this flimsy excuse has been removed. The more likely reasons for refusing to recognise unions are these:

1. B.L.S.A. has massive contracts with the South African state. It is one of the chief suppliers of the South African Defence Force, providing not only trucks and landrovers (which form the backbone of anti-guerilla operations) but also armoured personnel carriers. Of course, the figures for these contracts are never made public.



Secondly it supplies equipment to the South African Police who used it extensively to suppress resistance in Sowetho, as the pictures in this pamphlet indicate.

Finally it is a major supplier to local government.

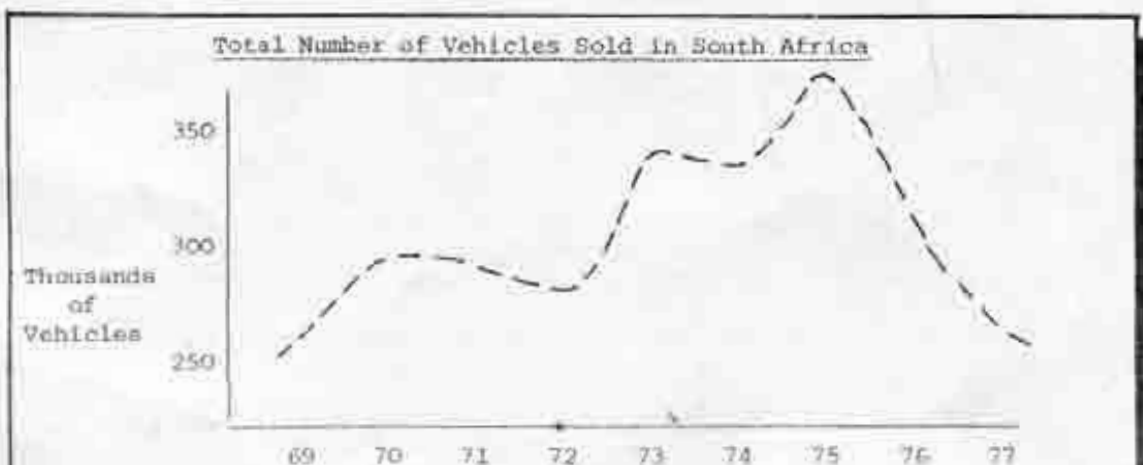
For example, in June 1976 it was announced that B.L.S.A. had won a £1.9 million order for 250 trucks from the Cape Provincial Authority. It must be remembered that equipment of this kind is frequently used to implement the Apartheid policies of the government (for instance, these trucks could well have been used in the recent evictions of black squatters near Cape Town).

Naturally as the state is such a large customer, it is able to exercise considerable leverage over the policies of B.L.S.A. As Leyland itself has argued, it "must conform, if not entirely" to South African government and establishment wishes. (Source: Guardian 14th September 1976)



Police using British Leyland Landrovers in Sowetho.

2. Recognition of M.A.W.U. would mean that B.L.S.A. would lose the absolute control that it now exercises over the production process. This would tend to hit the company far harder than demands for increased wages. This is of particular importance given the crisis that has hit the South African car market.



(Source: Financial Times, 14 July 1977. State of South Africa 1976)

Last year motor manufacturers in South Africa lost over £9 million and the prospect of this year looks even worse. Given these conditions it is vital for the company to be able to lay off or fire workers, speed up the line, shut down sections of the plant etc. whenever it wishes to. Clearly recognition of M.A.W.U. would impede this as the union would fight for the jobs and conditions of employment of its members.

The role of the British Government and British Trade Unions

In its "Report on the Leyland Motor Corporation of South Africa" issued in June, 1975, the Metal and Allied Workers Union called for the following:

"The Labour Party Government and the trade union movement in the United Kingdom have always freely condemned apartheid as the vehicle for discrimination and exploitation of the Black working-class. At present, Leyland South Africa has adopted labour policies which would seem to call into question their sincere commitment to progressive reform and change in South Africa. Furthermore, their labour policies provide further evidence that there exists active collusion between foreign companies and the South African government. In this case, this collusion is between the Labour Government and the South African government. We therefore call upon those in the position to do so to take active steps to pressurise Leyland South Africa Ltd. to recognise the Metal and Allied Workers' Union and refrain from acts of intimidation and victimisation."

How was this call answered ?

The British Government

The role of the government has been a contradictory one. As early as December 1974 the Secretary of State for Trade, Mr. Peter Shore, wrote to the chairmen of more than 500 British companies with South African subsidiaries. He urged them to adopt the code of practice set out in the House of Commons Select Committee's Report on British firms in South Africa. In particular, Section 7 of the code states: "Practices which hinder the development of African unions should be avoided. African trade unions are not unlawful and although they possess none of the normal trade union rights, there is nothing to prevent a company from recognising and negotiating with the trade union representing African workers."

and later;

"The lawful development of collective bargaining with African employees should be encouraged."

When British Leyland was nationalised in 1975, the Metal and Allied Workers Union anticipated that this would mean that their struggle for recognition would be won. As they said in a letter of April 1976: "Workers were delighted to hear that British Leyland Motor Corporation was to be nationalised. They saw the possibilities of practical and psychological changes taking place in the attitudes of South African management. They saw the possibility of the corporation's policy with regard to Black Trade Unions being effectively applied. But as time has gone by it has become apparent that these anticipations were unreal."

Instead of pushing for the implementation of policies that it had adopted, the British government maintained: "We do not interfere in the day-to-day management of any of the nationalised industries." (Source: Rhodesia Herald, 16 April 1976)

Again in December 1976 it was reported that a Department of Industry official said that "... although the Government had a controlling interest in British Leyland, it had been agreed that its administration should be the responsibility of the management and their commercial judgement should prevail." (The Times, 14 December 1976)

Yet this attitude has not stopped the British Government from proposing a code of conduct for companies based in the Common Market that would ask them to "defy the South African Government's apartheid rules by paying black and white workers the same wages, and recognising independent trade unions." (Source: Guardian, 13 July 1977).

In other words it is now apparent that the British Government is only prepared to issue statements and make declarations. When it is in a position to act directly, it refuses to do so.

The letter reproduced below, which was written in response to pressure from Frank Hooley M.P., is typical of the manner in which the government behaves.



Department of Industry
1 Victoria Street London SW1H 0ET

Telephone Direct line 01-215 5676
Switchboard 01-215 7877

From the
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State

Frank Hooley Esq MP
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

June 1977

Dear Frank

Eric Varley has asked me to reply to your letter of 17 May about British Leyland's policy on recognition of black trade unions in South Africa.

I fully understand and share your concern about slow progress towards recognition. Although we accept that British Leyland's investment in South Africa is a matter for management to decide within the framework of overall policy agreed with the National Enterprise Board, I have involved myself in the question of recognition.

British Leyland conform to the recommendations of the House of Commons Trade and Industry Sub-Committee on Wages and Conditions for African employees. They have also made it clear that no British Leyland employee will be discriminated against because of trade union membership. I want to see this extended.

I think it would be fair to say that we are making some progress and I am anxious to do what I can to help bring this about.

You can be sure that this is a matter in which I will be continuing to take the closest possible interest. By all means let's have a chat about it.

Sincerely, Les

LES HUCKFIELD

Not only does British Leyland not conform to the recommendations of the House of Commons Committee (reproduced above) but the Under Secretary of State is once again hiding behind the excuse that it is a "... matter for management to decide ..." If the government is going to take this attitude towards companies that it controls then it has no right to preach a code of conduct for private companies based in Britain and in the Common Market as a whole.

Labour Party Policy on South Africa passed at Annual Conference 1976

This Conference notes with disgust the events in Soweto and urges the Labour Government to do everything in its power to bring to an end the totally unjust white supremacist regime in South Africa.

This Conference expresses its deep concern at the reported breaches of the arms embargo of South Africa and the continued military collaboration with the apartheid regime in violation of United Nations resolutions and Labour Party policy.

This Conference recognises that the South African apartheid regime is a threat to the peace of Africa and the whole world and therefore calls for:

- a) the strict application of the British arms embargo including all equipment that enhances its military capability;
- b) British Government support for a mandatory United Nations arms embargo;
- c) a ban on all recruitment of mercenaries to Southern Africa;
- d) an end to all forms of military collaboration with South Africa.

It further notes that Britain's growing economic links with South Africa are helping to bolster the apartheid system.

Conference regrets that the Labour Government has so far failed to take decisive steps to reduce British investment in and trade with South Africa and therefore calls for a Government programme of disengagement based on the proposals contained in Labour's Programme for Britain 1976, including:

- a) an immediate freeze on all new investment in South Africa;
- b) no Government financed trade missions and an end to export credit guarantees;
- c) withdrawal of all nationalised or Government controlled industries operating in South Africa;
- d) effective Government action to stop emigration and tourism to South Africa;
- e) withdrawal of British banks operating in South Africa;
- f) Conference further calls upon the Government to stop the British Steel Corporation's investment in a £20 million new ferro-chrome plant at Lydenburg, South Africa.
- g) this Conference protests against the Government's decision to buy uranium from the Rio Tinto Zinc mines in Namibia. It condemns this move as a breach of United Nations sanctions policy and as a betrayal of Labour's policy in Southern Africa. It insists that the Government reverse this shameful policy.

Conference supports fully the demand of the Black African for self-government in Rhodesia now and demands that the British Government should in no circumstances support intervention by force, by any power, to perpetuate white minority rule.

British Trade Unions

The British Trade Union movement has for some time pushed British companies and the British government towards recognising black trade unions. After the T.U.C. delegation to South Africa in 1973 the position was adopted that independent trade unions were the only satisfactory form of representation for black workers. This has formed the basis of T.U.C. policy ever since and has led to a number of clashes between the T.U.C. and British Leyland over the recognition of M.A.W.U.

In June 1975 and April 1976 M.A.W.U. made representations to the T.U.C. asking them to take up Leyland's refusal to recognise M.A.W.U. with the firm's head office. In April 1976, representatives of the T.U.C. international committee met Leyland directors and asked that its South African subsidiary should meet M.A.W.U. and recognise the union at least in its Mobeni plant. Leyland replied that it would not recognise black unions "in advance of a general move in that direction by S.A. industry".

The T.U.C. rejected this stand and brought the issue to the attention of both its affiliated unions and the U.K. government. It called on affiliated unions to "... persuade British Leyland to modify their attitude ..." (Source: Letter from T. U.C. International Department to affiliated unions)

At the T.U.C. conference in Brighton in 1976 an emergency motion was unanimously passed condemning the repression of resistance by blacks in Sowetho and elsewhere, and calling for:

1. Cessation of all new British investments in South Africa.
2. A complete embargo on all direct and indirect military help from Britain to the South African Government.
3. Support for the national liberation movement in South Africa."

Given the connections between British Leyland and South Africa, both the first and second demands have direct implications for the policies and trading patterns of the company, and especially B.L.S.A. supplies to the South African Defence force and Police.

Within British Leyland itself there have also been a number of initiatives. Shop stewards at British Leyland condemned the use of British Leyland landrovers by South African Police in the repression of black students and workers. After a meeting of the British Leyland combine shop stewards on 18 June 1976 senior Rover shop steward, Peter Nicolas said: "We have now seen a classic case of Leyland's products being used against black South Africans to prevent them obtaining the elementary rights we take for granted in this country."

In August 1976 the following motion was passed.

Motion passed unanimously by the Leyland Limited
Trade Union Committee on August 11, 1976 in Birmingham

Because of the refusal by British Leyland International to recognise the Metal and Allied Workers' Union (a black Trade Union) in its three plants in South Africa, particularly the Mobeni plant near Durban where the M.A.W.U. has 95% membership, and Leyland's continuing victimization of Black Trade Union activities, we suggest the following course of action:-

1. A meeting urgently be sought with top management of British Leyland
2. Links be made with the M.A.W.U. particularly with the Mobeni plant, pledging the full support of the Leyland Combine Convenors in their struggle.
3. If British Leyland refuse these basic Trade Union rights of recognition and no victimisation, the following should be carried out:
 - (a) The blacking of C.K.D. and other work to South Africa (The T.U.C. has called for no further investment by British companies in South Africa whilst they refuse to recognise black trade unions).
 - (b) The carrying of this campaign back to the shop floor by keeping all affiliated shop stewards committees informed of progress up to date.
 - (c) The carrying of this campaign into the broad Labour Movement, by urging all our members to take it up in their Trade Union branches and Labour Parties.

This motion was previously adopted by the Executive.

The company refused to meet the committee on this issue and when shop stewards attempted to raise it in the Participation Committees, Leyland used the rule book to point out that Leyland International - the division responsible for its South African operations - was not part of the Participation Agreement with the unions, and so the matter could not be raised there.

Subsequently representatives of the Leyland combine and A.U.E.W. officials have met the personnel manager of Leyland International and further meetings

It is clear that British trade unions are unwilling to allow matters to stand as they are. The action that has taken place in the past must be built upon and extended, in order to bring pressure to bear upon both British Leyland and the South African government, until workers in South Africa are free to exercise their full political and trade union rights.

RESOLUTION 417 (1977) ADOPTED BY THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL AT ITS 2045TH MEETING ON 31 OCTOBER, 1977.

The Security Council:-

1. Strongly condemns the South African racist regime for its resort to massive violence and repression against the black people, who constitute the great majority of the country, as well as all other opponents of apartheid;
2. Expresses its support for, and solidarity with, all those struggling for the elimination of apartheid and racial discrimination and all victims of violence and repression by the South African racist regime;
3. Demands that the racist regime of South Africa:-
 - a) End violence and repression against the black people and other opponents of apartheid.
 - b) Release all persons imprisoned under arbitrary security laws and all those detained for their opposition to apartheid.
 - c) Cease forthwith its indiscriminate violence against peaceful demonstrators against apartheid, murders in detention and torture of political prisoners;
 - d) Abrogate the bans on organisations and the news media opposed to apartheid;
4. Decides that all states shall cease forthwith any provision to South Africa of arms and related material of all types, including the sale or transfer of weapons and ammunition, military vehicles and equipment, paramilitary police equipment, and spare parts for the aforementioned, and shall cease aswell the provision of all types of equipment and supplies, and grants of licensing arrangements, for the manufacture or maintenance of the aforementioned,
5. Calls on all states to review, having regard to the objectives of this resolution, all existing contractual arrangements with and licenses granted to South Africa relating to the manufacture and maintenance of arms, ammunition of all types and military equipment and vehicles, with a view to terminating them.

What action is needed by British Trade Unions Now ?

The issue of British Leyland's involvement in South Africa has been widely discussed in the British Leyland Trade Union Combine Committee, the Joint Shop Stewards Committees in the plants, Labour Party branch and constituency meetings and Anti-Apartheid organisations.

What we now need is specific action to support the struggle of black workers for elementary working class rights: -

1. RESOLUTIONS OF SUPPORT

The motions adopted by the British Leyland Trade Union Committee in August 1976 are listed on page 22. Resolutions of support for these motions from the labour movement - particularly from joint shop stewards committees - should be sent to Les Gurl, Secretary, Leyland Combine Committee, c/o 8, Turner Close, City View Estate, Cowley, OXFORD. Tel. 0865 - 774134.

2. SELECTIVE BLACKING OF SUPPLIES AND PARTS

Blacking should be imposed on supplies, CKD Units and spare parts to South Africa and to parts imported into this country from South Africa. This is a vital part of the campaign to end all economic links with the South African apartheid regime.

3. IMMEDIATE STOPPING OF ALL ARMS SUPPLIES

This is in line with the United Nations Security Council resolution of the 31st October, 1977 - see page - which commits the British Government to ending all arms supplies to South Africa. For British Leyland workers it is vital that all possible ways of ensuring that all supplies of CKD Land Rover units and spares to South Africa are effectively blocked.

4. DEMAND FULL TRADE UNION RIGHTS FOR WORKERS EMPLOYED BY LEYLAND SOUTH AFRICA

A list of minimum rights needed by all workers in South Africa is shown below. Telegrams from Leyland shop stewards committees and the wider labour movement, should be sent to the South African Government c/o The Prime Minister, Parliament Buildings, CAPE TOWN, South Africa, demanding the lifting of all banning orders on trade unionists like Alfred Mthewa, who is the national secretary of the Metal & Allied Workers Union (MAWU). In 1974 he was arrested by the Security Branch whilst recruiting members at Leyland's Elandsfontein plant, near Johannesburg. All union pamphlets were confiscated and he was detained, interrogated and threatened with a variety of charges. Letters demanding that the Metal & Allied Workers Union be recognised should also be sent to Leyland management both here and in South Africa.

5. AN END TO BRITISH LEYLAND INVESTMENT IN APARTHEID

Labour movement organisations, particularly Leyland Joint Shop Stewards Committees, should adopt resolutions demanding an end to British Leyland investment in apartheid. Copies of such resolutions should be sent to the T.U.C. and The Foreign Secretary.

MINIMUM RIGHTS NEEDED IN SOUTH AFRICAN PLANTS FOR ALL WORKERS

1. The right of access of union organisers to members in the factory. The repeal of laws which allow banning, arrest, imprisonment and torture of union members and organisers.
2. The right of union organisers to issue pamphlets and put up notices in the factory.
3. The right of shop stewards to canvass support, recruit and collect subscriptions in the factory.
4. Protection from all forms of victimisation for shop stewards and all rank and file members.
5. The right of shop stewards to hold meetings and report back to workers in the factory.
6. Paid release from work for shop stewards to take part in union-organised training and study.
7. The disbanding of all works and liaison committees in factories where the unions have members, and the recognition of elected shop stewards.

In 2 or 3 South African factories, black workers have these rights. THEY ARE URGENTLY NEEDED IN ALL PLANTS.

Composite Motion adopted by the T.U.C. Congress, Blackpool, 1977.

This Congress deplores the harrassment, intimidation and imprisonment of trade unionists in South Africa.

Recognising that the winning of trade union rights in South Africa is an important part of the fight against apartheid, Congress calls upon the General Council and affiliated unions to bring pressure to bear on British parent companies to persuade them to insist that their South African subsidiaries give full trade union rights of recognition and negotiation to all their workers.

Congress reaffirms its policy on South Africa and welcomes the decisions of the Second International Trade Union Conference for Action Against Apartheid (Geneva, June 1977) in particular the call for active participation in an international week of solidarity with the people of Southern Africa.

Congress urges the General Council to work closely with the South African Congress of Trade Unions to win full trade union rights in South Africa.

Moved by National Union of Railwaymen

Seconded by Tobacco Workers' Union

264

**HE PROTESTED AGAINST WORKING
A 48 HOUR WEEK FOR \$12 (US)
HE WANTED TO JOIN A UNION**



**HIS EMPLOYER AND YOURS MAY BE
ONE AND THE SAME!**

HELP HIM

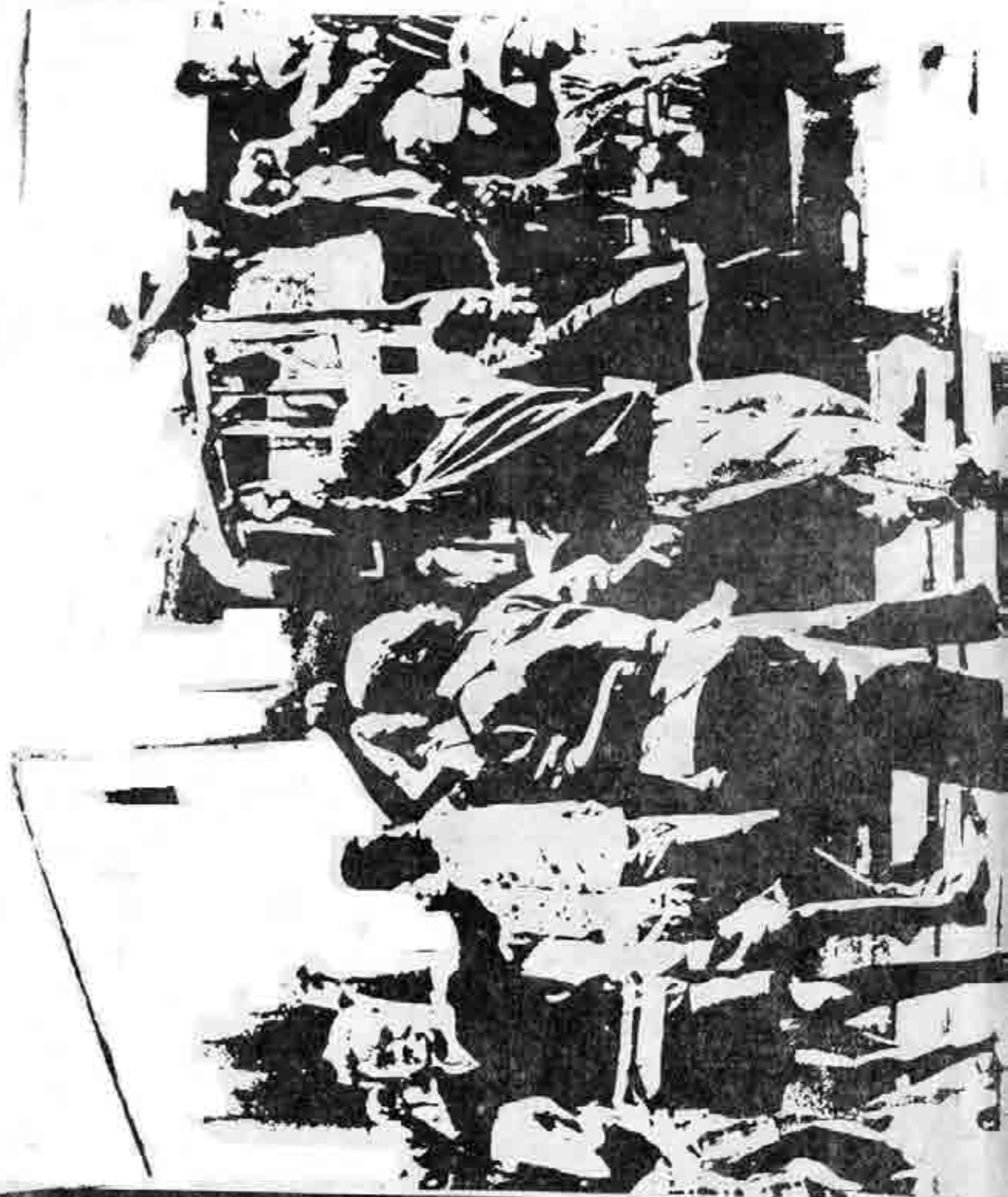
**JOIN THE PROTEST CAMPAIGN AGAINST
SOUTH AFRICA**

Is your company involved in South Africa? If so,
Ensure that protests are made to management about the exploitation
of your African colleagues.

Demonstrate solidarity with your black colleagues in South Africa by
fully participating in your union's action campaign.

**TAKE PART IN THE WORLDWIDE TRADE UNION PROTEST
CAMPAIGN AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA.**

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**SOLIDARITY WITH THE PEOPLE OF
SOUTHERN AFRICA**