

8268

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NIGERIAN LABOUR MOVEMENT.

THE STATE, STRUCTURE AND THE
DEVELOPMENT OF THE
NIGERIAN LABOUR MOVEMENT

By
JAMES ACHIN ZASHA

A Thesis
Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree
Master of Arts

McMaster University

September 1980

DEDICATED TO
TERKUMA and TERWASE

MASTER OF ARTS (1980)
(Sociology)

McMASTER UNIVERSITY
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: The State, Structure and The Development
of the Nigerian Labour Movement.

AUTHOR: James Achin Zasho, B.Sc. (Ahmadu
Bello University, Zaria)

SUPERVISOR: Professor Rhoda Howard

NUMBER OF PAGES: x, 229.

ABSTRACT

The major objective of this work is to analyse the impact of the state and socio-economic structure on the emergence and development of trade unionism in Nigeria. The literature on African urban wage workers portrays them either as a vanguard for the structural transformation of society needed to overcome underdevelopment or as privileged labour aristocracy. Utilising data on the Nigerian situation both of these views are substantially rejected in this thesis. Essentially I have tried to demonstrate reasoned skepticism regarding the political significance of the Nigerian working class and to show that even in strictly economic matters of the fight for higher wages, trade union economism has not significantly benefitted Nigerian urban workers.

An explanation to this situation is put forward in terms of the role of the state and the nature of the socio-economic structure. I argue that both in the colonial and post-colonial periods the Nigerian state has assumed the role of Capital in the development of labour and has thus been able to both maintain low wages and keep labour politically insignificant. I further argue that the Nigerian ethnic political structure which itself arises from,

and is reinforced by, the Nigerian peripheral capitalist relations of production, makes it as yet impossible for Nigerian urban workers to organise on a basis beyond economism.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

I am grateful to many people for their contribution to the successful completion of this thesis. My supervisor, Dr. Rhoda Howard's generous and incisive comments have been extremely helpful. Throughout the period of my work with her, I have always come out of her office with a sense of thorough encouragement, and I am grateful to her for this. The other members of my committee, Dr. Graham Knight and Dr. Gerald Rosenblum have greatly contributed in giving the work a more specific focus than would otherwise have been the case, and I appreciate it. I am deeply grateful to my brother, Dennis Ityavyar of the University of Jos, Nigeria, for sending from home research material which I found very helpful in the thesis.

My dear wife, Dorcas Zasha characteristically demonstrated remarkable patience and understanding as I increasingly spent more evenings in the library away from home. I cannot sufficiently express my gratitude to her.

I am grateful to Paul Anderson for allowing me generous use of his typewriter, and to Shirley Fama for typing the final draft. I am also grateful for the academic stimulation I have enjoyed from my colleagues Philip Ahire, Sylvester Alubo, David Brown, Bipul and Bula Bhadra, Cedric Lico-rish, Jeffrey Duncan and Luke Obilo.

I am grateful for the prayerful support of my brothers and sisters in Christ in Canada and abroad.

But above all it is God, Father of the Lord Jesus Christ in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, who gave me the strength and grace I needed for the work, and it is to Him that I give praise.

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

CHAPTER 1	INTRODUCTION	
	THE PROBLEM.....	1
	THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE.....	8
	A REVIEW OF MODELS	
	Revolutionary Theory.....	8
	Reformism.....	11
	Economism.....	12
	Labour Aristocracy Thesis.....	20
	THE APPROACH.....	24
	METHODOLOGY.....	31
	FOOTNOTES.....	33
CHAPTER 2	EMERGENCE OF INDUSTRIAL LABOUR FORCE	
	INTRODUCTION.....	39
	ORGANIZATION OF PRODUCTION IN PRE-COLONIAL NIGERIA.....	40
	CREATION OF WAGE LABOUR.....	44
	MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS OF COLONIAL LABOUR FORCE.....	63
	Labour Migration.....	64
	Size and Distribution of Wage-earning Population.....	67
	Wages.....	70
	FOOTNOTES.....	77
CHAPTER 3	COLONIAL TRADE UNIONS	
	INTRODUCTION.....	83
	FORMATION, ORGANIZATION and UNION MEMBERSHIP	84
	TRADE UNION UNITY.....	107
	ORGANISED LABOUR AND POLITICS.....	118
	COLLECTIVE BARGAINING and WAGE DETERMINATION	
	Evolution of Political Wage Fixing.....	127
	The General Strike of 1945.....	130
	MILITANT ECONOMISM.....	134
	FOOTNOTES.....	141
CHAPTER 4	POST-INDEPENDENCE TRADE UNIONISM	
	INTRODUCTION.....	148
	INDUSTRIAL LABOUR FORCE:	
	Size.....	149
	Migrant Labour.....	151
	GROWTH and STRUCTURE OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT.	154
	THE NIGERIAN LABOUR CONGRESS (N.L.C.).....	168
	Labour and politics.....	189
	The General Strike of 1964.....	191
	COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AND WAGE DETERMINATION UNDER THE MILITARY.....	201

CHAPTER 4	The Morgan Wage Awards, 1964.....	206
(cont.)	The Adebo Awards 1970-71.....	207
	The Udoji Awards, 1975.....	208
	ECONINISM.....	211
	FOOTNOTES.....	213
CHAPTER 5	CONCLUSION.....	219

TABLES.

1. Stated Destination of Migrant Labourers originating or passing Through Sokoto Province, 1952-53	64
2. Survey Data on Urban-Rural Ties in Enugu Nigeria 1961.	66
3. Distribution of wage earners in Nigeria by Region and Type of Employer, 1959.	68
4. Minimum Wages For Workers in Government Employment in Lagos, 1947-1960.	71
5. Index of Money and Real Wage Rates for unskilled workers in Lagos.	72
6. Growth of Labour Unionization, 1940-1960.	91
7. Trade Union Organization by Industry 1958.	103
8. Rise in Cost of Living Index: 1939-1944.	131
9. Strikes and Man-Days Lost 1940-1960.	135
10. Trends in Modern Sector Employment, 1973-75.	150
11. Growth of Labour organization, 1960-71.	154
12. Food prices and industrial wages in Kano, 1971-78	157
13. Distribution of Union membership by Industry, 1965.	158
14. Distribution of Union membership by union size.	160
15. Drop in Labour Party Support between July and December, 1964.	196
16. Cross-Pressured Voters between July and Dec.1964.	197
17. Prescribed Party Support and Actual Party support.	198
18. Percent prescribed party support and Actual party support by Ethnic group, Education and Time in Labour Movement.	200

CHARTS.

1. Abortive efforts by the unions to unite, 1943-1960. 109
2. Efforts to Unite, 1960-1978. 170
3. A Contrasting view of the 'radicals' and 'moderates' 185
in the labour movement.
4. Workers' view of labour disunity 187

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANTUF	All Nigeria Trade Union Federation
British TUC	British Trade Union Congress
ICATU	International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
IFCTU	International Federation of Christian Trade Unions
IULC	Indeependent United Labour Congress
JAC	Joint Action Committee
LUF	Labour Unity Front
NCNC	National Council for Nigeria and the Cameroons Later became: National Convention of Nigerian Citizens.
NCTUN	National Council of Trade Unions of Nigeria
NECA	Nigeria Employers Consultative Association
NFL	Northern Federation of Labour
NLC	Nigeria Labour Council
NNWU	Nigerian Maritime Workers' Union
NNDP	Nigerian National Democratic Party
NNFL	Nigerian National Federation of Labour
NPAWU	Nigerian Ports Authority Workers Union
NPC	Northern Peoples' Congress
NTC	Nigerian Tobacco Company
NTUC	Nigerian Trade Union Congress
NWC	Nigerian Workers Council
R&PT & CSU	Railways and Ports Transport and Clerical Staff Union
SWAPP	Socialist Workers and Farmers Party of Nigeria
TUC	Trade Union Congress
TUCN	Trade Union Congress of Nigeria
UAC	United Africa Company
UCCLO	United Committee of Central Labour Organizations
ULC	United Labour Congress
UNEC	United Middle Belt Congress
WFTU	World Federation of Trade Unions

CHAPTER 1.

INTRODUCTION

A. THE PROBLEM

This work is a study of the Labour Movement in Nigeria. The major objective is to examine the impact of the state and socio-economic structure on the emergence and development of the movement

The literature on underdevelopment, among other things, seems to centre on one important conclusion: that the productive potential of the now underdeveloped countries of the so-called Third World cannot be fully realized and used primarily for the benefit of these countries until there occurs a (violent) overthrow of the existing capitalist structures which the bourgeoisie of the third world collaborate with their metropolitan (senior) partners to perpetrate. Whether posed as Gunder Frank's "...Underdevelopment or Revolution" or in terms of what Immanuel Wellerstein identifies as the challenge now facing African countries, "Dependent development or revolutionary transformation", these formulations implicitly assign a central, or at least a crucial position to the working class in any meaningful effort at overcoming underdevelopment. This calls for a critical examination of the position of the working class and the institutions that have developed to represent them, the trade unions

in the under-developed countries. How, in the first place was the working class created in these countries, and what major factors affected their emergence? How does this working class define its class position? What is the objective position of this class relative to other social groupings? How are the organizations of the working class seen, and shaped by the state in these countries? And what are the major determinants of trade unionism in these countries?

Focusing on the emergence of the working class and the development of trade unionism in the concrete Nigerian context this work will probe into some of these questions with the specific aim of providing an explanation to the nature of labour organization in Nigeria. The central question to be addressed then becomes: What are the major determinants of trade unionism in Nigeria? Two factors are identified and developed to provide a basis for adequately answering the question: the state and the socio-economic structure. There is some justification for this.

The process by which an industrial labour force has emerged in Nigeria allows access to means of livelihood other than labour power and facilitates the extension of strong ties from rural areas to the urban centers where wage-workers live. Thus the workers who move to the town still own land in the rural village, and often due to uncertainties and higher costs of living

in urban centers, wives and children are either left in the home areas or the workers only get involved in temporary urban work thus maintaining close ties with rural areas.² Even the more relatively permanent urban based wage-workers have been observed to be involved in frequent visits and occasional financial aid and obligations to their rural communities of origin, or even to exhibit significant inclination towards more or less permanent urban-rural migrations.³ This aspect of the socio-economic structure is relevant to issues of labour commitment, Trade union membership and involvement. The rural-urban structure and continuity is also important in explaining the lack of explicit political unity of the Nigerian Trade Unions. This is because rural-urban ties, being primarily ethnic and kinship based, offer alternative modes of identification for urban wage workers.

The state has been very crucial in the use of wage-labour and development of Trade Unions in Nigeria. Playing the double roles of Legislator and (major) employer of labour, both the colonial and post-colonial governments of Nigeria (civil and military), have passed policies and actions which constitute major moulding influences on Nigerian Trade Union activities.⁴

This set of factors are taken to be of prime importance and it is on their impact on the emergence and development of Nigerian Trade Unionism that this work focusses.

I have chosen this thesis topic and formulated the problem the way outlined above because of the conviction that the major issues raised here have not before been adequately addressed in the major published works on the Nigerian Labour Movement. The results of Peter Waterman's original investigations to be embodied in his ongoing doctoral dissertation, "Wage Labour Relations in Nigeria: State, Capitalists, Unions and Workers in the Lagos Cargo-Handling Industry" will no doubt present evidence touching on the questions being answered here.⁵ But as a brief summary of the three major published works on the Nigerian labour movement below shows, even though the present work is based mainly on secondary sources, it goes far beyond merely reproducing any work done on the subject in Nigeria.

T.M. Yesufu's Introduction to Industrial Relations in Nigeria is an outstanding pioneer study of the subject. The book has two key sections: one describes the system of industrial relations introduced by the British in the colonial period, a system essentially modeled after the British type, and the other section catalogues major problems (especially those of early trade union organization and labour efficiency) in the operation of the system during that period.⁶ But, apart from the fact that Yesufu's work is by now dated, his view of the labour policy of the state as characterised by "emasculated laissez-faire" and his portrayal of the state as a

more or less neutral referee in the game of industrial relations, both make him unable to address a key question being developed in the present work, namely the impact of the state on the development of trade unionism in Nigeria. The six pages Yesufu gives to the analysis of the process of the emergence of wage labour in Nigeria is also considered inadequate, and the task is taken up in the second chapter of this work.

Wogu Ananaba's Trade Union Movement in Nigeria is a descriptive history of the Nigerian Labour movement up to 1966.⁷ Together with the question of the formation of early trade unions, Ananaba sets out to answer the questions "What is faction in Nigerian trade union movement? How did it begin, and why does it persist?"⁸

As Ananaba himself asserts, his work "provides a basis for further research on the history of the labour movement in Nigeria".⁹ But in doing so he presents a history much of which is, to my mind, necessarily biased. As a trade unionist of the conservative camp, he seems to blame factionalism in the Nigerian labour movement almost wholly on the Marxist-oriented leadership.

In Labour and Politics in Nigeria, Robin Cohen goes beyond earlier works in analytical and conceptual terms.¹⁰ The work is organized around the role of Nigerian labour organizations in the political process. The three central chapters discuss the factionalism in the labour movement, Unions as political agents,

and the system of wage determination. In spite of the internal splits of the unions discussed in detail by Cohen, he sees the unions as a significant political force relative to other social groups in the country, and mainly demonstrated in the conduct of the two General Strikes of 1945 and 1964, and in their ability to collectively press the state to set up Wages and Salaries review commissions.

There are two specific shortcomings in Labour and Politics which make further research even on the issues Cohen covered at least not a redundant effort. The first is the lack of a dynamic analysis of the role of the state and what impact it had on the development of unions in the period he studied, 1945-1971. His treatment of state-union relationships (even then on post-colonial Africa, and not specifically on Nigeria) takes the form of static descriptions and only leads to a construction of typologies¹¹ which, as John Kraus points out "simply do not provide any explanation for which factors are likely to expand union or union members' influence or fulfill different union goals".¹² Even the chapter on Unions under military rule does not analyse the increasingly restrictive role played by the state and its impact.

The second shortcoming concerns the impact of rural-urban ties and ethnic interests on the political behaviour of organized labour. A full consideration of

these factors is left out of Cohen's work on the excuse that "since the relationship of the working class as a whole to the countryside is intermittent, no systematic consideration has been given to the impingement of rural-based social forces on the town-and-factory-centered activities of organized labour".¹³ In a review of Labour and Politics, Sara Berry has also charged Cohen for making no effort to

assess, through direct observation, the relative importance to the workers of kinship, ethnic or other "traditional" affiliation vs. union or other class-oriented activity. Thus, while his evidence certainly shows the importance of class interests to many Nigerian wage-earners, it does not demonstrate the relative unimportance of other interests.¹⁴

In my view this is a serious charge, and the present work will seek to demonstrate the "relative unimportance" to the workers of class interests vs. ethnic interests.

It will by now be clear that these three major works on the labour movement in Nigeria all leave more room for further research. The present piece of work is one such research.

B. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

(1) A review of models

Leaving aside anarcho-syndicalist possibilities, three broad models of trade unionism can be identified. They are the Revolutionary model (or political trade unionism), Reformism (also in a sense political), and Economism (or business unionism). I will now briefly review each of these models and indicate to which of these the Nigerian situation best approximates. Having done that I will then identify and develop a framework within which to analyse the data in the thesis, and which will also explain why the Nigerian labour movement conforms closest to the one model and not the others.

THE REVOLUTIONARY THEORY

The Revolutionary Theory, a Marxist-Leninist tradition, defines wage-employment as involving a fundamental irreconcilable conflict: that between, on the one hand, the worker with his labour power on sale, and, on the other hand, the capitalist who buys and appropriates the worker's labour power.¹⁵ But in selling his labour power for wages the worker actually sells himself.

The free labourer, on the other hand sells himself, and indeed sells himself piecemeal. He sells at auction eight, ten, twelve, fifteen hours of his life, day after day, to the highest bidder... that is to the capitalist.¹⁶

The first aspect of the Revolutionary theory of Trade

Unionism is therefore the struggle to put an end to the system of wage labour which Marx regards as "a transitory and inferior form destined to disappear before associated labour...".¹⁷ Thus the very process of early formation and development of organized labour is conceived as a class process for a class struggle.

...the collisions between individual workmen and individual bourgeois take more and more the character of collisions between two classes. Thereupon the workers begin to form combinations (Trade Unions) against the bourgeoisie.¹⁸

Based on the implicit class nature of the struggle between organized labour and employers, Marx maintains that (a) decreasing competition between wage workers as a class-in-itself and perceived eventual understanding of their commonly experienced conditions of exploitation under a commonly identified foe, turns them into a class-for-itself with a consciousness sufficient to impel them to revolutionary actions;¹⁹ and that therefore (b) the organization of the working class is "the real class organization of the proletariat in which it carries out its daily struggle with capital, in which it trains itself" and thus (c) the ultimate objective of the working class is the seizure of political power as (d) everywhere political movements always develop out of workers economic movements,²⁰ because (e) "every class struggle is a political struggle".²¹ This summary chain of assertions and arguments is based on the fundamental conception that as long as the

capitalist system operates, so long will workers continue to be exploited, in fact their misery will increase in direct proportion as industry develops and prospers.²² And in this regard Lenin's formulation is central to the theory,

---the fundamental economic interests of the proletariat can be satisfied only by a political revolution that will replace the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie by the dictatorship of the proletariat.

And the Revolutionary theory of Trade Unionism draws inspiration from two sources: expected structural polarizations (as industrialization advances) and class crystallizations which make possible class alliances against capital in which the role of the working class is central;²⁴ and contradictions in the capitalist mode of production which necessitates the fall of the system.²⁵

Lenin's refinement of the theory maintains that the Labour Movement necessarily needs external political leadership by a revolutionary political party whose duty it is to bring and reinforce political consciousness into the movement, as,

The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own efforts is able to develop only trade union consciousness, i.e. the conviction that it is necessary to combine in unions, fight employers, and strive to compel the government to pass labour legislation.²⁶

Pulled together, the Revolutionary Theory of Trade Unionism claims historical necessity and

inevitability of trade unions as representing not just the narrow class of wage workers created by the development of capitalism, but as organizations whose historic role it is to mobilize the rest of the oppressed and exploited classes in a struggle against the employing, capitalist class.

REFORMISM

Reformism is not a coherently articulated theory of Trade Unionism the way the Revolutionary theory is. Edward Bernstein to whom Revisionism and Reformism owe their development did not set himself the task of producing a Trade Union theory.²⁷ But his work as it bears on trade unions was sufficiently distinct to have brought into being a trade union model: that trade unions in alliance with pro-labour parties, the radical bourgeoisie and co-operative movements, can press for and gain concessions at the levels of industry and parliament within existing capitalist structures, the nature of the concessions or reforms being such as to lead to "evolutionary socialism". The view is partly premised on certain quantitative and qualitative qualifications of the working class

Not only do the workers grow in numbers, but their economic, ethical and political level rises as well and thus grows their ability to be one of the governing factors in the state and national economy.²⁸

In this sense Bernstein saw in the trade unions

the potential capacity to successfully press for reforms capable of transforming society. And, like Marx and Lenin, Bernstein's concept of the Labour Movement identified a need for alliance with a political party. The difference between the Marxist-Leninist Labour Party alliance and Bernstein's lies in the latter's emphasis on working within existing structures to press for socialism whereas the Revolutionary view stands for the overthrow of existing power structures, preferably by force. Bernstein's hope for the success of the alliance is based on the concept of democracy at two levels, as has been stated: in industry and in the parliament. At the plant level the workers' day to day struggles with employers and gains in favourable contracts would constitute important shifts to socialism. At the level of Parliament Social Democratic representatives would press for reforms in the interests of workers.

Thus Reformism as a trade union model is a struggle by organized labour for both purely economic and explicitly political concessions through gradual reforms.

ECONOMISM

The tendency of trade unions (and for that matter, any organizations) to limit their activities and demands to principally or wholly economic issues defines economism. As they bear on this model of trade unionism the views of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, John R. Commons and

Selig Perlman will be briefly presented here.

Sidney and Beatrice Webb

The Webbs' theory of the labour movement draws heavily on the concept of efficiency

The economist and the statesman will judge Trade Unionism, not by its results in improving the position of a particular section of the workman at a particular time, but by its effects on the permanent efficiency of the nation.²⁹

By efficiency, the Webbs mean, in the main, activities of Trade Unions that (a) promote "the selection of the most efficient factors of production", (b) ensure a "better organization of these factors", and (c) enhance the personality of manual and "brain" workers "in spite of any apparent contradictions of the personal power of the capitalist class".³⁰ On the whole these activities constitute what the Webbs term the Trade Union function.

And in their "efficiency" or "functional" theory of Trade Unionism the Webbs regard industrial administration as involving three main levels: What to produce, how to produce and under what conditions--environment, health, remuneration, etc.--production should take place.³¹ The decision as to what to produce, the Webbs assign to consumers acting through "capitalist entrepreneurs or their own salaried agents". The problem of how to produce, the Webbs leave in the hands of "directors of industry, whether profit-makers or officials." It is on the third

category of administration that Trade Unions come in:

And in the settlement of these conditions it is the expert negotiations of the Trade Unions controlled by the desires of their members, to state the terms under which each grade will sell its labour.³²

Thus the Webbs theorize about the trade unions mainly in terms of the functions they have in society, that trade unionism "has a permanent function to fulfil in the democratic state".³³ In their theory the state is regarded as a necessary partner to Trade Unions as "the state is a partner in every enterprise".³⁴

Selig Perlman

Selig Perlman owes much of his theoretical work to John R. Commons whose own conception of Trade Unions was that they developed as and were protective organizations principally concerned with security of job opportunities through "protective legislation".³⁵ It was Selig Perlman who brought deeper into the domain of theory the assumptions of harmony of interests and therefore absence of class conflict struggle, which he shared with Commons about the structure of Industrial Society,³⁶ (comparable with the way Lenin brought deeper into theory and practice the views he shared with Marx about Trade Unionism). He postulates that the dominant attitudes of labour are conditioned by the consciousness of scarcity of opportunity" and that there-

fore wage workers get organized to safeguard and regulate available opportunity, what Perlman terms "Communism of opportunity".³⁷ Thus wage workers would be preoccupied with job opportunities, as indeed Perlman defines a trade union involvement:

An aggregation of concrete individuals sharing among themselves their collective job opportunity as well as trying to enlarge it and improve it by joint effort and step by step.³⁸

Rejecting any dominant radical political objective for labour, Perlman contends that

Unionism's deepest concern remains the right to job opportunities--of self-conscious groups ...and of individuals in that group.³⁹

It is on this basis that Perlman sees industrial democracy as both the immediate and ultimate objective of organized labour. He asserts that the more increasingly organized labour gets involved in decision-making in industry, the less dependent will it come to be on "a dogmatic anti-capitalist philosophy".⁴⁰ Rather, labour would discover that it pays to co-operate with owners of industry in the production process within existing social and economic structure leaving "the remote future... to be looked after in its own time by the remotely future labour movement".⁴¹

Thus, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, John R. Commons and Selig Perlman are typical representatives of the trade union model of economism as they all stress one factor of singular importance, and specific to the workplace; the economic.

Thus far I have tried to outline very briefly three major models of trade unionism as developed mainly in Russia, Western Germany, Britain and North America. The question we now answer is with which of these models does one identify the Nigerian labour movement, while providing an explanation for this identification is a task taken up in the main body of the thesis.

The Revolutionary model has at one time or another had some appeal -- and considering the issues of colonialism and underdevelopment it should -- to a section of the Nigerian labour movement. The Nigerian Trade Union Congress (NTUC) -- one of the four central labour organizations that dominated the Nigerian labour scene for nearly two decades after independence in 1960 -- adopted this model of unionism.⁴² A brain child of leftist labour leaders and youths, the organization correctly regarded Nigeria at the time of independence -- as a dependent neo-colonial country. Thus, at its First Revolutionary Convention in 1963, unimpressed by the country's attainment of political independence, it had this to say, "the masses of the Nigerian people know ... that behind the paraphernalia of the Nigerian Administrators are seen foreign hands -- British and American -- that control the life of every Nigerian".⁴³ Thus the N.T.U.C. at least theoretically had far greater concerns than wages and working conditions. The Congress collaborated with

other groups to form the Socialist Workers and Farmers party of Nigeria (S.W.A.F.P.) with an elaborate revolutionary manifesto:

...Our party is guided by a science of society -- the science of Marxism-Leninism. This is science which brings together all the experiences of mankind in struggle and from there draws lessons for the guidance of the common people in their fight to overthrow capitalism and imperialism and build socialism. It is a science which enables the people to know the roots of their poverty and weakness to see through all the deceptions, confusions, pretenses and lies of the ruling classes.⁴⁴

But manifestos and constitutions apart, the N.T.U.C. leadership within a decade of its existence kept vacillating in ambiguity between praising and defending the government and occasional vague declarations of "the need for the working class to take political power".⁴⁵ As we shall soon see this orientation to a revolutionary political ideology has been one major factor that has caused disunity in the Nigerian labour movement.

And trying to explain both the inadequacy of the theory of the N.T.U.C. and its failure to be Marxist, Waterman advances two factors: the Nigerian context and the role of World Communist movement. He argued that Nigeria's working class and labour movement provided a weak base for revolutionary leadership, and of much more significance, that the country "lacks a revolutionary situation (provided for instance, in China, Vietnam and

Guinea Bissau by savage and overt exploitation of the peasants) and a revolutionary intelligentsia (stimulated in these countries by foreign oppression)."⁴⁶ In the world context, Waterman shows how the communist world offered the N.T.U.C. an ideology, models and financial aid but did not offer it a concrete and relevant method.⁴⁷ Commenting on the role of international communism together with "Nigerian Social Structures" in blocking the emergence of revolutionary trade unionism, Waterman concludes

it has been reinforcing rather than undermining the bourgeois and bureaucratic culture that surrounds the labour movement in Nigeria. The circle seems viciously closed and the prospect distinctly bleak.⁴⁸

As illustrated by the failure of the N.T.U.C. in its revolutionary path, this model of trade unionism has not been the dominant philosophy within the Nigerian labour movement. So far, organized labour in Nigeria has not demonstrated practically the desire to overthrow existing capitalist structure in favour of an alternative structure. As I said earlier, explanations for this being so is given in the main body of the thesis.

It is hard to distinguish in practice between reformism and economism as models of trade unionism and on that basis assess the relevance of each to the Nigerian situation. Nevertheless, establishing this distinction helps bring out the issues more clearly and so we have

distinguished reformism from economism by the need in the former for alliance between trade unions and a labour or pro-labour party which represents labour at the national parliament (or equivalent levels) to press for reforms. Thus Reformism as a trade union model assumes as given the existence of a viable labour (pro-labour or Social-Democratic) party with the enthusiasm to align with organized labour and effectively represent the latter in Parliament. And this assumption is not surprising. Because theory has to arise from, and express, the actual, which in turn has a context, reformism is an expression of the historical and political developments in West Germany during the nineteenth century. Relevant to the reformist model therefore was the existence of a strong Social Democratic Party in West Germany at the time. In the Nigerian context the politics of Regionalism induced by the British Colonial administration, and the failure of a significant pro-labour political party to emerge from colonialism meant that during the six years of post-independence civilian parliamentary regime the trade union movement, neither implicitly nor explicitly, formed a well represented constituency in the national parliament. In fact, as will be demonstrated later, attempts to align with national political parties often tended to cause disunity within the labour movement.

It is the trade union model of economism that the

Nigerian labour movement most closely approximates.⁴⁹ Unable either to form a political party of their own or to establish working alliance with pro-labour political parties, and given an underdeveloped context in which wages have traditionally failed to keep pace with inflation, Nigerian workers organized in trade unions have principally concentrated on demands for increased wages, even though, as we shall argue in the last chapter of the thesis, the so-called wage increases do not seem to do them any good.

Thus it has come to be that much of the very few published works on Nigerian trade unions have tended to reflect their basic economism.

(ii) Labour Aristocracy Thesis

The thesis has come down in the history of organized labour as an attempt to describe and explain trade union economism.⁵⁰ As applied to Africa, the thesis has two versions. Frantz Fanon has described the African wage workers as being the most privileged and favoured section of the society, lacking any revolutionary political potential.⁵¹ On a more specific note, Giovanni Arrighi and John Saul seek to identify some links between African urban workers and other sub-groups which both put the former in a privileged position and make them identify up-ward. They maintain that

Higher wages and salaries...foster the stabilization of the better-paid section of the labour force whose high incomes justify the severance of ties with the traditional economy. Stabilization, greater bargaining power, and further increases in the incomes of this small section of the labour force, which represents the proletariat proper of tropical Africa. These workers enjoy incomes three or more times higher than those of unskilled labourers and together with the elites and sub-elites in bureaucratic employment in the civil service and expatriate concerns, constitute what we call the labour aristocracy of tropical Africa.⁵²

On the face of it, this thesis might appear capable of explaining the economism of these workers when they engage in trade union activities. But a more critical examination of the perspective shows that in fact, it has no immediate relevance either to Africa in general or Nigeria in particular.

Debating the relevance of the thesis to Africa in general, Peter Waterman⁵³ summarizes other research to point to the facts that (a) the economic gap between skilled urban labour and other urban and rural poor is in fact not such as is asserted by the thesis and (b) sociologically and politically, the urban working classes tend to identify with the other urban and rural poor and not upwards as suggested by the thesis. Waterman nevertheless concludes that within the exploited African working class there exist "active agents of conservatism", identified as "those dominating and

controlling leading positions" and those who dominate or control the working class, whether they are themselves workers or not".⁵⁴ I identify with Waterman in this conclusion and will go further and suggest that in Nigeria the state has been a strong "agent of conservatism" that dominates and controls the trade union movement.

An assessment of the relevance of the labour aristocracy thesis in the specific Nigerian context has been done by Keith Hinchliffe and Adrian Peace. Keith's empirical study in northern Nigeria⁵⁵ attempts to show that the incomes of urban wage-workers are not significantly higher than those of rural farmers, and he draws attention to the "varying opportunities which exist for female employment in the rural and urban areas",⁵⁶ indicating that females in the urban areas are less likely to be employed in income generating activity than their village counter-parts which makes the incomes of the urban wage-earning households more thinly spread.

In the work on Lagos wage-earners, Adrian Peace demonstrates that whether from the points of view of income levels, socio-economic status or political identification, the Lagos proletariat does not constitute a labour aristocracy.⁵⁷ Peace argues that from the colonial to the post-colonial period, Nigerian urban wages have been traditionally "minimal payments" which not only hardly keep up with the cost of living, but have had to be necessarily spread to cover the maintenance

of extended families, which does not place the urban wage worker in any privileged position suggested by the aristocracy thesis. Further, he maintains that rather than being a category alienated from the other urban poor and traders, the Lagos proletariat has become the "political elite of the urban masses, a reference group in political terms for other urban strata who substantially rely on the prevailing wage structure for satisfaction of their own interests in the urban arena".⁵⁸

As indicated earlier, the labour aristocracy thesis suggests a perspective which might explain the basic economism (militant or mild) of African urban workers. Critics of this perspective especially as it applies to Nigeria, have not replaced it with an alternative satisfactory explanation for trade union economism.⁵⁹ Apart from the conceptual difficulty one has in accepting Adrian Peace's view of the proletariat as a "political elite", his further view that they are populist militants does not have much supportive evidence beyond Lagos to make his views easily generalizable to the rest of Nigeria. For instance, the Adebo wage agitations which Peace uses to support much of his conclusions about the Lagos proletariat did not lead to the same kinds of conclusions in Kano, the second largest industrial city after Lagos or Zaria.

The point is this: the labour aristocracy perspective can be unsound for Nigeria, as indeed it is, but

merely faulting this perspective neither proves the opposite of the phenomenon the thesis seeks to explain, nor has a sound alternative explanation been advanced.

In the course of the present study, the economism of the Nigerian trade unions will be established, the labour aristocracy perspective rejected and a basis for an alternative explanation laid.

(iii) The Approach

A current perspective being utilized for the study of labour in the countries of the third world is that of class analysis. The approach is "rooted in (a) the study of modes of production, (b) the analysis of productive forces, (c) the figuration of relations of production, and (d) in dialectical analysis, i.e., the antagonistic relations contained in the above".⁶⁰ In the African context the approach among other things, specifies three areas as demanding emphasis:

- (1) the nature of peripheral capitalism and of the neo-colonial state, i.e., the definition of the social formation and the mode of production;
- (2) the character of the working class under the forms of capitalism prevailing in Africa; and
- (3) the nature of class consciousness and class action.⁶¹

While not dogmatically adhering to this model as outlined above, the present work identifies with the perspective in the study of trade unionism in the concrete Nigerian social formation.

Thus the perspective as applied in the present work sees the role of the state, the character of the Nigerian working class and the factors that determine this character as crucial is understanding trade unionism in Nigeria. This is further permised on the view that trade unionism in Africa can only be understood within the context of African history and environment. This premise guards against the danger cautioned by V.I. Allen, that "any attempt to abstract trade unionism from its environment and analyse it in isolation will neglect major moulding, shaping forces".⁶² And in Africa two major kinds of forces have been identified by Ronald Segal and Ioan Davies, as exemplified in their assertions, (a) "A study of African trade unionism...is much more than a survey of industrial organization. It is a study of African societies" and (b) "To consider the trade union movement in Africa is to consider too, the character of the new African governments, the direction of their development, their problems and objectives, the degree to which they effect and provoke popular participation".⁶³

I take as my point of departure on the theoretical consideration of the state, the debate on the post-colonial

state.⁶⁴ The debate is built around the concept of the "over-developed" post-colonial state, and centers on three related issues: (a) the scope or expanse of the state apparatus relative to the civil society, (b) the (changing) class basis of the state and (c) the relative autonomy of the state. The views of the leading theoretician of the concept, Hamza Alavi⁶⁵ can be briefly stated: One additional reason for the creation of the state apparatus in the colonies was the need to ensure absolute "dominion over all indigenous social classes" including the ability to effectively put down all resistance from these classes. To make this possible, strong military and police forces developed as part of the super-structure, giving rise to Alavi's view that in the colonies the state apparatus was "overdeveloped" relative to the economic base. In terms of its class basis, the state under colonialism was in the hands of the dominant class, the metropolitan bourgeoisie. In terms of autonomy, the colonial state was autonomous of the indigenous bourgeoisie, but manipulated by the metropolitan bourgeoisie. Alavi further contends that the post-colonial society inherits this "over-developed" state apparatus and thus the post-colonial state continues to be overdeveloped. Moreover, with attainment of political independence, the class basis of the post-colonial state changes fundamentally, as three important

classes emerge: the indigenous (merchant) bourgeoisie, the landed aristocracy and the metropolitan bourgeoisie, all having conflicting and competing interests making it impossible for the state any longer to remain the instrument of any one class, by which token the post-colonial state acquires a relatively autonomous role regulating the activities of the three classes. To summarize Alavi's point of view: the post-colonial state is overdeveloped, it is not an instrument of any one class, and is relatively autonomous.

Siding with Alavi, John Saul makes a point which is crucial to our interests here. He sees the state bureaucracy itself as a class in the making, using state power or access to this power to acquire private property.⁶⁶

Opposing both Alavi and John Saul, Colin Leys rejects the very concept of "overdeveloped" state, argues that the dominant class is still the metropolitan bourgeoisie and that the post-colonial state is not autonomous.

While we do not find the concept "overdeveloped" to be particularly helpful (especially as its theoreticians fail to specify at what point the state is "just developed" or when it becomes "underdeveloped") we nevertheless subscribe to the view that in colonial and post-colonial societies the state has assumed an important, central and decisive role in the economy.

Once we understand colonialism in Nigeria (as elsewhere) as a stage in capitalist expansion, we begin to see the role of the state as geared towards organizing production to meet the demands of British capital at home. Put in this perspective then, the colonial state in Nigeria becomes the direct representatives of British capital in the colony. By the same token we see the role played by the colonial state in the emergence of urban wage labour and labour organizations as in fact a role directly played by capital. Add to this the fact that British capital in the colony took the form of merchant capital (and not industrial capital) and we have a sufficient outline of a framework within which to understand the emergence of wage labour and trade unionism in Nigeria during the colonial period. This is taken up in chapters two and three of the thesis.

The nature of the post-colonial state in Nigeria differs slightly from the colonial state. Principally due to the discriminatory access to, and control over, the process of capital accumulation during the colonial period⁶⁸ and the locational divorce between the processes of surplus extraction and accumulation (Nigeria was the location for extraction, Britain for accumulation) during the same period, the indigenous bourgeoisie that came to prominence in post-colonial Nigeria seriously lacked a strong material base. To consolidate its base for

effective accumulation, the bourgeoisie in post-colonial Nigeria has laid high premium on access to and control of the state, and as Emeka Ekekwe has well observed, the state has come "to serve the class interests of those who controlled and/or had access to its apparatuses".⁶⁹ Thus when we talk of the post-colonial state in Nigeria we refer to those group of Nigerians who have had access to and control over the nation's administrative, coercive and legal apparatuses, and who use these to further the interests of capital. And it is in this framework that we situate our understanding of the role of the state in trade-unionism in the post-colonial period. And it is difficult not to see this in terms of class struggle.

Our major point here is that both in the colonial and post-colonial periods, we see the role of the state in trade unionism as in fact the role of capital in the development of labour, and it is as such that we examine its impact on this development.

The other side of the issue is the problem of ethnicity. It is our contention that ethnicity in Nigeria arises from, and is reinforced by, the peculiar Nigerian peripheral capitalist relations of production. This is so in two specific ways: the possibility of the wage earners' access to and ownership of means of production in the rural areas besides their labour power works to reinforce urban-rural links which, as we pointed out earlier, are in fact, ethnic ties. This in

itself is a factor strong enough to weaken the solidarity of urban wage workers and to affect their behaviour in trade unions. But there is an additional factor. In Nigeria the state apparatus as such has come to represent a major means of production, and those seeking access to and control over the state often make their appeals for support along ethnic lines and thus emphasise ethnic differences and identification. And in this sense ethnicity or tribalism becomes an ideology of the ruling class. As Archie Mafeje maintains,

There is a real difference between the man who, on behalf of his tribe, strives to maintain its traditional integrity and autonomy, and the man who invokes tribal ideology in order to maintain a power position, not in the tribal area, but in the modern capital city, and whose ultimate aim is to undermine and exploit the supposed tribesmen. The fact that it works,...is no proof that 'tribes' or 'tribalism' exists in any objective sense. If anything, it is a mark of false consciousness on the part of the supposed tribesmen, who subscribe to an ideology that is inconsistent with their material base and therefore unwittingly respond to the call for their own exploitation.⁷⁰

Nevertheless, the point is whether it represents an objective reality or false consciousness, ethnicity or ethnic identification constitutes a real alternative to working class consciousness in Nigeria.

Put in perspective then, we have a vicious circle: those with access to the state apparatus use it to wage a class war against the working class, particularly by the tight control over their institutions, the trade unions;

and to gain access to the state, the ruling class use an ideology detrimental to the political unity of the working class, to which the latter seems to subscribe. This situation then, provides an adequate basis for examining the emergence and development of workers' organizations in Nigeria. This task is taken up in the chapters that follow.

METHODOLOGY

The methodological approach used in data collection for this work is that of historical analysis. The bulk of the materials is a product of extensive library research conducted in the McMaster University and University of Toronto Robart libraries. As the period covered by the work is rather extensive - from about 1860 - 1978 - the material has been necessarily highly selective. As will be obvious from the references much of the data comes from published results of systematic research on various aspects of Nigerian history on the period covered by the present work. As very few works have been published on the Nigerian labour movement, the methodological strategy was to consult every known published work on the subject. To a large extent this was a success.

Some of the data is taken from original government documents while some is from articles and labour columns of Nigerian newspapers.

Limitations

The major shortcoming in the data is the inavailability of adequate statistical information which is a reflection of the poor statistical situation in Nigeria. This makes it difficult to be precise when and where the nature of the argument demands precision. Another limitation is the shortage of information on trade unionism in the private sector. Though this again is a reflection of the concentration of both wage workers and trade unions in the public sector, much more research is needed on private sector trade unionism.

On the whole, however, neither these limitations nor any others seem to do any serious damage to the content and style of the arguments made here based on data from the sources specified.

F O O T N O T E S

1. Gunder Frank, Latin America: Underdevelopment or Revolution. (New York, Monthly Review, 1969), and Immanuel Wallerstein, 'The Three Stages of African Involvement in the World Economy', in Gutkind and Wallerstein, (eds.) The Political Economy of Contemporary Africa. (London, Sage, 1976), P.48.
2. Some aspects of the urban-rural phenomena have been identified. Dan R. Aronson holds that it is an impendiment to class formation and class consciousness. D.R. Aronson, 'Ijebu Yoruba Urban-Rural Relationships and Class Formation', Canadian Journal of African Studies, Volume 5, No. 3, 1971, P. 263-279; Leonoard Plotnicov has called attention to the extension and survival of traditional institutions in Jos through rural-urban communications, see Leonard Plotnicov, 'Rural-Urban Communications in Contemporary Nigeria: The Persistence of Traditional Social Institutions', Journal of Asian and African Studies, Vol. 5, 1970, P.69-70; and Aderani Adepoju, 'Migration and Socio-economic links between Urban migrants and their home communities in Nigeria' Africa Vol. XLIV, 1974, demonstrates "the deep-rooted commitments which most migrants have with their natal homes", P.394.
3. See for instance Adepoju, op cit. Research on urban-rural migration in Nigeria is scanty in spite of the increasing significance of the phenomenon. The present author has observed urban wage workers leave their jobs to settle in their rural homes. Those observed are all below the age of 30.
4. The tendency for the State to get involved in trade unionism and become a major influence has not been peculiar to Nigeria. For a similar African (Kenya) case, see Richard Sandbrook, "The State and the Development of Trade unionism", Goran Hyden, Robert Jackson and J. Okono, eds. Development Administration, The Kenya Experience (Nairobi, Oxford University Press, 1970) P. 253-295.
5. An extract from Peter Waterman's work has been presented in his "Consciousness, Organization and Action amongst Lagos Port-Workers", Review of African Political Economy, No. 13 and has been extensively used in chapter four of the present work.
6. T.M. Yesufu, An Introduction to Industrial Relations in Nigeria (London, Oxford University Press, 1962).
7. Wogu Ananaba, The Trade Union Movement in Nigeria. (London, C. Hurst, 1969).

8. Ibid. Preface P. xi
9. Ibid. P. xi-xii.
10. Robin Cohen, Labour and Politics in Nigeria. (London, Heineman, 1974).
11. Ibid. P. 252-256.
12. John Kraus, "African Trade Unions: Progress or Poverty," African Studies Review, Vol. 19, No. 3, Dec. 1976.
13. Cohen, op. cit., P. 31.
14. Sara Berry, review of Cohen's Labour and Politics, in African Economic History Review, Vol. 1, No. 2, Fall 1974, P. 25.
15. Karl Marx, Capital, Vol. 1 (New York, International Publishers, 1967), P. 503.
16. Karl Marx, Wage Labour and Capital (Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1974), P. 19.
17. Karl Marx, "Inaugural Address of the Working-Men's International Association", in R.C. Tucker, editor, The Marx-Engels Reader (New York, W. Norton & Co., 1978) P. 518.
18. Karl Marx, The Communist Manifesto (with an Introduction by Stefan Possony, Chicago, Henry Regenery & Co., 1954), P. 30-31. Also V.I. Lenin, On Trade Unions (Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1970), P.357.
19. Karl Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy (Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishing House) P. 172-75, 'The Coming Upheaval' in R.C. Tucker, op. cit. P. 520.
20. Communist Manifesto, P. 132.
21. Ibid. P. 32
22. 'Inaugural Address', op. cit. P. 512-13.
23. V.I. Lenin, What is to be Done? (Pekin, Foreign Languages Press 1975), P. 57.
24. Marx argues that with advancement of industry, many other sections of society join the ranks of industrial wage workers: the small manufacturers, craftsmen and traders who cannot cope with large-scale industrial production; the peasants and the chronically unemployed, thus making

all classes of the population potential recruiting 'zones' for the proletariat, Communist Manifesto P. 29-30, 35.

25. Capital. op. cit. P. 503.
26. V.I. Lenin, What is to be Done? P. 37 .
27. Edward Bernstein's Evolutionary Socialism (New York, Shocken Books, 1961, (original date of publication, 1899), was mainly concerned with rejecting certain aspects of orthodox Marxism: he rejected the crisis thesis and argued instead that capitalism has the capacity for adaptability through such mechanisms as the internationalization of credit, the rise of industrial trusts and cartels and improved communication systems; and he rejected the thesis of increasing misery of workers.
28. Peter Gray, The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism: Edward Bernstein's Challenge to Marx (New York, Collier Books, 1962) P. 148.
29. Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Industrial Democracy (London, Longmans, 1902), P. 703. The Webbs define a trade union as "a continuous association of wage-earners for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of their working lives", The History of Trade Unionism (London, Longmans, 1920), P. 1.
30. Industrial Democracy, P. 703.
31. Ibid, P. 818.
32. Ibid, P. 822.
33. Ibid, P. 823.
34. Ibid.
35. John R. Commons, Labour and Administration, (New York, Kelly, 1913) P. 253-261.
36. This view is also expressed by V.I. Allen, International Bibliography of Trade Unionism (London, Ferlin, 1968), P. 13. Perlman has challenged the revolutionary theory on the grounds that it is too remote from the empirical world of labour. He identifies a major difference in the concept of labour: the mentality of workers and the mentality of intellectuals, arguing that the idea of labour as "an abstract mass in the grip of an abstract force" exists "only in the intellectuals' imagination and not in the emotional imagination of the manual worker" Selig Perlman, The Theory of the Labour Movement (New York, Kelly, 1970), Preface vii, P. 9-10.

37. Ibid. P. 6.
38. Ibid. P. 9.
39. Ibid. P. 298.
40. Ibid. P. 317.
41. Ibid.
42. The discussion on the N.T.U.C. is based on Peter Waterman's "Communist theory in the Nigerian trade union movement", Politics and Society Vol. 3, No. 3, Spring 1973, P.283-312.
43. Ibid. P. 289, quoted from documents of the founding conference.
44. Manifesto of the S.W.A.F.P. (Lagos, Ribway Printers, 1963), P. 13. Quoted in Peter Waterman, op.cit. P. 297.
45. Ibid. P. 291-92.
46. Ibid. P. 307-308.
47. Communist aid included "financing of the construction of a fully equipped four-storey Socialist Publishing House in Lagos, three quarters completed in 1972; and a clinic for Dr. Otegbeye, leader of the S.W.A.F.P. As Waterman notes, "The clinic was one of a series of commercial projects proposed by the N.T.U.C.- S.W.A.F.P. Among the realised ones was the Executive De Inn, near the N.T.U.C. headquarters in Yaba, Lagos. Other projects included clubs and laundries", Ibid., P. 309-310.
48. Ibid. P. 311.
49. To the extent that even without any explicit alliance with political parties, Nigerian unions have once in a while called for reforms beyond wage matters - as when in 1963 the United Labour Congress (U.L.C.) wrote a letter to the Prime Minister and all political leaders demanding extensive reforms, (Wogu Ananaba, op.cit. P. 231-236.) - one can say that trade unionism is also characterized by "reformist economism"; but the fact that the major emphasis has been almost exclusively on wage demands through frequent strikes, a still better qualification might be 'militant' economism. See Richard Sandbrook, "The Political Potential of African urban workers", Canadian Journal of African Studies; Vol 2, No. 3, 1977. However, qualified or not, economism has generally been the dominant characteristic of the Nigerian labour movement.

50. For origin of the term, see M.A. Shepherd, "The origins and Incidence of the term Labour 'Aristocracy'", Society for the Study of Labour History Bulletin No. 37, Autumn 1978, P.51-66; C.W. Mills used a perspective based on this notion to describe the upward move of American labour leaders into the circle of power elites. See Louis Morowitz, ed. Power, Politics and People, Collected Essays of C.W. Mills (London, Oxford University Press, 1963), P.97.
51. Frantz Fanon The Wretched of the Earth (London, Penguin, 1967) P.97.
52. Arrighi and Saul Essays on the Political Economy of Africa New York, Monthly Review, 1973) chapters 1 and 3 P. 11-43; 105-151.
53. Peter Waterman, "The Labour Aristocracy in Africa: Introduction to a Debate" Development and Change Vol 6 no. 3, July 1975 P. 57-73. Related debates on Africa include Th.J. Gerold-Scheepers, "The Political Consciousness of African urban workers", African Perspectives 2, 1978, P. 83-98; Richard Sandbrook "The Political Potential of African urban workers", op.cit.
54. Waterman, "Labour Aristocracy...", op.cit. P. 71.
55. Keith Hinchliffe, "Labour Aristocracy - A Northern Nigerian Case Study", Journal of Modern African Studies 12, 1, (1974) P. 57-67.
56. Ibid. P. 64
57. Andrian Peace, "The Lagos Proletariat: Labour Aristocrats or Populist Militants?", in Richard Sandbrook and Robin Cohen, The Development of an African Working Class. (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1975), P.281-302.
58. Ibid. P. 289.
59. Peter Waterman's 'Conservatism among Nigerian Workers' (Institute of Social Studies, the Hague, Occasional Paper No. 49, Jan. 1975) might be an attempt towards providing an alternative view.
60. Editors' "Introduction", in Robin Cohen, Peter C.W. Gutkind and Phyllis Brasier, Peasants and Proletarians. The Struggles of Third World Workers. (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1979) P. 14.
61. 'Introduction in P.C.W. Gutkind, Robin Cohen and Jean Copans, African Labour History (London, Sage Publications, 1978), P.24-25

62. V.I. Allen, op.cit, P.4.
63. Ronald Segal, 'Foreward' in Ioan Davies, African Trade Unions (Penguin, 1966) P.7-8; Ioan Davies demonstrates the validity of this view in the main body of the book.
64. Because the central focus of this work is not a study of the Nigerian state as such, but rather a consideration of the impact of its role in trade unionism, I do not consider it necessary to trace the debate from Karl Marx's The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte and F. Engels The origin of the Family, Private Property and the State through Lenin, State and Revolution, to the Poulantzas-Miliband polemic and the debates bearing on it especially as these works either deal with a different period or advanced capitalist states. Thus for the present purposes we consider it appropriate taking the post-colonial state as our point of departure.
65. Hamza Alavi, "The State in Post-Colonial Societies: Pakistan and Bangladesh", New Left Review, 1972, P.59-82.
66. John Saul "The State in Post-colonial Societies: Tanzania", The Socialist Register, 1974, P. 349-372.
67. Colin Leys, "The 'Overdeveloped' Post-Colonial State: A re-evaluation, Review of African Political Economy Michael Moore also questions the relevance of Alavi's views on South Asia. See Moore, "Public Bureaucracy in the Post-Colonial State: Some Questions on 'Autonomy' and 'Dominance' in S. Asia", Development and Change Vol. 2, No. 1, January 1980, P. 132-147.
68. This is one of the major themes of K.O. Dike's Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885, (London, Oxford University Press, 1956)
69. Eme Ekekwe, "Nigeria: Class Struggle and State Creation", paper presented at the Canadian Association of African Studies Conference, University of Winnipeg, May 1-4, 1979, P.17.
70. Archie Mafeje, "The Ideology of Tribalism", Journal of Modern African Studies Vol. 9, No. 2, 1971, P. 258-9.

CHAPTER 2

EMERGENCE OF INDUSTRIAL WAGE LABOUR

1850 - 1960

INTRODUCTION

The Colonial State in Nigeria created a migrant wage labour force by the nature of the socio-economic policies it enforced. As we mentioned in the last chapter, the essence of the colonial state was to organize and restructure production in Nigeria to meet the requirements of British capitalist development at home. Thus during the colonial period, Nigeria was fully incorporated into the world market system as a supplier of raw materials. To this effect two processes of peasantsantization and proletarianization were set in motion. The former defines the changing status of Nigerian traditional subsistence farmers to that of producers of cash crops mainly for export through colonial channels, while entry into the industrial wage sector of the economy (a sector created primarily to facilitate the process of exporting materials to Britain) defines proletarianization.¹ It is with the latter process that we are concerned in this chapter, though the early wage workers often found themselves between the two. It was possible for some workers to be urban wage-earners during one part of the year and peasants during another

part, or even at the same time to be both urban wage workers and peasants. Thus a wage labour force emerged during the colonial period which, though essentially industrial and urban, had deep roots in the rural areas. The land, labour and other economic policies of the colonial state played central roles in this process. Moreover, the initial shortage of both skilled and unskilled (and continued shortage of skilled) labour, the twin notions of the "target worker" and "backward-sloping" labour supply function; the regional differences in the extent of proletarianization (and hence of trade unionism); and the illusion of an aristocracy of labour in Nigeria, all have explanations in the context of the colonial state policy. And that is the focus of this chapter. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first is a brief statement of Nigeria's pre-capitalist (pre-colonial) economy. The second part discusses the mechanics of the emergence of industrial wage labour, indicating the major moulding factors. The third section takes a look at the character of emergent working class at the end of formal colonial rule in 1960.

ORGANIZATION OF PRODUCTION IN PRE-COLONIAL NIGERIA

Debates on the nature and definition of a pre-capitalist African mode of production need not detain us here. Certain elements have emerged from the various

attempts at the parameters of such a mode of production: (a) Communal (and slave) production, (b) Tribute paying and (c) long-distance trade.² The first two are helpful in the attempt here to present the basic elements of the organization of production in pre-colonial Nigeria.

On the whole, land was the most important factor of production and the family constituted the real unit of control over both land and production. Individuals had access to land for cultivation by virtue of their belonging to a family within the community.³ Thus the concept of communal ownership often fails to specify the level of control. Generally in Nigeria, the community or the village never exercised absolute authority over land. Traditional rulers could only act as trustees, thus, in the northern territories the emirs or chiefs held land in trust for the community, in the south among the Yoruba it was the oba or King; while in the politically fragmented East a council of elders, often ad hoc bodies, constituted legitimate political authority over land.⁴ But in terms of actual control of land, as T.O. Elias records,

The Chief, (or whoever is acting as trustees) has no right ... of continuous control or detailed supervision over any land which has once been granted to a family or individual, whose right of enjoyment and use cannot be lightly disturbed unless for good cause shown.⁵

The right of occupier to land under the system contrasts, for instance with the Roman usufructuary notion

in the sense that unlike the latter situation, the Nigerian occupier's access to his family land takes "the nature of part-ownership enjoyable, at least in theory, in perpetuity".⁶

The organization of production based on land as a factor of production did not always involve only free born members of family units. Slavery was widely practised throughout the territories that were later colonized as Nigeria. But the systems of slavery in the northern, southern and eastern territories all had one thing in common: varying degrees of incorporation of the slaves into the kinship groups they served, pointing to the fact that most slaves had access to land on which they farmed their own crops.⁷ The exception were pawns who entered the debt trap by pledging "possession and use of land to the pledge creditor in return for food or other benefits till such a time that the debt is fully cleared".⁸

On the whole, however, in pre-colonial Nigeria, "the individual labourer alienated from all means of production" was not a common feature in the organization of production.⁹

Another dimension of production in pre-colonial Nigerian society was the operation of local (often craft) industries. These included canoe-construction in the coastal regions and riverbanks, textile industries using locally grown cotton; ironworks utilizing such

locally mined items as iron, tin, gold and other minerals; wood-carving using local timber; leather industries using hides and skins of such local domestic animals as camels, goats and cattle; and soap industries.¹⁰ The organization of production in most of these craft industries was based on family labour: both free and slave families. Thus in the Yoruba towns, the rudimentary division of labour that there was followed family lines: some families engaged in cotton spinning and sold to families specialized in weaving.¹¹ And as Mabogunje records, "almost every family was engaged in manufacture for the market".¹² And in Borno, as D. Denham¹³ observed, "almost every house has its rude machinery for weaving, and the finer and closer linen is here made...". In the Hausa parts of the northern territories, slaves played a major role in the organization of production. In 1825, of Kano's estimated population of about 30,000 - 40,000, slaves formed a majority.¹⁴ Thea Buttner notes that "a few landlords possessed thousands of slaves in the city-centre who worked independently as artisans, traders, and delivered a large portion of their income to the landlords".¹⁵ This situation indicates the relative autonomy of the slaves in the production process.

This brief statement about the organization of production in pre-colonial Nigeria highlights a fact

the significance of which will become manifest shortly, namely, that the social relations arising from the production process did not create a significant category of dependent labourers totally alienated from land or other means of production. This sets the stage for the understanding of the response of both free and slave subsistence producers to the demands of the wage economy introduced by the British administration and the impact of the policies of that administration on the nature of the wage labour force that emerged.

CREATION OF WAGE LABOUR

One aspect of the economic policy of the British colonial administration in Nigeria was the full recognition and preservation of the forms of land ownership they found.¹⁶ Thus, in the first two decades of the twentieth century the colonial administration twice turned down requests and attempts to establish foreign-owned plantations.¹⁷ In 1922, though the requests of certain influential elements in Abeokuta (Western Nigeria) for individual ownership and sale of land was granted, it was strictly limited to urban land, the town council firmly standing on the position that "agricultural lands be preserved against acquisition by Foreign Capitalists".¹⁸ And as far into the colonial period as 1939, at an Annual Conference of Chiefs, the Sultan of Sokoto and Emir of Zaria "asserted the inalienability of farm lands as a principle of indigenous tenure"¹⁹ in both Sokoto and Zaria districts.

And writing on the land tenure system towards the end of the colonial regime, Elias concluded "the whole law and custom of tenure in the country remains subject to the institution of group or family ownership of land which ... impedes the emergence of absolute individual titles in an very large numbers".²⁰

A related facet of British economic policy was the emphasis on the production of cash crops for export with an almost total neglect of the establishment of manufacturing industries. In fact, it was only after the second world war that factory-scale industrialization began gathering momentum. This contrasts sharply with the status of exports of cash crops. At independence in 1960, Nigeria was the largest exporter of groundnuts in the world, supplying approximately 30% of total international trade, fourteenth largest supplier of world's cocoa crop, and supplied 2% of world's rubber.²²

The significance of both the land and export-oriented policy to the emergence of a wage labour force is that those who migrated to the urban centres to engage in work possessed two dominant characteristics, (a) they did not migrate to the towns on a permanent basis, because (b) they had definite alternative sources of income in their rural farming communities.²³ This in turn meant that unless urban wages were sufficiently attractive, that is, higher than what could be earned by otherwise engaging in rural farm work both the supply and duration

of wage labour was bound to be short. We shall come back to this in the discussion of the impact of colonial wage policy. For now we will discuss the process of labour recruitment.

The major mechanisms for the creation of a wage labour force were the introduction of coined currency, improvement in transport systems, the imposition of taxes to be compulsorily paid in cash rather than in kind, and various forms of forced labour. But the introduction of coined currency as such,²⁴ did not seem to have appreciable impact on the decision to enter wage employment as there was the discretion to engage in cash crop production to obtain the currency. Almost the same can be said of the relative impact of the imposition of taxation.

As part of the policy to encourage a monetary economy the government introduced direct taxation. The ostensible aim of the tax was to have revenue to pay traditional local rulers.²⁵ The government found already in existence various forms of tributes in the North, and by 1900 they had been put on a regular and cash basis "payable on a single demand in currency instead of in kind".²⁶ In spite of the Egba riots of 1918 against the British efforts to extend direct taxation to Yorubaland, by 1924 the system was in force in the region. And similarly the Aba riots of 1929 in the East did not prevent the practice from taking root in the region

by 1930.²⁷ Of relevance to the rise of wage labour was that direct taxation pushed people to seek the shortest way of acquiring cash, to pay. And in addition to cash crops, this was to be found in wage labour. The government had directed that each worker be paid up "fully in cash, at short intervals, and without the intermediary of any middleman or chief", the system (of paying for labour in cash) which Lord Lugard claimed "has done more than anything else to popularize the system of paid labour and to create a free labour market".²⁸ Coleman maintains "as a result (of progressive imposition of direct taxation) every household was eventually required either to turn to wage labour or produce cash crops".²⁹ But the impact of direct taxation on people's involvement in wage labour can be easily overstressed. For, as has been pointed out, wage employment was only one source of income for an annual tax payment. The fact that the potential wage-earner had easy access to the means of production, (here land), the availability and relative abundance of land, the high demand for cash crops by the British commercial bourgeoisie and the low wages paid in the wage sector all meant that under normal conditions the rural inhabitants "would take up land for themselves or engage in trade and neither remain as slaves, nor seek wages for hire".³⁰ And fifty years into

the colonial era, the government was to express concern over, not movements from rural to urban centres, but a "notable exodus from the towns, which were formerly to all intents and purposes, fortresses, into rural districts."³¹

The general tendency to choose to engage in export crop production rather than enter wage employment, a result of British emphasis on export crop production and offer of low wages in the wage sector is best seen in the dissolution of the slave system and the subsequent behaviour of ex-slaves.³²

As has been indicated, organization of production in pre-colonial Nigeria to a large extent depended on the use of slave labour. In Lagos almost all of the produce exported was produced by slave labour. Similarly the economy of Ibadan was dependent on slave labour by the nineteenth century. Ijebu Ode, Abeo Kuta and Badagri all had economies with heavy reliance on slaves. But during the last decade of the nineteenth century the British administration made various efforts to put a stop to the slave system. By 1898 the sale of slaves inland was virtually abolished and in 1916 the whole system was abolished throughout Nigeria. This was at a time McCallum, the Governor of Lagos faced an acute shortage of labour and it was expected that the freed slaves would flood Lagos in search of wage employment. But exactly the opposite happened. As Hopkins records,

"the freed slaves stayed in agriculture, colonized virgin land, and by the labour-intensive application of traditional techniques brought about a massive increase in the volume of export crops placed on the market".³³ The behaviour of the ex-slaves intrigued the Governor who reported, "It has surprised me not a little to see how well they have settled down and how steadily they have taken to commerce and agriculture".³⁴ A number of reasons can be advanced to explain the behaviour of the ex-slaves (potential entrants into the wage employment), namely: the nature of slavery in Yorubaland which allowed effective access to land and, as Hopkins has pointed out, the fact that "the economic development of Nigeria during the colonial period did not involve the creation of a landless proletariat in response to demands of new urban industries", more explicitly, the argument could be made that it was the colonial state's cash crop export-oriented policy that both provided a viable alternative and explains the reluctance of the ex-slaves to enter wage employment.

This reluctance was not specific to the ex-slaves in southern Nigeria. One potential source of wage labour force was the category engaged in craft industries in the pre-colonial urban centres. As discussed earlier, a large proportion of the urban population engaged in these crafts. But in the colonial period these industries were critically undermined and almost swept out of

existence by competition from cheaply produced substitutes from Britain. And this had a displacement effect on those engaged in the crafts. Akin Mabogunje has expressed the range of alternatives open and available to them.³⁵

For some, a solution was found by engaging in the modern equivalent of traditional crafts. Thus a blacksmith might become a tinker, a bicycle repairer or mechanic; a woodworker could become a carpenter, and a weaver might become a tailor. For some trading in the various commodities demanded by the European markets provided new employment opportunities. But for the large majority, a return to the land was perhaps the safest and most certain opportunity.

That Mabogunje had left out of the range of alternatives for this urban category the possibility of entry into wage labour is not an oversight. For the destruction of the craft industries was not accompanied by establishment of their modern equivalents by way of manufacturing industries, a situation determined by the logic of the colonial situation: an almost exclusive emphasis on production of cash crops for export. This deliberate lack of attention to industrialization partly explains why the emergence of an industrial proletariat in Nigeria at the end of one hundred years of British rule, was almost still-born.

But if the British primary export-oriented policy was responsible for both the shortage of labour and a late development of an industrial proletariat in Nigeria, the colonial wage policy did even more in this

direction. The colonial wage policy was most explicitly stated by Lord Lugard, one time Governor General of Nigeria,

It is an economic disadvantage to any country if the wage rate for unskilled labour is unduly high, for it arrests development ... Since however, the wants of the African peasant are few and are not necessities,...there is as I have said, but little incentive to earn wages, and it may often happen that as soon as the small sum be required has been obtained he will cease to work. The higher the wages in such a case, the less the work".³⁶

Inbuilt in this reasoning are the twin concepts of the "target" worker and "backward-sloping" labour supply function which together essentially convey the notion that since African peasants' wants are very specific, limited and inflexible, they enter wage employment in the first place on a very temporary basis to achieve a specific objective, and their stay in wage-labour is determined by how soon they earn sufficient money for the defined purpose, in turn determined by the wage rate. These assumptions gave birth to the British policy of low wages in Nigeria.³⁷ By 1905 the colonial office declared that in Southern Nigeria "every effort will be made to keep the rates of wages as low as possible". The condition of workers in Lagos was characteristic. As Hopkins observes, "The labourers in Lagos were a minority group in a predominantly commercial community. They were also the lowest paid section of

that community, receiving 9d a day".³⁸ But the state low wage policy did not work in the expected way to create a labour surplus. Rather it was the cause of persistent shortage of labour and a trend of short term participation in the labour force up till the 1930's. Thus, in spite of the shortage of labour by 1900, there was increased emigration of labour from Lagos to Ghana. "Between June 1900 and January 1902, approximately 6500 labourers left Lagos to work on the Sekondi railway and in the gold mines of the Gold Coast (now Ghana) where the rate of pay was higher than in Nigeria".³⁹ This indicates to what extent state wage policy influenced the supply of labour for wage employment. It would also suggest the reason for the so called "target-worker". As Charles Van Onselen puts it,

"The 'target' comes from the state that desire cheap labour through the economic compulsion exerted over subsistence farmers. Under these circumstances it is perfectly rational for Africans to work only until such time as the necessary revenue has been raised. The "target" is a reflection of the pace at which the state wishes to proletarianize peasants rather than an indication of the supposed limits of African understanding of the labour market".⁴⁰

We have seen that the colonial state's land, export-oriented and wage policies were crucial in setting the pace of proletarianization. Up to the 1930's there continued to exist the problem of labour shortage. And like in many other African countries, forced labour was

to become the major technique for recruiting labour for government projects. The system of forced labour used in Nigeria actually had the impact of encouraging the development of an unstable migrant labour force. The recruitment of labour for work on the construction of railways provides an interesting point. The choice of the railway industry as an illustration serves a number of useful purposes. It was a pioneer industry and required the largest number of labourers; secondly, cutting across the whole country the railway provides a focus to examine the overall national labour policy of the state and the possible impact the policy had on the emergence of wage labour force in the different regions.⁴¹

The colonial state adopted a policy of differential treatment in the recruitment practices during the early phase of railway construction (1895-1911). In the south men entered the railway employment on individual basis whereas in the north it had to be through traditional chiefs; and people in the south were specifically prohibited from working on the northern sections of the railways, even during times of severe shortage of labour on railway construction in the north, the policy was to delay construction rather than engage or transfer labour of southern origin. In fact, "Labour from anywhere

south of the Niger was not allowed into the country north of the River".⁴² The separatist tendency also manifested itself in the wage structure for railway employees. Thus whereas the railway worker in the south was paid 1s (1s = 12d.) per day, his counterpart in the north was paid only 9d per day out of which he paid a tax of 3d.⁴³ The relatively higher wage rate in the south is partly explained by the competition for labour the railways faced from cocoa production for export. The impact of this differential treatment of workers becomes obvious as we look at the recruitment policy in the north.

As has been indicated, the colonial administration chose to work closely with the traditional chiefs in the recruitment of labour for railway construction.⁴⁴ This policy is stated clearly by the political officer in charge of Trans-Kaduna section of the western line in a letter to a Resident Engineer.⁴⁵

With regard to whether the work is to be carried out by the Chiefs or Headman I would point out to you that the policy of the Government of this protectorate has always been to work through the Chiefs or Headmen, and I see no reason for altering this policy on the railway construction work.

Thus the required labour for the railway construction was recruited by state appointed "political officers" with the co-operation of the traditional Chiefs (the labour so recruited was called "political labour").

The process is well described by W. Oyemakinde.

"Political officers went to the emirs who in turn went to the district and sub-district heads through whom village heads were reached. The village head then contacted compound heads who got householders to select which of their members would work on government railway construction. All that a particular village could produce at one time would be led away to the construction camp by the first son of the village head or some other responsible person so appointed".⁴⁶

The labourers so recruited "were not allowed to stay longer than three or four weeks after which they had to go home and be regularly employed on their farms and the like while other groups replaced them".⁴⁷ And while on the job efforts were made to ensure that the workers were under the control, not of the resident engineer, but of the political officers or traditional chiefs. It was also the case that the recruitment of "political labour" was a relatively easier exercise in certain parts of northern Nigeria, as this depended on whether or not the traditional political structure was sufficiently centralized and hierarchical to facilitate the management of coercion. Thus the recruitment of labour through the process outlined above was relatively more successful in Nupe, an area with a well developed centralized authority structure, than was the case with the Gwari, which had a different kind of community structure. This difference has been underlined by a comment by

the Resident of Gwari,

"The provision of labour in the Gwari country, split up as it is into a number of different communities, is a totally different problem to the labour question in Nupe where the Emir of Bida is paramount chief and where, in consequence, organization can be effected through him as a central authority. More political officers are obviously wanted where there are many independent chiefs than in a state where there is one."⁴⁷

This difference in political structure also lies behind the fact that it was only the Gwari people who undertook armed resistance against force labour by killing the political officer Mr. Vanrenen and 11 indigenous policemen who had accompanied him to the Gussoro village.⁴⁸

This is not to suggest that in other areas peasants easily submitted themselves to conditions of forced labour. Even in the Nupe section of the railway" as Mason indicates, resistance took the form of flights.⁴⁹

But what made "political labour" even the more unattractive was the extremely low wages that eventually got into the hands of the workers. Besides the wages themselves being so low, the manipulations and extortions by the local recruiting staff made what eventually became the workers' own money rather insignificant. Reporting on the conditions in Zaria, Mason notes

Labourers who resisted conscription were punished by the Emir. Those who did not were exploited by their own headmen or other usurers so that when they were paid at the

end of the month they had to hand over two thirds of their wages. ...Not unnaturally did men avoid working on the railway.⁵⁰

Although railway construction reached its peak by 1912, and despite criticisms against the use of "political labour", as Mason observes, "As late as 1925 there were still over 3,000 men forcibly recruited to work on the railways in Northern Nigeria".⁵¹

Part of the overall result of this mechanism of creating a wage labour force was that a majority of those who first came in contact with industrial wage labour and who would have formed a wide basis for the formulation of a working class in fact went back to their rural homes permanently. As Mason puts it:

of the thousands of peasants conscripted to work on the railway lines from 1907, most returned to the oblivion of rural life with little more than a sharpened awareness of the conspiracy of exploitation which had developed between their chiefs and the Europeans.⁵²

These policy measures as discussed above reflect the essential character of a colonial state whose concerns were geared towards obtaining both (a) agricultural products (namely: cotton and ground nuts) for export, and (b) cheap labour for the construction of transport systems designed to facilitate the export of these crops. In fact, as Hopkins rightly observes, "The principal aims of the British policy was to create the political conditions most favourable to the develop-

ment of an export economy; there was no desire to see the Pax Britannica inaugurate a social revolution".⁵³

And the effects of these policies on the emergence of wage labour in Nigeria are yet to be properly assessed. For one thing the process of proletarianization was severely checked. Particularly in the north this policy delayed the development of a wage labour force with a continuous experience in wage employment which in turn affected their perception of the struggle between employees and employers. Moreover, as has been pointed out in the discussion of the recruitment process especially in the north, the policy induced migratory labour. Under conditions of low wages, relatively higher prices of agricultural products, and state specifications as to how long one had to stay in employment before compulsory leaving, the labour force that emerged had to be of a migratory type. As a matter of fact, in Africa as a whole, wage levels were set by employers and governments with consistent allowance for "rural supplementation", thus building into the employment and remuneration structure the necessary condition for "periodic return to the villages".⁵⁴ The phenomenon of labour migration in colonial Nigeria will be taken up at a later stage in this chapter.

We have tried to indicate the major policies of the colonial state with regard to the emergence of wage

labour in the early decades of colonial rule, and it has been indicated that the problem of labour shortage continued to plague the state. Even though the use of forced labour enabled the state to count on an adequate supply of labour by 1918, the shift from labour shortage to labour surplus was to wait for the 1930's. The shift from labour shortage to labour surplus can be explained by three factors: (a) increase in wages, (b) the depression of the 1930's and (c) world wars I and II.

(a) The first attempt to systematically formulate an official wage policy by the colonial state was the Hunt report of 1934.⁵⁵ The report and its recommendations marked the beginning of the state practice of dividing the country into wage zones and basing wage levels in each zone on the local costs of living, notwithstanding the Hunt Committee's declaration that "no account is taken of the cost of maintaining a labourer's wife and children".⁵⁶ Thus unskilled government workers had their first wage award which raised wages to take account of "local living costs" in 1937.⁵⁷ Beginning with the thirties, the remaining part of the colonial period witnessed several wages review commissions: there were two wage reviews in 1941 and 1942 "which together raised by 50% the starting rates of pay for unskilled workers in Lagos";⁵⁸ the post-war

1946 Tudor-Davies "Inquiry into the Cost of Living in Nigeria"; the 1947 Miller Report on "Unestablished and Daily Rated Government Servants"; the 1955 Mbanefo "Review of Salaries and Wages".⁵⁹ What makes the relative improvement in wages during the thirties a valid explanation for the shift to labour surplus is also the fact that this period coincided with the slump of the thirties, a point to be taken up shortly. For as Weeks observes:

The trade slump of the late 1920's and 1930's hit Nigeria particularly hard, leading to extensive recorded redundancies in tin mining, rubber production, and logging industries ... there were also declines in cocoa-growing areas, although no figures are available.⁶⁰

Thus at a time when cash crop production was hit by world prices, any increase in wages, no matter how small, was likely to influence the supply of labour. But in making this argument, two very critical qualifications with their attendant interpretations have to be made at this point. The first is ironic: though, as we have seen, the 1930's marked the beginning of any serious consideration by the colonial state for raising wages, the decade has also come down in Nigerian labour history as ushering in a period of official wage restraint. The second qualification is that all the state-appointed wage award commissions listed above had one thing in common:

the determination to set wage levels at par with local non-wage incomes. The reason was simple: to prevent rural-urban income inequalities. Thus the 1946 Tudor-Davies report cautioned that "undue emphasis on social considerations in wage policy might generate gross inequalities in the rural-urban wage structure",⁶¹ in the same manner the 1947 report "sought to set local wage rates for government unskilled labourers at the approximate level of non-wage incomes".⁶² These two qualifications have introduced crucial elements in this analysis: the so-called policy of "wage restraint" was merely a disguised continuation of the low wage policy; and, secondly, the fact that urban wage levels were closely tied to the levels of local non-wage earnings rules out any notion of a labour aristocracy composed of urban wage workers as against the other urban and rural groupings, an argument we shall return to shortly. For now we can only state that notwithstanding its deceptive character, the systematic attention the colonial state began to show to wage matters beginning from the 1930's deserves mention in explaining the shift from labour shortage to labour surplus. We further suggest that the apparent reversal of wage policy by the colonial government in the 1930's can be partly explained by the fact that during this time political movements were

emerging which made specific appeals to the emerging working class. Thus the change in policy can be interpreted as efforts by the colonial government to pacify wage labour. It is interesting to note that it was also during the 1930's that the administration began to show active interest in matters of trade union organization, in this case in order to be able to control these organizations the more effectively. We shall return to this in the next chapter.

(b) As has been indicated, the economic depression of the 1930's contributed to the creation of a labour surplus in Nigeria. Apart from the indirect effect the depression had through the fall in prices it also had the negative and direct effect of creating redundant labour. For, due to the depression both government and private employers cut down their demand for labour and as a result there was an excess of supply of labour.⁶³ The depression therefore marked part of a watershed between forced labour and ordinary labour.

(c) Both world wars were significant events in the rise of industrial labour force in Nigeria. Under war conditions many people joined the armed forces and other strategic industries, either by voluntary enlistment or by conscription. At the end of World War II about 80,000 demobilized soldiers and other servicemen

(who had acquired certain skills in the armed forces) joined those in active demand for wage employment.⁶⁴ As Weeks has documented, "Between 1945 and 1948 over 115,000 Nigerian troops were demobilized, of whom 90,000 registered for wage employment".⁶⁵

Thus, from the 1930's the combined effects of the colonial state wage policy, the economic depression and the two world wars transformed a situation of labour shortage into one of more or less abundant labour. Moreover, with the development of railways and roads which made possible the distribution of imported items to be paid for in cash, and as other forms of payments like dowry increasingly became transacted in cash, the need to enter wage employment became an established fact. In the remaining section of this chapter we shall consider the characteristics of the wage labour force that had emerged by the time Nigeria became independent in 1960.

MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COLONIAL INDUSTRIAL LABOUR FORCE

By the end of one hundred years of colonial rule in Nigeria, colonial state had created a dependent, migratory, numerically small, poorly paid working-class with a truncated consciousness. What follows in this section is an amplification of this view.

(a) LABOUR MIGRATION

Very little research has been done on the phenomenon of labour migration in the colonial period. But the little data that there is suggests useful ideas. In the 1951-52 dry season extending from October to March, the Federal Department of Statistics conducted a census on the migration of workers in Sokoto Province.⁶⁶ In terms of volume the study covered 259,000 migrants, approximately 25% of the labour force of the province. 52% gave their reasons for migrating as "seeking money", 16% seeking food", 24% trade, 6% customs", and 2% moved for "other reasons". Table 1 shows data on the stated destination of the migrants.

TABLE 1. STATED DESTINATION OF MIGRANT LABOURERS
ORIGINATING OR PASSING THROUGH SOKOTO
PROVINCE, 1952-3*

<u>DESTINATION</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>%</u>
Zam fara	26,000	31
Western Nigeria (excluding Lagos)	18,000	21
Northern Nigeria (other than Sokoto)	12,000	14
Jos Tin Mines	10,000	12
Gold Coast (Ghana)	10,000	11
Rest of Nigeria	5,000	6
French Territory	4,000	5

*Adapted with modifications from John F. Weeks, "The Impact of Economic Conditions and Institutional Forces on Urban Wages in Nigeria, Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies, 13, 3, 1971 P. 333 Table VI; culled from Office of Statistics, "Report on Labour Migration -- Sokoto Province" (unpublished report to the Office of Statistics, mimeo 1953, Table 16)

The data indicates that more than half of the migrants were motivated by the desire to gain money possibly in wage employment. But more striking is the fact that only for 12% of the survey population is there an indication of a movement to urban wage labour: those migrating to the Tin Mines of Jos. The majority were migrating to engage in rural agricultural wage labour. 31% intended going to the farmland of Zamfara in Northern Nigeria; 21% were heading for the cocoa farms of Western Nigeria, while a percentage equal to those migrating to the Tin Mines, 11% were travelling as far as to Ghana presumably to seek wage employment on cocoa farms or trade.

That a very low proportion of the migrants was inclined to urban wage employment is not inconsistent with the general character of the economic policy of the colonial state. Life in the urban centres was expensive and uncertain. The policy of the state in the areas of housing, rents, wages and other infrastructure was not geared towards encouraging the wage worker to stay in cities. As Hopkins observed, "the administration needed urban labourers, but it did not intend to acquire them at the risk of widespread social upheaval", meaning both that the state did not want to see an urban working class with sufficient roots in the urban setting to cut them off from the land, nor (consequently) an urban

working class with common traditions of residence or length of stay in the towns to turn them into a restive social force -- which partly explains why even those who succeeded in settling in urban areas to engage in wage labour still maintained strong roots with their rural areas of origin. Data on urban-rural ties in Enugu at the end of colonial rule illustrate this tendency, as observed in the table below.

TABLE 11. SURVEY DATA ON URBAN-RURAL TIES IN ENUGU NIGERIA, 1961

Dimension of Relationships with 'Homes'	49 Railway Workers	49 Market Traders	59 Senior Civil Servants
Wife at home	39% of Married Men	9%	2%
Children at home	54% of fathers	18%	19%
Visit home at least once a year	87%	92%	88%
Land Rights	All claim land rights		
Intend retirement at home	92%	98%	66%
Desire burial at home	98%	96%	84%

Source: Adapted, with modifications, from Joseph Gugler and William G. Flanagan, "Urban-Rural Ties in West Africa: Extent, Interpretation, Prospects and Implications", African Perspectives, 1, 1978, p.

The survey data is fairly representative of the Nigerian situation in general: the tendency of urban-based workers to leave their wives and children at home, to

maintain continuity of contact through frequent visits to the rural homes, to have land rights in the rural communities, and the desire to go back home after retirement.

And it is in this sense that it becomes necessary to distinguish between two kinds of migrations regarding colonial wage workers; there were the migratory workers and the migrant workers. The Sokoto case exemplifies the first type while the Enugu railway workers relate to the second. "Migratory" labour refers to what the Department of Labour described in 1956 as "large numbers of peasants who moved from the farms and villages to the towns after the planting and harvesting season in search of part employment, and returned to the farms before the next planting season".⁶⁷ The Enugu railway worker differs from this category of labour, but as T.M. Yusef rightly insists,

"he remains 'migrant' in the sense that whether the period of wage employment is two years or twenty, he does not regard his place of employment as home; the village remains home with which continuous contact is maintained".⁶⁸

Thus, in spite of the relative decline in the significance of "migrant" labour over the years as noted by Robin Cohen,⁶⁹ I would argue that by the end of colonial rule in Nigeria, the urban wage labour force that had emerged was almost wholly migrant.

(b) THE SIZE AND DISTRIBUTION OF THE WAGE-EARNING POPULATION

By the time of Independence in Nigeria, the wage-earning population stood at nearly 800,000, about 2% of the total population.⁷⁰ A careful examination of the data regarding the distribution of wage earners by 1960 reveals certain facts relevant to the major argument here. Table 111 shows the relevant data.

TABLE 111. DISTRIBUTION OF WAGE EARNERS IN NIGERIA BY
REGION AND TYPE OF EMPLOYER, 1959*

<u>TYPE OF EMPLOYER</u>	<u>EAST</u>	<u>NORTH</u>	<u>WEST</u>	<u>SOUTHERN</u>	<u>LAGOS</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>%</u>
				<u>CAMEROONS</u>			
Federal Government	6,800	9,000	7,400	1,400	26,200	51,300	11
Regional Government	18,300	33,900	18,400	5,600		76,200	16
Local Government	26,400	32,000	26,700	4,800	4,200	134,100	20
Public Corporations	18,700	10,400	16,200	17,200	21,000	83,500	18
Commercial & Other	26,400	53,900	24,500	9,600	41,800	156,200	30
Voluntary Agency	3,000	1,400	4,100	700	1,300	11,500	2
<hr/>							
All Employees	100,100	141,100	97,300	39,300	94,300	472,700	100

Source: *Adapted from T.M. Yesufu op.cit. P. 14, Table 2, as Table 1 in Report on Employment and Earnings, September 1959 (Federal Office of Statistics, Lagos). The report covered only workers in undertakings employing 10 or more persons, while the records actually showed 519,000. T.M. Yesufu maintains that other records of the Ministry of Labour provide sufficient basis for arriving at the figures 700,000 to 800,000 as the approximate population of Nigeria at the time.

Despite the severe limitations of this data it draws attention to certain significant facts. The first is the numerically small size of the wage-earning population. Even the seemingly inflated figure of 700,000 - 800,000 would just make up 2% of the total population at the time of independ-

ence. Comparative data makes the picture even much more striking. Thus between 1947 - 1950 the percentage of adult male population engaged in wage employment in Nigeria was 4, whereas the comparative figure in Ghana was 15; in Kenya 25; and in Southern Rhodesia, 40.⁷¹ This numerical smallness is hardly surprising. For the greater part of the colonial era, the simultaneous demand of the government for wage labour, and the mercantile bourgeoisie's demand for cash crops for export predisposed most people to opt for engagement in the latter. Moreover, for reasons historically obvious, the colonial government paid little attention to manufacturing industries. Hardly any wonder then, that at independence those engaged in wage labour still constituted a small proportion of the total population.

A second factor that emerges from the data in Table 3 is the dominant position of the state as major employer. At least 65% of those engaged in wage employment were State employees. The effect this had on the conduct of industrial relations will be discussed in the next two chapters. The third fact arising from the data is the imbalance in the regional distribution of the population engaged in wage labour. Thus, out of the total population engaged in wage labour, the North makes up only 30% in spite of the fact that each census in the colonial period shows that the North made up more

than half of the country's total population. 52% in 1952-53.⁷² This is again consistent with our arguments here. For, though its differential labour and educational policies in the regions, the State delayed the emergence of a wage labour force in the North more than the delay in the South, more especially in terms of skilled labour. As Wale Oyemakinde observes, "if by 1911 skilled railway labour was scarce in the south it was non-existent in the north. As far as the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria was concerned, even the development of a permanent unskilled work force was delayed considerably".⁷³

We have seen that in terms of the size and distribution of the wage-earning population during the colonial era, the policies of the colonial state destined the number to be very small and disproportionately concentrated in the southern half of the country. We shall next consider the question of whether this numerically small section of the colonial population constituted a labour aristocracy by virtue of the wages they earned.

(c) WAGES

We have already considered some aspects of the colonial wage policy, the two outstanding features of which were (a) Keeping wages low, and (b) basing wage levels on the levels of local non-wage incomes. A look at the minimum wage levels for government workers in the last

two decades of the colonial rule provides a basis for assessing the significance of the state wage policy for the emergent urban working class.

TABLE IV. MINIMUM WAGES FOR WORKERS IN GOVERNMENT
EMPLOYMENT IN LAGOS, IN 1947 - 1960*

(In shillings per day)

	<u>UNSKILLED</u>	<u>SEMI-SKILLED</u>	<u>SKILLED</u>
1946	2.6	2.7	4.5
1947	2.6	2.7	4.5
1948	2.6	2.7	4.5
1949	2.7	2.7	4.5
1950	3.0	2.7	4.5
1951	3.3	2.7	4.5
1952	3.4	3.0	6.0
1953	3.8	3.5	6.0
1954	4.7	4.0	6.0
1955	4.7	5.9	7.5
1956	4.7	5.9	7.5
1957	4.7	5.9	7.5
1958	4.7	5.9	7.5
1959	4.7	5.9	7.5
1960	5.8	7.6	8.7

*Compiled from Gerald K. Helleiner op. P.444-447, Tables 1-B-6
1-B-7 & 1-B-8

Though comparative data for levels of increases in the non-wage earning urban and rural sectors is lacking, we know that the minimum wages for unskilled workers were based on estimated income levels of urban and rural non-wage workers in order to prevent rural-urban income inequalities from emerging.⁷⁴ Granted that, we can safely argue that in terms of income differentials, unskilled urban workers hardly constituted an aristocracy over urban and rural self-employed workers. Furthermore, a closer look at wage differentials between unskilled and

skilled workers was not as big as is often supposed. In the fifteen years covered by the data at no time did skilled workers earn even twice as much as unskilled workers. And if we can extend the point on the basis of the fact of rural incomes being at par with incomes of unskilled workers, we can argue that the incomes of the highest paid urban wage-workers were not significantly different from incomes of other urban and rural self-employed workers. And when we take into account the increase in real wages over the years as opposed to money wages, the point becomes more fully established. Table V shows the trends in real and money wages over the last decade of colonial rule.

TABLE V. INDEX OF MONEY AND REAL WAGE RATES FOR UNSKILLED WORKERS IN LAGOS

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>MONEY WAGES</u>	<u>REAL WAGES</u>
1951	100	100
1952	124	132
1953	129	133
1954	140	137
1955	186	175
1956	186	160
1957	186	160
1958	186	160
1959	201	166
1960	233	182

Source: Adapted with modifications from John F. Weeks, "Wage Policy and the Colonial Legacy -- a Comparative Study". Journal of Modern African Studies, 9, 3, 1971, P. 384.

As Table four indicates, during the greater part of the last decade of colonial rule, real wages of unskilled workers were rising much more slowly than the money wages.

Thus, whereas money wages increased by 133% between 1951 and 1960, real wages only increased by about 80%. And when account is taken of the erosion of even the real wages caused by economic forces of dependence and obligations between urban and rural and extended family members what can be seen is an impoverished urban working class, hardly a labour aristocracy.

The discussion on labour aristocracy as the concept relates to wages leads us to a related question of the class character of the colonial (and post-independence) working class, an issue which will be more fully addressed in the next two chapters. For now we can only attempt to locate the colonial working class in the urban-rural structure.

The major employers of labour in colonial Nigeria were the government and private (commercial) firms. As they had their headquarters in the towns and operated mainly there, a vast majority of the wage-workers were urban-based. As we have sought to show, though town-based, the workers still maintained strong links with rural areas.⁷⁵ In the towns where workers lived, both physical and social structures existed which tended to reproduce communal settings. The settlement patterns followed ethnic lines. In Lagos, as Peter Marris notes, while the Korubas accounted for 75% of the town's population by 1960, and also accounted for over 50% of

the population of each ward, there was the tendency for them to cluster in particular zones like the western end of Lagos Island which was over 90% Yoruba; eastward across the island, 76% Yoruba; and Ebute Metta, 83% Yoruba.⁷⁶

In Jos, the colonial administration actively encouraged and enforced this pattern of settlement. And as Leonard Plotnicov observes,

Once the pattern had been established, immigrants gravitated toward more familiar neighbourhoods either because they were of the same religion, culture, family, tribe, or were friends ... Although wards and quarters are not given official tribal designations, there is significant ethnic clustering ... Biron, Ibo, Yoruba, Calabar and Urhobo clusters are particularly noticeable.⁷⁷

The case of Kano is also instructive. A government report on Metropolitan Kano summarizes the situation,

In urban Kano, there are three main distinct social patterns. The classical Mohamedan Hausa structure primarily in the city, and outer metropolitan areas ... the Ibo community whose social ties are probably more with their home community than with Sabon Gari and Gwrgwada where they live.⁷⁸

The significance of this separatist urban pattern of settlement is that, outside the workplace the urban workers' most immediate milieu of socialization was a complex of kinship structures which together produce and reinforce a form and content of consciousness posing as a competitor with working-class consciousness. Thus by 1960 the consciousness of the urban wage workers as a

class could at best be seen as "truncated" consciousness.

Besides the physical structure of the urban centres, social institutions existed which catered exclusively for kinship and ethnic interests, thus operating to extend and reproduce rural structures within urban centres. For instance, the Ibo Union in Kano was the institution with which the Ibos in Kano primarily and most strongly identified. The Union had primary schools and a secondary school catering almost exclusively for the Ibo community.⁷⁹ Similarly, such urban associations existed in Jos, Ibadan, Lagos and other towns in the colonial era. As we shall try to show in later chapters, such urban organizations vied with trade unions for the loyalties of urban workers.

To conclude, we have tried to show in this chapter firstly, that in pre-colonial Nigeria the organization of production was such that there did not exist a significant category of people who could easily be pulled into wage employment in an economy which would demand industrial wage labour. Secondly, in the process of creating a wage labour, two factors worked against the rapid development of a proletariat: British colonial policy emphasised neither urban industrialization which could have produced a large-scale urban proletariat, nor large-scale agricultural schemes which might have produced a rural

Besides, in attempting to create wage labour without a free labour market - that is, failing to relate wages to demand and supply of labour - the process of proletarianization was severely checked. And thirdly, we have shown that the result of the state labour policies was the emergence of a working class that was migrant, small in size and impoverished.

In the next chapter we examine the efforts of this emerging working class to organize into trade unions and the factors that determined the nature of the organizations in the colonial period.

FOOTNOTES

1. For similar views, see Robin Cohen, "From Peasants to Workers in Africa", Gutkind and Wallerstein, (eds.), The Political Economy of Contemporary Africa, P. 156-159; William Gavin, "Taking the part of Peasants, Rural Development in Nigeria and Tanzania, in Gutkind and Wallerstein, Ibid, P.132.
2. Samir Amin and Coquery Vidiovith, working separately have identified common features of a mode of production sufficiently distinct to be designated African. Amin sees the 'African type' as 'a combination of communal or tribute paying mode at a low level of development with long-distance trade relations'. Samir Amin, Accumulation on a World Scale, Vol. 1 P. 139-142; and Coquery Vidiovitch, disputing the relevance of associating the Asiatic mode of production with African conditions for absence of either a 'true despotism directly exploiting the peasantry' or 'generalised slavery' in Africa, defines the African mode of production as 'based on combination of a patriarchal communal economy and the extensive ascendancy of one group over long-distance trade', C.Vidiovith, 'Research in an African Mode of Production', P.C.W. Gutkind and Peter Waterman, African Social Studies (London, Heinemann, 1977), P.85; --- "The Political Economy of the African Peasantry and Modes of Production", in Gutkind and Wallerstein, op cit. P. 102-109. From a different perspective Thea Buttner the mode of production of pre-colonial African states as essentially feudal. He argues that slave-keeping was gradually transformed into 'feudal forms of exploitation' and maintains that in the economic structure of pre-colonial African states, 'the essential features of the character of production ... despite many peculiarities represented feudal relations', Thea Buttner, "The Economic and Social Character of Pre-Colonial States in Tropical Africa", Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1979, P. 275 - 289.
3. T.O. Elias, Nigeria Land Law and Customs (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1951), P.93; Victor Uchendu, State, Land and Society in Nigeria; A Critical Assesment of the Land use Decree (1978)", in Journal of African Studies, Vol. 6, No. 2, Summer 1979; P.65.
4. Ibid, P. 99

5. Ibid, P. 96.
6. Ibid. P.150.
7. For the status of slaves in the eastern parts of Nigeria see Victor Uchendu, 'Slaves and Slavery in Iboland, Nigeria'; in Suzan Miers and Igor Kopytoff, (eds.), Slavery in Africa. Historical and Anthropological Perspectives (University of Wisconsin Press, 1977), P.127-131; and K. Nwachukwu Ogedengbe, "Slavery in Nineteenth-Century Aboh", Miers and Kopytoff, op.cit. P. 136-152. For the situation in the western territories, T.O. Elias, op.cit. P. 170, and for the northern provinces, see Thea Buttner, op.cit. P. 284-85.
8. T.O. Elias, op.cit., P. 187-91.
9. Thea Buttner, op. cit. P. 289
10. See Akin Mabogunje, Urbanisation in Nigeria (New York, African Publishing Corporation, 1968), P.60-61; James Coleman, Nigeria: Background to Nationalism (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1971), P.36; R.O. Ekundare, An Economic History of Nigeria, 1860-1960 (London, Methuen, 1973) P.42-45
11. Mabogunje, op.cit. P. 82.
12. Ibid. P. 85.
13. D. Denham, H. Claperton and N. Oudney, Narratives of Travels and Discoveries in Northern and Central Africa in the Years 1822, 1823, and 1824 (London, 1828, Vol. 2), P.31. Quoted in Mabogunje, op.cit., P.60.
14. D. Denham et al, op. cit. P. 281, cited in Thea Buttner op.cit. P.288.
15. Thea Buttner, op.cit. P. 288
16. See James Coleman op.cit. P. 58. The reasons for the failure of the British to change the land tenure systems will not be pursued here as they are not critical to the problem at hand.
17. See James Coleman, op.cit. P. 59.
18. Ibid. P. 205.
19. T.O. Elias, op. cit.P. 202-203

20. Ibid. P. 359.
21. See Economic Survey of Nigeria Printed by Federal Government Printer, Lagos, 1959), P.5, 117.
22. Ibid. P.30, 31, 35.
23. An exception to this was in cases where certain rural cultivators got into the debt relations and could not pay, which often led to their pledging their crops and becoming dependent producers for others.
24. A.G. Hopkins, "The Currency Revolution in South-Western Nigeria in the late Nineteenth Century", Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, Vol. 3, No. 3, Dec. 1966, P. 473, 483; Lord Lugard, Political Memoranda, (London, Frank Cass and Co. 1970), P. 225; James Coleman, op.cit. P. 56-57.
25. At least that was Lord Lugard's stated aim. See Lord Lugard Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa (London, Frank Cass and Co. 1965), P.230-231; Political Memoranda, P. 167. But as Berg rightly observes, 'while in some cases the aim of taxing Africans was to raise revenues, more commonly direct taxes were levied primarily to force them out of the village into wage employment'. Elliot J. Berg, 'The Development of a labour in Sub-Saharan Africa, Economic Development and Cultural Change, 13, 1965, P.403.
26. Dual Mandate, P. 236.
27. Jack Woddis, Africa: The Lion Awakes (London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1961), P.10-11; James Coleman, op.cit. p.57.
28. Political Memoranda, P.225.
29. Coleman, op.cit. P. 57-58.
30. See T.M. Yesufu, An Introduction to Industrial Relations in Nigeria (London, Oxford University Press, 1962), P.7.
31. Cited in ibid. P. 8, from Political Memoranda, P. 243.
32. The brief illustration on the dissolution of the slave system derives from A.G. Hopkins, "The Lagos Strike of 1871: An exploration in Nigerian Labour History.", Past and Present, No. 35, Dec. 1966, P. 138-144.
33. Ibid. P. 143.

34. Carter to Chamberlain, Jan 9, 1896, C.O. 147/104.
Cited in Ibid P. 143.
35. Akin Mabogunje, op.cit. P. 120-121.
36. Lord Lugard, The Dual Mandate, P.404-405. Inbuilt in this reasoning are the twin concepts of the 'target' worker and backward-sloping labour supply function.
37. Information on state wage policy derives from A.G. Hopkins op.cit. P. 144-148.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. C. Van Onselen "Black Workers in Central African Industry, a critical essay on The Historiography and Sociology of Rhodesia" Journal of South African Studies. Vol. 1, No.2 April, 1975, P.237-38 (emphasis added.)
41. The discussion on railway construction draws heavily from Wale Oyemakinde, "Railway Construction and Operation in Nigeria, 1895-1911: Labour Problems and Socio-Economic Impact" Journal of The Historical Society of Nigeria, Vol. 7, No. 2 June 1974, P.303-324; and Michael Mason "Working on the Railway: Forced Labour in Northern Nigeria 1907-1912", in Gutkind et al (eds.) African Labour History (London, Sage, 1978), P.56-79.
42. Wale Oyemakinde, op.cit. P. 317, we take this with reservations as Mason reports Yorubas on railway construction sights in northern Nigeria, see Mason op.cit., P.62.
43. Wale Oyemakinde op.cit. P. 318.
44. This was in keeping with the British stated policy of indirect rule (governing through traditional chiefs) which worked best in the North.
45. Cited in Ibid, P. 316, from National Archives Ibadan, CSO 1/19 Vol. 9. Arthur Covey, Political Officer to S.G. Brounger, Resident Engineer Northern Extension, 22 Feb. 1908. Enclosure in W. Egerton to S. of S. of 25 March 1908.
46. Oyemakinde, op. cit. P. 317.
47. Quoted in Michael Mason op. cit. P. 68 from National Archives Kaduna, SPN 7/10 2888/ 1909, Gwari Labour for Railway.

48. Mason op. cit. P. 68-70.
49. Ibid. P. 67.
50. Ibid. P. 73.
51. Ibid. P. 74
52. Ibid. P. 75
53. A.G. Hopkins, "The Lagos General Strike", op.cit. P.144.
54. See African Labour Survey (Geneva, International Labour Office, 1962), P.325; Rural supplementation meaning that the urban workers were paid less than would otherwise be the case as it was believed that they could make up the difference by earning in the rural sector.
55. The account of the trends in wage policy from the 1930's is based on J.F. Weeks, "Wage Policy and the Colonial Legacy - A Comparative Study" in Journal of Modern African Studies, 9, 3, 1971, P.361-378.
56. Cited in ibid. P. 375, from Memorandum on 'Rates of Pay of Labourers and Employees in the Southern Provinces', Acting Chief Secretary's Office, Lagos, 3 September 1935.
57. Weeks, op.cit. P375.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid. P. 375-377.
60. Ibid. P. 365.
61. Ibid. P. 366.
62. Ibid.
63. T.M.Yesufu, op.cit. P. 11. This factor provides an insight in the analysis of the historical origin and development of unemployment in Nigeria. That analysis will not delay us here.
64. Ibid.
65. J.F. Weeks, op.cit. cited from Annual Report of the Department of Labour, 1948, P.3-4.
66. See R. Mansell Prothero, "Migratory Labour from North-western Nigeria, Africa, Vol. 27, No. 3, June 1957, P. 251-61; African Labour Survey op. cit, P. 130.

67. Yesufu, op.cit. P. 117. Cited from Department of Labour, Nigeria, Annual Report, 1955-6, Paragraph 31-32.
68. Yesufu, op.cit. P. 116.
69. Robin Cohen, op.cit. P. 159, Cohen incidently does not explicitly distinguish between 'migratory' and 'migrant' labour and thus fails to stress the applicability of the term 'migrant' to African urban workers to date.
70. Population statistics have historically been a major problem in Nigeria. Up to the time of the second world war, the Annual Report would yearly simply record "the vast majority of the people do not work for wages, being cultivators farming their ground, traders or craftsmen working for themselves and their own profit". See T.M. Yesufu, op.cit. P.13, culled from paragraphs 164,169, and 166 of the Annual Reports for 1935, 1936 and 1937, respectively.
71. See James Coleman, op.cit. P. 69, Table 5. Obviously the figures in these other countries include rural wage earners, a category relatively less significant in Nigeria than in these.
72. The figures are based on Gerald K. Helleiner, Peasant Agriculture, Government, and Economic Growth in Nigeria (Illinois, Irwin Inc., 1966), P. 429, Table 1-A-1.
73. Oyemakinde, op.cit. P. 315.
74. See Weeks, op.cit. P. 366; that is, preventing urban incomes from becoming too high relative to rural areas.
75. Coleman, op.cit. P.14.
76. Peter Marris, Family and Social Change in an African City: A Study of Rehousing in Lagos (North Western University Press 1962), P. 12.
77. Leonard Plotnicov, Strangers to the City, Urban Man in Jos, Nigeria, (University of Pittsburg Press, 1967), P.50.
78. Metropolitan Kano. Report on the Twenty Year Development Plan, 1963-1983, prepared by B.A.W. Trevallion (London, Oxford University Press, 1963), P. 36.
79. Ibid. P. 36.

CHAPTER 3

COLONIAL TRADE UNIONS

INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapter we examined the mechanisms and processes through which an industrial wage labour force emerged in Nigeria in the colonial era, the principal aims being to establish the major moulding forces. In the present chapter we shall seek to understand the origin and development of trade unionism in terms of the crucial role played by both the colonial state and the wider socio-economic structure. The chapter is divided into four major sections. The first one discusses the formation, organization, structure and membership of colonial trade unions; the focus here will be on the impact of the state as both legislator and major employer. The second section dwells on the issues of trade union leadership, ideology, politics, and unity. Section three sets forth the evolution of a unique system of collective bargaining and wage determination in which the state takes a central position with attendant consequences not only for the labour movement but for the whole system of industrial relations and political economy of Nigeria. The chapter concludes

with a section on trade union militant economism, the argument being that though the dominant (operative) mood of the colonial trade unions was "economistic", valid explanations go beyond those put forward by labour aristocracy theorists.

A. FORMATION, ORGANIZATION AND MEMBERSHIP OF TRADE UNIONS

Trade unions have existed in Nigeria almost as long as industrial wage employment though it was only as late as 1939 that Trade Union ordinance was passed legitimating trade unionism. Examples of trade unions that operated before the ordinance include the Mechanics Mutual Aid Provident and Improvement Association formed in 1893; the Nigerian Mechanics Union of 1919; the Lagos Mercantile Clerks Association of 1911, and the Nigerian Union of African Railwaymen formed by 1925.¹ The others more traditionally taken as operating before the Trade Union Ordinance are the Southern Nigerian Civil Service Union formed in 1912 (but later changed to Nigerian Civil Service Union after the amalgamation of 1914); the Nigerian Union of Teachers formed in 1931 and the Railway Workers Union in the same year.² Trade unionism at this time had three major characteristics, (a) they almost wholly involved only workers in government employment, with the bulk in the railway department;

(b) the unions operated mostly in the south. Strike data show that of the 25 recorded strikes between 1897 and 1939, at least 90% occurred in the south;³

(c) apart from the "Big Three" (the Civil Service Union, Nigerian Union of Teachers, and Railway Workers Union), most other unions before 1939 often only had a passing and temporary lifespan, they were often organized specifically for a strike purpose, and as Hopkins opines "... the leaders and their organizations arose with strike and disappeared soon after it had been settled, ... there is little evidence to show that the unskilled workers of Lagos had a permanent trade union at this early date".⁴

But the significant point is that Nigerian urban wage workers had recognized at a very early stage the need to organize and fight for their interests. Thus, some form of workers' organization or other had been in existence for as long as two decades before the passing of a trade union ordinance by the government which gave legal status to workers' organizations. Earlier in 1930, a directive had been sent from the secretary of state for the colonies requesting that the government take steps to regulate the formation and operation of trade unions. But even though the dispatch from the Secretary of State explicitly advised the colonial administration to allow only "acceptable" trade unionism, the administration in Nigeria did not take any immediate steps to pass trade union

legislation. Official reaction to the order urging trade union legislation was characteristic:

The view of the Nigerian Government, as well as those of the European employers who were consulted, were that the wage-earning population was still too small, that the tribal system of mutual assistance provided all the necessary protection which local workers then needed, and that the country was far from ready for the type of legislation which the "civilized world" had evolved only after a considerable period of years.⁵

Besides the dispatch from the Secretary of State for the Colonies, the International Labour Organization had also applied some pressures in 1930.⁶ But it took nine years before the colonial state in Nigeria did anything along the lines suggested by both the Secretary of State and I.L.O.

A number of events and developments in Nigeria influenced both the timing and major tone of the Trade Union Ordinance passed in 1939. The 1930's marked a period of increasing labour unrest. In fact, it is generally taken that the founding in 1931 of the Railway Workers' Union with its subsequent activities marked the beginning of militant unionism in Nigeria.⁷ Secondly, on the political scene, events involving organization of workers were increasingly becoming such as to change the attitude of the colonial state towards trade unionism from defensive hostility to aggressive intervention in order to have effective control over

the labour movement. In 1937 there was a confrontation between motor transporters and the police over the procedures for issuing licenses. Chief Obafemi Awolowo, who was later to become a leading politician, played a central role in the crisis which turned out to be a real embarrassment to the colonial administration; then in 1938 there was a clash between railway-workers and the police drawing public sympathy for the workers. Furthermore, for the first time a detailed appeal for political participation was put forward to workers by the Nigerian Youth Movement, a radical political organization, in their Manifesto released in 1938.⁸ As Nwanunobi has observed, 'from many viewpoints... the period of 1938-1939 was an auspicious one for the colonial administration to take preemptive measures if it was still to keep politics separate from trade unionism'.⁹

It is against this background that the Trade Union Ordinance of 1939 has to be understood. The ordinance defined a trade union as

any combination whether temporary or permanent, the principal purposes of which are the regulation of the relations between workment and masters, or between workmen and workmen, or between masters and masters...¹⁰

The ordinance was based, to some extent, on experience in Britain, with certain differences necessitated by the logic of the colonial situation. For instance as Sidney Webb (then Lord Passfield, Secretary of State

for the Colonies) had directed, the Ordinance required compulsory registration of every trade union if it was to be regarded as lawful. It was clearly stated that "No trade union or any members thereof shall perform any act in furtherance of the purposes for which it has been formed unless such trade union has first been registered". The decision to accept or refuse application for registration was solely in the hands of the Registrar of trade unions to be appointed by the Governor-General, and "in absence of such appointment the Federal Administrator-General shall be the Registrar of Trade Unions".¹² All registrations were made subject to cancellation at any time depending upon the "good behaviour" of the registered trade unions as judged by the Registrar of Trade Unions against whose decision either to refuse to register, or to cancel a "deviant" trade union no appeal would be taken.¹³ One would ask, why such draconian measures? And how do we explain them. The answer seems to lie in the fact that the trade union ordinance itself was a tool for class control in the hands of the colonial state, and it is only as such that we can understand its various dimensions and similar labour legislation later. For, if the emerging working class was to be prevented from becoming a strong political force and from falling "under the dominance

of disaffected persons by whom their activities may be diverted to improper and mischievous ends"¹⁴ as had been cautioned earlier by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, such measures became necessary. In the colonial situation the regime was always vulnerable to political attacks from indigenous urban groups, not least the working class. It was for the purpose of eliminating or at least minimising the threat coming from this class that the colonial administration decided from the beginning to make sure that the emerging trade unions limit their aims and objectives strictly to narrow economic matters. And one way of doing that was to take on a close supervisory role, in this case assumed by the Registrar of Trade Unions. As we shall see later, other ways included the use of direct force, imprisonment and guided educational programs for trade union leaders. Thus, besides the tendency of trade unions to gravitate towards economism left to themselves, in the colonial Nigerian situation, the state was very active, in fact, dominant in defining the paths the Nigerian labour movement was to take towards economism. As we shall argue later, this was made even easier by other factors internal to the country and its labour movement.

Another feature of the Trade Union Ordinance was the exclusion of certain categories of workers from organizing into trade unions. This category included the police and prison workers, and later the criminal code of Nigeria was amended to make possible strike activity by workers in such departments as water, electricity, fire and postal services illegal.¹⁵ This fact qualifies the argument often made that urban wage workers in Africa occupy strategic economic positions giving them a political muscle through the use of the strike weapon. In Nigeria, the colonial administrators were not unaware of this and thus went ahead to ensure that the "most strategic sectors were adequately insulated from strike activity".

Such was the nature of the Trade Union Ordinance which came into effect in April 1939. The state at last recognized trade unions, but only of a specific kind. Besides, there was nothing in the document to compel private employers to recognize and negotiate with trade unions. Be that as it may, the period after the Trade Union Ordinance was passed saw a sharp increase in the rate of unionization. The following table shows the trend.

TABLE 6

GROWTH OF LABOUR UNIONIZATION 1940-1960

(1) YEAR	(2) NUMBER OF UNIONS	(3) MEMBERSHIP	(4) PERCENTAGE INCREASE IN (2)	(5) PERCENTAGE INCREASE IN (3)
1940	14	4,629		
1941	41	17,521	93	278
1942	80	26,275	95	49
1943	85	27,154	6	3
1944	90	30,000	6	10
1945	97		8	
1946	100	52,747	3	75
1947	109	76,362	9	45
1948	127	90,864	17	18
1949-50	140	109,998	10	21
1950-51	144	144,385	3	31
1951-52	124	152,230	-14	5
1952-53	131	143,282	6	-6
1953-54	152	153,089	16	7
1954-55	177	165,130	16	8
1955-56	232	175,987	31	7
1956-57	270	198,265	16	13
1957-58	298	235,742	10	19
1958-59	318	254,097	7	8
1959-60	347	259,072	9	2

Sources: Compiled from R.O. Ekundare, An Economic History of Nigeria 1860-1960 (London, Methue, 1973) P.369, Table 18.5; James Coleman, op.cit. P. 258, Table 20; Ananaba, op.cit. P. 262, Table 8 and T.N. Tesufu op.cit. P.40, Table 4.

As the data shows both the number of unions and membership rose significantly following the Ordinance. Thus from only about three relatively established unions before the passing of the Ordinance in 1939 the number

of unions rose to 14 in 1940, an increase of more than 300%. The 1941 and 1942 increase in the number of unions and membership over the previous year were respectively 193% and 278% for 1941 and 95% and 49% for 1942. It is generally held that the Nigeria labour scene is dominated by small unions and that the increase in the number of unions tends to be higher than increase in actual membership. While we would concede that small unions proliferate the labour scene our data suggests that over the period 1943-1960 union membership in fact rose much faster than the number of unions.

The figure below compares the two aspects:

TIME SPAN	MEAN PERCENTAGE INCREASE IN NO. OF UNIONS	MEAN PERCENTAGE INCREASE IN UNION MEMBERSHIP
1943-1949	8	28
1950-1960	10	10
1943-1960	10	16

Clearly the increase in union membership was faster than that in the number of unions formed during the colonial period. Besides this, the number of workers unionized as a proportion of the total engaged in wage labour also increased considerably, rising from 17% in 1946 to 33% in 1959 which, as Yesufu notes, "would compare favourably in Asia, North America, or even Western Europe".¹⁶

Besides the stimulus to organize provided by the ordinance, other factors also necessitated organiza-

tional activity among wage workers. During the war period, between 1939 and 1946, the number of wage and salary earners rose by over 65% while the period 1939-1942 witnessed a rise in the cost of living in the urban areas of up to 70%.¹⁷ Furthermore, the order in 1942 given by the colonial administration under the General Defence Regulations making strikes illegal because of the war only increased the desire for wage workers to organize to protect their interests, which they perceived as under continual threat.

In terms of distribution by type of employer, as would be expected from our knowledge of the state being the major employer, a majority of unions and union membership were to be found in the public sector. Though data seems lacking we know for instance that of the 42,951 involved in the 1945 General Strike, 41,165 or 96% were those directly under the employment of the administration.¹⁸ The significance of this fact will be touched upon when we discuss the evolution of a Nigerian system of collective bargaining and wage determination.

The socio-economic structure which the colonial administration had carefully created and nurtured had a decisive impact on the distribution of trade unions in the country. In educational, economic, social and

political policies, the south was treated differently from the north.¹⁹ In general the two areas were administered separately, and in the North the aim was to preserve the Islamic religion and the centralised political structure as these the British system of indirect rule. Thus while primary and secondary schools were being established in the south, the missionaries responsible for this process were excluded from the north. And by 1901, whereas the south had 126 primary schools and one secondary school, there was only one primary school and no secondary school in the north. And as we have tried to point out in chapter two the labour policies pursued in the north differed from those in the south.

The result was that nearly all trade union activities were restricted to the south. As James Coleman noted, the "unionized sector of the labour force was composed exclusively of southerners".²⁰ The position is stated by Ananaba:

At that time (1959) there were very few unions in the North, the largest of them being the Tin Mine Worker's Unions which had been decimated by internal dissensions. The others were, in the main, inconsequential house organizations, which no national centre had tried to contact, and which did not seem to care anyway about central labour organizations in the country.²¹

Thus up to 1959, the end of colonial rule in Nigeria, there existed hardly any significant trade unions in

the north. This was a corollary to the fact that, as we indicated in chapter two, the colonial administration had delayed the emergence of a wage labour force in the north far more than was the case in the South.

But though almost entirely a southern phenomenon, once fully established and legally operating, the labour movement from the beginning engaged the attention of the colonial administration in a way hitherto unknown. The colonial state soon discovered that even the restrictive Trade Union Ordinance of 1939 was not enough to keep the labour movement in its "traditional" role. As has been indicated the formation of the Railway Workers Union introduced militant unionism in Nigeria. The world economic depression of 1929 was a major factor for the emergence of militancy among the railway workers. For as we indicated in chapter two, the depression affected the ability of the administration to handle its economic projects. As Ananaba notes,

The great capital works like the construction of railways, harbours, roads and telegraph lines then in progress, coupled with expanding educational and health services, meant an even heavier burden on the lean treasury...A panacea was found in mass retrenchment of public employees, in the conversion of some permanent posts to daily paid jobs, and in the reduction of working days in the month.²²

What the application of some of these economic measures in the Railway Department meant was that "the manual workers...

including artisans, craftsmen, locomotive engine drivers, permanent way men and labourers" were treated differently from those working in the offices. The grievance of the manual workers have been summarized, that:²³

- (i) while most of them were on daily rated jobs, their colleagues in the offices were on monthly contracts of employment;
- (ii) the economy measures introduced meant that their wages would no longer be calculated on a daily but on an hourly basis and this, they suspected, would reduce their pay packets;
- (iii) the economy measures also meant that some of them would not be paid on Saturdays, and this meant a further reduction of their pay packets and their purchasing power.

These grievances, all economic in nature, were not specific to the manual workers in the Railway department. That they led to emergence of militancy among railway workers can be explained by the additional factor of a leadership with a militant inclination. Among the railway manual workers this factor was supplied by Babington A. Macaulay, E.T.Z. Macaulay and Michael Imoudu.²⁴ As a matter of fact, Michael Imoudu has gone down in Nigerian labour history as the leading labour militant.²⁵

It was the case that the opposition to the hourly system of payment which had started by 1930 thus continued till 1938 when, as Ananaba records, "it was dovetailed in

a new agitation for improved conditions of employment".²⁶ Granted that the Railway Department was the largest single employer of labour, trade union militancy among railway workers was bound to worry the administration. As a matter of fact it was the case that the 1945 General Strike to which we shall soon turn was more or less a strike of the Railway Workers Union. Besides increasing trade union militancy, the decade of the forties witnessed rising interests of nationalist leaders in organized labour.²⁷ Accordingly the administration more than doubled its efforts to tighten its control over the labour movement to ensure that an "acceptable" trade unionism prevailed. This was achieved through various means including more aggressive legislation, direct and open coercion, training programs for labour leaders, and closer supervisory policy.

The years after the 1945 General Strike and World War 2 gave the administration various excuses to tighten its control over trade unions. The state became increasingly disenchanted with "the present Nigerian brand of trade unionism" and adopted measures to "improve trade union leadership and the standards of union administration".²⁸ This attitude was reflected in the recommendations of the Tudor Davies Commission, appointed in the aftermath of the General Strike of 1945,

it is no use asking the question: is the time ripe for Trade Unions in Nigeria? The point is that Trade Unions are in existence in Nigeria - de facto and de jure - and the real issue is not whether they are to be destroyed, but how they are to be directed into right paths.²⁹

The Commission went on to recommend, among other things, that the administration more often recruit labour officers from the ranks of trade unionists in Britain, that labour officers in Nigeria should undergo six months training in Britain and that the General Council of the British Trade Union Congress be more actively involved in "assisting Nigerian trade unions".³⁰ The recommendations of the Commission were fulfilled to the letter. In the first place it was decided that the Trade Union Ordinance was not being properly enforced, and so "efforts were made at a stricter enforcement of the Ordinance".³¹ Yesufu records that "Between January and October 1957, twelve prosecutions were instituted against trade unions and the same number were brought against union officials severally".³² Other means of direct coercion involved brutal treatment of strikers. This included the shooting in 1947 of UAC (United Africa Company) employees who went on strike demanding higher wages. Another incident was the shooting to death of 21 strikers in the Enugu Colliery in 1949.³³ Referring to the first incident the president of the Nigerian Trade Union Congress maintained that "Government was using all

means, fair and foul, to dwarf the growth of trade unionism in the country".³⁴ And that was exactly the kind of impact these measures tended to have on the labour movement. For if workers in the private sector who were inclined towards trade unionism faced all kinds of victimization from the employer by virtue of there being no provision to make employers recognize unions; and if striking workers both in private and government employment continued to face the risk of being shot and killed, the atmosphere hardly existed for enthusiastic commitment to trade union activities. And this would seem to be part of an explanation to the problem of trade union apathy often identified with the Nigerian labour movement.

The shooting incidents also serve as indicator of precisely whose interests the British Trade Union Congress was serving in Nigeria in its involvement with the labour movement in the country. A rebuke of the British Trade Union movement for its silence on the shootings in Nigeria by The Daily Worker of November 29, 1949 titled "Shoot 'Em Down" is instructive:

What would have happened if striking miners in a British Colony had been shot down under the Baldwin or Chamberlain Governments? An explosion from the National Union of Mine-workers, a protest from the TUC General Council, and some parliamentary fireworks from the Labour front benches. But this is not the 1930's.

Our Government is not Tory. The rulers of Britain and the colonies are the leaders of Democratic Socialism, defenders of western civilization, upholders of human rights. So when all the hypocritical phrase-mongering dissolved in the cordite smoke of the Nigerian volleys, not even a whisper is forthcoming at top level in the labour movement here.³⁵

This suggests the unity of interests of the British TUC, the labour government in Britain, and the colonial administration in Nigeria. And on this score the role of the British T.U.C. in "advising" or assisting with trade union organization in Nigeria can hardly be seen as different from the role played by the colonial state in "training" the Nigerian labour movement ensuring that only a particular kind of trade unionism emerged. This point is well illustrated by the stand of both the colonial administration and the British T.U.C. on the issue of separating labour from politics. The administration in Nigeria always insisted that the two be kept separate. Not surprisingly, and in spite of the fact that the British T.U.C. was itself deeply involved in political activity in Britain, a fact accepted by the British government as early as 1813 when it passed the Trade Union Act, the Congress was still condemning involvement of African trade unions in politics, as late as 1959.³⁶

In line with the recommendations of the Tudor Davies Commission, the administration increased its

supervisory and regulatory role by appointing special labour advisors. As early as 1941 just after the Trade Union Ordinance had been passed, a labour officer had been appointed, and as Coleman notes, the government "thereafter steadily expanded its supervisory and counselling services in the files of labour".³⁷ In 1946 special trade union officers were appointed to the Labour Department. The interesting thing was that most of the trade union officers were trade unionists in Britain. Besides there was a regular supply of literature from the British T.U.C. to local trade unions.

The other dimension of the influence of the state on trade union development was the training programmes it sponsored for trade union leaders. Unionists were given scholarships to study in Britain "under the guidance of the British Trade Union Congress". At home, a special program was started at the University College Ibadan in which Union officials underwent some training.³⁸ In 1960 a member of the National Union of Seamen of Great Britain was in Nigeria as part of the agreement between the British T.U.C. and the Electrical Worker's Union of Nigeria to "conduct educational courses" and to help in "the reorganization of the Nigerian Union of Seamen and the establishment of the Nigerian Maritime Board".³⁹

What we have tried to show here is the effort of the colonial state (aided by the British T.U.C.) through coercion, legal procedures and training programs to determine what type of labour movement was seen as best fit for Nigeria during the colonial period. That a colonial administration should be eager to see a trade union movement restrict its objectives strictly to wage demands is not difficult to understand. By design or as unintended effect the colonial administration had delayed the emergence of an industrial working class in Nigeria. But when this class did emerge it had the potential, of a proper alliance with the emerging national bourgeoisie, of undermining the continued existence of colonial rule. To check this development it was only to be expected that the colonial administration would assume a major determining role in the formation and development of workers organizations. Secondly, and this must have made matters a whole lot easier for the administration, the fact that the colonial state was both the major employer of labour and direct representatives of British capital in Nigeria meant that the state could only relate to labour the way capital would: guiding labour to develop only along such lines as would not constitute a threat to capital. And these two factors explain the coercive and restrictive role the state played to ensure that the trade unions limit their objectives and demands to economic matters. To

what extent this succeeded will be dealt with more at the end of this chapter. For the moment we will underline the fact and significance of the state being the major employer of labour. Table 7 shows the distribution of trade unions by industry by 1958.

TABLE 7

TRADE UNION ORGANIZATION BY INDUSTRY 1958*

INDUSTRY	NO. OF UNIONS	MEMBERSHIP
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	20	52,103
Mining and Quarrying	14	26,575
Manufacturing	40	10,926
Building and Construction	22	8,037
Electricity, Water and Sanitation	8	4,220
Commerce	45	7,758
Transport and Communications	66	44,458
Services	77	80,110
Others	6	1,555
All Industries	298	235,742

*Source: Adapted with slight modifications, from T.M. Yesufu op.cit. P. 41, Table 5.

Though the data does not specify which trade unions were from the public sector, we know that in the colonial period such "industries" as Transport and Communications, Services, Electricity, Water and Sanitation, and much of Mining and Quarrying were all heavily dominated by the state. Thus we can see that at least 62% of the total number of unions, and 75% of total membership were directly under state employment. But if unions in the

public sector faced the general problem of close supervision and regulation by the state, those in the private sector had additional difficulties arising from the nature of the employment situation.

Two types of employers can be identified in the private sector of colonial Nigeria: the indigenous Nigerian employer and the expatriate employer. Trade union organization faced difficulties with both; the Nigerian employer tended to engage very few workers and was paternalistic, and the big expatriate firms engaged large numbers of workers who had to contend with a racial work situation. T.M. Yesufu's characterization of the relationship between the Nigerian employer and his employees during the colonial period shows an accurate picture of the situation, and is worth quoting at length here.⁴⁰

Generally speaking, the indigenous Nigerian employer engages a small labour force, principally recruited from among members of his own clan or tribe. This smallness of the unit of enterprise and the identity of social background which he shares with his workers, have sometimes seemed to assist to insulate him to a large extent from some of the labour problems to which other employers are subjected. Such an indigenous employer is often regarded by his workers as a big brother who could be called upon, for example, to settle a private quarrel between two employees, or even to settle a family quarrel between one of his workers and a wife. Sometimes the employer belongs

to the same tribal organization as a majority of his employees; and if he regards any activity of one of them as likely to affect adversely the progress of his enterprise, such a matter could be brought up for settlement to the elders of the tribal union ... the personal bond is tightened thereby, which may create an atmosphere allowing low wages and bad employment conditions to be overlooked by the worker.

It is easy to see that such employers will either be paternalistic to the principle of unionism by their workers or be outright hostile. As Yesufu observes, most of them tend to be hostile to trade unionism, they themselves having "built a successful business from very small beginnings through sheer hard work", and also not being themselves altogether conversant with modern ideas of collective bargaining.⁴¹ This kind of opposition to trade unionism distinguishes the Nigerian employer from his counterpart in say, Western Europe. For unlike the latter, the Nigerian colonial employer might be anti-trade union because he may be genuinely ignorant, and incapable of dealing with collective negotiation.

The second type of private employer, the expatriate firms, were the major employers in commerce, manufacturing and construction. They dominated the private sector mainly because Nigerian participation was severely checked by the discriminatory issue of

import licenses by the state.⁴² As Yesufu notes, "the boss in Government and the large commercial firms was ... invariably a white man".⁴³ It is because of this dominance of whites in employment/management positions and Nigerians in labouring positions that Yesufu maintained, "Accordingly, labour-management relations in Nigeria have for long partly assumed the character of race relations".⁴⁴ The racial factor explains the strong anti-union and paternalistic attitude of these foreign firms. As Yesufu puts it, there were many big private employers who would "not tolerate the idea that trade unionism has a place in the scheme of relations with workers", while others were less intolerant but "nevertheless express fixed ideas about the type of union structure and union official with whom they are prepared to deal".⁴⁵ Again we can see that employer hostility toward trade unionism in colonial Nigeria takes on an additional explanatory dimension, the racial factor.

We now have a complete picture. In Colonial Nigeria trade unionism emerged and developed under the combined impact of state coercion and repression; and hostility and paternalism of employers in the private sector, more so as there was "nothing to compel an employer to recognize a trade union or to deal with it".⁴⁶ And all this repression, coercion, hostility and

paternalism by the employers of labour had one aim in common: if trade unionism could not be stopped, unions must be made to limit their objectives to minimum economic demands. In many aspects this was a success.

B. TRADE UNION UNITY

We have been trying to understand state intervention in labour organization in Colonial Nigeria in terms of class domination and paternalism by the colonial regime. We now take up another dimension of the issue. On their part, to what extent were colonial trade unions successful in coming together in a single organization to present a united front in their dealings with the state? This question is critical and an explanatory answer important for at least three specific reasons. Firstly, from the viewpoint of class struggle a central organization of the working class seems a minimum requirement for the workers. Secondly, in a colonial situation (where, moreover, employer-employee relations are compounded by the racial factor), it is mainly (if not only) in so far as the unions come together in a strong organization to either separately or in alliance with a political party, fight for the overthrow of colonialism that one can meaningfully talk of the significance of the labour movement in decolonization. And thirdly, from the

point of view of collective bargaining, in a context where the state is the major employer of labour, and where wages are determined at the central level, it does make a difference whether or not there is a central labour organization.

The answer to question is that the workers were unable to form a lasting central organization throughout the colonial period. Various efforts have been made to account for this. Explanations most often put forward include (a) personality differences among union leaders, (b) a proliferation of small unions, (c) the issue of international affiliation, (d) affiliation with national political parties, (e) ideological disagreements, and government attitude towards unions.⁴⁷ We can sum this up with the proposition that the failure of the Nigerian labour movement to form a united central body was the outcome of the articulation of the internal structure of the emerging Nigerian politics and the ideological structure of the world system into which Nigeria had been inserted, mediated through the Nigerian labour leaders. In fact, as we shall see later in chapter four, when, more than a decade after Independence the military stepped in to impose labour unity from above, the three canons of this proposition received central attention: international affiliation was banned, trade unionists were banned from active

participation in partisan politics, and eleven labour leaders were indefinitely banned from the labour movement to form a Central body and why such efforts failed. The chart below gives the picture.

ABORTIVE EFFORTS TO UNITE, 1943-1960*

TIME	LABOUR CENTRE	PRESIDENT	COMMENT
1943	T.U.C.	Bankole	Formed due to the need for a central labour organization
1949	N.N.F.L. vs. T.U.C.	Imoudu vs. Bankole	Split over issue of affiliation with Dr. Azikwe's N.C.N.C. (political party). Seed of discord sown during leadership disagreement over strike strategy in the 1945 General Strike
1950	N.L.C.	Imoudu	Merger to present a united front. Dominated by Marxist leadership. Affiliated with WFTU (Communist). Died due to setbacks faced by leadership.
1953	A.N.T.U.F.	Imoudu	To replace defunct N.L.C. and establish a labour Party to achieve Socialism
1957	N.C.T.U.N. vs. A.N.T.U.F.	Cole vs. Imoudu	Split over the issue of affiliation with I.C.F.T.U. or WFTU and leadership rivalry
1959	T.U.C.N.	Imoudu	Agreement to keep "communism" fascism, and political partisanship" out of the labour movement
1960	N.T.U.C. vs. T.U.C.N.	Imoudu vs.	Split over the issue of affiliation with ICFTU
* T.U.C. - Trade Union Congress N.N.F.L. - Nigerian National Federation of Labour N.L.C. - Nigerian Labour Congress A.N.T.U.F. - All Nigeria Trade Union Federation			N.C.T.U.N. - National Council of Trade Unions of Nigeria T.U.C.N. - Trade Union Congress of Nigeria N.T.U.C. - Nigerian Trade Union Congress I.C.F.T.U. - International Confederation of Free Trade Unions W.F.T.U.

The chart attempts a summary of the tortuous history of Nigerian Central Labour organization. As can be observed a common cause for almost all the failures was the issue of affiliation with either national political parties or international labour organizations. Thus, in spite of tensions within the labour leadership the first Central labour organization formed in 1943 enjoyed a relatively long, albeit hazardous, existence, even surviving the General Strike of 1945 till the intensification of nationalist political activities in the aftermath of the Second World War and the split of the I.C.F.T.U. from communist W.F.T.U. in 1949 after which both international organizations started wooing the allegiance of labour movements in the colonies.⁴⁸ The issue of affiliation with a national political party, Dr. Nnandi Azikiwe's N.C.N.C. was what presented the most immediate cause for the split in the first labour center, the Trade Union Congress in 1949. After long debates, motions and counter-motions, the call for affiliation was defeated. Judging from the personalities involved in the debates and the sides they took, it is obvious that ethnic orientations and interests were central to the disagreements. Wogu Ananaba describes two incidents one of which possesses much explanatory force:

On June 17, 1948 Charles Daddy Onyeama, an Ibo lawyer and member of the Legislative Council, predicted that "Ibo domina-

tion of Nigeria is a matter of time". That unfortunate statement provoked the Ibo-Yoruba feud of 1948, which had a disastrous effect on many trade unions. To ensure that Onyeama's prediction did not come to pass, members of the newly formed Egbe Omo Oduduwa, a cultural organization catering for Yoruba hegemony, infiltrated many trade unions and contrived arrangements to remove Ibos holding key positions and replace them with Yoruba men. Efforts were concentrated on important unions like the Railway Workers Union and the Amalgamated Union of UAC African Workers.⁴⁹

The point is that with the evolution of ethnic politics and a situation where political party support was based largely on ethnic loyalties, any attempt to affiliate a Central Labour Organization organized across ethnic groups, with any major political party was bound to cause splits within the center. Besides the labour leaders demonstrating this by their uncompromising attitudes, it was also the case that trade union members tended to be more strongly attached to urban ethnic associations than with the trade unions to which they belonged. A survey in 1959 shows that of the workers interviewed at both the Railway Workshop at Ebute Metta, Lagos and the African Timber and Plywood Sawmills at Sapele, up to 95% belonged to some ethnic union. But whereas only 22% were paid-up trade union members (in Ebute Metta) and 33% in Sapele, up to 90% were paid-up

members of ethnic organizations to which they belonged.⁵⁰ This shows where their loyalties lay, and suggests that on the question of affiliation with national political parties, which we have said were ethnically based, the Urban worker would either do so on an individual basis or through urban ethnic associations, and seldom through a Central Labour Organization. Seen from the standpoint of labour leaders and union membership then, one can understand why the first labour center disintegrated over the issue of affiliation with Azikiwe's N.C.N.C. in 1949.

The fate of the second labour congress, the N.L.C. was not any better. The communist inclinations of its leadership was seen as rather extreme and a source of embarrassment to Dr. Azikiwe's party with which the congress sought affiliation. Anti-communist and anti-revolutionary feelings among the leading political parties at this time is understandable. The 1950's marked a period of increasing devolution of power to Nigerians in preparation for self-rule, and the politicians who were already picturing themselves in power did not want to be in close alliance with, or support any groups with ideological inclinations likely to challenge the capitalist system which the politicians were struggling

to inherit and consolidate.⁵¹ Thus, as Robin Cohen observes, "The N.C.N.C. leadership, increasingly aware of the possibility of transforming itself into a ruling political class, grew progressively more disillusioned with the more revolutionary organizations that it spawned".⁵² Be that as it may, the dismissal of N.L.C.'s General Secretary from the N.C.N.C. cabinet shortly after charges of "Communist infiltration into the N.L.C.," and an ill-timed and abortive General Strike he had earlier called contributed to the gradual death of N.L.C.

The third labour Center, A.N.T.U.F. split over the issue of affiliation with international labour organization. A.N.T.U.F. leadership wanted affiliation with the communist World Federation of Trade Unions (W.F.T.U.) while anti-W.F.T.U. wanted affiliation with the pro-west International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (I.C.F.T.U.). The Center disintegrated as a rival body, the National Council of Trade Unions of Nigeria (N.C.T.U.N.) was formed in 1957. Ananaba typically characterized the two,

The A.N.T.U.F. and the N.C.T.U.N. engaged in identical press warfare as did the T.U.C. and N.N.F.L., the A.N.T.U.F. calling its rival an imperialist stooge, while the N.C.T.U.N. consistently charged the A.N.T.U.F. with being a communist front organization.⁵⁴

As Independence approached the two central labour organizations came together to form the Trade Union Congress of Nigeria (T.U.C.N.), and then to be strictly guided by a joint statement which they produced which, among other conditions, maintained,

While recognizing the right of the individual to believe in any brand of political ideology, we nevertheless take cognizance of the events which led to disunity in the past, and agree therefore, that in the interest of permanent unity, communism, fascism, and national political partisanship shall not be projected in the Nigerian Labour Movement.⁵⁵

But the T.U.C.N. that emerged in March 1959 lasted for a bare six months. For the issue of affiliation with the I.C.F.T.U. arose again and coupled with leadership rivalry, split the labour center. The President, Michael Imoudu had earlier paid a secret visit to Russia (albeit in his capacity as leader of the Labour Movement) where he spoke over Moscow Radio in praise of communism, pledging to convince the Nigerian workers of its attractiveness on his return to Nigeria, which he did in his address to a conference of the Electrical Workers' Union in Lagos. He declared that he "had been to the land of communism, had seen communism at work, and had come to the conclusion that it was the best system for the workers and people of Nigeria to follow",⁵⁶ other such utterances by the T.U.C.N. president

increasingly became a cause for friction within the leadership. Imoudu's radical ideology had driven him to a position where even his own union, the Nigerian Railway Union, started making efforts to retire him.⁵⁷ As for his status as President of the T.U.C.N. after repeated, but abortive efforts by the Central Working Committee to get him either to attend meetings or to defend himself, the Committee finally suspended Imoudu from office. Imoudu's reaction was to dismiss the Central Working Committee. What followed was the holding of two conventions in Lagos and Kano in April, 1960. The Kano meeting arranged by the leadership of T.U.C.N. dismissed Imoudu and elected Adevola as President, while the Lagos meeting named itself the Nigerian Trade Union Congress (N.T.U.C.) and elected Imoudu as President.⁵⁸ Thus at Independence there were still two labour fronts.

It is interesting the way the two central labour organizations perceived the cause of disunity. From the point of view of the T.U.C.N. the issue was leadership. Making its case before the Labour Reconciliation Committee, (a body set up by the state to reconcile the unions), the T.U.C.N. declared, among other things,

We recognize that Imoudu has been long in the Nigerian labour movement and, without any intention to deny what contributions he may have made in his long connection, we feel obliged to state frankly that in nearly all splits that

had occurred in the labour movement in this country, Mr. Imoudu has been the central figure.⁵⁹

The T.U.C.N. accordingly recommended that Imoudu be retired from the labour movement. On their part the leadership of N.T.U.C. felt that the root cause of disunity was ideology and affiliation with international labour organizations. They maintained:

As the world is divided into two camps, so are its labour forces, i.e. W.F.T.U. and I.C.F.T.U. It is clear that I.C.F.T.U. is the labour arm of Western capitalism. Why then should we affiliate to it?⁶⁰

As a matter of fact, T.M. Yesufu is largely right when he observes that each of the two centers was "in fact a puppet of one or more foreign organizations, and run almost completely with money from foreign sources: the Ghana T.U.C. and the W.F.T.U. support one section, while the I.C.F.T.U. supports the other".⁶¹

Our discussion of the issues leading to the disintegration of the central labour organizations and the views held by the two rival groups at independence shows that the failure to have a permanent labour front was due to the combined effect of the evolving internal political structure and the different ideological positions adopted and defended by the labour leaders.

Two additional things need to be said about the vain efforts to form a central labour organization. The

first concerns the representative character of the labour centers. It turned out that a relatively small proportion of organized labour affiliated with the central bodies. For instance, the Department of Labour annual report of 1950/51 noted that "By the 31st of March, 1950, the majority of the registered trade unions, including most of the largest, were outside both organizations"⁶² (T.U.C. and N.N.F.L.). And in 1960 60% of the trade unions with 51% of total union membership were unaffiliated to either the T.U.C.N. or N.T.U.C.; 14% of the unions representing 18% of total union membership were affiliated to Imoudu's radical-oriented N.T.U.C. while 27% of trade unions representing 31% of the total membership was affiliated to Adebola's moderate T.U.C.N.⁶³ This suggests that the issue of a central labour organization was not a matter of concern to a majority of the registered trade unions. It also suggests that affiliation of the labour centers to any of the political parties might not necessarily have meant an immediate political advantage in terms of numbers, which partly explains the fact, for instance, that towards Independence the major political parties pitched their camps, not with organized labour but with their respective ethnic regions.

The second comment to be made dwells on the part the colonial administration played concerning the various efforts at unity. The administration was in a position,

(and used that position) to accept, side with, or reject any of the labour centers. For instance, Cohen reports concerning the formation of the All Nigeria Trade Union Federation, (A.N.T.U.F.), that "at first the government refused to recognize the new organization and at the second annual conference tried to infuse the more moderate elements into the leadership".⁶⁴ Thus the intervention of the administration in the rivalries often worsened matters as it chose sides, backing one labour center as opposed to the other, hence the complaints by N.T.U.C., "The Federal Government too, while talking of neutrality, openly supports the T.U.C.N. which violates its doctrine of neutrality by affiliating to I.C.F.T.U."⁶⁵

What we have outlined is the woeful failure of the Nigerian labour movement during the colonial period to come together to form a permanent central labour organization even to press for narrow economical demands. The explicit political performance of the labour movement in the colonial period is what we now briefly turn to.

ORGANIZED LABOUR AND POLITICS

The degree to which trade unions were a significant force in politics during the colonial period in Nigeria as elsewhere in Africa has been a subject of debate. Stating the view that trade unions were an insignificant force in politics Berg and Butler assert "What is most

striking about the politically involved during the colonial period is their limited impact when they did become involved, and their restricted role after independence".⁶⁶ Representing the opposite view and criticizing Berg and Butler for a narrow definition of political participation by trade unions simply in terms of the intensity of labour-party alliance, John Kraus argues that,

in political systems where a class, party, or government seeks to monopolize political prerogatives and the distribution of scarce resources, status, and power, major attempts by unions to maintain or assert their right to a role in such prerogatives and distributions is clearly a political action.⁶⁷

This view further argues that African trade unions generally occupy strategic position in the national economy which gives them great political potential in spite of their numerical smallness.⁶⁸

My own view is that whatever political potential organized labour possessed during the colonial period, its failure to realize it and adopt a conscious and unified political strategy to defend its class interests whether independently or in alliance with a major political party rendered it a politically insignificant category. That this was so can be attributed to both the determined effort and policies of the colonial state right from the beginning to keep politics out of labour, and the very nature of the

structure of the politics that was emerging. We can consider this in terms of three chronological periods, the period before 1939; the period from 1939 to 1950, and the period from 1950-1960 when Nigeria became independent.

The period before 1939 when the Trade Union Ordinance was enacted represented the formative and experimental stage in Nigerian Trade unionism. And during this period, as we have indicated the administration was active in its insistence on the separation of labour and politics. Besides, at this time the indigenous politicians hardly needed the support of workers in their confrontations with the colonial administration. As Nwanunobi notes,

Issues which engaged the educated African elite in controversies with the government in those early times evolved largely around how these members of the elite group could make inroads into privileges reserved for the white expatriates. And on such matters the educated African elite in Nigeria were always as articulate as any and did not need the workers to help them with their argument, which were the main weapon used by the African intelligentsia of that period.⁶⁹

In fact, the early nationalist leaders were wary of any alliance with the working class. Thus in 1897 when workers went on strike in Lagos they had hardly any support from early African nationalists. As Hopkins observed,

Even Macaulay, the acknowledged leader of the "agitators" disapproved of the strike action and took care not to become

too closely involved with the urban workers, lest he should encourage the growth of a power which could not be confined within the limits of his own political programme and organization.⁷⁰

As for the trade unions themselves, we have already indicated their transient nature. The ones that were more or less permanent, (with the exception of the Railway Workers' Union formed in 1931) were hardly trade unions in the sense of the word. The Nigerian Civil Service Union formed in 1912 was by design and operation "an exclusive body confined in membership to the upper segment of the African staff".⁷¹

The union determined from the beginning not to have anything to do with strikes and to be removed from wage workers as much as possible. The Nigerian Union of Teachers formed in 1931 was not significantly different from the Civil Service Union. It was the Railway Workers Union inaugurated in 1931 that ushered in a period of militant unionism which began to draw the attention of political leaders. But as we have shown, increasing union militancy of the thirties also arose the interests of the colonial state which embarked on steps to de-politicise the working class. The first comprehensive legal step was the Trade Union Ordinance of 1939. As Nwanunobi has put it "it was an ordinance which, in effect, nipped in the bud the alliance which showed signs of developing between labour and politics".⁷²

The period 1940-1950 was marked by a surge in nationalist political activities. It was also a time when organized labour was attempting either to form its own party or align with one of the political parties. Both cases failed. The 1945 General Strike provided some momentary occasion for the political parties to seek the support of the working class. But after the strike the Labour Centers also sought alliance with political parties. But as we have shown the first attempt at such alliance in 1949 broke down due to underlying ethnic differences.

The period after 1950 till Independence saw decreasing prospects for either the working class forming its own party or allying with other parties.⁷³ The regionalization of politics did not help the situation. As a matter of fact the only strong alliance between organized labour and political parties during this period was based on ethnic loyalties. This was the alliance between Northern Mine Workers' Union and the N.P.C. In the early 1950's Ahmadu Bello (who later became Premier of Northern Nigeria) expressed concern over the domination of the Nigerian Mine Workers' Union and the Amalgamated Tin Mines of Nigeria African Workers' Union by southerners, especially the Ibos. To reverse the situation the Northern Mine Workers'

Union was founded in 1954. The President of the Union was Alhaji Isa Haruna who was the Northern Region Vice President and the Plateau Provincial President of the Northern People's Congress (NPC), and also a contractor for Bisichi Tin Company, and thus an employer of labour; the Secretary of the Union was the Plateau Treasurer of N.P.C. and a company welfare officer.⁷⁴ The dynamics of the situation involving the Tin Mine workers well illustrate the obstacles in the way of Nigerian organized labour adopting a united class position in politics. The disintegration of the Nigerian African Mine Workers Union followed along the lines of ethnic political alliances. The first break away group, becoming the Northern Mine Workers Union, was predominantly Hausa, and was affiliated with the N.P.C., a political party with which the Hausas generally identified, the other breakaway group formed the Middle Belt Mine Workers' Union, was predominantly Dirom, and was affiliated to the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC), a political party with which the Diroms generally identified. The residual group, the Nigerian Mineworkers' Union was primarily Ibo and lent support to the N.C.N.C., a party with which the Ibo's generally identified.⁷⁵

The point being made here is the fact that since the structure and pattern of political practice evolving in Nigeria in the colonial period was based on

ethnic loyalties, organized labour found it particularly difficult to shelve its ethnic differences, define its class position and present a united political front. The tendency was that provisions were made for political activity in the constitutions of all early trade unions but practical political activity was left to the Central Labour organizations that sporadically came into existence. But as we have seen this very political activity was one major cause of splits in the central organizations. And just one year before attainment of political independence the Trade Union Congress hardly had any choice but to "eschew politics and to leave the individual workers free to pursue whatever political activity he might choose".⁷⁶ And that was more or less what obtained in the union locals on a wide basis, as Nwanunobi well puts "Successive events have shown that not only did the unions agree to leave political participation to individual members, but attempts to drag them into politics have been consistently resisted by the workers themselves".⁷⁷ And Coleman sums it up, "Many wage-earners belonged to the organization (the political party) but they came in through urban branches of (ethnic) unions, rather than through the trade unions".⁷⁸

To sum it up, while it might be insufficient to assess the political participation of trade unions in politics simply by the presence or strength of alliance

between the labour movement and political parties, in Nigeria the virtual absence of this alliance and the inability of the workers to evolve practical alternative political strategies based on their objective class position make it much more difficult for practical political significance to be attributed to the labour movement. Granted this, we submit that coupled with the determination of the colonial administration to separate labour from politics, the dynamics of the structure and pattern of the Nigerian politics that evolved in the colonial period placed great constraint on the political behaviour of the Nigerian labour movement during that time.

C. COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AND WAGE DETERMINATION

The literature does not agree as to whether or not the Nigerian Labour Movement has had any impact on the determination of wages in the country. Opening the debate was W.M. Warren's thesis that the trade union movement played a central role in wage determination.⁷⁹ Warren argues,

however prevalent such internal weaknesses and external difficulties may have been, the Nigerian trade union movement has been able, substantially, to counteract their debilitating effects by mobilizing political sources of strength which have enabled it to raise the real wages of its membership and of urban wage employees generally.⁸⁰

On the same side of the debate with Warren, Peter Kilby

shares the view of union pressure as being crucial to wage determination.⁸¹ Robin Cohen holds the same view, seeking to show that each wage commission set up by the administration to review wages was preceded by trade union pressure, summing up the argument that

the factors that have the most frequent and most consistent explanatory value in looking at the process of wage determination are those associated with union pressure, political sensitivity to potential urban discontent, and attempts to win political support from the trade unionists and their allies.⁸²

On the other side of the debate, arguing for the irrelevance of the trade union movement in wage determination Elliot Berg maintains that,

During the years when the Nigerian trade unions were most politically committed, most effective and most influential, the colonial administration ignored their wage demands and real wages fell substantially,⁸³

and argues instead that a "range of causal forces" not directly related to trade union impact motivated the colonial administration to set up wage commission to review wages. Siding with Berg in the debate, John F. Weeks suggests that "one can build a model of wage determination in the Nigerian context which is consistent with union weakness", maintaining that "For humanitarian, institutional, and ideological reasons, the government commissions a major wage review about every five years".⁸⁴

Without intending to intervene in the debate in any substantive fashion, we can make a number of

observationed on the substance of the debate,
 (a) the absof emphasis on collective bargaining
 and wage netion between trade union representatives
 and managemoth at the local and national level,
 (b) the cenplace taken by the state-appointed wage
 review commns, leading to (c) what has come to be
 called "poll wage-fixing". We now briefly examine
 how these ets of wage determination have evolved and
 what the coences are for the Nigerian Labour movement.

Evolution oitical Wage Fixing

Afte Trade Union Ordinance was enacted in
 1939, the col administration made efforts to set up
 a system ofective bargaining akin to what obtained
 in Britain, stem Peter Kilby refers to as the Anglo-
 Saxon Model Provincial wages Commissions set up in
 1937 which lly consisted of the "Resident District
 Officers and other local heads of Governement
 departments" expanded later in 1942 to include
 "representa of workers selected by administrative
 officers".⁸ Is set up soon proved to be inadequate.
 In 1948 Whitcouncils were established in which rep-
 resentativem both the workers' and employers' sides
 were to mee negotiate over wages and other conditions
 of service. ut the councils hardly worked. The major
 reason for ifailure was the lack of co-operation

especially from the side of management.⁸⁸ With the breakdown of the Whitley councils in 1949, an official of the British Ministry of Labour was consulted for advice and what followed in the 1950's was provision being made for "standing committees for joint consultation and collective bargaining", consisting of representatives from both the workers' side, (often the President and Secretary of the Union and other elected workers) and management side. The Chairman for such committees was usually a representative of the employer.⁸⁹ Such was the system that the administration developed.

But one thing every student of Nigerian Industrial Relations agrees upon is the failure of the system. Hardly were wage levels set through this system. With the approach of political independence in the fifties, the regionalization of politics accompanied by devolution of powers to the regions, the three Regional governments, in each case started the practice of fixing wages for workers in their domain. The first step was taken by the Action Group, the ruling party in the Western Region, in 1954 by announcing an "award of five-shilling minimum wage throughout the Western Region". This was followed by the N.C.N.C. in the East, deciding in 1955 to transfer all daily-paid labour, with increased rates of pay to permanent establishment, on wages which approximated to 4s. 2d per day".⁹⁰ And the NPC in the Northern Region

acted similarly by twice awarding wage increase to its staff in 1955.⁹¹ What all this amounts to is a situation where the regional governments all by-pass the established mechanisms of wage determination to go on and announce and implement wage increases to its workers according to criteria not entirely dictated by economic considerations. This, to my mind provides the basis for the deviation from, and de-emphasization, on, the concept of collective bargaining. By 1959 the pattern had become well set. In that year, which was also an election year, there was a general demand for increased wages by the labour movement. The response was as Yesufu puts it,

all the Governments of the Federation promised to review salaries and wages... the Western Regional (Action Group) Government appointed the Morgan Commission in respect of its employees, while the Federal and other Regional Governments together appointed a separate Commission --the Mbafeno Commission.⁹²

And this was in spite of the fact that the administration continued to pay lip service to a preference for a system of voluntary collective bargaining.

The essential elements of political wage fixing which was in the process of institutionalization in the colonial period can be briefly outlined:

1. A general increase in the cost of living leads to agitation by organized labour for wage increases.

Usually a number of strikes occur.

2. At some point the state responds by setting up a wages and salaries review commission with specified terms of reference one of which usually restricts the commission's concerns to workers directly under state employment.
3. The Commission, usually known by the name of its Chairman invites memoranda from all concerned, deliberates, publishes and submits a report to the state.
4. The state studies the report, accepting or rejecting certain recommendations as it sees appropriate. After a comprehensive study of the report a "white paper" is released effecting "appropriate" wage increases often back-dated.
5. Workers in the private sector embark on wide-scale strikes demanding similar increases in wages in their firms, which they usually get.

To illustrate this characterization of the process of political wage-fixing, we shall discuss the causes, course, and consequences of the 1945 General Strike.

The General Strike of 1945

The major causes of the General Strike centered on the issues of declining real wages, shortages of essential commodities, and the failure of the state to

keep its promise to increase wages.⁹³ What had particularly made the situation explosive was the attitude of the administration in refusing to increase wages to wage workers while at the same time granting salary awards to European officials (and later to African senior staff).⁹⁴ As the table below indicates the cost of living index was rising fast as wages remained relatively stagnant.

TABLE 8

<u>RISE IN COST OF LIVING INDEX: 1939 - 44</u>			
<u>PERIOD</u>	<u>FOOD</u>	<u>CLOTHING</u>	<u>OVERALL</u>
1939	100	100	100
1942 (April)	153	167	147
1944 (Oct)	165	221	165

Source: Compiled from Nwanunobi, op.cit.P.90

In fact by 1945 there was a fall in real wages of 68% from the 1939 level. After waiting in vain for the administration to fulfill its earlier pledge to increase wages, the Labour movement embarked on a strike action.

Not all executive members of the Central Labour Organization at the time were in agreement on the need to strike. Many felt there was still the possibility to settle things through negotiations. But a militant

section headed by Michael Imoudu, who had just been released from prison, went ahead and executed the strike.⁹⁵ Over 90% of the participants in the strike were those under direct employment of the administration. And except for the active participation of railway workers in Zaria the strike was almost wholly limited to the south. The timing of the strike gave it wide public support. The politicians had their axe to grind against the colonial administration, especially by the latter's actions in terms of the imposition of the Richards Constitution on Nigeria in 1945, the military-like enactment of opposed ordinances and the rough treatment the administration gave to striking Kings College students.⁹⁶ The workers also had the support and sympathy of the landlords who suspended rents in the duration of the strike, and market-women who contributed generously to workers Relief Fund.⁹⁷

The strike ended without the demands of the strikers for wage hikes being met. Rather at the end of the strike the state set up a Wage Review Commission under the chairmanship of Tudor Davies. It is worth noting that the setting up of wage commission was not exactly the desire of the workers. Thus the committee representing the workers pleaded "In the event of a Commission of inquiry becoming absolutely unavoidable, the committee would desire that such a Commission as

may be contemplated may be a Royal, Independent and Impartial Commission...⁹⁸ That was wishful thinking. For the Tudor Davies' Commission collected information from both labour and the official side, flew to Britain to write up the report which a year later led to a cost of living allowance increase of 50%, and gave a piece of advice to the State:

Wise statesmen are those who foresee what time is thus bringing and try to shape institutions and to mould men's thought and purpose in accordance with the change that is silently surrounding them... (and again) the Trade Unions should receive every help and encouragement from Great Britain to develop along proper trade union lines. The alternative will be their being swallowed up and converted to political uses in a wider demand for self-government and independence, i.e. their drifting finally and irrevocably into the hands of the politicians.⁹⁹

The data does not permit us to demonstrate the last point, namely increased agitation by workers in the private sector following awards of wage increases to public sector workers, leading to a carry-over effect of increased wages in the private sector. But such was the trend. In fact the 1955-6 Annual Report has a comment regarding the private sector workers demand for a Gorsuch Commission award,

The release of the Gorsuch Report in July (1955) and its acceptance by Government led immediately, as in similar circumstances in the past, to a general demand for "Gorsuch" by

unions of workers employed in the private industry...It is unfortunate that many workers are still under the impression that any wage adjustments in respect of Government servants should also be applicable throughout private industry.¹⁰⁰

We have tried to outline the evolution of a Nigerian system of wage determination in which the state assumes a central place, determining the wages not only of workers in the public sector but indirectly of workers also in the private sectors. While the significance of this development will be more fully treated in the next chapter, we can make an observation that unlike labour movements in independent countries, the Nigerian labour movement both at the local and national levels had very limited experience with voluntary collective bargaining.

D. MILITANT ECONOMISM

V.I. Diejomaoh suggests that prior to 1950, and especially in the postwar years Nigerian trade unions behaved in a way remotely resembling Lenin's revolutionary conception of the labour movement, but that "since the mid-1950's, however, unions seem to have adhered more to what Perlman conceived as labour's proper role".¹⁰¹ Our analysis shows that by and large the Nigerian trade union movement was outside the mainstream of politics. For the greater part of its existence

during the colonial era, the labour movement was hardly more than a marginal force in colonial politics.

The nature of the colonial state -- as the major employer of labour, and its racial and alien character -- meant that there were spontaneous uprisings by organised labour to fight for worker's rights. Thus in spite of (or even because of) the coercive and restrictive role played by the colonial state in labour policy, the number of strikes and mandays lost continued to increase throughout the colonial period, though on a fluctuating basis, as the table below shows.

TABLE 9
STRIKES AND MAN-DAYS LOST, 1940-1960*

YEAR	NO. OF STRIKES	NO. OF MAN-DAYS LOST
1940	1	n.d.
1941	6	n.d.
1942	11	13,878
1943	6	26,300
1944	9	5,541
1945	13	1,800,000
1946	10	132,000
1947	28	132,000
1948	20	n.d.
1949-50	46	577,000
1950-51	19	286,351
1951-52	38	20,243
1952-53	26	59,847
1953-54	33	26,874
1954-55	30	12,166
1955-56	43	901,600
1956-57	30	61,297
1957-58	49	63,400
1958-59	53	73,095
1959-60	54	70,862
1960-61	69	160,478

Source* Adapted from Robin Cohen, Labour and Politics, P.194.

A pattern is observed in the data. Both number of strikes and man-days lost tend to peak during years of major government wage awards. The state made major wage increases in 1945 following the Tudor Davies Commission; in 1955/56 following the Gorsuch Report and in 1960/61 following the Mbanefo and Morgan Wages Review Commissions.¹⁰² As can be seen from the table both number of strikes and man-days lost rose sharply during these years and fell similarly after the issues were relatively settled. This phenomenon has been described as a "demonstration effect", meaning the tendency of private sector workers to seek to compel their employers through demonstrations and strikes to pay them similar wage increases given to workers in the public sector through the wage review commissions.

The most prevalent factor for workers going on strike in the colonial era was the demand for increased wages and the hesitation of the employers to grant them when the workers desired. Thus by and large, their struggles seemed to centre on their occupations' demands. Cohen and Hughes have well observed of the tactics and position of the colonial workers,

spontaneity often characterised the wage earners behaviour in their occupational struggles, whereas their effort at creating a separate political identity had limited success. Symbiotic and often dependent relationships existed with the middle classes...the possibilities of

independent class action still remain contingent on the extent to which workers can free themselves from the politics of bourgeois clientelism.¹⁰³

If the Nigerian labour movement neither constituted a separate revolutionary political force, nor provided a firm base for revolutionary politics what were the factors at work?

An answer to this question and related others could be that the labour movement was an organization of labour aristocrats who stood to benefit from the system by virtue of the high wages workers were paid and by virtue of their consciousness of themselves as a class whose interests were better served by upward identification with the bourgeoisie rather than by downward identification with the peasants and the urban unemployed and marginally employed. But both of these aspects of the explanation in terms of the labour aristocracy thesis can be faulted.

For one thing, as was shown in the preceding chapter, the wage earners were hardly better off than the rural workers and other urban workers. If it could be demonstrated that trade unions in the colonial period used a fair machinery of wage determination to raise wages far in excess of other less privileged groups' incomes, the labour aristocracy thesis might begin to acquire some explanatory basis. But the system of collective

bargaining and wage determination that was emerging in the colonial period was such that the determination of the exact level of wages was almost the preserve of the colonial state and its appointed wage review commissions. And the fundamental philosophy of the colonial wage commissions was geared towards the "equalization of purchasing powers". The philosophy is clearly spelled out by one of such bodies:

As the qualifications of the persons appointed to the lowest grades of the established staff and therefore their potential earning capacity are in general the same as those possessed by the majority of the adult male population, it would be incorrect to provide them with a local purchasing power greatly in excess of that of the non-wage-earners among whom they live and may continue to live.¹⁰⁴

The point is that the economism of the colonial trade unions can not be explained by the argument that they were privileged viz-a-viz non-wage urban and rural dwellers.

In terms of consciousness of themselves as a distinct privileged group, the labour movement in the colonial era simply did not have or demonstrate it. Even the consciousness it had as a class was truncated by ethnic consciousness and identification. We have shown how the typical colonial worker was more involved and identified with the urban ethnic association than with his trade union. Such workers would define them-

selves primarily as members of an ethnic group, not elements of a privileged labour aristocracy.

In arguing that the labour aristocracy thesis does not explain the economism of the colonial trade unions, we offer an alternative explanation based on the analysis in the main body of this chapter. The colonial state played an effective role of depoliticising the labour movement from the beginning by insisting, through force, legislation and training that labour and politics be kept separate. Granted that even the road to national independence took the constitutional route, not violent mass struggles, the role of organised labour was fairly successfully minimised in politics. And within the labour movement itself the strong allegiance to ethnic origins militated against the development of labour politics in the midst of the dominantly ethnic and regional politics that was evolving. Given these circumstances organised labour could mainly concentrate on the issues on which there was absolute agreement: demands for increased wages and better working conditions; essentially economic demands, hence the economism of the colonial trade unions.

To conclude, in this chapter we have traced the emergence and development of the labour movement in Nigeria during the years of colonial rule, with the aim of identifying major shaping forces. We have tried

to argue that the colonial state played the role of capital in developing trade unionism in Nigeria. Granted that the interests of capital and labour are always not the same, granted further, that capital in the form of the state had at its disposal all coercive, repressive and legislative tools, it is not difficult to see both why and how it was possible for the state to push for the development of a brand of unionism least offensive to the interests of capital (particularly colonial capitalism). On their part, we have seen how ideological differences among labour leaders and the ethnic political structure reduced areas of agreement and unity almost wholly to matters of wage demands. We suggest that it is a combination of these factors that explain the emergence of trade unionism based on militant economism, and by extension, also sheds light on the paradox of non-revolutionary trade unionism in a colonial and racial situation.

FOOTNOTES

1. See Arnold Hughes and Robin Cohen, "An Emerging Nigerian Working Class: The Lagos Experience, 1897 - 1939" in Peter C.W. Gutkind et al. (eds.), African Labour History, (London, Sage, 1978), P. 37-38.
2. Wogu Ananaba, The Trade Union Movement in Nigeria, P.10-14.
3. Hughes and Cohen, op. cit. P. 40.
4. A.G. Hopkins, 'The Lagos Strike of 1897 ...', op.cit. P.150.
5. As put by Yesufu, An Introduction to Industrial Relations. P. 29-30.
6. James Coleman, Nigeria: Background to Nationalism.
7. T.M. Yesufu, op. cit. P. 36; Ananaba, op. cit. P. 16.
8. See Onyeka Nwanubobi, "Wage Labour and the Politics of Nigeria and Kenya; A Comparative Study", African Studies Review Vol. 17, No. 1, April 1975, P. 81.
9. Ibid.
10. Laws of the Federation of Nigeria and Lagos, 1958, Capter 200, P. 3643.
11. Ibid. P.3648.
12. Ibid. P.3647.
13. Ibid. P.3647, 3651.
14. B.C. Roberts, Labour in the Tropical Territories of the Commonwealth, (Durham, Duke University Press, 1964), P.179.
15. Laws of the Federation...op.cit. Chapter 42, Ekundare, An Economic History of Nigeria, P. 367.
16. Coleman, op.cit. P.257, T.M. Yesufu, op.cit, P. 79.
17. See Immanuel Geiss, "Some Remarks on the Development of African Trade Unions", Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, Vol. 3, No. 2, Dec. 1965, P. 369; and James Coleman, op.cit, P. 256.

18. Wogu Ananaba, op.cit, P.44.
19. James Coleman, op.cit, especially P.44-54, 322-23, and 132-140.
20. Coleman, op.cit, P. 258.
21. Ananaba, op.cit, P.168.
22. Ananaba, op.cit, P. 17
23. Ibid. P.17-18.
24. Ibid. P. 18-22
25. Ibid, P. 18-22. Michael Imoudu's entry stay and exit from the Nigerian labour movement have all been remarkably dramatic. He came into prominence when, prior to unionisation in the railway employment, he opposed the introduction of the hourly system of wage payment by removing the notice to that effect posted by the Railway Management, and later summoning a meeting at the close of work. That led to the formation of the Railway Workers Union. See Ananaba, op.cit. P. 18; as a labour leader he spent much time in prison both in the colonial and post-colonial periods. And in 1977 he was banned from participation in the labour movement by the Military regime, in vain did he protest, on learning of the ban: "who says he has banned Labour Leader Number One? It is the workers that appointed me life president and not the government", West Africa, Feb. 28, 1977, P. 432. As a recognition of Imoudu's contribution to trade unionism in Nigeria, in December 1978 the University of Ife awarded him an honorary doctorate degree in law. Daily Times, January 8, 1979, P. 17.
26. Ananaba, op.cit. P. 20.
27. Coleman, op.cit, P. 256.
28. This view differs from that held by T.M. Yesufu, that the administration at this time was not being repressive but only embarking on "concrete plans to improve trade union leadership and the standard of union administration", Yesufu, op. cit, P. 93.
29. Cited from Enquiries into the Cost of Living and the Control of the Cost of Living in the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria, (H.M.S.O. Colonial No. 204, 1946) para. 88, in Yesufu, op.cit, P.65.

30. Ananaba, op.cit, P. 64.
31. Yesufu, op.cit, P. 95.
32. Ibid.
33. Ananaba, op.cit, P. 72, 98.
34. Ibid. P.72.
35. Cited in ibid. P.98.
36. See Onyeka Nwanunobi, op.cit. P.80-81, Ioan Davies, African Trade Unions. P. 196.
37. Coleman, op. cit. P256.
38. See E.O. Egboh, "trade Union Education in Nigeria (1940-1964)" African Studies Review, Vol. 14, No.1, April 1971, P. 86; T.M. Yesufu, op.cit. P. 93-94.
39. E.O. Egboh, op.cit. P.90.
40. Yesufu, op.cit. P.99-100.
41. Ibid. P.100.
42. Onyeka Nwanunobi, op.cit. P.91.
43. Yesufu, op.cit. P.100.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid. P. 106.
46. Ibid.
47. Robin Cohen, Labour and Politics. P. 98; Ananaba, op.cit. P. 172-77, 296; Yesufu, op.cit. P. 46-47.
48. Cohen, op. cit.
49. Ananaba, op.cit, P.92.
50. Yesufu, op.cit, P. 67.
51. This seems to be one of the themes in Claude Ake's 'The Congruence of Political Economies and Ideologies in Africa' Gutkind and Wallerstein, The Political Economy of Contemporary Africa (London, Sage, 1976), P.198-211.

52. Cohen, op.cit. P.75. And this also partly explains why Dr. Azikiwe became disillusioned with the Zikists.
53. Ibid. P.74-76.
54. Ananaba, op.cit. P. 152.
55. Yesufu, op.cit. P. 46.
56. Ananaba, op.cit. P.176.
57. Ibid. P. 305.
58. Ibid. P.183-186.
59. T.U.C.N. Memorandum to Labour Reconciliation Committee of the All Nigeria People's Conference, cited in Ananaba, op.cit. P.304.
60. N.T.U.C. Memoranda (to same Reconciliation Committee), P. 321.
61. Yesufu, op.cit. P. 155.
62. Cohen, op.cit. P.74.
63. Percentages compiled from Cohen, ibid. P.82.
64. Ibid. P.78.
65. Ananaba, op.cit. P.321.
66. Elliot Berg and J. Butler, 'Trade Unions' in James Coleman and Carl Rosberg (eds.), Political Parties and National Intergration in Tropical Africa. (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1964), P.340-81. A similar view is held by Onyeka Nwanunobi that 'interpretations which portray the Nigerian trade unions as political organizations or as forming the 'muscle' of the political parties are gross exaggerations... the Nigerian wage earners have not been important as a category to influence Nigerias' politics', Nwanunobi, op.cit. P.77, 100.
67. John Kraus 'African Trade Unions: Progress or Poverty?' African Studies Review, Vol. 19, No. 3, Dec. 1976, P.105
68. See Richard Sandbrook and Robin Cohen, The Development of an African Working Class. (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1975), P.18-19.

69. Nwanunobi, op.cit. P.82.
70. A.G. Hopkins, op.cit. P.151-52.
71. Yesufu, op.cit. P.34.
72. Nwanunobi, op.cit. P.81
73. See V.P. Diejomaoh "Industrial Relations in a Development Context. The Case of Nigeria", in Damachi Ukandi et al Industrial Relations in Africa (London, McMillan 1979). Diejomaoh observes that 'since the mid-1950's however, unions seem to have adhered more to what Perlman conceived as labour's proper role'. P. 191.
74. See Richard Sklar, Nigerian Political Parties: Power in an Emergent African Nation, (Princeton, University of Princeton Press, 1963), P.495; Ananaba, op.cit. P.128.
75. Robin Cohen, op.cit. P.114-115.
76. Yesufu, op.cit. P. 146.
77. Nwanunobi, op.cit. P. 101.
78. James Coleman, op.cit. P. 265.
79. W.M. Warren, 'Urban Real Wages and the Nigerian Trade Union Movement, 1939-60; Economic Development and Cultural Change Vol. 15, No. 1, Oct. 1966, P. 21. The same argument is made in a subsequent defence, Warren, 'Urban Real Wages and the Nigerian Trade Union Movement, 1939-60: Rejoinder', ibid. No. 17, Oct. 1969, P.618-626.
80. Warren, Ibid. Vol. 15, No. 1, Oct. 1966, P. 21.
81. Peter Kilby, "Industrial Relations and Wage Determination: Failure of the Anglo-Saxon Model", Journal of Developing Areas, 1, (July, 1967), P. 496-501. Kilby twice maintains his view of the trade unions as being advantageously placed to apply pressure and achieve higher rise in wages. See Kilby "A Reply to John F. Weeks' Comment", Ibid. No. 3, Oct. 1968, P.19-26; P. Kilby, "Further Comment on the Kilby/Weeks Debate, Final Observations", Ibid. No. 5, January 1971, P.175-176.
82. Robin Cohen, op.cit. P. 209. This basic argument is put forward in his "Further Comment on the Kilby/Weeks Debate", Journal of Developing Areas, 5, January 1971, P. 155-164.

83. Elliot Berg, "Urban Real Wages and the Nigerian Trade Union Movement, 1939-1960: A Comment", Economic Development and Cultural Change, No. 17, Oct. 1969, P.613.
84. John F. Weeks, "A Comment on Peter Kilby: Industrial Relations and Wage Determination", Journal of Developing Areas, 3, Oct. 1968, P.8-9. In an extension of the argument Weeks submits that "While one cannot generalise from a single case, the Nigerian experience indicates what has been almost universally for developed countries and what Marx argued a century ago - trade unions have considerable difficulty raising real wages in the long run within a capitalist economy in the absence of favourable economic conditions", Weeks, Further Comment on the Kilby/Weeks Debate, An Empirical Rejoinder", Ibid. 5, January 1971, P.174.
85. See Peter Kilby, Industrialization in an Open Economy: Nigeria 1945-1966 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1969), Chapter 9.
86. Yesufu, op.cit. P.52.
87. Ananaba, op. cit. P.78.
88. Ibid.
89. Yesufu, op.cit. P.52-53.
90. Ibid. P.141-42.
91. Ibid.
92. Ibid.
93. Wale Oyemakinde, "The Nigerian General Strike of 1945", Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, Vol. 7, No. 4 June 1975, P.694, John F. Weeks, "The Impact of Economic Conditions and Institutional Forces on Urban Wages in Nigeria", Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies, 13, 3, 1971, P.324.
94. Ananaba, op.cit. P.48.
95. Oyemakinde, op.cit. P. 700. Infact Ananaba maintains that the strike was almost altogether master-minded by Michael Imoudu, that "there is little doubt that but for Imoudu's activities there might have been no General

96. Nwanunobi, op.cit. P.89.
97. Oyemeakinde, op.cit. P.704.
98. Ibid. P.709
99. Report of the Tudor Davies Commission into the Cost of Living in the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria, No. 204. (London: H.M.S.O. for the Colonial Office, 1945) P.13,27. Cited in Cohen, 'Further Comment..', op.cit. P.159.
100. Cited in Yesufu, op.cit. P.60, from Department of Labour, Nigeria, Annual Report, 1955-56; Paragraph 96.
101. V.I. Diejomaoh, op.cit. P.190-91.
102. Cohen, op.cit. P. 196.
103. Cohen and Hughes, op.cit. P.53 .
104. Quoted in Cohen, 'Further Comment', op.cit. P. 158.
(Emphasis added).

CHAPTER 4POST-INDEPENDENCE TRADE UNIONISMINTRODUCTION

In the last chapter we examined the formation and development of early labour organizations during the colonial period. Among other things it was argued that the basic economism of the Nigerian labour movement is best explained by the effects of the repressive and supervisory strategy of the colonial state, the socio-political structure of both Nigeria and the wider world system into which the country was incorporated; and (consequently) the divisions within the labour movement itself.

The present chapter addresses issues similar to those examined in the last chapter, but in a different period, the post-independence period. This period differs from the colonial one in the sense that in the post-colonial situation the nature of the state changes, as we outlined in Chapter One. But this change only means that the state continues to play a leading role in the labour movement. Besides the labour policies of the post-colonial state differ little from those of the colonial state, and the socio-political structure continues to affect the labour movement in much the same

way as it did in the colonial period.

The focus of the chapter will be on five main issues; 1. urban wage employment, 2. the structure and growth of organized labour, 3. labour unity and politics, 4. collective bargaining and 5. labour economism.

1. INDUSTRIAL LABOUR FORCE

(a.) SIZE

The proportion of Nigerians engaged in industrial wage employment has not changed significantly since the attainment of political independence in 1960.¹ By the mid - 1960's the actual labour force was about 28 million, just under half the country's total population. Of the 28 million, 70% were involved in agriculture and related engagements, 15% were engaged in commerce and only 6% (or 3% of the total population) was engaged in industrial wage labour and about 8% were self employed as (urban) "traders, craftsmen, transporters etc."² By mid-1964 54% of the wage-earning population was engaged in direct employment by the state, 38% in European-owned firms and (by implication, as this is not stated in my source) 8% engaged in Nigerian-owned private firms.³

The data shows how in the sixties industrial wage labour continued to be small, and how this small wage labour was to be found mainly under state employment. Relatively more recent data reveals much the same trend, as can be observed in the table below.

TABLE 10TRENDS IN MODERN SECTOR EMPLOYMENT, 1973-75

<u>INDUSTRY</u>	<u>EMPLOYMENT</u>			
	<u>Sept. 1973</u>		<u>April 1975</u>	
	Thousands	%	Thousands	%
Agriculture	102	7	105	7
Mining and Quarrying	89	6	90	6
Manufacturing and Processing	297	22	324	21
Construction and building	190	14	210	14
Electricity, gas & water	29	2	30	2
Distribution	97	7	99	6
Transport and Communication	89	6	92	6
Services	496	36	550	38
ALL INDUSTRIES	1389	100	1500	100

Source: Adopted, with slight modifications, from V.P. Diejomaoh, "Industrial Relations in a Development Context, The Case of Nigeria," U.G. Damachi et al Industrial Relations in Africa (London, McMillan Press, 1979, Table 5.10 p. 196

As the data indicates in absolute as well as proportional terms the rate of growth of the wage earning population since independence has not been impressive. Granted that the total figure here of 1.5 million wage workers is a gross underestimate, even a higher figure of 2.8 million will mean that the wage earning population represents only 4% of the total population. In terms of sectoral distribution, as the table shows, once it is acknowledged that the state dominates in a majority of the industries, like services, manufacturing and processing; mining and quarrying, and transport and communication, it becomes evident that at least 58% of the wage-earning population is employed by the state. This

factor of the state being the major employer of labour plays a crucial role as a basis for increases state intervention in labour-management relations. The point is that the colonial trend continues to exist in the post colonial period. Wage labour as a proportion of total population is both small and concentrated in the state sector.

(b) Migrant Labour

In Chapter two a critical distinction was established between two kinds of migrations regarding colonial wage workers in Nigeria: Migratory and migrant workers; the former characterised by seasonal movements of peasants to and from towns in search of strictly temporary wage employment; the latter category typifies wage-workers who become relatively settled in urban wage work but nonetheless regard, both psychologically and materially, their village as their home. In the post-colonial period seasonal migration has become a relatively unimportant factor in urban wage employment as a reserve army of the urban unemployed and semi-employed grows in number and seeks to get employed in areas that would otherwise attract seasonal migrants. But I would argue that migrant labour both as a category and concept has continued to be a significant factor in the analysis of urban wage employment in Nigeria.

Though research data on urban-rural permanent

return migration by wage-workers in Nigeria either does not exist or is not available, the fragmentary evidence available regarding the attitudes, desires and intentions of urban wage workers point to the fact that a good proportion of these workers do not see wage-employment as a permanent life-long engagement. And it is also in this sense that one can advance discussion on the concept of migrant labour beyond the level of actual physical movement to that of consciousness. If workers do not identify their long term goals with wage employment then this is likely to influence their behaviour in trade unions, and whether or not in the long run they actually leave wage employment does not change this influence fundamentally. Research in key Nigerian towns shows the tendency of wage workers to regard wage-employment as a temporary occupation.

In Kano, Paul Lubeck's study of three factories shows that the aspirations of the wage workers is to leave factory work and engage in trading activities.⁴ Lubeck also indicates the tendency of labour leaders to leave the movement and join higher occupations and politics.⁵

At the Nigerian Tobacco Company (N.T.C.) in Zaira, interviews with some skilled workers revealed that they operated personal commercial enterprises at the same time as they were engaged at N.T.C. work; and as Remy observed,

one of the workers "A young Yoruba man had made careful plans for a future clothing store and was already saving towards the 400 he considered to be adequate initial capital."⁶

In Lagos both Adrian Peace and Peter Waterman report the aspirations of workers to leave factory employment.⁷ At the Traffic and Engineering Departments of the Nigerian Ports Authority in Lagos, Peter Waterman observed

Despite the fact that most N.P.A. workers are likely to spend their wage-earning life within its junior staff, there are still high aspirations to professional or petty-entrepreneurial occupations. Wage-labour within the N.P.A. appears to be considered more as a - possibly long-period in the worker's life than as characterising his social status.⁸

What this line of research data does is provide the basis for a broad characterization of urban wage workers in Nigeria. Over the years, though rural migrants are becoming relatively settled in urban wage employment, only paying occasional but frequent visits to their homes in the villages, by and large, urban wage employment is not seen as a permanent and life-long source of livelihood. Thus though in the long run the workers may not be able to migrate to rural areas on a permanent basis, the desire to do so and the aspiration to "migrate" from wage-employment to alternative means of income is a factor whose influence on membership and behaviour in the labour movement cannot be easily discounted.

Specifically this factor has some association with trade union economism. Workers who define their stay in wage-employment as a temporary state would tend to emphasize immediate economic rewards as against long term political demands in their organizations. Precisely this has been the attitude of Nigerian urban workers.

2. GROWTH AND STRUCTURE OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

Except for the isolated periods of general agitations for higher wages and improved conditons of service, both membership and number of unions have continued to increase on a relatively steady rate since 1960.

The table below gives the general trend.

TABLE 11 GROWTH OF LABOUR ORGANIZATION 1960-1971

(1) YEAR	(2) NUMBER OF UNIONS	(3) MEMBERSHIP	(4) % INCREASE IN (2)	(5) % INCREASE IN (3)
1960	360	274,126	4	6
1961	402	281,124	12	3
1962	435	324,203	8	15
1963	502	352,790	15	9
1964	551	517,911	10	47
1965	615	519,000	12	2
1966	631	520,164	3	0.2
1967	674	530,000	7	2
1968	696	540,000	3	2
1969	721	550,000	4	2
1970	809	600,000	12	9
1971	873	655,215	8	9

*Source: Adapted from Robin Cohen, Labour and Politics in Nigeria (London, Heinemann, 1974)P.129.

On the whole sharp increases in the number of unions as well as membership have tended to correspond with periods of widespread strike activities over wage issues. The years 1963/64 marked a period of industrial unrest culminating in the 1964 General Strike, to which we shall return later. Corresponding to this period is a sharp increase in both the number of unions and union membership. The 47% rise in membership in 1964 is particularly remarkable. The period after the General Strike was marked by a relatively low percentage increase in both membership and union organization until another period of widespread agitation for higher wages in 1970/71. This followed the publication and implementation of the report of another wages review commission under the Chairmanship of Chief Adebo. In this year the rate of organization rose from 4% in the previous year to 12% while union membership increased by 9% as against the 2% of the previous year. This strong relationship between strike activity over wages and growth of unionization is suggestive of the major motivations for forming and joining labour organizations. The greater the perceived probability that organized action can serve their immediate economic interests, the greater also is the likelihood that wage-workers will join or combine into trade unions. In this case organized

strike activities for increased wages in 1963/64 and 1970 led to sharp increase in the membership and number of trade unions. The Nigerian workers' emphasis on wage issues can be understood when one considers the economic and political conditions under which they work. For one thing prices have always risen much faster than the wages of workers. Despite attempts by various regimes to control prices, it has always been much easier to control wages, that is, keep them constant than prices. For another, the various regimes in Nigeria have always had excuses to keep wages stagnant in the face of rising prices. As we have seen in the colonial period the excuse for keeping urban wages low was that higher urban wages might create an urban-rural income inequality. In the post-independence period, additional excuses became easily available. Thus by 1963 when urban workers were getting impatient after waiting in vain for their independence "bonus", the administration explained its resistance to raise wages by the argument that no provision for increased wages had been made in the six-year Development Plan introduced in 1962. And we can correctly point out that when a ruling class makes a six year "development" plan and does not consider any need for raising the wages of workers in six years, that "planned development" reflects the interests of that class, at least not working class interests. From

the mid-1960's to 1970 the outbreak of the Civil War provided yet another reason for wages being kept low while prices escalated. It is interesting to note that the wage freeze imposed by the military regime under war conditions was still in effect eight years after the end of the war. The result is that while prices of certain food items have increased by up to 800% between 1971 and 1978 the starting wage for urban workers has gone up by a mere 159%. The table below shows the picture of wages and food prices in Kano, 1971 to 1978.

TABLE 12

FOOD PRICES AND INDUSTRIAL WAGES IN KANO, 1971 to 1978
IN NAIRA

Item	November 1971	November 1975	November 1978	Percentage Increase 1971 to 1978
Millet (measure)	.17	.50	1.10	547
Rice (measure)	.83	1.60	2.50	201
Sorghum (Guinea Corn) (measure)	.21	.50	1.00	376
Beef (kilo)	.93	-	2.50	169
Palm oil (beer bottle)	.17	.70	1.55	812
Groundnut oil (beer bottle)	.25	.85	1.25	400
Pepper (measure)	.33	-	1.00	203
Starting wage for Industrial worker	.87	1.75	2.25	159
In 1978 NI = \$1.60 = £0.80.				

Source: Paul Lubeck "Labour in Kano" op.cit. P.41.

This situation thus seems to be an additional plausible explanation for the economism of the Nigerian labour movement.

As a result of this drive towards unionization caused by incidents of strikes, by the end of 1971, 40% of the wage-earning population was organized in unions. And as a continuation of the colonial trend workers in the public sector continued to dominate the labour movement. The table below shows the distribution of union membership by industry.

TABLE 13 DISTRIBUTION OF UNION MEMBERSHIP BY INDUSTRY, 1965*

	No. of Members	% of total Membership
1. Community Services	133,208	25.4
2. Transport	102,089	19.5
3. Manufacturing	78,438	15.0
4. Mining and Quarrying	55,990	10.8
5. Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	33,854	6.5
6. Services (not otherwise specified)	28,470	5.4
7. Construction	27,993	5.3
8. Government Services	27,930	5.3
9. Wholesale and Retail Trades	11,387	2.1
10. Electricity, Steam & Gas	8,419	1.6
11. Banks, Insurance & Financial Institutions	8,197	1.6
12. Communications	7,936	1.5
	523,911	100.0

Source*: Adapted from Robin Cohen, op.cit. p. 128.

The total union membership for this year represents 30% of the wage-earning populations or 2% of the labour

force. And in the absence of direct data giving the exact number of wage-workers unionized under state employment, it is evident from the table that more than 55% of union membership is to be found in the Public Sector. Peter Kilby observes regarding this period that "Unionization is limited to the civil service, public corporations and European firms...The small-scale sector...has remained largely unorganized."⁹ In fact in Kano where the private sector has traditionally been a major employer of labour (whether in the 1960's when the labour scene was dominated by the Asian and Levantine-owned industries and indigenous merchant capitalist enterprises or in the 1970's when the oil boom has led to increased establishment of industries by Multinational Corporations like Dunlop, I.C.I., Bata, Fiat, and Union Carbide),¹⁰ as late as 1970 there was no active factory union in spite of Kano being the second (to Lagos) largest industrial center in Nigeria.¹¹

One structural element of the labour movement in Nigeria has been until 1978 the proliferation of small trade unions. Together with the failure of the unions to form one labour congress to represent them, this factor was to become a justification for the open intervention by the state to restructure the movement in the mid-1970's. A close look at the structure of the distribution

of union membership shows the dominance of small unions.

TABLE 14: DISTRIBUTION OF UNION MEMBERSHIP BY TRADE UNION SIZE, 1952/63-1971.

Size	Number of Unions				Distribution of Membership(%)			
	1962/3	1963/4	1964/5	1971	1962/3	1963/4	1964/5	1971
50 and under	62	105	91	138	1	7	1	1
51-250	167	180	231	365	7	8	6	7
250-1,000	79	93	139	239	12	13	14	17
1,000-5,000	52	45	47	77	28	27	17	24
Membership not known	60	67	22	32	-	-	-	-
	435	502	551	873	100	100	100	100

Source: Calculations and figures based on Robin Cohen, op.cit. p.113, Table 4.2.

The data shows that in 1971 for instance trade unions with a size of 250 members or less accounted for 58% of total number of unions but had only 8% of total union membership. On the other hand in the same year trade unions with a size of 5,000 and above made up only 3% of total number of unions but accounted for 51% of total union membership. Earlier in 1962/3 much the same pattern can be observed, thus 53% of the registered trade unions were of the size 250 members and under and had only 8% of total membership, while unions of the size 5,000 members and above made up only 3% of the total number of unions but accounted for 52% of total membership. Some of the explanations given for

the prevalence of small unions in Nigeria prior to the restructuring exercise initiated by the state are, firstly that the very large size of the country coupled with the real problems of fast communication stand in the way of large unions. Secondly, a multiplicity of small unions is blamed on the attitudes of union leaders who choose to be "big fish in little ponds rather than small fish in big ponds," an attitude manifested by the practice of some leaders simultaneously being secretaries of several unions. Thirdly it is maintained that the attitudes of some employers in the private sector actually encourage the growth of small unions, namely, that, as T.M. Yesufu puts it "Very many of them (employers) are opposed to dealing with an organization of workmen which extends beyond their individual establishment or firm. It is this which accounts for the preponderance of company unions in the commercial establishments in particular."¹²

But beyond the reasons for the existence of small house unions the consequences on the labour movement have also been significant. For one thing a multiplicity of small isolated workers organization does not form a strong base for the development and maturing of a powerful working class especially considering the fact that organized labour makes up such a small proportion of the

labour force. Furthermore the multiplicity of small unions has been a major factor which provided a justification for the military regime to get so openly and directly involved in labour organization in 1978, a process to which we shall return later. Suffice it to be said here that the restructuring process which reduced the number of trade unions in Nigeria from 1,000 to 43 plus 18 unions for senior staff and 9 for employers has been single handedly undertaken by the administration.¹³

Internal Cross-Pressure

An aspect of the internal structure of the unions which tend to mitigate against union involvement and the class interests of workers is the issue of vertical links and competing interests which manifest themselves in a variety of forms. These links and interests are not defined or identified in the formal structure of unions but nevertheless tend to affect union performance significantly. At the Nigerian Tobacco Company (N.T.C.) factory in Zaria it is observed that hiring practices which are more or less based on patron-client relationships have a carry-over effect on labour management relations.¹⁴ At the Zaria N.T.C. in spite of the formally defined channel of employment through job applications, interviews and subsequent hiring, what in practice tends to be the hiring norm

is the process whereby those seeking factory jobs are helped by informal but crucial "contacts" or intervention by a third party. Often the third party is a manager, co-ethnic, foreman or supervisor who then acts as a patron or sponsor for the applicant. Those who get jobs through such mechanisms often maintain the patron-client relationships even when they are relatively settled in their jobs, for apart from the simple factor of mutual obligations there is likely to be the additional concern on the part of the wage-earner that if the patron had been influential in hiring he can also be influential in firing. One way in which the client pays back his patron is by acting as a spy on his fellow-workers. Thus regarding the Personnel manager, the workers expressed a "general belief in his widespread use of "spies" among the workers..."¹⁵ The effect of these patron-client linkages on working class solidarity is obvious. As Remy concludes, "As long as economic security remains bound to schooling and patronage in Zaria working class solidarity cannot develop. Industrial unions become then not an expression of a class interest, but rather another institution within which conflicting interests can be pursued."¹⁶ The point is that this situation is not peculiar to Zaria. Research in other Nigerian factories is likely to show similar patron-client relationships especially those based on ethnic

affiliation. Thus in the same way as rural-urban labour migration introduce ethnic relationships and consciousness into the urban milieu, so also do hiring practices more or less develop along patron-client basis and introduce vertical relationships and other forms of consciousness into the workplace and constitute a constraint and tensions on horizontal relationships and consciousness among workers.

The case of the Port workers unions in Lagos provide further evidence on the kinds of tensions and impact that vertical links tend to have on labour organizations.¹⁷ It is the case of the inability of workers in the Marine Department to come together into one industrial union. By 1943 the workers were represented by one union, the Nigerian Maritime African Workers Union, but by 1960 the number of unions had risen to seven and in 1977 prior to the restructuring exercise by the state there were 5 unions divided against one another. A major explanation given for the structural disunity and factionalism is the issue of ethnicity. Three main unions are identified: the Railways and Ports Transport and Clerical Staff Union (R&PT & CSU) led by Adebola; the Nigerian Maritime Workers Union (NMWU); and the Nigerian Ports Authority workers Union (NPAWU). As Waterman reports

The accusation against the Railway and Ports Transport Clerical Staff Union was that it was Yoruba-dominated, appealed to Yoruba tribalism, and attacked management because it was non-Yoruba in composition. The counter-accusation of Adebola was rather against Ibo managers for conspiring with Ibo officers of his own and other unions.¹⁸

Exploratory research along the lines suggested by these accusations and counter-accusations of appeals to ethnic loyalties in the unions show that in fact the Yorubas dominate in the Railways and Ports Transport and Clerical Staff Union while the Ibo and Southern and Eastern Minority groups dominate in the Nigerian Maritime Workers Union. The research also makes three points which provide further evidence for the argument being made here, and are worth brief summarising:

(a) while the R&PT&CSU leadership adopted militant posture to appeal across ethnic divisions" and thus to some extent overcome the issue of "tribalism", the same was not the case with other unions. As Waterman observes while in the mid-1970's some unions were "overcoming tribalism" others were still "using ethnic appeals";¹⁹ (b) that "in the mid-1970's it was the moderate, Christian, non-Yoruba leaderships which had many relations with a top management largely of the same composition";²⁰ (c) that on the whole "N.P.A. workers have traditionally appealed to ethnically-affiliated superiors for protection or promotion";²¹ (d) "By stressing the value of 'vertical' links between workers

or unions at the bottom and management at the top, the moderates were not only undermining horizontal worker solidarity in general, but were unable to overcome vertical relations of a type they formally abhorred,"²² and, finally (e) that "the sources of support for ethnically identified leadership lie not simply in the widespread use of ethnicity in the cruel, competitive and arbitrary world surrounding the N.P.A., but in the traditional, widespread and blatant use of it by officers and top managers in jockeying positions within the corporation."²³ This information is presented to provide a basis for this point: ethnic identification as a strong element in the Nigerian political structure has a strong influence on the internal life of trade unions in Nigeria both on the level of structure and consciousness. On the level of structure, as the case of Lagos port workers show ethnic affiliation and identity prevented the formation of a strong industrial union representing port workers until structural unity was imposed on them from above by the creation by the state of the Nigerian Authority Workers Union 2 (NPAWU2) to replace the multiplicity of unions in the port.²⁴ On the level of consciousness we can see that ethnic identification and affiliation vertically links labour and capital providing an alternative form of consciousness with a specific content at the workplace expressed by

the fact that job security and promotion can be secured by the upward identification with co-ethnics in management positions. The additional significance of job security and promotion in the Nigerian context makes this view all the more compelling.

In a situation of stagnant wages (in fact falling real wages) arising from the wage freeze imposed by the state in 1969 the only other viable alternative to collective bargaining as a tool for increased wages is promotion on the job, and high unemployment rates in the face of arbitrary dismissals²⁵ makes the need to feel secure in the job a high priority. In fact in research in Kano Paul Lubeck concludes regarding the questions of the absence of factory unions in Kano even in the 1970's,

It is clear from my research that the single most salient issue in the consciousness of workers interviewed is job security. Any union organization that is able demonstrably to diminish the profound insecurity of unskilled labourers in Kano will have little difficulty in recruiting and maintaining loyal members.²⁶

Workers have shown that in matters both of promotion and security the trade union is not the only channel, that ethnic identification and affiliation might be helpful. The point being established here is that under these circumstances the trade union requests and demands have tended to be on narrow, immediate economic gains as conflicting interests of class and ethnicity prevent a working class solidarity beyond economic matters.

Peter Waterman's research with the Lagos port workers shows that the unions "most using ethnic appeals" were also the ones that "were tied up with small-group or individual issues of promotion and regrading" while the one union, the R&PT&CSU, that was "best overcoming tribalism" that "most dramatically appealed to non-members in the 1970's" and was therefore able to initiate and lead "the only portwide strike in the 1970's."²⁸

The major implication for all this is that it is only in so far as Nigerian trade unionists develop strategies to minimize the practice of falling back on vertical ethnic appeals that workers organizations will begin to form the basis for the expression and articulation of the interests of the working class beyond economism.

3. THE NIGERIAN LABOUR CONGRESS (N.L.C.)

The present Nigerian Labour Congress (N.L.C.) created by the state in 1978 represents the third time that Nigerian trade unions have either come together or been brought together to form one central labour organization known by that name. The first N.L.C. as we have seen was formed in 1950 but was inoperative by 1953: the second was formed in 1975 but ceased to exist in 1976. Altogether there were four abortive attempts by the colonial trade unions to form a united labour congress and an equal number of abortive attempts to do so since the attainment of political independence in

1960. But if at independence in 1960 there were two rival central labour organizations in Nigeria, by 1974 there were four. In the section that follows, we shall try to explain why post colonial attempts at creating a labour congress failed, and why one was created in 1978. The explanation will be advanced in terms of class struggle, in which case the role of the state in the formation of a labour congress will be seen as a manifestation of this struggle while the other factors to be discussed will be viewed as the ill-preparedness of the working class so far to cope with the struggle.

The chart on the following page summarizes the trend in efforts to have one organization to represent labour since independence.

EFFORTS TO UNITE

TIME	NAME OF ORGANIZATION	PRESIDENT	COMMENT
1960	N.T.U.C. vs. T.U.C.N.	Imoudu vs. Borha	split of T.U.C.N. over issue of affilia- tion with I.C.F.T.U.
1962 3rd May	ULC	Adebola	merger of T.U.C.N. and N.T.U.C. following Ibandan conference.
1962 5th May	I.U.L.C.	Imoudu	split from ULC over issue of affiliation with I.C.F.T.U. and voting procedures at Ibadan conference, Fraternal relationship with W.F.T.U.
Dec. 1962	NWC	Anunobi	split from ULC. affil- iated with I.F.C.T.U.
Dec. 1962	N.F.L.	Il. Nock	Claimed affiliation with I.C.A.T.U.
Aug. 1963	N.T.U.C.	Goodluck	Takeover of I.U.L.C.
Sep. 1963	J.A.C.		Temporary alliance of all trade unions centers for the purpose of the 1964 General Strike.
1970	U.C.C.L.O.	Goodluck	Alliance of N.T.U.C. U.L.C., LUF and N.W.C.
1975	N.L.C.		Followed Apena Cemetery Declaration (Explained in text)
1978	NLC	Hassan Sumnonu	Created by the state to replace the 1975 unrecognized NLC

*N.T.U.C. - Nigerian Trade Union Congress
T.U.C.N. - Trade Union Congress of Nigeria
U.L.C. - United labour Congress
I.U.L.C. - Independent United Labour Congress
N.W.C. - Nigerian Workers Council

N.L.F. - Northern Federation of Labour
 J.A.C. - Joint Action Committee
 U.C.C.L.C. - United Committee of Central Labour organizations.
 N.L.C. - Nigerian Labour Congress
 I.F.C.T.U. - International Federation of Christian Trade Unions
 W.F.T.U. - World Federation of Trade Unions
 I.C.A.T.U. - International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions.

Sources: Material for the period 1960-71 substantively
 adopted from Robin Cohen, "Nigeria's Central
 Trade Union Organization: a study guide"
Journal of Modern African Studies, 9,3, 1971,
 p. 457-58; Wogo Anaba, The Trade Union Movement
 in Nigeria (London, C. Hurst, 1969) p. 222-23;
 Richard Synge ed. Africa Guide, 1978, p. 249.
 James Unoh, "Long History of Unions divisions"
West Africa 2 June 1980, p. 964-965.

A brief commentary on this chart is in order here. The data can be divided into two major factors. (a) factors which facilitate some form of labour unity (albeit short-lived) and (b) those which bring about disunity. On the basis of this categorization a model of labour unity in Nigeria can be conceived and the major implications of that model for the Nigerian labour movement can then be argued. Thus, in the pages that follow we intend to discuss the circumstances under which the unions were brought together and subsequently disintegrated, and on that basis we will draw out conditions under which they can stay together, and conclude with the major implications of this kind of unity.

(a) Unity. Between 1960 and 1978 there have been five major occasions when Nigerian trade unions have come together in one central labour organization. The first time was in 1962. That was at a conference initiated by the new independent regime and convened in Ibadan. The Ibadan conference led to the creation of the United Labour Congress which lasted as a congress for only three days. The significant point here is that it was the initiative of the state that brought the unions together in Ibadan. It is easy and tempting to argue that the state intervened at this point mainly for the convenience of forming one single organization to represent workers, and leave it at that level.

We go further and suggest that the additional motive of control and paternalism cannot be ruled out.

The second effort at unity was in 1963 when the Joint Action Committee was formed. The committee was made up of representatives of all the central labour organizations and was formed for the purpose of pressing for higher wages from the state, and failing that, to organize a strike.²⁹ The committee did its assignment, pressed for higher wages, organized and executed the 1964 General Strike to which we shall return soon. Despite desires by some that the Committee be turned into a formal labour congress, it ceased to exist after the general strike. The point being made here is that this time the factor that had brought the competing labour organizations together was principally economic: the desire to have a united front to press for wage increases.

The third time the unions were again brought together was in 1970 when they formed a loose committee called the United Committee of Central Labour Organizations (U.C.C.L.O.) made up of representatives from the four central organizations: the N.T.U.C., N.W.C., U.L.C., and L.U.F. Prior to the creation of this committee a Salaries and Wages Review Commission had been set up under the chairmanship of Chief Adebo, and as Cohen puts it, "the U.C.C.L.O. was set up solely to co-ordinate the submissions of unions to this commission."³⁰ The

committee ceased to exist after the executions of the wage increases recommended by the Adebo Commission. Again, a purely economic matter was the principal factor bringing the trade unions in a central organization.

The fourth time the unions came together was in 1975. The immediate circumstances surrounding the creation of the central body was the occasion of the funeral ceremony of a deceased veteran trade unionist, Mr. J.A. Oduleye. At the Apena Cemetery where Oduleye was buried, angered at the fact that the trade unionists attending the burial ceremony of a strong union leader could not come as members of a strong united labour congress, but as leaders of four central labour organizations divided against one another, a veteran trade union leader, Mr. Okon Eshiett made a passionate declaration calling for labour unity. Following the (now famous) Apena Cemetery Declaration the four central labour organizations; NTUC, U.L.C., N.W.C. and L.U.F. came together in 1975 to form the (second) Nigerian Labour Congress (N.L.C.).³¹ While conceding the sentimental and psychological motivation of the cemetery Declaration, it would seem to be the case that more crucial motivating factors for the formation of the 1975 N.L.C. was the fact that the years 1975 witness another salaried and Wages Review Commission appointed by the state under the chairmanship of Chief Jerome Udoji.³² Though no direct evidence is given, Peter Waterman sees

the creation of the N.L.C. in 1975 as also "stimulated by government pressure."³³

Finally, the fifth occasion since 1960 when the unions were brought together in one central organization was at the direct initiative of the state in a process of major re-organizations in the labour movement beginning in 1976 and ending with the creation of the present Nigerian Labour Congress (N.L.C.) in 1978. Having refused to acknowledge the 1975 N.L.C. the military administration appointed a Trade Union Administrator, Mr. Abiodun who was given the mandate to perform "on behalf of trade unions the same duties as are normally performed by a Central Labour Organization" and to restructure trade unions on industrial lines.³⁴ What followed the reports of both the Administrator of Trade Unions and a related Trade Union Tribunal headed by Justice Duro Adebisi and the action of the military administration on the two reports was a series of reforms affecting the structure and leadership of the labour movement. In the first place all affiliation between Nigerian labour Organizations and International Labour Organizations outside Africa were banned. Secondly, eleven labour leaders were banned from further participation in trade union affairs. Thirdly, a code of conduct was prepared and submitted to union leaders to make up part of their constitution. Among other things the code made it an

offence for trade union leaders to participate in partisan politics. And finally 43 industrial unions were formed whose General Secretaries were not to be elected but appointed by the state. Uniting all the industrial unions is the Nigerian Labour Congress.³⁵ We have seen in this case that the state was a central actor in process of forming a united labour congress.

We have seen in the above section that for the five times since 1960 that the Nigerian trade unions made an effort at unity, twice the unifying factor was the need for effective demand for increased wages twice the state was the central factor and the other occasion is in between these factors. Why would the state be a principal actor in matters of labour unity? As the case of the restructuring exercise of 1976-78 and the chain of reforms and conditions following it demonstrated, state policy here does not merely reflect a governmental responsibility of helping workers organize, but beyond that, helping them organize in such a fashion as to make the actions of this organization to be more effectively controlled and checked than would otherwise be the case. We shall follow-up on this soon.

(b) Disintegration Just as the major factors which have facilitated some form of coming together of Nigerian labour organizations have been specified above,

so also can those factors that have persistently stood in the way of unity be identified. Four major occasions of disintegration will be considered. The first was the withdrawal from the Trade Union Congress of Nigeria (T.U.C.N.) by the Marxist-oriented labour leadership to form a rival labour center, the Nigerian Trade Union Congress (N.T.U.C.) in 1960. The major reason for this split was the question of affiliation with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (C.F.T.U.).³⁶ The Marxist labour leaders who had relations with the Communist World Federation of Trade Unions (W.F.T.U.) would not support any affiliation with the (I.C.F.T.U.) whose ideology was basically anti-Communist.

The second split was in 1962 when the Marxist-oriented group pulled out of the United Labour Congress, again over the questions of affiliation with the I.C.F.T.U.³⁷

The third occasion since 1960 on which the opportunity to form a united Labour Congress escaped the unions was in 1963/64 with the formation of a Joint Action Committee (J.A.C.), a body which was made up of representatives of all the four central labour organizations. Though the J.A.C. was formed explicitly to organize action for wage increase which culminated in the 1964 General Strike, the organization formed a basis for a central labour organization. As Wogu Ananaba puts it "Although it was basically an ad hoc body most workers

and their friends hoped that the J.A.C. would pave the way and eventually become Nigeria's Central labour organization in a unified labour movement."³⁸ But just a few months after the General Strike the Committee ceased to exist. A central reason for its breakdown was an attempt at affiliation to a political party. A statement by the president of the United Labour Congress (ULC) - co-member of J.A.C. - on the issue is revealing.

When the J.A.C. was formed we of the United Labour Congress thought it was only for the purpose of using it to obtain benefits for the workers of Nigeria, but members of the N.T.U.C. took the opportunity to advocate the interests of the Socialist Workers and Farmers Party (SWAFP)³⁹

Accordingly the U.L.C. was (together with the Nigerian Workers Council) the first to pull out of the J.A.C.⁴⁰

The final major occasion of disintegration was the break up of the Nigerian Labour Congress (N.L.C.) of 1975 following refusal by the state to recognize the body. The Congress was formed in December 1975 but in May 1976 the Federal Commissioner for Labour, Major General Adofeope announced the decision of the government not to recognize it.⁴¹ And in September of the same year, the Federal Government promulgated Decree 44 which banned the four central labour organizations which had come together to form the defunct N.L.C. (the NT.U.C., L.U.F., N.W.C. and U.L.C.).⁴²

The Daily Times labour editor, Mr. Umoh James Umoh has well observed: "With the government refusing to recog-

nize the N.L.C. in May, 1976 and with the government banning N.T.U.C., U.L.C., N.W.C., and L.U.F. in September 1976, Nigerian workers became sheep without a shepherd."⁴³ and, elsewhere, "Whatever the Government may say about the respect for industrial democracy like its predecessor it would like the central labour organization to be government controlled."⁴⁴

We have outlined the four major occasions of labour splits since 1960. As we have seen on three occasions the most immediate divisive factor was the issue of ideological differences over affiliation with international labour organizations and a national political party; and on one occasion, the most immediate factor was the action of the state. Thus we have two broad factors accounting for the failure to unite: the question of affiliation and the state. And this raises two crucial questions. The first one is: How can the state be a factor associated with both unity and disunity in the labour movement? Secondly, considering the fact that ideology as such, especially communist ideology, has not been a significant element in Nigerian national politics, how do we explain the prominence of ideology, especially communist ideology, as a divisive factor within the Nigerian Labour Movement?

Regarding the first question, we argue that the image of the Nigerian state as a promoter of both

labour unity and disunity is consistent with the repressive nature of its labour policies. Thus whether by the government refusing to recognize a central labour organization as it did in 1976 thus causing the organization to fall back into its divided constituent member organizations or by banning all competing and divided central organizations and creating in their place one united labour congress as the government did during the period 1976-78, the end result is similar: either a weak and divided labour movement,⁴⁵ or a strong and united labour movement with equally strong limitations and restrictions imposed on it by the state. And the reasons for the desire of the state to control labour varies in our view, with the nature of the regime, even though the class basis for control is always evident.

Thus the colonial state sought to control trade unions because the logic of colonialism demanded it. As an alien authority whose basis of local legitimacy rested on force or the threat of force, the state regarded organizations of the urban working class as a threat to the colonial system, especially if these organizations could conduct their activities beyond the work place and effect alliance with another class equally considered a threat to colonialism, the rising indigenous bourgeoisie. And it is in these terms that one can understand the

policies and actions of the colonial state regarding trade union matters. State policies and actions in the post colonial period can also be set in context. In a period of competing political parties for leadership (competition albeit based on ethnic appeals) that marked the first five years after independence, a ruling political party that was indifferent to the activities of a militant though divided and competing labour movement would only do so at its risk as there was always a possibility of a radical political party emerging to align with labour to de-stabilize the regime. This gives some insight into the reasons for the state initiative to call a unity conference in 1962 and also why that conference failed to effect the desired unity. For what came out of the conference were two factions, one supported and recognized by the government, the other, anti-government. And during the military regime, 1966-1979, the workers were to bear the brunt of the policies of a ruling class whose logic of operation was not entirely dictated by democratic principles. Thus with the economic effects of a civil war and the increasing inability of the state to achieve the economic targets set out in the regular "development plans", an era of what we call industrial relations by decrees was set in. It was felt that a stronger control of the working class especially their strikes and wage demands would

lessen the economic woes of the country. That this era culminated in the series of reforms and the re-structuring of the labour movement in 1978 outlined earlier has an additional explanation. The military was to hand over power to an elected civilian regime in 1979. And the last minute reforms can be seen as efforts by the outgoing regime to diminish the chances of politics conducted on an open class basis thus endangering the position of the class the military has become part of.

On the second question, one fundamental reason why ideology and the issue of international affiliation came to play such a divisive role in the Nigerian labour movement is seen in terms of the financial needs of the unions and their leaders. We saw in the last chapter how very few of the union members pay their dues. And in the absence of any compulsory check off system the unions faced heavy financial burdens of how to raise money. And it did not take long before union leaders discovered that international affiliation could be a ready source of finance. Robin Cohen's comment on the issue makes the point:

The trade union leaders' quest for financial security has also drawn in a network of international federations and foreign unions willing to sponsor their allies in the Nigerian movement. Genuine ideological empathy between the donors and recipients cannot be ruled out, but in general the past behaviour of Union leaders and the disbursements of funds received from the international bodies, would seem to indicate

that the leadership has a predominantly instrumental attitude towards foreign support rather than being too concerned about the political colouring of its money.⁴⁶

It would seem that the Nigerian labour leaders would not like to be seen by their respective foreign financial supporters as losers in any attempt at uniting together to form a central labour organization. In fact the split in the T.U.C.N. (Trade Union Congress of Nigeria) in 1960 was most immediately and directly due to disagreement over the alleged financial commitment by the ICFTU to effect affiliation with the congress. A letter addressed to the General Secretary of the congress, L.L. Porha, a pro-ICFTU affiliate, (the president, Mr. N. Imoudu was anti-ICFTU) showed the intentions of the ICFTU:

I feel that assistance should not be withheld... at least the I.C.F.T.U. should help the T.U.C.N. financially. We are therefore transferring to you a sum of £200 for each of the months of August, September and October, out of which the salary of the General Secretary of the T.U.C.N. is to be paid in accordance with an earlier commitment on our part.⁴⁷

Similar correspondence was discovered which showed that the I.C.F.T.U. was prepared either to break it up and "revive the Committee of I.C.F.T.U. Affiliated Unions."⁴⁸ What followed these allegations was a chain of events which subsequently led to the split of the congress.⁴⁹

Besides the need for foreign financial resources the ideological factor in the Nigerian labour movement

can be seen as arising from genuine differences in the way the labour leaders see the Nigerian reality and how to relate to that reality. It is in this sense that two distinct groups have emerged within the Nigerian Labour movement: the radicals identified with the L.U.F. and N.T.U.C. leadership and the "moderates," identified with the N.W.C. and U.L.C. leadership. The radicals view the economic development and distribution of resources in Nigeria as unfair and needing structural change whereas the moderates seem more or less typified by a complacency with the status quo. Typical attitudes expressed by these two groups have been tabulated by Robin Cohen and are worth reproducing here.⁵⁰ (See following page)

The table has to be interpreted with caution. For one thing, as Cohen himself observes "an individual union or an individual worker may not hold the attitudes of a center to which he is attached."⁵¹ Besides, the Nigerian political scene not being one of explicit competing ideologies, the average Nigerian worker is not so familiar with alternative ideologies as to choose one and on that basis vehemently oppose the other. Thus I would argue that the schema actually reflects not so much the differing and conflicting personal attitudes of Nigerian union members as the campaign strategies of the Union leaders in their struggle for power. As a

CHART 3: CONTRASTING VIEWS OF THE "RADICALS"
(LUF, NTUC) AND MODERATES (NWC, ULC).

LUF, NTUC LEADERSHIP

NWC, ULC LEADERSHIP

Customary Mode of Address

'Comrade'

'Brother'

Attitude to Strikes

A necessary recourse to deal with a stubborn management. A means of increasing the consciousness of the workers by struggle. ('Militant')

A regrettable recourse; to be used only when all the mechanisms of collective bargaining are exhausted. It is possible to have a meaningful dialogue with management. ('Responsible')

Attitude to Government

Government basically represents colonial bourgeois or neo-colonial interests; workers should not be surprised if their interests are ignored. ('Hostile')

Government represents the national will, and there is every expectation that it will consider the interests of the workers. ('Favourable')

Attitude to Ministry of Labour

The Ministry is an arm of the government; its intervention in the affairs of the movement is not always disinterested. ('Suspicious')

The Ministry considers the wishes of the workers, employers and government equally; it is truly neutral. ('Strongly favourable')

Attitude to Political Parties

The major political parties have promised the workers much, and given them little; they represent selfish ethnic interests; workers therefore need their own parties to represent their interests. (exclusivist')

Individuals may lend support to any party they choose. Unions should avoid involvement in partisan politics. ('Neutralist')

CHART 3: continued.

Attitude to Class

Class antagonisms are endemic and inevitable. Employers and workers are locked in an irreconcilable struggle. ('Conflictist')

Class lines are not clear and there is every possibility of reaching accommodation between worker and employer. ('Collaborationist')

Source: Cohen, op.cit. P. 103

matter of fact a survey of workers' opinions on labour disunity puts leadership struggle as a leading factor. In response to the question "Why are Trade Unions not united?" a sample of 121 members of the Ibadan University Workers Union in 1968 gave the following answers.⁵²

	3
Leadership struggles	41
Ideological differences	17
Government foments or provokes disunity	11
Some unions support governments	
Some do not	10
Other reasons	10
Unions are united in goals and spirit	5
No reasons/ don't know	6
	<hr/>
	100

What we have tried to do so far is outline the main factors that have facilitated some form of labour unity and those which have stood in the way of unity in the Nigerian labour movement. The state and wage issues have been identified as the major factors that have brought the unions together. Factors that have hindered labour unity are firstly, the question of affiliation to international organizations and the related problem of ideology; differences among labour leaders over the need to affiliate with internal political parties, and power struggle among the leaders

themselves; and the role of the state.

What these amount to is this: for it to be possible for Nigerian unions to come together and remain in one labour congress three specific conditions have to be met, (a) the unions must denounce political affiliation, (b) they must submit to the state as the organizer of the congress (because the state is able both to organize and disorganize) with all powers to shape the structure, functioning and leadership of the congress, and (c) the unions limit their central concerns to the immediate economic interests of union members. These, more or less, seem to be the conditions that have brought into existence the present Nigerian Labour Congress (N.L.C.) created single handedly by the state in 1978.

The major implication of a national labour congress formed and existing on such basis should be obvious. To seek to bring about structural changes in the political economy through revolutionary measures is hardly conceivable under the circumstances as the labour congress must not be seen either by the state or its constituent members (individual unions or workers) to be engaged in any forms of political struggle. To initiate and press forward for gradual legislative reforms in favour of labour is almost as difficult on the part of the labour congress as it is not formally represented at the legis-

lative level by an affiliated political party. What is less difficult for the unions, then is to fight for economic incremental gains in terms of wage increases. But even in this option the matter is not that easy. We have already outlined the politicization of wage determination in Nigeria. It can only be said here that a de-politicized labour congress participating in a system of political wage fixing can at best achieve very little for the workers.

LABOUR AND POLITICS

As citizens of this country we have the inalienable right to participate in political activities and join political parties of our choice strictly on INDIVIDUAL BASIS. BUT THE TRAGIC BLUNDER AND DANGER we must guard against is the desperate attempt on the part of any group or groups of labour leaders to impose any political parties of their choice on you.⁵³

This was a warning given to union leadership and membership by a Nigerian trade unionist on the question of political participation in 1978. Similar such statements from certain influential labour quarters are worth quoting. Commenting on an abortive meeting held to organize labour unity in 1966, the United Labour Congress (ULC), one of the then four central labour organizations, gave a press statement:

...the meeting which ought to be an industrial one was used by some politicians for the political manoeuvres in complete disregard and

violation of the undertaking given to the supreme Commander and Head of the Federal Military Government in a meeting with labour leaders. The ULC is purely an industrial and not a political organization.⁵⁴

And two years later in interviews with Cohen, two District Secretaries of the United Labour Congress, one in the Mid-West State and the other Mallam Kaltungo, in the Northern States, maintained respectively, "What we need is not the stirring up of class consciousness by more of strikes, agitations and sabotages but the reinforcement of our democratic influence in society by the expansion of our trade union education work;" and "the workers would make a mistake in trying to set up a dissident political party. This will be to the detriment of the workers interests."⁵⁵

Granted that these of the above statements come from labour leaders with a conservative ideology,⁵⁶ they nevertheless provide sufficient basis for the formulation of a critical question. When unionists advise themselves against (a) collective participation in politics (b) the "stirring up of class consciousness", (c) the transformation of a "purely industrial" organization into a "political" organization and (d) forming a "dissident political party", the question arises: What is the political significance of organized labour in Nigeria? We submit that the tendency of workers to put ethnic identification over and above their working

class identity in political matters (which is itself conditioned by the structure of politics in Nigeria) minimizes whatever potential political influence organized labour possesses. Ethnic identity influences the Nigerian wage worker's political behaviour far more than does his working class identity. This tendency is in turn conditioned in a major way by the manipulation of ethnicity (and religion) by Nigerian politicians in their struggle for political and economic power.⁵⁶ To demonstrate the view that the Nigerian worker puts his ethnic identity over and above his class identity we will discuss the workers attitude and participation in the 1964 General Strike and the December Federal Elections of the same year.

The 1964 General Strike and After

Prolonged insensitivity of the state to workers demands for a general wage increase was the major cause of the General Strike of 1964. Earlier in 1961 a comprehensive demand for wage increase was presented to the Federal Government in the Zudonu Committee Report prepared by the Trade Union Congress of Nigeria (TUCN). No action was taken on this report. A similar request (this time more militant in its tone) was made by the Nigerian Trade Union Congress (N.T.U.C.) in 1963 but was also ignored by the administration.⁵⁷ This gave the two rival labour organizations the opportunity to

come together in the ad hoc body called the Joint Action Committee (JAC) set up to co-ordinate the demands of workers. The Federal Government refused to grant wage increases on the excuse that no provision for wage increases had been made in the Six Years Development Plan which had just been introduced. To contain a one day strike by Lagos dockworkers in September 1963 the government set up a six-man commission of enquiry to look into the demands of workers. The commission began its work in October 1963 and finished in April 1964. But both the government's delay in publishing and implementing the Report and the continued ban on public demonstrations only led to increased agitations by workers. Thus on May 30, 1964 a mass meeting was held which mandated the J.A.C. to organize a General Strike by June 1, should the government not release the report by that date. The release of the report on June 3rd only worsened matters as demonstrations had already begun, and, moreover, as most of the favourable recommendations of the report had been rejected by the government. Robin Cohen describes the strike that followed in these words:

The strike involved perhaps 750,000 workers many of them not unionists, and spread over the whole countryside... Besides the wage-and-salary earners, a large measure of support came from other sources. Many domestic servants refused to work, while, in the towns, a number of unemployed joined the

workers at political rallies and mass meetings.⁵⁸

Underestimating the intensity of the workers' grievances and their determination, the Prime Minister gave the striking workers 48 hours to return to work or face summary dismissal. The workers similarly replied by giving the Prime Minister 48 hours to resign his position as head of state.

What gave the strike an additional dimension was the fact that like the 1945 General Strike, the workers' grievances coincided with specific political grievances outside the labour movement, this time it was the growing strains between the ruling party, the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) and its coalition partner, the National Convention of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) dominated by the Ibos.⁵⁹ As Friedland observes,

Both Action Group (Yoruba dominated) and NCNC leaders supported the strikers' demands and both parties reportedly gave at least token financial assistance to the strike leaders of the several factions. Dr. M.I. Ikpara, Premier of the Eastern Region and Chairman of the NCNC, was particularly outspoken in his support of the union demands.⁶⁰

Thus Friedland maintains that while the strike was "a national movement in that it extended to all regions" it nevertheless "involved regional interest conflicts and ethnic grievances of the Ibos and Yorubas against the North."⁶¹

The government must have been aware of such possibilities, for failing to bring the strike to an end by ultimatum it tried to end it by largely meeting the demands and terms of the workers: wages were to be negotiated at levels very close to those suggested by the Commission, there would be no dismissals or victimization of strikers, the strike period of two weeks would be regarded as holiday with pay. Thus the strike was called off on June 13.

In his assessment of the strike afterwards, Wahab Goodluck, a Marxist labour leader said "in its development the strike had raised possible political action which with a developed Marxist-Leninist party could have led to a proletarian revolution."⁶²

But if the actions of the workers in the course of the General Strike raised any political hope in them as a class conscious category, their performance in the Federal Elections that followed six months later told a different story. For one thing, as Nwanurobi puts it:

Gogu Chu Nzibe, one of the most active champions of the idea of the participation of the working class in politics, contested that election as an independent candidate on a manifesto essentially directed at the workers in his constituency, Ikeja Central, which was predominantly working class. He was only able to get 736 of the votes cast. The NNDF (Nigerian National Democratic Party) got 856 votes,

while the NCNC candidate was elected with 1,455 votes.⁶³

Similarly "neither the Socialist Workers and Farmers Party, founded in 1963, nor the Labour Party, founded in 1964 as a reaction to the government's handling of the 1963/64 labour crisis, could claim the support of the majority of the workers."⁶⁴ The major explanation for the failure of a Nigerian worker to support a labour or working class party is, as has been advanced, the tendency to put ethnic identity above class identity. Robert Nelson's work very well falls along the line and his data will be presented here as evidence for the argument.⁶⁵

Nelson's major proposition can be identified.

the Nigerian worker of whatever nationality is cross-pressured between his loyalty to his ethnic group and loyalty to his economic interest group. Applying this cross-pressure model to the period between the strike of June and the election of December 1964, one would expect that as the election neared, it would make the worker's ethnic groups more salient. His support for his economic interest group, the labour party would decline and support for the ethnic parties would increase.⁶⁶

He presents data in his first table which shows a decline in the proportion of those who indicated that they would support a labour party in July just after the General Strike, and those who indicated so in the election period. The data is shown below.

TABLE 15: DROP IN LABOUR PARTY SUPPORT BETWEEN JULY & DECEMBER

	July	October- December
Percent Who		
Indicate some Labour Party Support	88%	41
Indicate ethnic Party support only.	5	41
Other	7	17
TOTAL	100 (N=58)	99 (N=72)

*Source: Table 1 in Nelson op.cit. P.164. Also see footnote 67.

The data shows equal support for ethnic and labour parties in October 1964, but the 47% drop in labour party support and 36% rise in ethnic party support show also that under normal circumstances that is in times when workers are not in a mood of a general strike, most workers swing to support ethnic parties rather than labour parties. This is consistent with our argument here that the Nigerian worker tends to put his ethnic identity above his class identity in his political orientation.

The next table presents data which shows the relative ease with which workers would choose either a labour or ethnic party.

TABLE 16: CROSS-PRESSURED VOTERS BETWEEN JULY AND
DECEMBER 1964*

Percentages who are:

	July	October-Dec.
Not Cross-Pressured (choose only one party):	24	63
Cross-Pressured (choose at least two competing parties)	69	19
Other	7	17
TOTAL	100 (N=58)	99 (N=72)

*Source: Table 1 in Nelson op.cit. Also see footnote 65.

What the data demonstrates is that even at the time just after the General Strike the number of people who found it difficult to make a choice between a labour and ethnic party was high, 69% as against only 19% at the election time. As the proportion of those who indicated ethnic party support only rose (by 36%, table 6) much faster than the proportion of those indicating some labour party support (which in fact fell by 47%, table 6), table 7 in fact shows that workers are more at ease and more willing to desert a labour party in support of an ethnic party. This again is consistent with our

argument here.

Table 17 below sets forth a case in assessing what workers say and what they actually do.

TABLE 17: PRESCRIBED PARTY SUPPORT AND ACTUAL PARTY SUPPORT*

	<u>Prescribed Support</u> % who indicate that workers should	<u>Actual Support</u> % who indicate that they
1. Support a labour Party	43.2%	8.9%
2. Support an ethnic party	9.6	49.1
3. Not mix in politics	35.9	-
4. Support no Party ("none")	-	35.0
5. Other	11.2	6.9
TOTAL	99.9 (N=574)	99.9 (N=574)

*Source: Table 6 in Nelson op.cit. Also see footnote 65.

The data draws attention to differences between the ought and the actual. Thus whereas 43% of the workers indicate that workers should support a labour party, only 9% actually did support it. On the other hand 10% feel that workers should support an ethnic party but almost 50% actually support such a party. What this does suggest is that at best one has to be cautious in taking what workers verbally express as a show of class solidarity, the verbal expression must be judged against what they actually do. And here their actual support shows that they pay lip

service to support for a labour party in favour of ethnic parties. This also supports the contention here that ethnic identification has a stronger political appeal to workers than does their class solidarity. The data in the next table shows that this is so irrespective of the worker's ethnic group, level of education and length of trade union membership. (See next page for Table 18.)

The trend shown in the table is quite clear. In each case the proportion of workers who actually support a labour party is much lower than the proportion prescribing support for it; and the reverse is the case with support for ethnic parties: the proportion who actually support such parties is much higher than the proportion prescribing such support. It is interesting to note that even the length of time in the labour movement does not seem to have any effect on the tendency. In fact both the lowest actual support for labour party and the highest actual support for ethnic party is to be found among those who have been in the labour movement for approximately ten years.

To sum it up, this data has been presented and analysed to show the effect of one factor, ethnic consciousness and identification, on the class consciousness and political participation of the Nigerian trade union member. We have seen how this factor militates against

TABLE 18: PERCENT PRESCRIBED PARTY SUPPORT AND ACTUAL PARTY SUPPORT BY ETHNIC GROUP, EDUCATION AND TIME IN LABOUR MOVEMENT.*

		<u>Ethnic Group</u>									
		Yoruba (N=277)		Ibo (N=186)		Mid-West (N=74)		Northerners (N=14)		Eastern Minorities (N=12)	
		P*	A+	P	A	P	A	P	A	P	A
Labour		40	8	43	9	55	11	43	7	33	8
Ethnic		9	50	11	55	5	43	0	29	33	25

		<u>Education</u>					
		Primary (0-3Yrs) (N=91)		Primary (3-6yrs) (N=338)		SomeSecondary (N=141)	
		P	A	P	A	P	A
Labour		32	11	46	9	46	8
Ethnic		15	43	9	52	8	50

		<u>Length of Trade Union Membership</u>					
		1 - 7 years (N=134)		8 - 10 years (N=73)		Over 10 years (N=354)	
		P	A	P	A	P	A
Labour		40	11	34	3	46	9
Ethnic		10	45	7	56	11	50

P* = Prescribed Party Support
A+ = Actual Party Support

Source: culled from Table 9. Nelson op.cit. p. 170.
Also see footnote 65. other categories like
"Others".

political solidarity by the working class. The substantive implication of this is that until and unless the Nigerian wage-workers transcend their immediate ethnic interests and begin to make their political decisions as members of a working class, the political significance of this class in Nigeria will continue both to be in serious question and dependent upon spontaneous uprisings in general strikes which create opportunities for bourgeois politicians to use workers' grievance in their intra-class-certainly no working class - struggles.

4. COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AND WAGE DETERMINATION UNDER THE MILITARY.

In chapter three we set forth the major features of a model of political wage-fixing that was being institutionalized in Nigeria during the colonial period. To briefly recapitulate: a perceived and felt rise in the cost of living leads to agitation by the workers, often involving some strike action; the state responds by setting up a wages review commission, which prepares and submits a report to the state; the state moderates and implements the Commission's recommendations by giving a general wage award to workers in the public sector; and the award has a carry-over effect in the private sector as workers there press on private employers through waves of strikes to implement the public sector wage increases.

In this section we examine the perpetuation, stabilization and major effects of this style of wage determination particularly under the military regime which was instituted in Nigeria through the Coup of January 1966 and lasted till October 1979.⁶⁷

We have discussed the failure of the Whitely Councils established in the colonial period as institutions of collective bargaining, mainly due to lack of co-operation on the part of management and private employers. After the attainment of political independence in 1960, especially in the civil service the Whitely Councils were replaced by the public service Negotiating Council. Some of the many aims and objectives of the Council included securing "the greatest measure of cooperation between the Governments of the Federation in their respective roles as employer and the general body of civil servants in all the public services of the Federation" and having the "general responsibility for negotiating all matters affecting the conditions of service of civil servants."⁶⁸

In the private sector the Nigeria Employers' Consultive Association, (NECA) and other employers' Organizations like the Chambers of Commerce, industry, mines and agriculture were to represent private employers in negotiations with trade unions in the private sector.

copies of any agreement reached between employers and unions be deposited with the Commissioner of Labour, before it would become effective. A. Adeogun notes that "...mere deposit of a collective agreement does not alter its status: it is the order of the Commissioner that gives it the force of law and only as between the employer and the individual workers and not as between the employer and the trade union which negotiated the agreement."⁷³ One year later, Decree No. 53 of 1969 made compulsory a prior approval of the Federal Military Government before any employer could grant "a general or percentage wage increase to any group of employees." Failure to comply on the part of any employer would cost him three years imprisonment. The decree added that the Industrial Arbitration Tribunal would have "no power to grant or approve any such increase."⁷⁴ Such decrees and legislation tends to have the effect of making both unions and management regard collective bargaining as only of secondary importance. In fact on occasions the military regime actually used the powers of the decree to cancel collective agreements.

Thus in 1978 the Ministry of Labour "rejected the agreement reached between the management and workers of Paper Conversion Nigeria Limited, Lagos, for the payment of housing allowance of between ₦ 120 to ₦ 150 a year...the payment of car allowance of between ₦ 50

a month; motor cycle allowance of ₦ 20 a month..."⁷⁵

The deputy general secretary of the National Union of Paper Products Workers, Mr. Sunday Abiola described the government action as "a negation of the principles of collective bargaining."⁷⁶ It is this attempt by the state to conduct industrial relations almost mainly by decrees that largely makes collective bargaining as a machinery for wage determination both a mockery and failure in Nigeria. David Ojeli observes, "this strategy of militarising industrial relations tends to alienate and frustrate workers and lower productivity and efficiency."⁷⁷

In any case even if the machinery set up were to operate effectively it would cover only a very small proportion of the workers. By 1968 only 16% of employers with a labour force of over 10 had formal communication channels.⁷⁸

Thus, rather than determining wages through a collective bargaining machinery, what has become the norm is the system we have already outlined: wage fixing through state appointed salaries and wages review commissions. Between 1960 and 1978 there were three major general wage awards in Nigeria, and all of them were through this system. A brief review of each of these awards is in order here.

The Morgan Wage Awards, 1964

An account of the 1964 General Strike has already been given in the last section. The events leading to the strike and the strike itself were all connected with the setting up of the salaries and wages review commission under the chairmanship of Mr. Justice A. Morgan. Here we will only recall aspects of the process relevant to the system of wage determination we are discussing.⁷⁹

Initial demands for increased wages were put forward by the two major central labour organizations, NTUC and ULC. These steps were followed by a delegation from the ULC to the Federal Minister of establishment. Failing to elicit any action from the Federal Government through these steps the U.L.C. addressed a joint letter to political leaders expressing the demands of workers before the government.

The next step was the specific demand that a wage review commission be set up by the state. Continued indifference by the state to the workers demand led to the coming together of the rival labour organization into the J.A.C. to co-ordinate workers activities.

As part of the expression of the workers demands for increased wages Lagos dockworkers went on a one day strike in September 1963. It was in an effort to contain more strikes that the wages review commission was

set up. The handling of the report of the Commission by the administration both prolonged and intensified the General Strike, but in the end workers got a general wage increase.

The Adebo Award 1970-71.

By the end of the Nigerian Civil War in January 1970, workers could no longer continue to exercise patience in facing ever rising prices and stagnant wages.⁸⁰ As one magazine editorial in Lagos put it. "In the heat of the war it was relatively easy to keep the workers quiet but after January 1970 all hell broke loose. Emergency or no, the workers clearly signalled that "enough is enough."

Increased trade union pressure led to the establishment of yet another Wage Review Commission under the Chairmanship of Chief Adebo in July 1970. The Commission took written evidence from 600 trade unions and other associations. The central labour organization, the United Committee of Central Labour Organizations (U.C.C.L.O.) formed mainly for the occasion, also made a presentation to the commission on behalf of workers. In December 1970 the Commission made a preliminary report which granted wage increases in the public sector and made specific recommendations that the same be implemented in the private sector. This first report sparked off a wave of strikes across the country as workers in the private sector

faced resistance by their employers to implement the recommendations. But by and large workers both in the public and private sectors gained some wage increase.

The Commission produced its second and final report in August 1971 the overall effect of which was a 30% raise in wages and salaries. The agitations surrounding the Adebo awards continued till the beginning of 1972.

The Udoji Award 1975

Again following increased demands by unions for wage increases the Federal Government appointed another Wage Review Commission under the Chairmanship of Chief Jerome Udoju in 1974. The recommendations of the Commission in early 1975 led to another wave of strikes this time both in the public and private sector. Public sector trade unions were seeking redress of specific grievances while unions in the private sector sought to extend the wage recommendations of the Commission to their sector as their employers claimed the recommendations did not apply to them.⁸² As Diejomah observes, "Union strength prevailed in spreading the Udoji awards to the private sector despite their alleged impotence."⁸³ In Kano workers in the private sector went on "Udoji Strikes" until they obtained wage increases.⁸⁴

These three cases well illustrate the stabilization of a process of wage determination that lies beyond

the conventional principles of collective bargaining and has significant effects on the wages of Nigerian workers.

In the first place there is serious doubt as to whether these wage increases awarded by public wage review commissions actually raise the real wages of the workers. Commenting on the issue of minimum wage rates stipulated by the state through such Commissions, the Adebo wage review commission observes the ineffectiveness of implementing the rates.

It has not in fact worked that way. The rate is not imposed by law. The bigger employers have no difficulty in following the Government ...The only fuss they make is about freedom to settle rates with their workers on the basis of free collective bargaining. The medium employers make a greater fuss, some of them pay the rate in order to stave off a more costly industrial action, the rest pay rather less, either because their workers are not so well organized or because their workers recognize the employers' genuine inability to pay. The weakest employers, for similar reasons, are left out.⁸⁵

We see then that even the recommended minimum wage rates are not strictly adhered to. As Diejomah correctly maintains "On balance we may conclude that salary review commissions have not succeeded in increasing the real wages of most categories of workers nor have they succeeded in establishing a national wage structure."⁸⁶

Secondly, by appointing public wage review commissions which invites memoranda from about anybody or organization in Nigeria, the state gives publicity to

wage increases disadvantageously disproportional to the likely raise in wages aimed at. The effect of this undue publicity is that even before workers get their increased money wages, everybody trading in goods and services of all kinds increase their prices by proportions in far excess of what workers expect from the awards so that they also can get their fair share of "Morgan", "Adebo" or "Udoji." This worsens rather than improves the conditions of the working class. Very well has Dr. Adeogun noted, "much publicity attends the awards of these commissions with the result that traders are only too eager to cash in on them by putting up prices so that in the long run the workers hardly benefit from them."⁸⁷ As we can see the effects of this system of wage determination go far beyond the confines of the working class and spill over into the whole political economy. For when prices rise so fast due to the wage increase by public commissions, everybody is affected, but the major beneficiaries are traders and landlord, not wage workers. In fact, Andrian Peace identifies a symbiotic relationship between Lagos traders and wage workers. The former consider the gains by the latter as "common property."⁸⁷

What we have done in this section is to show the central position the state has occupied in the wage determination machinery and the effects this has not only

on the wage workers but the whole political economy.

5: ECONOMISM

In chapter three we showed the inability of organized labour in colonial Nigeria whether to adopt a revolutionary political ideology or to participate in electoral politics on a collective class basis; that by and large, the labour movement was characterised by militant economism. We showed that explaining this in terms suggested by the labour aristocracy thesis is inadequate and suggested an alternative explanation with the state, socio-economic structure and the structure of the labour movement itself as crucial factors.

In the present chapter evidence has been produced for a different period to further advance this alternative explanation. We have seen how in the post-colonial period the state has intervened in the labour movement largely to insulate it from politics and to make urban wage workers an impoverished lot. We have also shown how in the labour movement itself wage issues tended to foster (temporary) unity while attempts to bring in politics and ideology brought splits. Finally we have shown how in political decision-making the wage worker tended to be more ethnically minded than class conscious. But beyond identifying these factors as determining the nature and role of trade unionism in Nigeria: its funda-

mental economic outlook, we have tried to show how even in the economic matters of wages on which Nigerian workers are all united, the unions have substantially failed to raise real wages mainly because of the failure of free collective bargaining and the insitutionalization of state appointed public wages and salaries review commissions.

F O O T N O T E S

1. Poor labour (as well as other vital) statistics continue to pose a major problem to research in terms of precise statements and analyses. For political reasons, the most recent census with officially accepted results was that conducted in 1963. Over the years employment figures given by the Federal Ministry of Labour in it's Annual Reports are results of surveys and can not by themselves act as sufficient indicator for overall trends.
2. Robin Cohen, Labour and Politics. P.50.
3. Robert Melson, "Ideology and Inconsistency: The 'Cross-Pressured' Nigerian Worker", American Political Science Review, Vol. 65, No. 1, March 1971, P.163.
4. Paul Lubeck, "Unions, Workers and Consciousness in Kano, Nigeria: A view from Below", Sandbrook and Cohen, The Development of an African Working Class.P.144.
5. Ibid. P. 145.
6. Dorothy Remy, "Economic Security and Industrial Unionism: A Nigerian Case Study", Sandbrook and Cohen, op.cit. P.169.
7. Andrian Peace, 'Industrial Protest in Nigeria', Robin Cohen, Gutkind and Brazier, Peasants and Proletarians.P.418.
8. Peter Waterman, "Consciousness, Organization and Action amongst Lagos Port-Workers", Review of African Political Economy No. 13, May-Aug, 1978, P.50.
9. Peter Kilby, Industrialization in an Open Economy: Nigeria 1945-1966. P. 267.
10. See Paul Lubeck, "Labour in Kano since the Petroleum Boom" Review of African Political Economy, ibid. P.37; Lubeck, 'unions, Workers and Consciousness..', op.cit.P.140-41.
11. Ibid. P.140.
12. A summary of the arguments is made by T.M. Yesufu, An Introduction to Industrial Relations in Nigeria.P.78-82.
13. Daily Times (Lagos) January 16, 1978, P.21.

14. This short account on N.T.C. Zaria is based on D.Remy,
op.cit. P. 161-176.
15. Ibid. P.167.
16. Ibid. P. 176.
17. Data on the unions in the Nigerian Ports Authority
(N.P.A.) is based on Waterman, op.cit. P.47-63
18. Ibid. P.55.
19. Ibid. P.56
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid. P.60.
25. A case of arbitrary dismissal that can be cited offhand
is the fate of a Lagos wage worker who was recently
fired for parking his bicycle in a space reserved for
his general manager. Daily Times (Lagos).
26. Lubeck, 'Unions, Workers and Consciousness....' op.cit. P.159.
27. Waterman, op.cit. P.56
28. Cohen, op.cit. P.84-90; Ananaba, The Trade Union Movement
P. 213-227.
29. Ananaba, ibid. P. 38-39; Cohen, op.cit. P.165.
30. Ibid. P.97.
31. Daily Times, April 17, 1978, P.20.
32. Waterman, op.cit. P.59.
33. Ibid.
34. R.D. Davison, Industrial Relations Decrees in Nigeria,
(Zaria, Ahmadu Bello University Press, 1977). P.38;
Daily Times, Oct. 25, 1976, P.16; op.cit. Jan. 16, 1978, P.21
35. West Africa, Apr. 4/77, P.681, 687; ibid. Mar. 14/77, P.528;
Daily Times, Jan. 16/78, P.21; ibid. Oct. 25/76, P.6; Richard
Synge (ed.), Africa Guide, 1978, P.249.

36. Cohen, op.cit. P.80-82
37. Ibid. P. 85-86
38. Ananaba, op.cit. P. 251.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid. P. 252.
41. Daily Times January 16, 1978, P.20.
42. Ibid. P.21, R.D. Davison, op.cit. P.38.
43. Umoh James Umoh, "Nigerian Labour Movements - Past and Present: What future?" Daily Times, Jan 16, 1978, P.21.
44. Richard Synge, op.cit. P. 249
45. In fact Robin Cohen maintains that the state stood to gain by disunity in the labour movement. He argues ' In its role as the largest employer of labour in the country it was in the interests of the government to keep the other side of the negotiating table at logger heads; it would perhaps not be going too far to assert that successive governments have connived to maintain the status quo', Cohen, op.cit. P.101.
46. Ibid. P.99.
47. Quoted in Robin Cohen, op.cit. P. 81, original source not given.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid. P.81-82.
50. Ibid. P. 103
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid. P. 137
53. Nneamaka Chukwura, "politics: Workers Must beware", Daily Times, Nov. 13, 1978, P. 21, (Emphasis original).
54. Quoted in Cohen, op.cit. P.94, from press statements of the U.L.C. files, 1966.
55. Interview statements reported in Cohen, op.cit. P.120. The view of one N.T.U.C. Secretary (a Marxist-oriented labour organization) does not in fact differ from those

of the more conservative leaders. In an interview in 1969 he maintained "we must organise workers from the bottom upwards...Not all this talk of worker's party", ibid.P.120.

56. Emeka Ekekwe, "Nigeria: Class Struggle and State Creation", Paper presented at the 1979 Canadian Association of African Studies Conference, University of Winnipeg, May 1-4, 1979. Okwudibia Nnoli, 'The Dynamics of Ethnic Politics in Nigeria', ODU, A Journal of West African Studies, No.14, July 1976., P.15-16, Nnoli also develops the dimension of urban socio-economic insecurity as accounting for the emergence and development of ethnic identity and consciousness.
57. Wogu Ananaba, op.cit. P. 228; Cohen, op.cit. P.164-65; the following account of the General Strike is based on these two sources, Ananaba, P.228-252; Cohen op.cit. P.164-168.
58. Cohen, op.cit. P.166. Perhaps saying that the strike spread over the whole countryside is a little bit too sweeping as no evidence is given as to how the strike was carried out or supported in the countryside.
59. See William H. Friedland, "Paradoxes of African Trade Unionism, Organizational Chaos and Political Potential", in Africa Report, June 1965, P.7.
60. Ibid. P.9.
61. Ibid.
62. Cohen, op.cit. P. 167, Quoted in Goodluck, "Nigeria and Marxism", African Communist, No. 19, 1964, P.55.
63. Onyeka Nwanunobi, "Wage Labour and the Politics of Nigeria..." op.cit. P.86.
64. Ibid. P.86-7
65. The data that follows is derived from Robert Nelson, op.cit. P.161-171. The data from tables 15 and 16 here are based on his "1. non-probabilistic survey of 58 trade unionists who attended a meeting sponsored by the University of Ibadan in July 1964; 2. a non-probabilistic survey of 29 workers who attended a training program for trade unionists sponsored by the United Labour Congress in 1964; and 3. a mail Questionnaire", op.cit. P. 163; and tables 17 and 18 derive from his "survey of 574 railway workers in the Lagos yard of the Nigerian Railway Corp....interviewed in May 1965", P.166.

66. Ibid. P. 163.

67. The circumstances and events leading to the military take over of government in Nigeria lie beyond the major objectives of this study and so I remain mute on them. A good short overview is offered by Peter Waterman, "Structure, Contradiction and the Nigerian Catastrophe: Elements of an Analysis", Presence Africaine, No. 77, 1971, P. 192-207.

68. David Ojeli (President, Nigerian Civil Service Union) "Collective Bargaining, A Mockery in Civil Service", Daily Times, June 11, 1979, P. 21.

69. V.P. Diejomach, op.cit. P. 192.

70. A.A. Adeogun, "Industrial Relations and the Law", in T.O. Elias, Law and Social Change in Nigeria, (Lagos, University of Lagos Press, 1972), P. 113.

71. Diejomach, op.cit. P. 193.

72. David Ojeli, op.cit. P. 21.

73. A.A. Adeogun, op.cit. P. 112, (emphasis mine).

74. Ibid. P. 121-22.

75. Daily Times, Dec 4, 1978, P. 16.

76. Ibid. P. 17

77. David Ojeli, op.cit. P. 21.

78. T.M. Yesufu, "Management Policies for Industrial Peace in Nigeria", Journal of Business and Social Studies, Vol. 1, No. 1, September 1968, P. 35-47; cited in Diejomach, op.cit. P. 177.

79. The account is based on Ananaba, op.cit. P. 228-252; and Cohen, Labour and Politics, P. 164-68.

80. The brief review of the Adebo award is based on Andrian Peace, 'Industrial Protest...' op.cit. P. 423-436; Peace, "The Lagos Proletariat...", op.cit. P. 291-300, and Cohen, op.cit. P. 233-237.

81. Cohen, op.cit. P. 233, originally in Afriscopes, November, 1971.)

82. Based on Diejomach, op.cit. P. 184, 192-94; Lubeck, 'Labour

in Kano since the Petroleum Boom', op.cit. P.41-45.

83.Diejomach, op.cit. P. 184.

84.Lubeck, op. cit. P. 42.

85.Second and Final Report of the Wages and Salaries Review Commission, 1970-71. (Lagos, Federal Ministry of Information) P.20; See also White Paper on the Second and Final Report of the Wages and Salaries Review Commission, 1970-71. (Lagos, Federal Ministry of Information, 1971), P.7.

86.Diejomach, op.cit. P. 184.

87.A.A. Adeogun; op.cit. P. 114

88.Andrian Peace, "Lagos Proletariat...", op.cit. P.290.

CHAPTER 5.CONCLUSION

We started this study by posing two sets of questions. The first relates to the role of the working class in effecting fundamental structural transformations in underdeveloped social formations, which has not been directly addressed here. The second narrows and specifies the issue down to what determines the emergence, development and nature of trade unionism in the concrete Nigerian situation. And it is hoped that answering this question, which has been the central concern of this dissertation, has provided sufficient basis for at least knowing the direction of the answer to the first broad question, at least as far as the Nigerian case goes.

As we have shown John Saul and Frantz Fanon have indicated that prospects for structural transformations in Africa through urban wage workers are rather bleak. But in doing so they utilise the labour aristocracy perspective which has been hotly disputed as irrelevant to the experience of African urban wage workers. Critics of the labour aristocracy thesis are substantially right, but they all seem to have one thing in common: they hardly go beyond the thesis they critique, and

when they do what is often asserted is some form of historical imperative, 'proletarian messianism'.

The present work provides a basis for 1. rejecting the labour aristocracy thesis and yet 2. explaining what the perspective is thought capable of explaining, the economism of wage workers, and 3. understanding the major determinants of the nature of trade unionism in Nigeria. One major conclusion we have arrived at is that as it is one cannot seriously begin to look to the Nigerian working class for structural transformation of the status quo; but this is not because they are a privileged labour aristocracy. Rather, we submit that forces both external and internal to it render the working class seriously underdeveloped both in consciousness and action.

The other conclusion we draw is that judging from the factors that have influenced the nature of workers organizations that have emerged in Nigeria, it is likely that present trends will continue. The socio-economic structure and the nature and role of the Nigerian state are both expressions of underdeveloped peripheral capitalism. Until and unless either underdevelopment or the nature of capitalism it engenders, or both come to an end, the picture of trade unionism we have analysed in this work is likely to change very little. And as we have

seen, change is neither likely to come easily nor quickly, at least as far as looking to the Nigerian working class and their organizations, the trade unions, is concerned.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adeogun, A.A. "Industrial Relations and the Law",
T.O. Elias, Law and Social Change in Nigeria
(Lagos, University of Lagos Press, 1972).
- Adepoju, Adeniran, "Migration and Socio-Economic Links
between Urban Migrants and their Home Communities
in Nigeria", Africa Vol. XLIV, 1974.
- Ake, Claude, "The Congruence of Political Economies and
Ideologies in Africa", P.C.W. Gutkind and
I. Wallerstein, The Political Economy of
Contemporary Africa (London, Sage, 1976) 198-211.
- Alavi, Hawza, "The State in Post-Colonial Societies:
Pakistan and Bangladesh", New Left Review, 1972
59 -82.
- Allen, V.I., International Bibliography of Trade Unionism
(London, Merlin, 1968).
- Amin, Samir, Accumulation on a World Scale Vols. 1 & 2
(New York, Monthly Review Press, 1974).
- Ananaba, Wogu, The Trade Union Movement in Nigeria
(London, C. Hurst, 1969).
- Aronson, D.R. "Ijebu Yoruba Urban-Rural Relationships and
Class Formation" Canadian Journal of African
Studies, Vol. 5, No. 3 (1971) P. 263-279.
- Arrighi, G. and John Saul, Essays on the Political
Economy of Africa (New York, Monthly Review
Press, 1973).
- Ferg, E. "The Development of a labour force in Sub-Saharan
Africa", Economic Development and Cultural Change,
13, (1965).
- "Urban Real Wages and the Nigerian Trade Union
Movement 1939-1960: A Comment", Economic
Development and Cultural Change, No. 17, (Oct. 1969)
- Ferg, E. and J. Butler, "Trade Unions", James Coleman
and Carl Rosberg, Political Parties and National
Integration in Tropical Africa. (Berkeley, Univ.
of California Press, 1964). 340-81.

- Fernstein, Edward, Evolutionary Socialism (New York, Schocken Books, 1961).
- Futtner, Ther, "The Economic and Social Character of Pre-Colonial States in Tropical Africa", Journal of The Historical Society of Nigeria Vol. 5, No. 2, (1970) 275-289.
- Chukwura, Nneamaka, "Politics: Workers Must beware", Daily Times, (Nov. 13, 1978) P. 21.
- Cohen, Robin, "From Peasants to Workers in Africa", Gutkind and Wallerstein (eds.), The Political Economy of Contemporary Africa (London, Sage, 1976) 156-59.
- "Further Comment on the Kilby-Weeks Debate", Journal of Developing Areas, 5, (January, 1971) P. 155-164.
- Labour and Politics in Nigeria (London, Heineman, 1974)
- Cohen, R. Gutkind, P.C.W. and Brasier. Peasants and Proletarians. The Struggles of Third World Workers. (New York, Monthly Review, 1979)
- Coleman, J.S. Nigeria: Background to Nationalism (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1971.)
- Commons, J.R. Labour and Administration (New York, Kelly, 1913).
- Davies, Ioan African Trade Unions (Penguin, 1966)
- Devason, R.F. Industrial Relations Decrees in Nigeria, (Zaria, A.P.U. Press, 1977)
- Derham, D. et al. Narratives of Travels and Discoveries in Northern and Central Africa in the Years 1822, 1823 and 1824 (London, 1828).
- Diejomach, V.P. "Industrial Relations in a Development Context. The Case of Nigeria", Damachi Vkardi et al. Industrial Relations in Africa (London, McMillan, 1979)
- Dike, K.O. Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885. (London, Oxford University Press, 1956).

- Egboh, E.O. "Trade Union Education in Nigeria, 1940-1960" African Studies Review, Vol. 14, No. 1 (April, 1971).
- Ekekwe, Ene "Nigeria: Class Struggle and State Creation" Paper Presented at the 9th Annual Conference of the Canadian Association of African Studies, University of Winnipeg, May 1-4, 1979.
- Ekundare, R.O. An Economic History of Nigeria, 1860-1960 (London, Methuen, 1973).
- Elias, T.O. Nigeria Land Law and Customs (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951).
- Fanon, F. The Wretched of the Earth (London, Penguin, 1967).
- Friedland, W.H. "Paradoxes of African Trade Unionism, Organizational Chaos and Political Potential" Africa Report (June 1965)
- Frank, Gunder, Latin America: Underdevelopment or Revolution (New York, Monthly Review, 1960)
- Geiss, I. "Some Remarks on the Development of African trade Unions", Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria Vol. 3, No. 2 (Dec, 1965)
- Gerold-Scheepers "The Political Consciousness of African Urban Workers", African Perspectives, 2, (1978) 83-88.
- Gray, P. The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism: Edward Bernstein's Challenge to Marx (New York, Collier Books, 1962).
- Gutkind, P.C.W. et al. African Labour History (London, Sage Publications, 1978).
- Helleiner, Gerald K. Peasant Agriculture, Government and Economic Growth in Nigeria (Illinois, Irwin inc., 1966).
- Hinchliffe, "Labour Aristocracy - A Northern Nigerian Case Study" Journal of Modern African Studies 12, 1, (1974) 57-67.
- Hopkins, A.G. "The Currency Revolution in South-Western Nigeria in the late Nineteenth Century", Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria Vol. 3, No. 3 (Dec. 1966)

"The Lagos Strike of 1871: An Exploration in Nigerian Labour History", Past and Present No. 35. (Dec, 1966) 138-144.

Horowitz, L. (ed.) Power, Politics and People, Collected Essays of C.W. Mills (London, Oxford University Press, 1963).

Hughes, A. and Cohen, "An Emerging Nigerian Working Class: The Lagos Experience, 1897 - 1939" in P.C.W. Gutkind, et al. African Labour History (London, Sage, 1978).

Kilby, Peter, "A Reply to John F. Weeks' Comment", Journal of Developing Areas, 3, (Oct. 1968) 19-26.

"Further Comment on the Kilby/Weeks Debate, Final Observations".

Ibid. No. 5 (January 1971).

"Industrial Relations and Wage Determinations: Failure of the Anglo-Saxon Model".
ibid. No. 1. (July, 1967) 496-501.

Industrialization in an Open Economy: Nigeria 1945-1966 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1969).

Kraus, John "African Trade Unions: Progress or Poverty?" African Studies Review, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Dec. 1976)

Lenin, V.I. On Trade Unions (Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1970).

Leys, Colin, "The 'Over-developed' Post-Colonial State: A Re-evaluation", Review of African Political Economy, No. 5, (Jan-April, 1976).

Lubeck, P. "Labour in Kano since the Petroleum Boom" ibid. No. 13, (May - August, 1978)

"Unions, Workers and Consciousness in Kano, Nigeria: A view from Below" in Sandbrook, R. and Cohen, The Development of an African Working Class (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1975).

Lugard, Lord. Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa (London, Frank Cass & Co. 1965)

Political Memoranda (London, Frank Cass & Co. 1970).

Mabogunje, Akin. Urbanization in Igeria (New York, African Publishing Corporation, 1968).

Mafeje, Archie. "The Ideology of Tribalism", Journal of Modern African Studies, Vol. 9, No. 2, (1971).

Mains, Peter. Family and Social Change in an African City: A Study of Rehousing in Lagos. (North Western University Press, 1962)

Marx, Karl Capital Vol. 1 (New York, International Publishers, 1974).

"Inaugural Address of the Working-Men's International Association" in R.C. Turner ed. The Marx Engels Reader (New York, W. Norton & Co. 1978)

The Communist Manifesto (With an Introduction by Stefan Rossny; Chicago, Henry Regenery, 1954).

The Poverty of Philosophy (Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishing House).

Wage Labour and Capital (Moscow Progress Publishers 1974)

Nason, Michael. "Working on the Railway: Forced Labour in Northern Nigeria 1907-1912" in P.C.W. Gutkind et.al. African Labour History.

Nelson, Robert. "Ideology and Inconsistency: The 'Cross-Pressured' Nigerian Worker", American Political Science Review, Vol. 65, No. 1. (March 1971)

Moore, Michael "Public Bureaucracy in the Post-Colonial State: Some Questions on 'Autonomy' and 'Dominance' in South Asia.", Development and Change Vol. 2, No. 1. (January, 1980) 132-147.

Nroli, Okwudibia. "The Dynamics of Ethnic Politics in Nigeria", ODU, A Journal of West African Studies No. 14, (July, 1976).

Nwanunobi, Oryeka, "Wage Labour and the Politics of Nigeria and Kenya: A Comparative Study", African Studies Review Vol. 17, No. 1, (April, 1975)

- Ogedengbe, Nwachukwu, "Slavery in Nineteenth Century Aboh" in Niens and Kopytoff (eds) Slavery in Africa. Historical and Anthropological Perspectives (University of Wisconsin Press, 1977).
- Ojeli, David. "Collective Bargaining, A Mockery in Civil Service", Daily Times (June 11, 1979) P. 21.
- Onselen, C. Van "Black Workers in Central African Industry, A Critical Essay on the Historiography and Sociology of Rhodesia", Journal of South African Studies Vol. 1, No. 2 (April, 1975)
- Oyemakinde, Wale "Railway Construction and Operation in Nigeria, 1895-1911: Labour Problems and Socio-Economic Impact" Journal of The Historical Society of Nigeria Vol 7, No. 2 (June, 1974)
- "The Nigerian General Strike of 1945", ibid Vol. 7, No. 4, (June 1975).
- Peace, Andrian, "Industrial Protest in Nigeria", Robin Cohen, Gutkind and Frazier (eds) Peasants and Proletarians.
- Peace, Andrian, "The Lagos Proletariat: Labour Aristocrats or Populist Militants? in Richard Sandbrook and Cohen, op.cit. 281-302.
- Perlman, Selig The Theory of the Labour Movement (New York, Kelly, 1970).
- Plotnicov, Leonard "Rural-Urban Communications in Contemporary Nigeria: The Persistence of Traditional Social Institutions", Journal of Asian and African Studies, Vol. 5, (1970)
- "Strangers to the City, Urban Men in Jos, Nigeria" (University of Pittsburg Press, 1967).
- Prothero, Mansell. "Migratory Labour from North-Western Nigeria", Africa Vol. 27, No. 3, (June, 1957) 251-61.
- Remy, Dorothy. "Economic Security and Industrial Unionism: A Nigerian Case Study", in Sandbrook and Cohen, op.cit. 161-177.
- Roberts, R.C. Labour in the Tropical Territories of the Commonwealth, (Durham, Duke University Press, 1964).

- Sandbrook, Richard "The Political Potential of African Urban Workers", Canadian Journal of African Studies Vol. 2, No. 3 (1977)
- Saul, John. "The State in Post-Colonial Societies: Tanzania", in The Socialist Registrar, (1964) 349-72.
- Shepherd, N.A. "The Origins and Incidence of the Term 'Labour Aristocracy'", Society for the Study of Labour History Bulletin No. 37, (Autumn 1978) 51-66.
- Sklar, Richard. Nigerian Political Parties: Power in an Emergent African Nation. (Princeton, University of Princeton Press, 1963).
- Trevallion, P.A.W. Metropolitan Area (London, Oxford University Press 1963).
- Vehendu, Victor "Slaves and Slavery in Iboland, Nigeria", in Susan Miers and Igor Kopytoff (eds.) op.cit.
- "State, Land and Society in Nigeria; A Critical Assessment of the Land Use Decree (1978)", Journal of African Studies Vol.6, No. 2(Summer 1979).
- Umoh, James "Nigerian Labour Movements - Past and Present" What Future?" Daily Times (Jan. 16, 1978) P.21.
- Vidiovitch, Coquery "Research in an African Mode of Production" P.C.W. Gutkind and Waterman. African Social Studies (London, Heineman, 1977).
- "The Political Economy of the African Peasantry and Modes of Production", Gutkind and Wallerstein, op.cit. 102-109.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel "The Three Stages of African Involvement in the World Economy", Gutkind and Wallerstein op.cit.
- Warren, W.M. "Urban Real Wages and the Nigerian Trade Union Movement, 1939-1960", Economic Development and Cultural Change Vol. 15, No. 1 (Oct 1966)
- "Urban Real Wages and the Nigerian Trade Union Movement, 1939-60: Rejoinder" Ibid. No. 17, (Oct. 1969) 618-626.
- Waterman, Peter "Communist Theory in the Nigerian Trade Union Movement", Politics and Society Vol. 3, (Spring 1973) 283-312.

"Consciousness, Organization and Action Amongst Lagos Port Workers", Review of African Political Economy No. 13, (May - August 1978).

"Conservatism among Nigerian Workers" Occasional Paper No. 49, (Institute of Social Studies, the Hague, Jan. 1975).

"The Labour Aristocracy in Africa: Introduction to a Debate" Development and Change Vol. 6, No. 3., (July 1975) 57-73.

Webb, Beatrice and Sidney Industrial Democracy (London, Longmans, 1902).

The History of Trade Unionism (London, Longmans, 1920).

Weeks, John F. "A Comment on Peter Kilby: Industrial Relations and Wage Determination", Journal of Developing Areas. 3, (Oct. 1968).

"Further Comment on the Kilby/Weeks Debate, An Empirical Rejoinder", Ibid. 5, (Jan, 1971).

"The Impact of Economic Conditions and Institutional Forces on Urban Wages in Nigeria", Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies, 13,3, (1971)

"Wage Policy and the Colonial Legacy - A Comparative Study" Journal of Modern African Studies 9,3, (1971) 361-378.

Woddis, Jack Africa: The Lion Awakes (London, Lawrence and Wishart 1961).

Yesufu, T.N. An Introduction to Industrial Relations in Nigeria (London, Oxford University Press, 1962).

"Management Policies for Industrial Peace in Nigeria" Journal of Business and Social Studies Vol. 1, No. 1, (September, 1968) 35-47.