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THE NIGERIAN STATE AND LABOUR IN THE 1970s

by

© Godwill Aghatise Ogboghodor, B.A. (Hons.), M.A.

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Graduate
Studies and Research in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy.

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DEDICATION

In Cherished Memory of Akiti,
himself the epitome of struggle

To Agharese,
a lesson in courage and devotion

For Osebun, Aimuan
and the future before us.

CONTENTS

List of Tables	vi
List of Abbreviations	vi
Abstract	viii
Acknowledgement	ix
Introduction	x
 CHAPTER 1: THE STATE AND LABOUR IN NIGERIA	 1
The Contemporary Political Economy of Nigeria	3
Inequality in Nigeria	12
The Nigerian Ruling Class	21
The Nigerian Working Class	28
Organized Labour and the State	38
Corporatism: The Nigerian Context	47
 CHAPTER 2: THE NIGERIAN LABOUR MOVEMENT: BACKGROUND TO ANALYSIS	 55
A Brief History of the Labour Movement	55
Political Parties and the Roots of Disunity in the Labour Movement	63
The Structure, International Affiliation, and Frag- mentation of the Labour Movement	72
Trade Union Finance and its Implications	86
"Radicals" versus "Conservatives"	92
The Union Centres and the Gowon Regime	97
 CHAPTER 3: THE ORIGINS OF CORPORATISM IN NIGERIA, 1973-75..	101
The 1973 Trade Unions Decree	102
The Formation of NTUF and the Momentum to Apena	110
Workers, Unions and Udoji: Relief After the Wage Freeze?	114
The Steering Committee and the "Agege Deal"	121

CHAPTER 4: THE "CORRECTIVE REGIME" AND UNION RESTRUCTURING, 1975-78	128
The Muhammed Régime and the Establishment of Bourgeois Hegemony	130
The NNLP and the Stillbirth of the NLC	137
The "Statizing Corporatization" of the Nigerian Labour Movement	150
"The Activities of Trade Unions Tribunal of Inquiry"	154
The Restructuring of Trade Unions in Nigeria	157
Implementing a Corporatist Model	168
 CHAPTER 5: THE NLC AND CORPORATISM, 1979-81	 176
The Structure of the NLC	180
The 1979 Budget: Collaboration Engenders Conflict?	185
The NLC and the Second Republic	199
The 1981 NLC Election	212
May Day Celebration and the 1981 General Strike	217
The 1981 Strike and the Corporatist Project: A Brief Assessment	226
 CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION	 230
The Parameters of Corporatism in Nigeria	230
The NLC and Class Struggle in Nigeria	243
 Appendices	 254
Notes	280
Selected Bibliography	310

LIST OF TABLES

1. Industrial Composition of Nigeria's GDP: Selected Years	5
2. A Summary Picture of Relative Winners and Losers in the Nigerian Economy Since About 1964	13
3. Estimates of Rural and Urban Incomes at Rural and Urban Prices, 1977-78	15
4. State Governments' Estimated Revenue and Expenditures, 1979-80	19
5. Trends in Employment in Large and Medium-Sized (Modern Sector) Establishments, 1975-80	30
6. Occupational Breakdown of Employment in Large and Medium-Sized (Modern Sector) Establishments, 1975-80 ..	32
7. Basic Attitudes and Ideologies of Nigeria's National Labour Centres	94
8. The Udoji Commission's Annual Salary Gradings	118
9. Unskilled Annual Wage in Current and Real Terms, 1964 - 1979	120
10. Membership of the Constitution Drafting Committee	135

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

AALC	African American Labour Centre
ACSTWU	African Civil Servants Technical Workers' Union
AFL-CIO	American Federation of Labour - Congress of Industrial Organizations
AG	Action Group
ANTUF	All-Nigeria Trade Union Federation
CCEPO	Co-ordinated Committee of Elected Principal Officers of Industrial Unions
CDC	Constitution Drafting Committee
CDTU	Committee for Democratic Trade Unionism
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
COLA	Cost of Living Allowance
CSTWUN	Civil Service Technical Workers' Union of Nigeria
ELECTRUN	Electrical Workers' Union of Nigeria
GNPP	Great Nigerian People's Party
IAP	Industrial Arbitration Panel
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions

IFCTU	International Federation of Christian Trade Unions
ILO	International Labour Organization
ISF	International Solidarity Fund
IULC	Independent United Labour Congress
JAC	Joint Action Committee
LUF	Labour Unity Front
MPLA	Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola
NAPTUN	National Association of Professional Trade Unionists of Nigeria
NCNC	National Council for Nigeria and the Cameroons (later; National Convention of Nigerian Citizens)
NCSU	Nigerian Civil Service Union
NCTUN	National Council of Trade Unions of Nigeria
NEC	National Executive Council (of the NLC)
NECA	Nigerian Employers' Consultative Assembly
NIC	National Industrial Relations Court
NLC	Nigeria Labour Congress
NNFL	Nigerian National Federation of Labour
NNLP	New National Labour Policy
NNOC	Nigerian National Oil Corporation
NPAWU	Nigerian Ports Authority Workers' Union
NPC	Northern People's Congress
NPN	National Party of Nigeria
NPP	Nigerian People's Party
NTUC	Nigerian Trade Union Congress
NUT	Nigerian Union of Teachers
NWC	Nigerian Workers' Council
NYM	Nigerian Youth Movement
OATUU	Organization of African Trade Union Unity
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OPEC	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
PAWC	Pan African Workers' Congress
PDL	Poverty Datum Line
PRP	People's Redemption Party
PWU	Postal Workers' Union
RWU	Railway Workers' Union
SWAFP	Socialist Workers' and Farmers' Party
SWPP	Socialist Working People's Party
TUC(N)	Trade Union Congress (of Nigeria)
TUCN	Trade Union Congress of Nigeria
TUI	Trade Union Institute
UAC	United African Company
ULC	United Labour Congress
ULC(R)	United Labour Congress (Reconstituted)
UNAMAC	Amalgamated Union of the United African Company African Workers of Nigeria
UPN	Unity Party of Nigeria
WCL	World Confederation of Labour
WFTU	World Federation of Trade Unions

ABSTRACT

The central theme with which this study deals is the relationship between the Nigerian state and central labour organisations in the 1970s. The changing industrial, economic and political context in post-civil war Nigeria brought into sharp relief the confrontation between the state and the labour movement. Ironically, the fragmentation of the labour movement had allowed for working class action in 1971-72 which posed a threat not only to capital accumulation, but also to the authority of the state. The Trade Unions Decree promulgated in 1973 ushered in the process of restructuring the trade unions under direct state supervision. The attempt by the state to vitiate the class struggle bore its own contradictions. Far from producing a collaborationist and cooptive union leadership which corporatism (state attempt to control the working class) needed to stabilize as well as to function effectively, the restructuring of trade unions in Nigeria resulted in the creation of horizontal (class) organisations within the labour movement in which the radical and non-cooptive union leaders were in ascendancy. Against this background, the 1975 New National Labour Policy (NNLP) designed to enhance the state's attempt to ensure industrial peace and social harmony, alongside the building of a constitutional framework for establishing the hegemony of the ruling class, the strengthening of the authority of the national government and maintaining the stability of society (social relations), was to face opposition from organized labour. In the present conjuncture, the state-structured Nigeria Labour Congress (as the class organisation of the labour movement) provided the institutional locus as well as focus for an analysis of the question, whether or not, corporatism was an adequate mechanism/strategy for maintaining class domination in Nigeria.

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Finally, I should stress that none of the above is in any way responsible for any weaknesses and omissions this study might have. I alone bear such responsibility.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis focuses on the relationship between the state and the labour movement in Nigeria, concentrating on corporatist developments in the immediate post-civil war period (the 1970s) through the state's creation of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) in 1978 to the general strike of 1981. This study builds on, and goes beyond, Robin Cohen's influential study of Labour and Politics in Nigeria.¹ Not only does the present study cover the 1970s and the early 1980s (Cohen's work, on which our historical Chapter 2 relies heavily, generally covers the period from 1945 to 1971), it also deals with a specific theme, namely the state's attempt to directly control the working class (i.e. corporatism).

In a period in which the study of corporatism is increasingly popular in research on Latin America, this study is rather a lonely traveller on the African route. It therefore strives not to make generalisations at this (early) stage of the application of corporatist theory to the study of class domination in Africa. In this regard, it does not share a "remarkable characteristic of students of Latin America" which, according to Silvio Duncan Baretta and Helen Douglass in a review essay on authoritarianism and corporatism in Latin America, "is how comfortable we feel in making statements about

the whole continent.⁷² Our single country study therefore seems justified.

Because the contemporary trajectory of events exhibit contradictory expressions in post-civil war Nigeria, this study must proceed cautiously in terms of attempts at definitive analysis. The study will proceed historically, exploring the terrain of national union centres/central labour organisation-state relations in the period concentrated upon. Particularly, it will try to come to grips with the reasons behind the attempts made by the state to incorporate and control the trade unions.

For a number of reasons to be discussed subsequently - the fact that the federal government of Nigeria is predominantly the major employer of labour in the country not being the least important - the role of the state is crucial in the determination and movement of wages. While providing one of the major reasons why collective bargaining in its traditional form has not taken root in Nigeria, it also points up the important fact of the state being constantly at the centre of nearly every wage demand in the country. It is therefore with the state that the trade unions have, for the most part, had to deal, particularly because virtually all wage increases (certainly all the major wage reviews) are tied directly to governmental wage commissions.

Efforts by the military regimes to rationalize and re-structure the labour movement, as well as to establish and develop corporatism, from 1973 henceforward, were made within

the framework of the prohibition of the right to strike, the exclusion of trade unions from the political arena, the imposition of a wage freeze from 1972-74 and again from 1976-80, and the direct involvement of the state in the internal governance of trade unions between 1975 and 1978. The background to these efforts was provided not only by the wildcat strikes of 1971-72, but also by the changing industrial, economic and political context in Nigeria in the 1970s as import substitution industrialisation fed by oil revenues began to replace agriculture as the main basis of accumulation, and a strong national (central) government was needed to consolidate the hegemony of the ruling class. With the state and the indigenous bourgeoisie in collaboration with foreign capital (an alliance institutionalized by the Nigerian indigenisation programme), industrial unrest in the burgeoning industrial sector came to be seen as a serious threat not only to the new patterns of accumulation, but to the stabilization of social relations as well. This necessitated the state dealing with labour directly, hence state attempts at excluding or preventing labour demands which threatened social stability as well as capital accumulation. The success or failure of the state's fledgling corporatist arrangement was to hinge on whether or not the leadership of the labour movement would acquiesce in it or collaborate with it.

Trade union action or inaction can be appreciated fully only if rooted in the specific political economy within which such action or inaction takes place. Workers and their

indigenous organisations are thus located in this study in relation to the political economy and social formation, with a view to developing a concrete analysis of trade union effectiveness, or lack of it, in the particular conjuncture with which we are dealing. Chapter 1 therefore deals with the contemporary political economy of Nigeria and the nature and role of the state in mediating the predominantly non-hegemonic social relations in Nigeria society. Here an attempt is made to build a theoretical/analytical framework for (the) subsequent analyses of state-labour relations in Nigeria, alongside a discussion of the contemporary class structure of Nigeria with particular emphasis on the composition of the working class and its location in the political economy. In addition, a definition of, as well as a theoretical introduction to, corporatism as a mechanism/strategy of class domination is provided.

Chapter 2 deals with the history, structure and ideology of the labour movement, covering roughly from the pre-independence period to the civil war. The main thrust of this chapter will be to analyze the several attempts at unity made by the national union centres and why these attempts failed. The factors which contributed to formations and splits in the labour movement will be examined critically, with especial emphasis on the differing ideological and political orientations which formed the basis of division within the Nigerian labour movement from very early in its history, but which also endure to date.

Chapter 3 traces the origins of corporatism in Nigeria.

It specifically attempts to come to grips with the changing industrial, economic and political context in the post-civil war period and how this resulted in, and, in turn, affected the increasingly more assertive role of the state vis-à-vis the trade unions in the 1970s. The implications of the Trade Unions Decree of 1973 which provided the statutory framework for state intervention in the labour movement will be discussed.

Chapter 4 explores the background to the creation of the NLC by the state (1975-78). In particular, it examines the New National Labour Policy (NNLP) announced in 1975 and discusses the state's direct intervention in internal trade union affairs as well as the restructuring of trade unions which became pivotal to the state's attempt at establishing and developing corporatism. The bifrontal nature of this corporatism, i.e. the extent to which it entailed the exclusion and direct state control of the trade unions alongside mechanisms for their cooptation and integration, is closely analyzed.

Chapter 5 analyzes the NLC (in action) since its formation. The focus is on the relationship between the NLC and the Nigerian state. An attempt is made to deal with the role of the NLC in the fledgling corporatist experiment, including how the central labour organisation is or is not catalyzing the resistance to exploitation, and the problems with which it has had to contend. Particular stress is laid on the political as well as ideological orientation of the NLC leadership, insofar as the role (action or inaction) of the central labour

organisation depended upon it.

Chapter 6 attempts to draw conclusions from the central questions that have been posed in Chapters 1 through 5. Without offering any definitive conclusions, it nonetheless tackles the problematic as well as contradictory role of trade unions in the class struggle. The concluding argument will be that given the objective conditions of the peripheral capitalist state in Nigeria, organized labour (to the extent that it represents the only real opposition to the ruling class) can expect responses from the state ranging from continuing attempts at cooptation to total control. Organized labour's ability to cope with the state remains severely limited, given its small size in Nigerian society and the fact that it has to date been unable to forge an alliance with the other subordinated and dominated classes in the country.

CHAPTER 1

THE STATE AND LABOUR IN NIGERIA

State-labour relations in Nigeria constitute the primary focus of this study, with its specific object being the corporatist project embarked upon by the state from 1973 on. In order to understand corporatism in the Nigerian context, it is necessary to root the attempt to explicate its establishment in the political economy of Nigeria. An understanding of the political economy of Nigeria will help in elucidating subsequent analysis of why and how the corporatist experiment was undertaken in Nigeria. The first six sections of this chapter present an overview of the Nigerian political economy and social formation, while the seventh (and last) section attempts a theoretical introduction of corporatism as a mechanism used by the state for structuring and stabilizing social relations. In Nigeria, organized labour was the target of such structuring by the state. Here, a few opening statements will serve to introduce the nature and problems of the Nigerian ruling class¹ and the labour movement.

The Nigerian ruling class has been fragmented socially, economically, and politically, and this fragmentation has affected the manifestation of its supremacy. Since indepen-

dence from Britain in 1960, Nigeria has been plagued by a series of crises and military coups, including a thirty-month civil war (1967-70). Civilian constitutional rule was frequently punctuated by conflicts amongst comprador and ethnic fractions of the ruling class competing for the limited resources within a peripheral capitalist economy.² In these circumstances, civilian rule broke down less than five and a half years after independence (October 1, 1960 - January 15, 1966, when the army seized power in a bloody coup d'état), and was not restored until October 1, 1979 -- after nearly fourteen years of military rule. How did this affect state-labour relations?

The fact that the ruling class has been fairly unstable, coupled with the fact that the basis of accumulation in colonial and the immediate post-colonial period was agricultural rather than industrial (as we shall discuss presently), allowed a rather general absence of direct state intervention in the labour movement in the first decade following independence. Thus, the state's responses vis-à-vis labour were rather eclectic as well as ad-hoc in the 1960s.

As we shall see, institutional arrangements for the control of the labour movement did not emerge until the 1970s. At the time of the military regime's restructuring of trade unions in 1977, there were about one thousand unions in Nigeria. These were previously "organized" into four national centres, which themselves had disintegrated in varying degrees from 1969 on. The process of rationalising the union structure

was actually begun in 1973, when the military government promulgated the Trade Unions Decree. Among other things, this decree was to provide the statutory framework within which the state would deal with the fragmentation of the labour movement, as well as to directly supervise its restructuring, with the explicit aim of securing labour's collaboration in the maintenance and preservation of social stability. We deal fully with this whole process later on, but first of all, we shall set the stage with a discussion of the contemporary political economy of Nigeria.

The Contemporary Political Economy of Nigeria

Nigeria is a peripheral capitalist society: it remains a source of raw materials as well as a market for investment and goods manufactured in Nigeria by local subsidiaries of foreign firms, in addition to goods manufactured overseas. As Gavin Williams and Terisa Turner have written, "Capitalism in Nigeria has always taken a primarily commercial form. Control of the terms of exchange of commodities has been the major source of opportunities."³ This, in turn, has meant that control of the state (or access to it) has become the actual forum of competition amongst different fractions of the Nigerian ruling class and their allies. The following analysis of the structure of the economy will serve to clarify the argument in this paragraph.

Agriculture was the mainstay of the (structure of the)

economy in the colonial as well as the immediate post-colonial period in the 1960s, when primary products (cash crops) such as cocoa, groundnuts, palm-kernel, palm-oil, and rubber accounted for between 60 and 70 percent of total exports.⁴ However, the situation began to change drastically in the 1970s. Although estimates vary, it is nonetheless clear that oil had begun to replace agriculture as the mainstay of the economy by the mid-1970s, when it accounted for 20 percent of the GDP and 75 percent of total exports. During the same period, agriculture's contribution to the GDP and exports declined to 34.1 percent and 17.4 percent respectively.

The industrial composition of the GDP (see Table 1) also reveals that agriculture's contribution fell from 65.9 percent on the eve of independence in 1958/59 to 24.5 percent in 1975/76, while industry (including oil) showed a phenomenal rise from 9.2 percent to 49.1 percent during the same period. In the 1960s therefore, accumulation was based mainly on the appropriation of value from farmers and "development" plans were financed by reserves accumulated by the regional governments' marketing boards (with the Federal Government's Central Produce Marketing Board performing the role of chief buying agent internally and selling agent externally). The reserves became the main source of government revenue, being the price differential between what was paid to the farmer and what the marketing boards earned in the export of produce.⁵ Thus, accumulation was derived primarily from commerce, with the state firmly in the role of a commercial agent.

TABLE 1

INDUSTRIAL COMPOSITION OF NIGERIA'S GDP: SELECTED YEARS*

	<u>%</u>			
	1958/59	1966/67	1970/71	1975/76
Agriculture	65.9	53.8	41.8	24.5
Industry	9.2	19.8	32.4	49.1
Transport and Communication	4.1	4.0	3.7	3.2
Distribution	12.5	12.4	11.5	10.5
Government	3.1	3.2	5.3	7.4
Social Services	3.0	4.2	3.2	3.7
Others	2.2	2.6	2.1	1.6
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

*Source: Billy Dudley, An Introduction to Nigerian Government and Politics (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), Table 7.4, p. 240.

However, the Nigerian economy as a whole was dominated by foreign capital. Foreign private ownership comprised 62 percent of total ownership of industrial assets and 85 percent of total private ownership of industrial assets in 1965.⁶ In the same period 75 percent of the book value of industrial assets of firms in Nigeria with a value of N50,000* or more, was foreign-owned and controlled. Wayne Nafziger has also estimated that 55.3 percent of the 2,355 professional and managerial personnel in manufacturing firms in Nigeria in 1965 with 100 or more persons employed were foreign. Besides:

The fact that in Nigerian manufacturing in 1985 foreigners accounted for as much as 24.7 percent of the total wages and salaries but only 2.4 percent of the total employment suggests that they were highly represented among high-level personnel in the industrial sector.⁷

* N1 = \$2 Canadian approx.

Both the 1972 and 1977 Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Decrees (the indigenisation decrees) redefined the relationship between foreign and indigenous capital, but the high degree of foreign control was not affected much by them. According to the provisions of the decrees, service activities and unsophisticated manufacturing were to be effectively barred to foreigners. A minimum 60 percent Nigerian ownership was required in such small-scale enterprises as brewing, soft drinks, furniture making, cement, matches, metal containers, detergents and soaps, and wholesale distribution; and 40 percent indigenous ownership was applied to basic industrial sectors such as chemicals, raw materials, transport equipment and textiles.⁸

The background to the indigenisation programme itself was provided by the civil war and growing oil revenues which both served to expand the state's economic activities, as well as to extend the state's control over imports, banking and expanded factory production, i.e., to intensify and accelerate the substitution of import of consumer goods (import substitution industrialisation). Not only did the indigenisation programme considerably enhance state control over access to private commercial opportunity, it also laid the basis for a greater interpenetration between state personnel and the economy (mainly foreign monopoly capital).⁹

Although the indigenisation programme increased Nigerian ownership in the commercial and service sectors, neither majority ownership nor any significant degree of indigenous

control was secured in the important manufacturing sector of the economy. As Thomas Biersteker notes:

... transnational corporations are not yielding managerial control. The sharing of equity directed in Nigeria's indigenisation effort is not equivalent to the sharing of control in the newly established joint ventures. Virtually every transnational corporation involved in Nigeria has found ways to neutralize the indigenisation requirements. The specific strategy varies from firm to firm. However, they are all designed to ensure a minimal loss of control over the operations. Transnational corporations either (1) fight to retain a majority of equity, or (2) find ways to retain control with a minority share of equity.¹⁰

The overall impact of the indigenisation programme points to the failure of independent capitalist development in Nigeria and thus the consolidation of dependent capitalist development, even underdevelopment.¹¹ As Paul Collins et al. have argued, Nigeria has yet to develop its capacity to increase production to meet expanding demands for goods. Capitalist enterprise in Nigeria is still a matter of controlling the market for particular goods, not producing them. This perpetuates the interdependence of foreign and Nigerian middlemen in the commercial exploitation of Nigerian producers and consumers.¹² Biersteker drives home a similar and even more crucial point:

Since Nigerian society is pervaded by the idea that "foreign is better", indigenisation inevitably encourages investments in transnational corporations. There are no counter-incentives for investments in productive, indigenously controlled enterprises, hence the programme undermines the basis of accumulation by a national capitalist class. Although some pockets of local accumulation may exist, a risk-averse, profit maximizing Nigerian investor will buy shares in foreign-owned and dominated concerns. Indigenisation thus encourages a comprador role for local business in a society plagued by strong comprador tendencies. Accordingly, indigenisation may have contributed to a decrease, rather than an increase in Nigerian control of the economy.¹³

Above all, the indigenisation programme in Nigeria has meant that a significant amount of revenue accruing from oil has been recycled into financing the expansion of firms which for all practical purposes remain firmly under the control of foreign capital.¹⁴

Thus, there remains a large foreign (transnational) corporate sub-sector of the private sector (of the Nigerian economy), to which only the public sector is comparable. (Both of them are officially referred to as "the modern sector", that is, large- and medium-sized establishments employing 10 or more persons.¹⁵) There are two other sub-sectors of the private sector, both basically commercial as well as final-consumption-oriented. One, the joint Nigerian and "Third World" (e.g. Indian, Pakistani, Hong Kong, Lebanese) capitalist sub-sector, could be described as small in relation to either the public sector or the transnational corporate sub-sector of the private sector, but it is actually "medium-size" in comparison with the other sub-sector of the private sector, the small Nigerian sub-sector.¹⁶ The crucial distinction between these last two is the fact that the latter is predominantly petty bourgeois in ownership as well as frequently self-employed (mainly petty traders and simple commodity producers in the urban informal sector). The former, in contradistinction, is owned by small capitalist employers who depend on wage labour, but are themselves engaged in production alongside their workers, and they do not employ sufficient quantities of labour power to accumulate large masses of capital.¹⁷ The location of workers (with

whom we are concerned in this study) in the economy is discussed later on, but next the structural weakness of the economy is examined.

Agriculture remains the economy's main weakness. A vast majority of Nigerians (more than 70 percent) still live on the land and depend on agriculture for their livelihood. But agriculture has been sadly neglected since Nigeria struck oil. Oil alone currently accounts for between 90 and 95 percent of exports, while its direct linkages with the rest of the economy are tiny.¹⁸ Nigeria has moved from self-sufficiency in food twenty years ago to a position where food imports now account for about 20 percent of total imports. According to a recent ILO report to the Government of Nigeria, "... with every year that passes, the proportion of oil in total exports gets closer to 100 percent and imports, even of food, are increasing greatly."¹⁹ The government itself announced in early 1981 that food import bills rose from N71 million in 1975 to N1.5 billion in 1980. The Minister of State for Agriculture also pointed out that Nigeria's food supply deficit has been growing at an alarming rate over the last couple of years.²⁰ All this has happened in spite of such government programmes as "Operation Feed the Nation" and "Green Revolution". The "Operation" neither fed the nation nor has the "Revolution" been green! There is both hunger and despondency in the country. Many farms have been virtually deserted owing to the departure of able-bodied men and women for the cities, lured by the urban-bias of governmental spending of oil revenue. Agriculture has

failed to keep pace both with the population increase and the expansion of urban markets.²¹

Besides, all of Nigeria's export crops have declined in production. Cocoa, the major revenue earner before oil was struck, remains Nigeria's only substantial agricultural export crop. Yet, the decline in cocoa production became marked in 1978-79 when Nigeria's share of world production slumped from 14 percent to 9 percent. Also, cocoa production for the 1980-81 season was 152,000 metric tonnes, 100,000 tonnes less than actual production in 1971-72. Even then, the Nigerian Cocoa Marketing board was only able to buy cocoa from producers through a federal subsidy, which also enabled it to compete in a glutted world market. (It should be pointed out here that the ability of the federal government to continue to subsidize the price of cocoa is bound to be seriously jeopardized both by the declining production of oil and its falling price in the world market -- we return to this point presently.) Cotton, groundnuts and rubber, once major contributors to the revenue, are now in a state of serious decline, and face the same situation as cocoa. Groundnuts and cocoa also face the additional problems of smuggling -- the former to Niger Republic, while the latter is smuggled mainly to the Republic of Benin, in part to earn negotiable foreign currency which can buy scarce goods to smuggle back to Nigeria at great profit. Recently, the Minister of State (Ministry of Finance) in charge of Customs and Excise announced in Lagos that "most businessmen in Nigeria are big-time smugglers."²²

In these circumstances, oil revenue quite obviously has provided a breathing space for the Nigerian state in the 1970s.²³ Oil currently accounts for about 90 percent of total federal revenue. The stark reality, however, is that oil is a wasting asset. The glut of crude on the world market -- caused by the increased supply, at better prices, of non-OPEC (mainly British North Sea, Norwegian and Mexican) oil to the major industrialised capitalist countries -- has resulted in an overall drop of 30 percent in production in 1981-82. Oil revenue has fallen by as much as 20 percent and that marked the first drop in Nigerian oil earnings in 13 years.

The impact has already started showing. The overall budget was down by 17 percent with a 25 percent cut in defence spending. Many projects in the 1981-85 development plan are threatened. In his 1981 budget speech, President Shagari had forecast N14,700 million as government income from oil but independent estimates showed that income from oil may barely total N10,000 million -- recording a shortfall of nearly N5,000 million. OPEC's benchmark price for most of 1980 and early 1981 was \$40 per barrel. But it dropped to \$34 per barrel about the middle of 1981 and, even then, Nigeria had to offer a \$2 per barrel discount to its customers in order to be able to sell its high quality "sweet" crude. OPEC's benchmark price has since dropped a further \$5 and currently (1982-83) stands at \$29 per barrel. The deterioration of the oil market has left Nigeria in a quagmire, and the consequences for its economy are grave. Since Nigeria has not broadened its export

base, it is clear that the Nigerian mono-economy will suffer immensely with any further decline in both oil production and revenue. Such a situation would mean increased suffering for the subordinate classes in Nigeria's basically inegalitarian as well as exploitative social structure.

Inequality in Nigeria

There is gross inequality in Nigerian society. Before elaborating on this statement, it should be pointed out that the figures relating to the degree of inequality overall have a very shaky statistical foundation. Social statistics in Nigeria are, in general, hard to come by, and official averages hide a great deal of real inequalities. Even the Federal Office of Statistics, in a recent publication on Social Statistics in Nigeria, stated that "Where some important topics have had to be omitted, lack of data rather than lack of imagination is the problem."²⁴

In a recent report on Nigeria, the ILO concluded that: (1) in absolute terms, poverty in Nigeria is a rural phenomenon; (2) as an increasing problem, it is an urban phenomenon. This means that in any strategy to alleviate poverty, policies have to be devised to meet the problems of both rural and urban areas.²⁵ But no strategy for combatting poverty exists in Nigeria. Since independence in 1960 (and even before then), farmers, wage-earners and the urban informal sector operators

have been perpetual losers in the Nigerian economy (See Table 2).

TABLE 2
A SUMMARY PICTURE OF RELATIVE WINNERS AND LOSERS
IN THE NIGERIAN ECONOMY SINCE ABOUT 1964*

	Winners/Losers	Reasons
Farmers	losers	'Neglect of agriculture'; worsening of internal terms of trade.
Wage earners	losers	Weak bargaining power, due partly to the rapidly- growing urban labour force.
Professionals	winners	Greater increase in demand than supply.
Informal sector**	losers	Heavy migration into towns.
Formal sector entrepreneurs	winners	Protection.

*Source: First Things First: Meeting the Basic Needs of the People of Nigeria (Addis Ababa: ILO, Jobs and Skills Programme for Africa, 1981), Table 54, p. 228.

**The small Nigerian private sector — petty traders, hawkers, roadside sellers, mechanics, small-scale family enterprise)

At the level of income distribution,²⁶ the degree of inequality can be seen from the fact that in 1965, a Minister with Cabinet rank received ₦5,400 per annum, while the lowest paid labourer in the public sector earned ₦292 per annum -- the

former's salary being 18½ times larger than the latter's wage. By 1979, the Minister took home (on the average) ₦20,000, while the labourer's earning was ₦720, 28 times smaller than the Minister's annual salary: the gap had widened in the fourteen-year period. It was the low income workers, with their wages constantly lagging behind the cost of living, who bore the brunt of inflation, which rose between 10 and 15 percent annually throughout the period. Between 1975 and 1979, the composite consumer price index for all items (food, rent, transport, fuel, clothing, etc.) rose by 86.3 percent. Figures for rural and urban average incomes for the 1960s are not available, but the 1977-78 figures reveal a huge disparity in rural-urban average incomes. The average urban income is more than 6 times the average rural income (see Table 3), that is, at rural prices where more than 70 percent of the population live.

Whereas the World Bank (at 1980 market prices) put Nigeria's GNP per capita at ₦700, the ILO has estimated that over 80 percent of unskilled workers and over two-fifths of informal sector operators -- mostly street sellers -- fall below the poverty line (the poverty datum line, PDL, was set at ₦65 per month for a household of 5.6 members in urban areas and ₦35 in rural areas). As many as 40 percent of farming families fall below the poverty line, 25 percent by a considerable margin. Altogether, there are over three times as many poor families in rural areas as in urban areas -- one-third of urban population can be considered to be living in poverty.²⁷ As the

TABLE 3

ESTIMATES OF RURAL AND URBAN INCOME AT RURAL AND URBAN PRICES1977-78*

	At Rural Prices	At Urban Prices
<u>TOTAL INCOME</u> (Million Naira)		
Non-Agricultural (URBAN)	14,689	14,689
Agricultural (RURAL)	5,389	7,497
<u>AVERAGE INCOME</u> (Naira per annum)		
URBAN	559	559
RURAL	92	128
(Ratio)	(6.1)	(4.4)

*Source: Adapted from First Things First, op. cit., p. 215.

government itself admitted:

It is possible to record a high growth rate in per capita income while the masses of the people continue to be in abject poverty and lacking in the basic necessities of life, particularly in a situation, such as in Nigeria today, where the momentum of growth derives from a sector whose direct impact on the bulk of the population is small.²⁸

Several aspects of state policy have reinforced the existing patterns of inequality. Following Billy Dudley's analysis, it is clear that programmes aimed at agricultural regeneration may have led to the creation of a steadily rising number of landless peasants.²⁹ The emphasis on large mechanised farming schemes (the numerous River Basin Development

Authorities), directly managed by the state or by private individuals operating on their own or in collaboration with external financial interests, has led to the dispossession of small farmers who have neither been properly resettled nor adequately compensated. State personnel in the upper ranks of the armed forces and the administrative bureaucracy, together with their allies in the "contracting-commercial class and the professional/managerial groups", have also acquired urban real estate with aid from government-financed housing corporations and bank loans. According to Dudley, urban real estate, given the burgeoning industrialization and the growing urban labour force, is about one of the most profitable forms of private investment in Nigeria.³⁰

In contradistinction, urban housing policy has blatantly discriminated against the working class.³¹ The loan for owner-occupier purchases (N65,000), which is repayable over a 15-20 year period, carries an annual interest rate of 8 percent (N5,200) which far exceeds the total annual wage (N3,000, the highest incremental step) of an employee on Grade Level 7, who is at the top of the lower income group (the working class).³² This practically ensures that the working class, who bear the highest burden of rent in Nigeria, is excluded from benefitting from public housing. Indeed, as Dudley has pointed out, "Most of the lower income group pay, on average, about 30 percent of their monthly wage on house rents: the equivalent for the upper income group, whose rents are subsidized with a fixed upper limit of N300 per annum, is 2.4 percent, and in most

urban centres the density of occupancy ranges from 5:1 to as high as 7:1.³³

To worsen the situation, the offspring of the urban working class and the rural population lose out in the competition for higher educational places. To get into a good school means boarding away from home, but the boarding fees of ₦60 per term represent 25 percent of the gross annual income of an employee at the bottom of the lower income group, a proportion only a few can pay given that the lower income group is usually the worst-hit by inflation and given that they already pay 30 percent of their monthly wage on rent. In reality, the lower income group subsidizes the education of the children of those in the upper income group and thus helps to entrench the elite in their position of power. Should this tendency continue, then the likely outcome, as Dudley so aptly put it,

would be for the elite ... to become a self-recruiting elite and to the extent that it is the elite who control and manipulate the instrumentalities of the state and also wield political power, the elite also become a self-perpetuating oligarchy.³⁴

In class terms, this monopoly of state resources will enable the ruling class to reproduce itself, and this is crucial not only to the maintenance of the inegalitarian and exploitative social structure, but to the rule by this class as well.

The return to electoral politics in 1979 may have aggravated the inequalities in Nigerian society by putting further strains on the economy. No sooner were civilian politicians installed in October 1979, than they legislated huge salaries

and fringe benefits for themselves. The draft estimates³⁵ for 1980/81 contained a provision of N48 million solely for the personal allowances of members of the Senate and the House of Representatives (a figure of about N90,000 per head for the 545 members of the National Assembly). The figure for members of the 19 States' Houses of Assembly was about N45,000 per head. At this level, the more than 1,300 members of the States' Houses grossed over N70 million, an amount which represented over 1½ percent of recurrent state expenditure. This amount was an additional burden on oil revenues, because the 19 states generated only a very small percentage (10.2% on the average) of their total expenditure internally (see Table 4). The difference came (and still comes) from the federal government (the distributable pool account and direct grants). All this helped to widen, not bridge, the income gap in the country. As Martin Dent put it:

At both federal and state levels, remuneration and personal expenses of members will, at this rate, absorb twenty or thirty times as high a proportion of government recurrent expenditure as is the case in the United States or in Great Britain. Judged by the standard of living of the majority of its people, Nigeria is still a poor country, and must cut its coat according to its cost.³⁶

Furthermore, the privileged few live in mansions, expensive bungalows and costly modern flats set aside in affluent residential enclaves. These are well serviced with water and electricity supplies, schools and hospitals which are cut off from surrounding working class locations by road, railways, public buildings, barbed wire fences and imported dogs. But

TABLE 4

STATE GOVERNMENTS' ESTIMATED REVENUE AND EXPENDITURES, 1979-80*

State	Internal Revenue (Million N)	Total Expenditure (Million N)	Internal Revenue as % of Total Expenditure
1. Anambra	32.1	275.7	11.6
2. Bauchi	30.7	238.5	12.8
3. Bendel	31.9	310.1	10.3
4. Benue	25.0	198.4	12.6
5. Borno	15.3	263.3	5.8
6. Cross River	20.3	244.4	8.3
7. Gongola	12.1	243.3	4.9
8. Imo	24.1	345.3	6.9
9. Kaduna	28.0	295.8	9.4
10. Kano	41.7	375.3	11.1
11. Kwara	10.1	214.8	4.7
12. Lagos	196.4	475.7	41.3
13. Niger	16.4	393.4	4.1
14. Ogun	18.3	192.4	9.5
15. Ondo	28.8	205.9	13.9
16. Oyo	27.2	530.3	5.1
17. Plateau	17.4	198.1	8.8
18. Rivers	25.0	524.4	4.7
19. Sokoto	25.6	314.0	8.1
TOTAL	626.4	5,839.1	Average % 10.2

*Source: Approved Estimates of State Governments, 1979/80. (Lagos: Federal Ministry of Finance, 1979); adapted from African Business, August 1981, p. 63.

the provisions of such basic amenities as public sanitation and transportation, pipe-borne water (most houses do not have tap water), low-cost housing and electricity is grossly inadequate in the working class locations of Agege, Ajegunle, Mushin (all in Lagos), as well as throughout the country. The problem is even more acute in the (rural) countryside. As Adrian Peace

puts it, with particular reference to the industrial workers at Ikeja:

In these circumstances it is scarcely surprising that in the course of day-to-day life the Ikeja workers frequently articulate a marked sense of resentment against the prosperity of the few by comparison with their own relatively poverty-stricken circumstances. Likewise, it is to be expected that at times of industrial and political conflict, the injustice of these gross material inequalities becomes one of the major grounds on which workers justify a challenge to the authority of those in government circles. The major source of their grievance, however, is the extent to which successive civilian and military governments have reinforced the divisions between rich and poor. The general impression is that the role of government is to give more to those who have wealth, comfort and privilege, at the direct expense of those who lack all such scarce resources.³⁷

It is under these circumstances that workers and trade unionists are told to exercise restraint over wage demands in the "national interest" and for the sake of "national development". Resentment of corruption and exploitation by the rich and powerful is indeed general throughout Nigerian society. It has been an important element in mobilizing workers (and cocoa farmers³⁸) who have engaged in militant class action in defence of both their rights and their interests. As it is workers and their organization that concern us in this study, it is therefore to them and to their relationship with the state that we now turn. Before we do that, however, we deal next with the Nigerian ruling class, insofar as class is a relational concept and the working class cannot be studied in any country apart from an understanding of the class to which it is subordinated and with which it is in conflict.³⁹

The Nigerian Ruling Class

Can one speak of a ruling class in Nigeria? To the extent that Nigeria is a class society, even though a peripheral capitalist one at that, the answer is yes; but this can be done only with careful conceptual definition. The exercise will entail some (detailed) elaboration.

From a Marxist perspective, the ruling class in a capitalist society is the capitalist class or the bourgeoisie. According to Ralph Miliband,

This is the class which, for Marx, was so designated by virtue of the fact that it owned and controlled the means of production and of economic activity in general - the great manufacturing, financial and commercial "interests" of capitalist enterprise. The 'capitalist class', however, extends well beyond these 'interests', and includes many people who fulfill specific professional and other functions on behalf of these "interests", and who are in various ways by virtue of income, status, occupation, kinship, etc. - associated with them. It is this variegated totality which is called the 'ruling class' in Marxist parlance ...⁴⁰

But the bourgeoisie of the peripheral capitalist formation of Nigeria cannot be spoken of in the same sense as their counterpart in metropolitan (Western) capitalist societies. This is precisely because (as we have seen) in Nigeria, as in a large number of peripheral capitalist or "Third World" societies, "there has existed no strong indigenous class of large-scale capitalists, since the major industrial, extractive, financial and commercial enterprises are mainly owned and controlled by foreign interests."⁴¹ Moreover, it is important to note the extent to which the fledgling Nigerian indigenous

bourgeoisie has been constituted from above, in and through the state, rather than emerging through class struggle from below as was generally the case in Western capitalist societies.⁴² As already pointed out above, the Nigerian state has had to expand as a direct, if comprador, economic agent and as a guarantor of the indigenous bourgeoisie, thus bestowing its distinctive characteristic upon the latter.

In consequence, there has occurred "a very pronounced inflation of state and executive power ... with which is usually associated a very high degree of autonomy, at least from civil society over which the state holds sway."⁴³ It is in this sense that Hamza Alavi's thesis regarding the "over-developed" post-colonial state, despite the criticisms that have been levelled against it, remains particularly germane. Alavi argues that in addition to its "overdevelopment",

[t]he apparatus of the state, furthermore assume(s) also a new and relatively autonomous economic role which is not paralleled in the classical bourgeois state. The state in the post-colonial society directly appropriates a very large part of the economic surplus and deploys it in bureaucratically directed economic activity in the name of promoting economic development. These are conditions which differentiate the post-colonial state fundamentally from the state as analyzed in classical Marxist theory.⁴⁴

Miliband also has argued that this inflation or over-development of the state occurs because social groups which would have an interest in limiting and controlling the power of the state do not have the power or the will to do so; while dominant classes and groups, where they do exist, find it to their advantage to have a strong and repressive state to act on their behalf.⁴⁵ In the Nigerian case, the working class is, as

we shall see presently, relatively small, weak and fragmented, and the rural (peasant) population, is not only remote from the centres of power, but also very weak vis-à-vis the dominant classes, thus placing very little limitation on the role of the state.

The question that arises at this juncture is: What does state power in Nigeria actually represent? Thus far, it is clear that the state reproduces foreign domination of the economy, but it simultaneously facilitates the growth of an indigenous bourgeoisie. This is a fledgling domestic bourgeoisie formally separate from the state personnel who control the state apparatus, but together they constitute the ruling class. Both the state and the indigenous bourgeoisie being created under its aegis are subordinated to a foreign bourgeoisie, who own and control a high degree of the nation's economy and thus reduce the relative size as well as the power of both the state and indigenous bourgeoisie. The latter are fundamentally in a dependency relationship with the foreign bourgeoisie. The key to understanding the nature and role of this indigenous bourgeoisie is to note its nurturing by the state (i.e. it is still in the process of class formation itself) and thereby its own non-dominant and subordinate role vis-à-vis the state which guarantees its economic power. In other words, this indigenous bourgeoisie is weak relative to the state, but derives whatever strength it has in the society from its relationship with the state. Since the state is strong in comparison to civil society, state power thus plays a

crucial role in mediating conflict between non-hegemonic classes in society, while, at the same time, it guarantees the economic power and dominance (vis-à-vis the subordinate classes) of the indigenous bourgeois class. Here, Miliband's observation regarding the "Third World" in general is relevant to Nigeria in particular:

... political power (which also means here administrative and military power) ... creates the possibilities of enrichment and ... provides the basis for the formation of an economically powerful class, which may in due course become an economically dominant one. The state is here the source of economic power as well as an instrument of it: state power is a major "means of production".⁴⁶

But the state itself has functioned mainly as a comprador and commercial agent of foreign imperialist capital, and has, in turn, bestowed this distinctive characteristic upon the indigenous bourgeoisie whose creation it is fostering. In consequence, the indigenous bourgeoisie is not a national bourgeoisie -- a class which would occupy "a relatively autonomous place" in the national political economy, "whose interests are linked to the nation's economic development, and which comes into relative contradiction with the interests of big foreign capital."⁴⁷ Rather, this is a class pursuing rapid accumulation (mainly in a primitive and commercial sense) within the constraints of an imperialist world economy, but using its alliance with international capital to buttress its domestic class position.

What kind of society results from such a situation in which the role of the state is very large? Three distinct

characteristics should be noted:⁴⁸ First, the use of state power assumes many different forms, including of course the suppression of any challenge to the supremacy of what turns in effect into an economically and politically dominant class. Second, the dominant class tends to be very divided and fragmented, with power highly personalized and therefore subject to frequent and violent changes. In general, peripheral capitalist societies are poorly articulated in economic and social terms, and therefore in political terms as well. Third, what power-holders have to fear is not the restraint of their power, but its sudden and usually violent termination by way of a coup engineered by rival groups of people, themselves representing little except their own ambitions and interests. (Compare Samuel Huntington's notion of "praetorianism".⁴⁹)

Thus, this highly "praetorian" nature of peripheral capitalist societies makes the establishment, maintenance, and operation of constitutional rule a major as well as a problematic task for the ruling class. In other words, following Antonio Gramsci, the ruling class in these societies cannot be said to be a hegemonic class, that is to say, "its intellectual and moral leadership has not been objectified in and exercised through the institutions of civil society, the ensemble of educational, religious and associational institutions."⁵⁰ For Gramsci, this constitutes hegemony, that is, rule by consent, one of the two forms in which a ruling class manifests its supremacy. How then has the ruling class in peripheral capitalist societies manifested its supremacy? It has done so in the

other form stated by Gramsci, namely, it has dominated through the coercive organs of the state.

In Nigeria, the ruling class has not succeeded fully in establishing and maintaining its rule by consent. The Nigerian ruling class lacks hegemonic control; instead, it has established a tenuous political domination by more or less coercive means (through the coercive organs of the state). But, in general, it lacks "the strength of bourgeois rule in advanced capitalist society, where force is resorted to on a large scale only in periods of exceptional crisis."⁵¹

Yet, (civilian) hegemonic rule (with the return to democracy in 1979) in Nigeria needs consent more than anything else, thus making the task before the ruling class an enormous one indeed. As Williams and Turner sum it up:

Civilian constitutional rule requires a bourgeoisie in command of productive resources, capable of settling its own affairs peaceably, maintaining the authority of the state and accommodating the participation in politics of subordinate classes. The production, market, state and moral relations of Nigerian society generate conflict among competing comprador interests for access to scarce resources, between compradors and technocrats over the direction of state policy, and between the state and subordinate classes over the terms of their exploitation.⁵²

The enormity of the task of ruling "peaceably" confronting the ruling class is even more pronounced because of the prevalence of non-hegemonic class relations in Nigeria, which has meant that interests are mediated more and more by the state (the coercive sphere) and realized, as well as accommodated, less and less within civil society (the hegemonic sphere).⁵³ It should be stressed here that the state is able

to perform this crucial mediation role for two reasons. First, the state itself (as representing the ruling class) enjoys a preponderant position vis-à-vis all social classes which are still in the process of class formation themselves (hence a fluid class structure) and are therefore relatively weak and fragmented. Second, the centrality of the state in its relationship with civil society on the one hand, and vis-à-vis international capital and the world market-dependent reproduction process on the other, also helps to reproduce this fragmentation and weakness of the classes, thereby producing an unstable class structure overall.⁵⁴ As Bjorn Beckman has argued, "the state itself is the very linch-pin around which the system of imperialist domination rotates ... It is international in the domination of production for the world market, in its integration into production and class formation (and class alliances) at that level."⁵⁵

Thus, the state uses both its preponderant position and centrality vis-à-vis civil society to act as the guarantor of the ruling class -- a fact which explains much of how and why peripheral capitalism, as unviable as it has been in Nigeria (as everywhere else in the "Third World"), has nonetheless been able to persist and reproduce itself thus far. It has done this despite the fact that its internal contradictions continue to provide the objective conditions for the radicalization of all sections of the working class, but which working class has remained basically small, weak, and fragmented. This is the class with which we are concerned in this study and it is to it that we can now turn.

The Nigerian Working Class⁵⁶

Just as the notion of domination was crucial to the definition of the ruling class, so is the notion of subordination crucial to the definition of the working class. In other words, classes are primarily defined in relational terms of the economic structure (social organization of economic relations) of capitalist societies within which the social relations of production are of crucial significance, indeed, are overwhelmingly important.⁵⁷ Thus, according to Miliband:

The "working class" is therefore that part of the "collective labourer" which produces surplus value, from a position of subordination, at the lower ends of the income scale, and also at the lower ends of what might be called the "scale of regard."⁵⁸

In terms of this orientation, the Nigerian working class will comprise all those in wage employment in the country who, from a position of subordination, produce surplus value or surplus labour, which is appropriated and expropriated by those who own and control the means of production, "and who on the basis of this relationship can identify a common opposition to their own economic interests and act accordingly."⁵⁹

Considerable care must therefore be taken in attempting to establish the contemporary boundaries of the working class among Nigeria's wage employment population. To begin with, it is important to note that wage employment recorded considerable growth in the 1970s. In 1975, wage employment was 2.18 million, and it increased by 820,000 or 37.6 percent over five years to reach the 3 million mark in 1980. At this rate, wage

employment was 7.5 percent and 9.3 percent of the labour force in 1975 (29.22 million) and 1980 (32.20 million), respectively; or 7.8 percent and 9.7 percent of total gainful occupation in 1975 (27.91 million) and 1980 (30.80 million) respectively.

Of the rest of the gainfully occupied persons, 17.86 million or 64 percent were engaged in agriculture in 1975. Although the number of persons engaged in agriculture increased to 18.48 million in 1980, its share among the gainfully occupied dropped to 60 percent. Of course, agriculture recorded a negative growth rate of 2.1 percent between 1975 and 1980. The remainder of the gainfully occupied is made up of those classified by the Third Plan as "Self-Account, Unpaid Household Workers, and Unpaid Apprentices". These are mainly the informal sector operators and the working poor (e.g. petty-traders, hawkers, roadside sellers, mechanics). The informal sector itself constitutes about 30 percent of total gainful occupation (the economically active population). Thus, a breakdown of total gainful occupation or the economically active population in 1980 would produce about 10 percent in wage employment, about 30 percent in the urban informal sector, and 60 percent in agriculture.

Crucially, wage employment in the modern sector of the economy (i.e. the public sector and the large foreign corporate sub-sector of the private sector -- see Table 5) grew from 1.5 million in 1975 to 2.25 million in 1980. The modern sector therefore represented 68.8 percent and 75 percent of wage employment in 1975 and 1980 respectively. According to the

Fourth Plan, the fastest growing sector between 1975 and 1980 was manufacturing which recorded an average growth of 18.1 percent in constant terms.

In terms of employment within the modern sector, Table 5 reveals that manufacturing and processing, and building and construction recorded the most impressive percentage growth rates. In 1980, these two pairs, in addition to mining and

TABLE 5

TRENDS IN EMPLOYMENT IN LARGE AND MEDIUM-SIZED
(MODERN SECTOR) ESTABLISHMENTS, 1975-80*

Sector	Estimated Employment 1975 (a)		Estimated Employment 1980 (b)	
	No. (thousands)	% share	No. (thousands)	% share
Agriculture	105.0	7.0	135.0	6.0
Mining and Quarrying	90.0	6.0	113.0	5.0
Manufacturing and Processing	324.0	21.6	517.0	23.0
Building and Construction	210.0	14.0	364.0	16.2
Distribution	30.0	2.0	50.0	2.2
Transport and Communication	99.0	6.6	158.0	7.0
Electricity, Water and Gas	91.5	6.1	126.0	5.6
Services	550.5	36.7	787.0	35.0
TOTAL	1,500.0	100.0	2,250.0	100.0

*Source: 1975 (a): Adapted from Third National Development Plan 1975-80 (Lagos: Central Planning Office, Federal Ministry of Economic Development, 1975), Table 32.8, p. 375.

1980 (b): Adapted from Third National Development Plan 1975-80 (Lagos: National Planning Office, Federal Ministry of National Planning, 1981), Table 35.4, p. 427.

quarrying, electricity, water and gas, amounted to 49.8 percent of modern sector employment. Significantly, the services' (including government) share of modern sector employment dropped from 36.7 percent in 1975 to 35 percent in 1980. This changing composition of modern sector employment is important in appreciating the growing significance of oil-fueled industrialization in the economy, and should be borne in mind regarding the restructuring of the trade unions as well as the ascendancy of "junior workers" in the 1977-78 "industrial unions" and the state-structured Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC).⁶⁰

Nigeria's workforce in the modern sector can be divided into "junior staff" (clerical, lower professional, technical and supervisory), "operatives" (the term used for skilled machine operators), and "labourers" (the unskilled and often casually employed pushers, diggers, etc.). The last two categories "are working class in a strict sense"⁶¹ (the classical Marxian proletariat), and they dominate the wage-earning population as shown in Table 6. The "operatives" and "labourers" comprise the skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled categories, who together constitute 77 percent of wage employment in the modern sector as a whole. If the intermediate category workers are added to the proletariat proper (together constituting Nigeria's "junior staff"), the percentage share of the "junior staff" in the modern sector rises from 77 to 94. These, then, are the junior workers who solely constitute the NLC, structured by the state in 1978 as a

TABLE 6
OCCUPATIONAL BREAKDOWN OF EMPLOYMENT IN LARGE AND
MEDIUM-SIZED (MODERN SECTOR) ESTABLISHMENTS, 1975-80*

Occupational Group	Estimated employment and Percentage Contribution of Occupational Groups			
	1975	%	1980**	%
Senior Category	91,500	6.1	126,750	6.4
Intermediate Category	252,000	16.8	339,300	17.1
Skilled and Semi-Skilled Category	436,500	29.1	559,650	28.3
Unskilled and Others	720,000	48.0	954,300	48.2
	1,500,000	100%	1,980,000	100%

*Source: Adapted from, Third National Development Plan 1975-80, op cit., Table 32.9, p. 376.

**1980 figures here are Third Plan projections. While the Fourth Plan estimated modern sector employment at 2.25 million (as opposed to the Third Plan's 1.98 million), a similar breakdown such as in this Table was not provided. However, the percentage contribution of junior workers should (given the trend here) be higher or at least hold firm.

"junior staff" central labour organization. The NLC thus comprises about 94 percent of wage employment in the modern sector, a sector of the economy which plays a crucial role in industrial relations practice in Nigeria (as we shall see presently).

In contradistinction, Nigeria's "senior staff" category comprises the middle and upper salariat -- managers and senior officials (executives) in the modern sector -- only about 6 percent of modern sector employment. Besides enjoying attractive salaries and fringe benefits, this last category of

employees is "also protected from most changes in the market conditions and thus enjoy a relatively high job security."⁶²

The emphasis on the modern sector is not just because of the fact that it represents about 75 percent of wage employment in Nigeria, but precisely because it is where an overwhelming majority of unionized workers are to be found. Since the primary focus of this study is on state-labour (i.e. organized labour) relations, the modern sector thus serves as the locus of the analysis of such relations as well as of the organization of the working class itself.

But the public or state sector is the predominant part (about 65 percent) of the modern sector in Nigeria, and this raises a problem for our usage of the term "working class" or "proletariat" in this section as well as henceforward. This is precisely because state employees and commercial workers are not supposed to be part and parcel of the working class, even though they are wage earners.

The most celebrated contemporary exponent of this view (the distinction between productive and unproductive labour) was Nicos Poulantzas who argues that because state employees and commercial workers do not produce surplus value, they are unproductive wage earners who are not to be included in the working class: "While every worker is a wage earner, not every wage earner is a worker, since not every wage earner is necessarily a productive worker, i.e. one who produces surplus value (commodities)."⁶³ Although Poulantzas admits that surplus labour is extorted from these wage earners, he

nonetheless insists that they "are not directly exploited in the form of the dominant capitalist relation of exploitation, the creation of surplus value."⁶⁴ Thus, according to Poulantzas, they belong in the "new" petty bourgeoisie; "new" because, unlike the traditional or old petty bourgeoisie who are either petty traders or artisans, these unproductive labourers earn wages.

However, the point must be made that Poulantzas carries Marx's treatment of productive and unproductive labour in Capital too far. The result is that the working class is defined too narrowly in Poulantzas' schema, which ignores the crucial fact that even though the so-called unproductive labourer does not produce surplus value (i.e. he or she is not a direct producer), he or she nevertheless, following Guglielmo Carchedi, "produces a certain use value (e.g. a service) while, at the same time being expropriated of surplus labour. This means that he [or she] takes part both in a labour process and the surplus labour producing process, where the latter dominates the former ... we can say that this worker is economically oppressed."⁶⁵

In sum, the "experience" (the effects of objective determination, the relations of production and class exploitation⁶⁶) of both the productive and unproductive labourer is not dissimilar under the capitalist production process, which manifests a unity in the domination of the labour process and of the surplus value production process.⁶⁷ Indeed, as Erik Olin Wright has made clear in his critique of the concept of

unproductive labour:

Both productive and unproductive labour are exploited, in the sense that unpaid labour time is appropriated from them. The only difference is that in the case of productive labour, unpaid labour time is directly appropriated as surplus value, whereas in the case of unproductive labour, unpaid labour merely reduces the costs to the capitalist of appropriating part of the surplus value produced elsewhere. In both cases workers will be dispossessed of control over the labour process. In both cases capitalists will try to increase productivity, to get workers to work harder. And in both cases, socialism is a prerequisite for ending exploitation.⁶⁸

Having said that, a further note on Nigeria's public sector is warranted here to clarify the point that even a large proportion of state employees are productive workers. This is as a result of the direct and rapidly expanding role played by the state in the economy, a role immensely strengthened by the indigenisation programme discussed above. Given the ubiquity of the public sector in Nigeria -- from the traditional government services (ministries or departments) to government's involvement in the service and commercial industries such as electricity, water, health, housing, banking, insurance and commodity supply companies (e.g. the Nigerian National Supply Company) to railways, airways, ports, textiles, mining (including oil), and manufacturing (e.g. petrochemicals, iron and steel, metal products, automobiles) -- the traditional distinction between state and industrial workers has all but disappeared.

Again, while industrialization is not yet the commanding sector of the economy, it is already the leading sector of the economy -- even though the point cannot be missed that Nigeria's burgeoning industries owe their growth to oil revenue. The

saliency of industrial production in the large foreign corporate sub-sector of the private sector cannot be gainsaid. In fact, as we shall see, it was strikes carried out by workers in this sub-sector in 1971-72 that formed the immediate background to direct intervention in the labour movement by the state. With the indigenisation programme bringing the state as well as the indigenous bourgeoisie, whose growth it was fostering, into this sub-sector (more in terms of equity ownership than control of enterprise), the interpenetration between the state and the economy was to grow and solidify. When the state labelled the trade unions it restructured in 1977 as "industrial unions", it was merely acknowledging the growing significance of the industrial base of the economy overall.

The point, therefore, is that an emphasis on the modern sector in this study is not misplaced. Clearly, it is the locale of the organized working class in Nigeria. However, before discussing organized labour and the state, it is pertinent to take a brief look at workers in the informal sector (25 percent of wage employment) of the economy, i.e. the small Nigerian petty bourgeois, and the joint Nigerian and "Third World" small capitalist sub-sectors.

In general, conditions unfavourable to labour prevail in these two sub-sectors of the informal sector. Not only do employers here pay below government minima and accept a high turn-over amongst a largely uneducated workforce, they are also hostile to unions: the style of management being paternalistic under its best conditions, and labour exploitative under its

worst.⁶⁹ But the informal sector remains, for the most part, non-unionizable because of its highly petty bourgeois character, i.e. the high proportion within it of people not primarily dependent upon wages, but on self-employment. As for the small capitalist employers within this sector, when they are not directly engaged in production alongside their workers, they frequently draw their workforce from family members, or Nigerian migrant workers from the rural areas during the farming off-season (e.g. dry season) or from foreign migrant workers (mainly West Africans) who formed a substantial percentage of informal sector operators until they were expelled from Nigeria in early 1983. These together constitute the urban working poor cut off from the organized working class, and who therefore remain perpetual losers in the Nigerian political economy since they lie outside the purview of governmental wage commissions, which operate in relation to the modern (formal) sector.

For a number of reasons, which we discuss next, the modern sector has historically been the focal point of labour conflict in Nigeria. Overall, the most visible aspect of class antagonism and conflict has been that between the workers and the government, the latter "in the dual role of ruler and major employer."⁷⁰ We now turn to organized labour and the state in Nigeria.

Organized Labour and the State

Organized labour is small in Nigeria. At the end of 1980, the total membership of the NLC, based on the up-to-date (December 1980) total dues check-off/monthly contribution paid by the industrial unions affiliated to it, was under half a million (365,692 to be precise - see Appendix A). While this figure grossly under-represents the numerical strength of the NLC - because the industrial unions, on the average, paid less than half their own numerical as well as financial strength drawn from the automatic check-off into the coffers of the NLC - it is nonetheless the case that the working class remains largely unorganized in Nigeria. Even if, for the purposes of analysis, we estimate the size of the NLC at one million, this would still be less than half the total number of wage-earners in Nigeria. This fact should be borne in mind as we now provide a background for the discussion of state-labour relations in Nigeria.

We begin with one of the immediate interests of the working class, namely the wage bargain. Perhaps the most salient feature of the wage bargain in Nigeria is the fact that collective bargaining (in its traditional form of employers and employees negotiating the terms of employment - sale of labour power - and then eventually signing a "contract" or "collective agreement") has not taken root in Nigeria. The system of wage determination in Nigeria is a colonial legacy, and one with dire implications for the trade union movement in its relation-

ship to the state: it entails a centralized process of wage determination through periodic statutory wage commissions, whereby basic wage rates are directly tied to governmental decision-making.

Since 1938, when the Trade Unions Ordinance gave legal definition as to what constituted a trade union and provided for its registration, the government's power to fix wages has been strengthened rather than weakened. By 1964, the government had applied a comprehensive set of wage levels throughout the country as part of the settlement following the 1964 general strike. In May 1968, the exigencies of the civil war situation and the anticipation of increased strike action were thought compelling reasons for the government to issue a decree which banned strikes and imposed compulsory arbitration (at the pleasure of the Commissioner or Minister of Labour) in any dispute which lasted longer than seven days. This was followed by the Ministry of Labour setting up an Industrial Arbitration Tribunal in 1970 to determine wages referred to it by the Commissioner and to settle the interpretation of "collective agreements" or the terms of settlement of any trade dispute. The tribunal was expected to function properly despite the fact that the crucial decision about wages would have been taken through the setting up of governmental commissions and committees.

However, throughout all this, the government continued to lay great emphasis on its support for a system of "free negotiation" and "collective bargaining" between employer and

employee.⁷¹ As Robin Cohen pointed out:

In general the institutional and legal framework of bargaining that has been established in Nigeria can be seen as encapsulating the form, rather than the substance, of industrial relations. As such it closely corresponds to the broader discrepancy existing in other areas of social life between the constitutional, legal and normative mores inherited from the colonial government, and the real behaviour patterns. The substantive issues that divide wage-earners on the one hand from employers and government on the other have an existence far removed from the recognized system of industrial relations, while the unions, the employers and the government continue to give formal adherence to the system.⁷²

The substantive issues in trade disputes relate to wages (the leading issue), discipline, conditions of service and anti-union activities. These disputes have been consistently more numerous in the private sector than in the public sector.⁷³ Their nature and basic characteristics support the view that they "have an existence far removed from the recognized system of industrial relations" (collective bargaining). Wage disputes, to take the leading issue for example, occur over failure to implement pay increases recommended by government-appointed wage commissions (as in the case of the Ikeja workers in 1971 discussed below). Again, this is more prevalent in the private sector where workers have often used industrial action either to back up their demand that awards made to their counterparts in the public sector be extended to them or to secure the awards from their employers who hesitate or refuse to comply with government directives that they be included in the general wage award, as was the case in 1971. Thus, trade disputes often cluster around a major wage review exercise and they often extend beyond the immediate post-review period.

While trade disputes have ranged over demands for wage increases, changes in method of payment, wage and salary structure, irregular pay-day, payment through foreman or headman rather than directly by cashier or paymaster, delay in making payments, demands for overtime payment, payment for work done on public holidays, payment while on strike, changes in overtime rate, deductions from wages, annual increments, to under-payments,⁷⁴ the point should be emphasized that these issues are dealt with at the governmental wage commission level rather than at the level of collective bargaining between particular local unions, federations or even centrals and employers. Hence, it is customary in Nigeria for trade unionists to address labour problems directly to the government irrespective of their causes and the circumstances surrounding them. For instance, the Joint Action Committee (JAC) - which comprised the four national labour centres - at the time of the general strike of 1964, maintained that "the present dispute is between the workers and the government of Nigeria", whereas some private employers put up an advertisement in the press that there was "no dispute" between them and their workers even though their workers were on strike.⁷⁵

The centrality of the government in the (process of the) determination and movement of wages, as well as the political and socio-economic context in Nigeria, has had the effect of transforming industrial action into political action. Sometimes this transformation is even aided by the reaction of the government commission itself to the plight of the workers.

This was the case in 1970 with regard to the Adebo Wages and Salaries Commission which made this scathing indictment of both the government and others who have access to the state:

From some of the representations made to us, it is clear not only that there is intolerable suffering at the bottom of the income scale, but also that the suffering is made even more intolerable by manifestation of affluence and wasteful expenditure which cannot be explained on the basis of visible and legitimate means of income.⁷⁶

With this kind of indictment coming from a government commission, workers and trade unionists have not only been emboldened in their confrontation with the government, but have become more strongly convinced about the "justness" of their case.

Thus, trade unionists in Nigeria did not really have to organize and mobilize the rank and file. "Bargaining" is actually conducted in "public", on the pages of newspapers, and ultimately before a wage commission, where the "militant" few representing the union centres (themselves already merged into a common front, like JAC), do the "bargaining". Since no collective agreement or binding contract is signed by the employer(s) and employees, it ipso facto means that a ratification vote by the membership of trade union locals is never held. Consultation with the rank and file is therefore minimal, and trade union leaders concentrate on proving their mettle in radical or anti-government rhetoric. In short, what counts in a "confrontation situation" is the trade union leader's political style and his populist idiom.⁷⁷

This lack of rank and file orientation among Nigerian trade union leaders explains, among other things, the weak

organizational structure of the trade union movement and vice versa: leaders are largely unaccountable to the rank and file; union centres are unable to co-ordinate the activities of their affiliates and the affiliates, in turn, often take action without reference to the union centres - including the withholding of money. Union centres in the 1960s were particularly susceptible to the manipulation of foreign trade union internationals because they lacked the financial resources they could have had with better internal organization and mobilization. Also, leaders could all the more easily do as they pleased with their positions. Local leaders were able to switch affiliation (nationally) without prior consultation with and approval of their membership, while the leaders of the union centres also affiliated internationally without consulting with their local unions and, in turn, could be "activated" and "de-activated" at will by the internationals because they lacked local base/support (financially and organizationally) in the first place.

All this amounted to a weak and fragmented labour movement; although, perhaps owing to the political style of wage bargaining in Nigeria, the labour movement as a whole often has been capable of waging effective "wage wars". As already pointed out, the transformation of industrial action into political action means that the labour movement has traditionally adopted an essentially "political" strategy vis-à-vis the government and (private) employers, a strategy that often guaranteed crucial public support to the labour movement given

the resentment against injustice and inequality in Nigerian society:

Translating economic grievances into political demands usually means that unions run through a spectrum of political action: petitions, representations, and appeals to public opinion. The last is the most effective weapon in the trade unions' political arsenal. Sedulous attention is paid to the building of the "justness" of workers' demands for a wage review. All the newspapers, perhaps because of the character of their readership, give good coverage of labour disputes, usually report the press conferences of the union centres, and often carry articles by the union leaders.⁷⁸

Nevertheless, the trade union movement has rarely transcended "wage wars" or strictly economic demands. This is symptomatic of the fact that an elaborate class strategy does not exist within the Nigerian labour movement. As a corollary, no strong and virile socialist movement exists on a national scale in Nigeria. Although the Nigerian Trade Union Congress (NTUC), one of the four national centres from 1963 to 1977, demonstrated socialist tendencies (to be elaborated upon later) and was actually labelled by Peter Waterman as "the Communist trade union organization in Nigeria",⁷⁹ one would be over-drawing the case to maintain that an elaborate class strategy was in place in the labour movement. Despite the fact that the NTUC was the second largest national centre, behind the moderate/reformist United Labour Congress (ULC), it never managed to organize the overwhelming majority of the workforce who remained un-unionized and unorganized outside the labour movement. The NTUC never did attempt to become a mass or grassroots workers' movement. Although in 1963 it "helped create the Socialist Workers' and Farmers' Party (SWAFP), the

two organizations did 'coincide', and the leadership of the latter was intended to be the leadership of the former".⁸⁰ Wahab Goodluck, S.U. Bassey and Tunji Otegbeye were the leading figures in both organizations. Ever since, however, socialists have not been "able to build a national association which would be capable of challenging the ... conservative or liberal-welfarist parties"⁸¹ of Nigeria.

However, despite the politicized nature of industrial relations in Nigeria, it is still largely the case that Adam Przeworski's general description of capitalist politics holds:

Political struggles become focussed on distribution. They concern production only insofar as it relates to future consumption, to satisfaction of future materialist interest. They concern the very organization of political relations only insofar as the organization of politics determines the a priori probabilities of realization of material interests. Politics indeed becomes a matter of "who gets what, when, and how", a process of establishing the priority of claims to the national product.⁸²

Nevertheless, what distinguishes Nigeria within this general framework is that the "organization of politics" itself has been riddled with intense conflicts between the military-bureaucratic and civilian (commercial/contracting) fractions of the ruling class. While these dominant fractions have managed to keep the subordinate classes and groups in civil society at the bottom of the "priority of claims to the national product", political relations between these dominant fractions themselves (i.e. when civilians rule and when they are overthrown by the military or the incidence of coups and counter-coups within the military itself) have nonetheless been affected by the

action(s) of the organized working class.

Trade union action, even though primarily over wages or immediate and short term material interest, has not infrequently weakened the legitimacy of the rulers over the ruled, and also dangerously damaged their ability to rule peacefully or peaceably. The impact of trade union action on the organization of politics cannot be over-emphasized in a situation (such as in Nigeria) where interests generally are mediated by the state and in which the hegemony of the ruling class is not secure in civil society. The inescapable consequence is that the society or political system as a whole becomes prone to coercive intervention by the state, when confronted by effective trade union action. For instance, the army and the police were used to intimidate workers during the 1964 general strike. Here, it is pertinent to recall the warning of the Editor of West Africa at the time, that "if Nigeria's political leaders do not stand together to find solutions to the present crisis, they might fall together."⁸³ Also, trade union action in the immediate post-civil war period (1971-72) provoked a series of state interventions in the labour movement from 1973 on, and trade union action in the wake of the Udoji wage commission (1974-75) contributed immensely to the erosion of the legitimacy of the Gowon military government and to its replacement in July 1975 by the self-professed "corrective regime" of Murtala Muhammed. In the circumstances, the Muhammed/Obasanjo (Muhammed's successor) regime sought even further intervention in the trade union movement.

Thus, small, weak, and fragmented as the organized working class is in Nigeria, it nevertheless has succeeded in weakening the liberal constitutional facade of civilian political rule, as well as in destabilizing the social peace which the military rulers tried to impose in a basically inegalitarian and exploitative social structure. The question that arises is: How did the military regime respond to the destabilization of social relations by trade union action? An attempt to elaborate an answer to this question is the object of this study, and the thesis is that such response was essentially corporatist in nature.

Corporatism: The Nigerian Context

In this section, we shall attempt to lay a theoretical framework for subsequent analyses of corporatism in this study. Corporatism is viewed here primarily as a creation of the state; defined as a mechanism used by the state for structuring and stabilizing antagonistic social relations. Concretely, it is a mediatory mechanism designed and constructed by the state to co-opt and incorporate the working class (in the capitalist state. As a political structure, it is employed by fractions of the ruling class who control the state apparatus as a means of coping (or attempting to cope) with the conflict emanating from working class action against the capitalist state.⁸⁴

Working class action in Nigeria presented a critical

challenge to social stability, as well as a crisis situation for the state. The response of the state to this challenge or crisis precipitated by unprecedented working class action was all the more remarkable against the background of a "certain aloofness" that previously marked the state's relationship with the Nigerian labour movement.

For the labour movement in Nigeria has had a peculiar relationship to the state and political parties right from the start. It remained fairly independent of both even though there have been discernible attempts at governmental/state control of the labour movement since its inception in 1943. This "relative autonomy" of labour vis-à-vis the state in Nigeria was an unusual situation in Africa, where either trade union integration in the dominant/ruling political party or close partnership between the ruling party and the union movement has been the dominant feature of state-labour relations. Tanzania⁸⁵ typified the former model (as did Nkrumah's Ghana), while Kenya⁸⁶ represented the latter. To be sure, the existence of de jure one-party state (in Tanzania) or a de facto one (in Kenya until it adopted a one-party legislation in 1981) made such relationships a possible or even a logical outcome. But, so did the existence of a single central labour organization alongside the one-party state, with the latter, more often than not, fostering the creation of the former in the first place.

In contradistinction, the absence of either a one-party state in Nigeria before the civilians were overthrown in 1966

or a single central labour organization until the NLC was created by military decree in 1978, may have hindered trade union co-optation or close partnership with the state. Although the task of union co-optation was (therefore) left to a military (bureaucratic-authoritarian) state to begin to formulate in the 1970s, it must be stressed that this timing was dictated not by the onset of military rule, but rather by the eruption of widespread industrial unrest in 1971-72.

The fragmentation of the Nigerian labour movement allowed local union leaders in the foreign corporate sub-sector of the private sector to carry out industrial protests at the local level without reference to the national centres. In 1971, workers in the private sector took action to secure wage increases which the Adebo Commission granted to their counterparts in the public sector, and also recommended should be extended to them. The strikes, which themselves took place in defiance of an anti-strike decree dating back to the civil war, succeeded in forcing the private sector employers to pay the striking workers their own "Adebo". The strikes were spontaneous and violent in significant respects - government and company vehicles were overturned and burned, machines were destroyed in Ikeja factories, and expatriate managers were physically attacked. According to Cohen, "In its intensity and scope, the outburst of industrial unrest was quite without precedent in Nigeria and quite beyond the power of the established trade union leadership to control."⁸⁷

Since this was a situation to which the weak organiz-

ational structure of the labour movement had contributed, the state undertook union restructuring to curtail workers' action and to enforce social peace. As Peace noted:

The attempted reforms of the labour movement represent an unequivocal attempt by those in government to bring such local level unions within the orbit of state control to a greater degree more than ever before. If successfully engineered, they may severely circumscribe the organizational ability of ordinary workers to defend their interests against policies imposed from above, and to articulate their deep-rooted dissatisfaction with the extent of inequality in Nigerian society.⁸⁸

This response by the state to working class action in Nigeria resembles what has increasingly been called "corporatist development" in contemporary societies. To begin with, it is consistent with how Alfred Stepan views corporatism: "primarily" as an elite response to crisis, a response that involves the attempt by elites who control the state apparatus to restructure the relationship between sectors of civil society and the state."⁸⁹ It should be stressed as well that Stepan's "crisis response model" captures the central dynamic that underpins our orientation to corporatism delineated above.

However, corporatism remains a problematic concept that has been used often too loosely by many scholars in the social sciences.⁹⁰ Indeed, such a loose usage in the African context is provided by Timothy Shaw, who writes that: "In Africa, the corporatist imperative is expressed in a variety of one-party states which span the ideological spectrum but share a concern for control and order."⁹¹ But, as we have seen, corporatism is neither party integration per se nor a national attribute. Rather, corporatism locates a political structure used by the

state in dealing with the working class directly, i.e., the emphasis is on functional representation (of socio-economic producer groups) rather than party representation.

Corporatism, as an attempt by the state to forge class harmony and organic unity of civil society, has its roots in medieval society, which was strongly influenced by the Aristotelian concept of a "well-ordered political community": "the whole is necessarily prior to the part."⁹² As Leo Panitch has argued, nineteenth century corporatist theorists, seeking to revive this notion of community, in the face of the rise of industrial capitalism, decried on the one hand the individualism and competition of capitalism, and on the other the class conflict and socialist movements to which it gave rise. They thus contended that class harmony and organic unity were essential to society:

Looking backwards to the mutual rights and obligations that presumably united the medieval estates, they proposed a social and political order based on functional socio-economic organizations in civil society, operating largely autonomously in their respective fields, but united with each other and the state in sectoral and national decision-making bodies and committed to maintaining the functional hierarchy of an organic society.⁹³

Thus, corporatist ideology was to stress the "common good" over "sectional interests" under the aegis of the state. The problem, however, is that the state is neither "procedurally neutral" nor does it uphold the "common good". Rather, "the state should be viewed as a mechanism of domination and control."⁹⁴ Under these circumstances, the "common good" was no more than the good of the dominant classes in society. Ipsa

facto, the mediation of social relations by the state was tantamount to the preservation of a relationship under which the subordinate classes would perpetually remain society's underlings. Hence the attempt, in modern society, to integrate the working class in the capitalist state must be seen as an attempt to vitiate the class struggle. Corporatism defines as well as describes such an attempt by the state.

In this regard, two types of corporatism have conventionally been distinguished in the theoretical literature. Broadly speaking, the distinction is between Philippe Schmitter's "state" and "societal" corporatism.⁹⁵ While this distinction turns on the degree to which "corporations" or class groups are dependent upon, and penetrated by, the state in the case of "state corporatism", and similar groups are autonomous of, and indeed penetrate, the state in the case of "societal corporatism"; it is rather obvious (from our discussion thus far) that the initiative for creating and structuring these class groups along corporatist lines comes from the state.⁹⁶ To therefore assign "state corporatism" to peripheral capitalist countries and "societal corporatism" to the central capitalist ones is to apply the notions of coercion and consent, which underlie the distinction, in a far too descriptive as well as ideal-typical sense. The point is that coercion and consent are intermingled everywhere, as we shall see especially in the Nigerian case.

Significantly, Guillermo O'Donnell has captured this intermingled nature of corporatism in his notion of "bifrontal

corporatism" which contains the two components of state ("statizing") and societal ("privatist") corporatism.⁹⁷ What this bifrontal character of corporatism does is to raise to the level of visibility, or indeed to bring to the fore, "any particular corporatist policy, whereby its inherent tensions and contradictions become palpable especially vis-à-vis the trade unions. In fact, as O'Donnell himself is careful to point out, bifrontal corporatism, as a particular policy orientation of the state towards the working class (i.e. the working class is its target) has a distinct bias to it. He calls this policy bias the "segmentary character" of bifrontal corporatism. While this particular bias is itself a product of the structural inequality of society (which bifrontal corporatism seeks to cement and preserve), it is also the critical element in the restructuring of social relations by the state. For this policy bias (the segmentary character of bifrontal corporatism) means that bifrontal corporatism's

... actual functioning and social impact differ systematically according to cleavages largely determined by social class. Statizing corporatization tends to function effectively when crystallized in the statization of the class organizations of the popular sector, especially the trade unions ... The bifrontal and segmentary character of this corporatism entails that the main link established with the popular sector is one of control.⁹⁸

Thus, bifrontal corporatism in Nigeria entailed state structuring of the labour movement in a manner which produced a system of officially sanctioned, non-competitive, compulsory trade unions. Moreover, state subsidies (e.g. direct subvention/grant, authorization of automatic dues check-off) were

provided for the trade unions. In return for these inducements, the state imposed certain constraints on trade union demand-making (notably the imposition of a wage freeze, plus the removal of/ban on the right to strike), leadership selection and internal governance, in addition to barring or excluding trade unions from the political arena.⁹⁹ In all this, emphasis must be on the pivotal role of state policy not just in "chartering" and creating these trade unions from above and then establishing guidelines on how they can act, but also on state monopoly of agenda-setting in accordance with its, and not the trade unions', "own interest lines."¹⁰⁰

Without a doubt, this kind of state policy would need a quiescent as well as a "collaborationist" union leadership to work. Ironically, however, union restructuring in Nigeria failed to produce this kind of union leadership. This, in turn, raised the question whether corporatism is an adequate means of securing hegemony.

Our attention now shifts to the organized working class itself - the history, structure, organization, and leadership of the Nigerian labour movement - and, subsequently, to the singularly most important development in the 1970s, namely the "rationalization" of the union structure, which culminated in the state-created single central labour organization, the NLC.

CHAPTER 2

THE NIGERIAN LABOUR MOVEMENT: BACKGROUND TO ANALYSIS

This chapter, while providing a brief history of the trade union centres and central labour organizations in Nigeria (see Appendix B), will specifically attempt to generate explanations for the lack of structural unity in the labour movement, and to consider the consequences of its fragmentation not only for the leadership, organization, and financing of the trade unions, but for their relationship to the state as well. Moreover, an attempt will be made to provide a general outline of the basic attitudes and ideological orientations which underlay the radical (left)/conservative (right) split in the Nigerian labour movement very early in its history, and which remain important in understanding its subsequent development.

A Brief History of the Labour Movement

The history of trade unionism in Nigeria could be said to have properly begun with the passing of a trade union law by the colonial government. Ordinance No. 44 of 1938 (later known as the Trade Union Act of 1938) gave the legal definition of a union and also provided that five persons could form a union,

described as:

... any combination, whether temporary or permanent, the principal purposes of which are the regulation of the relations between workmen and masters, between workmen and workmen, or between masters and masters, whether such combinations, would or would not, if the Ordinance had not been enacted, have been deemed to have been unlawful combination by reason of some one or more of its purposes, being in restraint of trade.¹

The Railway Workers' Union (RWU), led by Michael A.O. Imoudu (who was to become a dominant figure of the labour movement for 35 years), was the first trade union to have been registered under the Ordinance. By the end of 1941, forty-one unions (including the African Civil Servants Technical Workers' Union and the Nigerian Union of Teachers) had been registered. The passing (three years earlier) of the Ordinance, coupled with the enormous pressures on the colonial economy as a result of the war, hastened the pace of unionization.²

Trade union organization was centred in Lagos, where Imoudu led railway workers to Government House in 1942 to demand a Cost of Living Allowance (COLA). Imoudu was dismissed from service (he was an apprentice turner with the Nigerian railway), detained in Benin Prison (where he organized a prisoners' strike), and subsequently banished to his home town - some 100 miles north of Benin. He was not released until 1945.³ The COLA agitation and the harsh treatment meted out to Imoudu provided the unions with their first opportunity to undertake collective action. The unions and the nationalists (in the anti-colonial movement) made strenuous efforts to secure Imoudu's release between 1942 and 1945. It was in the midst of

the numerous collective actions (sending petitions to the government, organizing protest marches, articulating workers' demands in the nationalist press (The West African Pilot) that the need for central co-ordination arose, and the stage was thereby set for the formation of the first central labour organization in Nigeria.⁴

The Trade Union Congress of Nigeria (TUC) was born under militant circumstances in August 1943. It was therefore ironic that the TUC split six years later, in 1949, because it was no longer able to meet the aspirations of the "radicals" in the labour movement.

The aims of the TUC were to unite all trade unions into one organized body; to deal with the general labour problems affecting workers in the whole country; to protect the legal status and rights of trade union organizations; to see to the proper organization of trade unions; to organize annually a congress of all trade unions; to establish a workers' newspaper; to establish a trade union secretariat; to establish a Nigerian Labour College; and to promote scholarships for trade unionists to study abroad.⁵

The TUC inaugural conference resolved "to press for the nationalization of mining and timber industries, township transport and other important public services", besides demanding workers' representation in the Legislative Council and the regrouping of unions according to trade or craft.⁶ The nationalization and representative issues were political demands aimed at the status quo, and the colonial government

wasted no time in inaugurating a series of monthly consultative meetings between the TUC and the Labour Department, obviously in an attempt to keep the activities of the labour organization under close scrutiny.

However, whatever cordial relationship or close collaboration developed between the TUC and the Labour Department, it did not last for very long. Although the government did approve a 50 percent increase in the Cost of Living Allowance following the COLA agitation of 1942, real wages actually continued to decline in the period from 1942 to 1945. The government had promised "a general review of emoluments and other conditions of service ... as soon as possible after the war", and even admitted that the cost of living had risen because "certain essential commodities are in short supply, and difficult to obtain."⁷ Yet, in 1945, when workers demanded a minimum wage of 2s. 6d. (30k) for daily paid labourers and a 50 percent increase in the existing COLA, they were told that the government was not prepared to revise either the rate of pay or cost of living allowance.

The situation immediately gathered momentum. Tension had mounted during the war: Imoudu had been arrested and detained, and the colonial government had issued an order under the General Defence Regulations which banned strikes and lock-outs during the war. The order was aimed at crushing the labour militancy that was gaining ground at this time. Added to this was an accusation of racial discrimination, for the colonial government had given European civil servants increased bonuses

after the war, while leaving unchanged the allowances for African government workers.⁸

It is not clear why the colonial government decided to release Imoudu from detention in May 1945. Robin Cohen has suggested that the government was perhaps "hoping to remove the sting from the workers' demands".⁹ But, it is more likely the case that the government was attempting to improve its image with workers at a time when tension was building towards a strike. In any event, Imoudu's release only added fuel to an already flammable situation. Upon his release, Imoudu was able to resume his leadership of the labour movement, even though he was doing so unofficially since the TUC was formed in his absence. However, he remained the leader of the RWU and, of course, the "uncrowned" first king of the labour movement. When he returned to Lagos, he was jubilantly received by the workers and the movement in the direction of a strike proceeded apace.¹⁰

A brief exploration of the background to the 1945 general strike is pertinent at this juncture. The African Civil Servants Technical Workers' Union (ACSTWU), whose President, T.A. Bankole, was also the President of the TUC, had sought to postpone the strike for 14 days. Bankole and his allies in the labour movement met with stiff opposition from Imoudu. At a mass rally on June 21, Imoudu rose to speak after Bankole had apparently dissuaded workers from going on strike over the failure of the government to meet their demands. Imoudu repudiated conciliation, and renounced the negotiation approach

to a government which had openly refused "to accede to the request that the cost of living allowance and daily rates should be increased."¹¹ Imoudu stated:

I am the President and owner [sic] of the Railway Workers' Union throughout Nigeria, and I am going to speak for you. Am I not going to speak for you? (Shouts of "Yes, yes".) Negotiation has failed. We are going on strike on 22nd.¹²

According to Bankole himself, after re-echoing the last sentence of Imoudu's declaration, the workers sprang frantically upon their feet and staring at him (Bankole) shouted "Thief, thief, you have been bribed; government has bribed you."¹³

The attempt to halt the strike by the established leadership of the TUC and ACSTWU having failed, workers proceeded on the strike action on the date pronounced by Imoudu, June 22nd. The 1945 general strike (Nigeria's first) lasted for 54 days in Lagos (June 22 - August 14). Imoudu's RWU led the strike. Technical employees and labourers in the Railways, Marine, Public Works, and Printing Departments, and Lagos Municipal Workers were prominent in the strike. They were joined by their provincial counterparts. The strike was effective as services were paralysed, even though the government took a number of harsh measures to break the strike. As Cohen has written, the government "successively threatened the strikers with a forfeit of wages, attempted to run a skeleton railway service with the aid of the management and ... prison labour, took on 900 blackleg labourers, ordered the arrest of 9 leaders suspected of being responsible for the derailment of a train, and finally banned the [nationalist newspapers] West African

Pilot and the Daily Comet."¹⁴

For the moment, it appeared that the moderates in the labour movement had been humiliated. The radicals could rightfully claim to have successfully taken on the government, and therefore provided the needed momentum to the nationalist movement. However, as it turned out, the victory won by the radicals proved to be short-lived, as the settlement of the strike swung the pendulum back to the moderates in the labour movement by allowing them to recover some of their prestige. The Tudor Davies Commission appointed in October 1945 to do a post-mortem on the June-August General Strike, as well as "make recommendations as to the future compilation and computation of the cost of living in Nigeria", castigated the government in no uncertain terms: "the cause of the strike was Government dilatoriness and its lack of sympathy in handling its employees."¹⁵ However, as Cohen points out, the commission was also clearly interested in lending its weight to supporting the moderate leaders predominantly representing the white-collar unions at the expense of the section following Imoudu.¹⁶

Mention has already been made above of the division that occurred in the labour movement just before the strike. Post-strike behaviour in the labour movement was clearly influenced by this division. This was to be seen in the submission of memoranda to the Tudor Davies Commission. An ad hoc body of workers emerged within the TUC. Called the Supreme Council of Nigerian Workers, it comprised the ACSTWU, the Nigerian Civil Service Union (NCSU) and other largely white-collar unions,

such as the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT). These unions, in the main, provided the base of the established leadership of the TUC which had disagreed with Imoudu over the prosecution of the strike. Perhaps to dissociate themselves from the TUC (since the strike was carried out in the name of the TUC, even though it was not led by its established leadership), they formed the Supreme Council. The Tudor Davies Commission, for its part, recognized the Supreme Council, and not the TUC, as "fully representative" of Nigerian workers and warned trade unions of drifting "finally and irrevocably into the hands of politicians."¹⁷

Before discussing the relationship between the labour movement and the nationalist movement/political parties or politicians, some important points in the history and development of the labour movement have emerged and should be noted. First, the centrality of the government in the process of wage determination is unmistakable from the very beginning. This allowed the unions to bring considerable pressure to bear on the government. Second, and relatedly, is the predominance of public sector unions in the labour movement. Third, the labour movement was split between "radicals" and "conservatives" from very early in its history and development. The fact that the origin of this split was not ideologically-based (Left-Right Continuum) should also be noted. The split was more over tactics or modus operandi, but, in turn (and in time), it became critical in the choice of allies (both domestic and foreign) by the labour leaders. Fourth, the government's

tendency to accord official recognition to its chosen section of the labour movement emerged ab initio.

In sum, while workers' demands on minimum wage and the increase in COLA were won, the 1945 general strike nevertheless left the fledgling labour movement split right down the middle between hardliners/radicals and moderates/conservatives. This split was to prove an enduring one and the division persisted for more than thirty years, with more or less the same dramatis personae. Positions assumed by the labour leaders in the very early days vis-à-vis the nationalist movement and political parties, the state, and the international trade union organizations were rigidified and consistently maintained. These positions, in turn, came to define relationships within the labour movement, as well as to underlie differences among its top leadership. Moreover, very early in its development, the split in the labour movement was further complicated by the link between the nationalist movement/political parties and sections of the labour movement at different times. We shall now deal with the relationship between the nationalist movement and the labour movement.

Political Parties and the Roots of Disunity in the Labour Movement

The labour movement had a peculiar relationship to the political parties and subsequently to the Nigerian state right from the start. The growth of the trade union movement and the

nationalist movement/political parties occurred simultaneously, and the two did coincide in origins and aspirations. The latter also gravely affected the fortunes of the former in its formative years.

After the COLA agitation of 1942, the nationalist movement began to forge closer cooperation with the labour movement. During the 1945 strike, the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC)¹⁸ led by Nnamdi Azikiwe (Zik) gave crucial support to the strikers led by Imoudu. Zik himself broke with the elitist Yoruba Lagosians in the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) in 1941, and, together with Herbert Macaulay, founded the NCNC in 1944. A journalist, Zik had been publishing two dailies in Lagos since 1938. Both the West African Pilot and the Daily Comet actively supported workers' claims and asserted that "the nationalist struggle and the cause of the labour movement were indissolubly linked."¹⁹ At this point in time, the NCNC chose to throw its weight directly behind the radical section of the labour movement.

The NCNC's choice to champion a radical course of action was not without selfish motivations: for the nationalist party was not yet clear "as to what tactics were necessary to oust the colonial power."²⁰ In the circumstances, should violence become necessary, then Zik could count on the support of labour leaders like Imoudu, who had demonstrated that he could carry the rank and file with him. Although the TUC was not hitherto formally affiliated to the NCNC, Imoudu was nonetheless regarded and treated as a nationalist leader. Not only was he

accorded high status in the nationalist leadership and co-opted onto the executive of the NCNC, he also was among the political party's Pan-Nigerian delegates who toured the countryside in April 1946.²¹ This link between the labour movement and the nationalist political party²² was strengthened by the fact that radical labour leaders saw their economic struggle as part and parcel of the anti-colonial movement.

However, this link soon proved fatal to the unity of the labour movement. For a number of reasons, which we shall discuss presently, the radical labour leaders soon came to be regarded by their allies (the NCNC) as carrying their radicalism too far; and, with the tacit support of the NCNC, the moderate/conservative labour leaders succeeded in forcing the radicals out of the TUC in 1948.

The change in the attitude of the NCNC toward the radicals in the labour movement was strongly influenced by events in the national political scene from 1946 onward. In that year, the Richards Constitution effectively regionalized political power by providing for three Regional Houses of Assembly - North, East, and West. Soon after, Governor Macpherson undertook a tour of the country with a view to making a constitutional revision which promised even more regional autonomy in the direction of executive government action. These developments in the 1946-48 period served to galvanize the regional association/parties into action. The NCNC soon found itself competing with regional associations (later the AG and the NPC) with the distinct possibility of the

colonial government actually arranging to hand over political power to a moderate/conservative party, or at least a less radical one at independence. Under these circumstances (as become increasingly clear below), the NCNC was soon persuaded by the colonial government's injunctions to keep the labour movement out of politics — a campaign the government carried out vigorously after it was shocked and surprised by the scope and effectiveness of the 1945 general strike.

As the decolonizing process got under way, the colonial government was able to use the attractions of political office to woo the leaders of the NCNC on to the path of constitutional activity.²³ Anxious to dissociate itself from violence and a radical labour movement, the NCNC now tacitly threw its weight behind conservative labour leaders at the annual TUC conference in December 1948 by not actively supporting the radical position of affiliation with itself (the NCNC).²⁴ Thus, when the TUC voted to "disaffiliate" from the NCNC, the stage was set for the fragmentation of the labour movement. Henceforth, the labour movement would be permanently split between "radicals" and "conservatives", and only temporary alliances were possible.

In March 1949, the radicals — Imoudu, Nduka Eze and F.O. Coker — reacted to the setback they suffered at the 1948 TUC conference by forming the Nigerian National Federation of Labour (NNFL) as a rival body to the TUC. Imoudu and Eze were President and General Secretary respectively, of the new trade union centre. The aims of the NNFL were quite ambitious:

The leaders proposed to press for the socialization of important industries in the country with a view to realizing a Socialist Government where the identity of the working class would not be lost and, ultimately, the achievement of a world-wide parliament of the working class.²⁵

While the white-collar unions (cf. the Supreme Council of Nigerian Workers) remained in the TUC, the predominantly blue-collar ones resigned from the TUC and joined the NNFL. Among them were Imoudu's Railway Workers' Union (RWU), Eze's Amalgamated Union of the United Africa Company African Workers (UNAMAG), Coker's Postal Workers' Union (PWU), the Public Utility Technical and General Workers' Union, the Nigerian Union of Nurses which forced its General Secretary, N.A. Cole, to quit his post of TUC President, and the Elder Dempster Lines African Workers' Union.²⁶ The NNFL at its formation appeared a more all-encompassing centre than the TUC, but both organizations actually had to compete for affiliates among the newly formed and still forming unions, with the "radical" ones tending toward the NNFL while the "conservative" ones leaned toward the TUC, which became the government recognized union centre upon the formation of the NNFL.

But both the TUC and the NNFL cooperated briefly in November 1949 during the Enugu Colliery "go slow" industrial action by the Nigerian Coal Miners' Union which was affiliated to the NNFL. The miners were demanding, among other things, that they be paid their mine allowance provided for in the Coal Mine Ordinance, but hitherto paid to white officials only. However, the police killed twenty-five strikers and seriously

wounded fifty-one others, and this bloody massacre outraged nationalist sentiment. The nationalists quickly formed the National Emergency Committee which cut across party and ethnic lines. The labour movement responded by forming a parallel body, the National Labour Committee. Pressures from these two bodies forced the colonial government to appoint the Fitzgerald Commission to enquire into the labour troubles at the Enugu Colliery. Although the Commission blamed both the government and the trade union leaders for the unfortunate incident at Enugu, it was the memorandum submitted by the Secretary of the TUC, A.A. Adio-Moses, that encouraged the government to undertake a study of the problem of industrial relations in the country. According to Adio-Moses:

... unscrupulous individuals had taken undue advantage of the situation and, under the guise of workers' leaders, have exploited them and prostituted the movement for their own subversive ends.²⁷

The group of experts (in trade union organization and labour relations) appointed by the government to study the problem of industrial relations was still in Nigeria when the Department of Labour moved to unite the labour movement. The motivation for this move is unclear. A possible explanation is that the government believed Adio-Moses' claim that the labour movement was being "prostituted for subversive ends". His memorandum to the Fitzgerald Commission seemed to have strongly influenced the government: after all, he was the Secretary of the TUC, the official union centre in the country. Both Adio-Moses and the Department of Labour had indirectly blamed the

NNFL for encouraging the industrial action which led to the blood bath.

But the government-sponsored merger of the TUC and the NNFL in May 1950 was short-lived. Although it took place under the direct auspices of the Department of Labour (itself under the guidance of a team of British experts), the outcome must have fallen far short of the expectations of both the government and the TUC. The new central labour organization, the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), was dominated by the leadership of the radical NNFL. Imoudu was elected President of the NLC, F.O. Coker its Deputy President, and Nduka Eze its General Secretary. The NLC leadership further drove a wedge between itself and the conservative TUC leaders when in a promptly called congress in June, the NLC reversed the 1948 TUC "disaffiliation" decision and voted to affiliate with the NCNC internally. By so doing, the NLC leadership reintroduced the cause of the 1948 split of the labour movement. Before the congress rose, a new factor, but one that was to prove a lasting cause of disunity and fragmentation in the future, was introduced into the labour movement: the NLC decided to affiliate with the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) internationally. This affiliation soon introduced cold war politics into the labour movement since the WFTU was Soviet-led.

Meanwhile, many of the white-collar unions, including the NCSU, the NUT and the ACSTWU, refused to transfer their assets to the NLC, thereby putting the new central labour organization on a poor financial and organizational footing. Yet, it was

the attitude of the NCNC to the radical leadership of the NLC that proved most damaging. For the NCNC, the radical orientation of the labour movement no longer served a useful purpose. The effective regionalization of political power in 1946 and the promise of even more autonomy for the Regions prior to independence had spawned powerful regional parties (the AG in the West and the NPC in the North). These, in turn, weakened the "national character" of the NCNC, which, in any case, had pragmatically calculated that it stood a better chance of winning in its "home" region, the East. The Ibo-led NCNC would need to win a regional base to counter the Yoruba-led AG in the West and the Hausa/Fulani-led NPC in the North in the Federal elections that were to be held prior to independence. Thus:

The NCNC 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. Concurrently, the British were beginning to hold out a sufficiently attractive devolution of power for party leaderships in the West and the North to organize themselves as the recipients. In this situation the Zikists and other radicals in the NCNC were an embarrassment to the NCNC.²⁸

The interests of the NLC and the NCNC had therefore diverged and were fast becoming irreconcilable, as some devolution of political power approached. The increasing militancy of the NLC did not help matters either. In August 1950, Eze (NLC General Secretary) led his own union, UNAMAG, in a successful strike, which won a 12½ percent increase in members' cost of living allowance. It was an entirely private sector (UAC) industrial action, but addressed to the government because of the latter's role in the structure of wage determination in

Nigeria. In December 1950, Eze again led mercantile workers in a countrywide strike. This time, however, "the strike was badly planned, badly timed, and badly led. Even the radicals in the NLC's leadership refused to lend their whole-hearted support, and the strike was broken, the strikers victimized. The NLC practically disintegrated under the shock of this event ..."²⁹

Considering the activities of Eze and the NLC as giving it a bad image, the NCNC used the West African Pilot in January 1951 to deplore communist infiltration into the NLC (affiliated to the WFTU the year before) and expelled Eze (also a Zikist) from the NCNC on grounds of "disloyalty and breach of trust."³⁰ This effectively terminated the affiliation or alliance of the labour movement to any national body (political party or otherwise). In any case, the political parties (including the NCNC) had become too preoccupied with capturing regional power (scheduled to occur before the transfer of power at the national/federal level), and started to campaign more and more on behalf of ethnic (Hausa-Fulani, Ibo, Yoruba) nationalism. The politicians no longer needed the support of the labour movement against the colonial power. As a corollary, no political party was sufficiently national or dominant enough to integrate the labour movement after the attainment of independence; neither was close partnership between the ruling party and the labour movement (ever) feasible. The fragmentation of the labour movement made this even less feasible.

Rather, it was international affiliation, begun by the

NLC affiliation to the WFTU in 1950, that was to play a critical role in the labour movement over the next 25 years. Hitherto, differences in tactics on approaches to industrial relations and to the government, and affiliation internally to a political party have provided the causes for formations and splits in the labour movement. Henceforth, international affiliation and the personality of the leaders were to become crucial factors in its fragmentation. We shall now deal briefly with these two factors alongside the structure of the labour movement itself, in order to better explain why they possessed such potency.

The Structure, International Affiliation, and Fragmentation of the Labour Movement

The Nigerian labour movement had an inherently weak structure. Mention has already been made above of the Trade Union Act which provided that five persons could form a union. This resulted in the proliferation of small unions (about 1,000 unions at the time of the government restructuring exercise)³¹ which, together with the existing structure of wage bargaining, profoundly weakened the trade union movement.

A number of problems arose from these basic conditions: Individual unions were frequently too small to be self-supporting. Since they did not operate a check-off system until 1978, it was therefore generally the case that many individual unions were not wealthy enough to employ full-time officials. This

situation spawned the emergence of the "professional trade unionist", the full-time paid general secretary or "trade union entrepreneur" who could "organize" as many as ten unions and be paid "allowances" every month by each of them.³² This also meant that these unions had little control over the "roving" general secretary, who often arbitrarily affiliated "his" unions to one national centre or the other and thereafter could switch affiliation at will.

Also, the non-existence of collective bargaining in its traditional form effectively ruled out consultation at the local level of the labour movement (with all the implications it had for union democracy). In this situation, great emphasis was placed on "bargaining" with the government at the level of the wage commission, with union leaders often hastily winning minimal concessions which in turn required rank-and-file militancy to actually secure, let alone increase. While this pitted workers against the government from time to time, it nonetheless diminished internal organizational processes at the union level. This explains why, for instance, the individual unions were not financially solvent or self-supporting. The unions never had a strike fund; but they did not need one, because, during strikes (which on the average last only a few weeks), workers usually received their salaries and wages. In 1971, when private employers stopped workers' pay during strike action in the wake of the Adebo Commission's report, the workers refused to return to work unless they were going to be paid for the period of the strike like their counterparts in

the public sector. In the end, the government directed that private employers comply with the workers' demand, and the latter did.

Furthermore, the national centres themselves had little or no control over their affiliates (the local unions). Although this situation sometimes turned out to be beneficial for the rank and file (1971 for example), it nonetheless had a debilitating effect on the overall organization of the labour movement. Besides not making for a strong and virile labour movement, it exposed the national centres to the intrigues and manipulations of the aid-bearing (financial/material and ideological) international federations. All too frequently, the relationship between the local unions, the national centres, and the international federations became a vicious circle, with the national centres caught in the middle. It was the national centres which were getting little or nothing from their local affiliates, yet it was they that also needed to look strong and well-organized in order to secure the support of the international federations. Thus, rather than being paid dues by their local affiliates, the national centres were frequently pressed to "pass down" to the local unions money and material received from abroad, more or less to win their "affiliation". Consequently, the national centres came to depend increasingly on the international federations for support and sponsorship.

Thus, while the absence of one-party control of the state apparatus precluded the centralization and incorporation of the trade union movement, the void was filled by the all too eager

international federations (especially in the two decades of the 1950s and 1960s before détente in the early 1970s). The split of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) from the WFTU in January 1949 marked the beginning of intense competition between the two organizations for the allegiance of colonial unions. While the WFTU became Soviet-led, the ICFTU soon fell under American domination, thus allowing the two organizations to be used for cold war aims.³³ In Nigeria (as elsewhere in Africa), the ICFTU's flag was aggressively carried by the AFL-CIO's African American Labour Centre (AALC). Both international federations, together with the International Federation of Christian Trade Unions (IFCTU, later the World Confederation of Labour, WCL), played crucial roles in the fragmentation of the labour movement from 1950 onward.

However, the argument that the differing ideological vocabulary, political colouring and attitudes of the leadership of the trade union centres reflected, more than anything else, their interest "only in maintaining a flow of income from outside the country",³⁴ can only be partially sustained. First of all, this only increasingly became the case with respect to the fragmentation of the labour movement from 1951 onward; but, even so, as we have seen, the split between "radicals" and "conservatives" in the labour movement had pre-dated the impingement of the international federations, and it was not ideological per se. Yet, the quarrel over which tactics to adopt vis-à-vis the government, political parties, employers

and industrial relations, cannot be too far removed from some ideological proclivity, particularly in the choice to pursue militant or moderate tactics. The choice of allies from the very beginning stemmed less from the lure of foreign money, but more from the union leaders' conviction that their cause would be better helped.

Thus, as early as 1948, the NNFL was pressing "for the socialization of important industries in Nigeria with a view to realizing a Socialist Government where the identity of the working class would not be lost and, ultimately, the achievement of a world-wide parliament of the working class." The (NNFL-led) NLC in 1950 voted to affiliate with the WFTU, by which time the latter had come under the sway of the Soviets and was already preaching the alliance of all working peoples and colonial unions in a global anti-imperialist struggle. In this case, the NNFL-dominated NLC saw the WFTU as a natural ally, and it can be asserted that there was a genuine ideological empathy between the two organizations.

So too could the case be made that a tour of Nigeria in March 1951 by an ICFTU delegation was sponsored both by the colonial government and the (by now conservative as well as status-quo defending) NCNC-controlled nationalist press which had begun the condemnation of communist infiltration of the NLC. The delegation was met at the Lagos airport by those unions which had refused to transfer their assets to the NLC, and by Bankole and H.P. Adebola (who subsequently played an important role in the labour movement). The ICFTU tour was

nevertheless obviously successful, for in its wake a rival union centre - the Committee of ICFTU-Affiliated Unions in Nigeria - was set up. Cold war politics had been injected into the Nigerian labour movement, and the ICFTU-sponsored and supported "conservatives" were henceforth to frustrate unity efforts within the working class movement.

Before looking in detail at the various efforts at uniting the labour movement and why they failed in each case, it should be borne in mind that while the role of the international federations may not have been the determining factor in every instance of fragmentation in the labour movement, it possessed such ubiquity and potency that the other factors (such as personality differences among the leadership, relationship of the labour movement to the government, and the political parties) pale, by comparison. As Cohen has written:

The activities of the international bodies both helped to sow the seeds of disunity and reinforce existing divergences. At the very least the patronage and support that the foreign unions lent to their favoured allies in Nigeria ensured the survival of some organized groupings in the labour movement that might otherwise have been swallowed up by mergers or take-overs.³⁵

Developments in the labour movement between 1951 and 1973, when the Military Government promulgated the Trade Union Decree (No. 31) of 1973, which statutorily and effectively ended the period of fragmentation by structurally realigning the labour movement itself,³⁶ quite openly reveal the activities of the international federations.

In real terms, no central trade union organization existed between 1951 and August 1953, when the All-Nigeria

Trade Union Federation (ANTUF) was formed. Again, the "radicals" appeared to be in control of the new body: two clauses in ANTUF's constitution called for the establishment of a "political wing of the workers' movement (political party) with a view to realizing a socialist government", and "the state ownership of major industries". Imoudu again won the Presidency of the new body, while another radical, Gogo Chu Nzeribe, was General Secretary. Thus, even though ANTUF did not formally affiliate with an international federation (a key requirement that made unity possible), the composition of its leadership left little doubt as to where the new body stood vis-à-vis the international federations. ANTUF became extremely popular among the workers; organizing forty-five unions in 1956, with some 181,000 members (out of a total organized labour force of 200,000), thus embracing the overwhelming majority of organized workers.³⁷ However, the government denied ANTUF official recognition, and the conservatives in the ICFTU Committee - led by an emerging corps of "professional" general secretaries, such as H.P. Adebola of the Nigerian Ports Authority Workers Union, L.L. Borha of the Locomotive Drivers' Union, and N.A. Cole of the Nigerian Union of Nurses - began to work relentlessly to change the character of the new central labour organization.

In April 1956, with ICFTU patronage and support, the conservatives set up the Council of ICFTU-Affiliated Unions, comprising those unions outside the ANTUF fold - the prominent ones among them being the Nigerian Union of Teachers, the

Association of Local Government Employees, the Nigerian Civil Service Union, and the unions led by Adebola, Borha and Cole.³⁸ They charged that the leadership of ANTUF was communist infiltrated, echoing a similar charge made against the NLC in 1951. By 1956, both the government and the "conservative" unionists had started to exhibit a strong, if not doctrinaire, anti-communist bias. H.P. Adebola was typical of both the anti-communist conservatives and the professional unionists:

Asked ... whether he had ever in the past exploited anti-Communism to recruit into his own union fold, Adebola replies, "Oh, to be candid, after taking oath on the Holy Koran, God forbid that I should tell a lie here. We used it, that there are Communist trade unions and Nigeria was not prepared for Communism and we don't believe in Communist trade union movement."³⁹

After Adebola's motion to affiliate ANTUF to the ICFTU was rejected by delegates at the fourth annual conference in 1956, he led the ICFTU Council away from ANTUF to form the National Council of Trade Unions of Nigeria (NCTUN), which was promptly affiliated to the ICFTU. The government wasted no time in according it official recognition even though it was apparent that the new body was not representative of the labour movement. Thus, the labour movement was again split into two by 1956: the conservative and official union centre, the NCTUN, and the radical and unofficial centre, ANTUF.

A temporary alliance was formed in 1959 when the government appointed a wages and salaries review commission (the Mbanefo Commission), and the union leadership hung on after to call a merger conference for March 1959 at Enugu. The conference itself was made possible by the NCTUN revocation of

its affiliation to the ICFTU (since ANTUF was not formally affiliated). The Enugu conference decided that the new centre should not be affiliated internationally. But the (second) Trade Union Congress of Nigeria (TUCN) which resulted from the Enugu conference was wrecked soon after, when it became clear before the end of 1959 that the NCTUN-dominated executive of the TUCN had actually received money from the ICFTU. While one letter, addressed to TUCN General Secretary, L.L. Borha, spoke of a financial commitment from the ICFTU, another "indicated that the ICFTU was prepared to break up the TUCN and revive the Council of ICFTU-Affiliated Unions should it not succeed in gaining the TUCN's affiliation."⁴⁰

Just six months before Nigeria's independence in October 1960, the TUCN effectively disintegrated into the TUCN (with H.P. Adebola and L.L. Borha as President and General Secretary respectively) and the Nigerian Trade Union Congress (NTUC), as the former ANTUF now called itself. NTUC was led by Imoudu as President and Nzeribe as General Secretary, just as it was in ANTUF. While the TUCN, now mainly the former NCTUN, openly reverted to its affiliation to the ICFTU, the NTUC remained unaffiliated internationally. But the NTUC left no one in doubt as to its radical orientation: it called for the immediate introduction of a unitary constitution, the resignation of British personnel employed in the army and police force, the nationalization of the major industries, and the creation of an African Liberation Fund.⁴¹

This was the situation in the Nigerian labour movement

2

until August 1961, when the newly-emergent post-colonial state (in partnership with the ICFTU) co-sponsored an All Nigeria People's Conference to discuss "The Role of Nigeria in African Affairs":

The Conference set up a number of committees, one of which was the Labour and World Economics Committee headed by Dr. S.A. Aluko. This committee was of the view that Nigeria could play an important and prominent role in African Labour affairs, but to do so effectively, it needed to put its own house in order by first forging one central labour organization. Accordingly, it was recommended that a small committee, whose duty would be the reconciliation of the two warring factions in the central labour movement, be set up.⁴²

In consequence, a seven-man Labour Reconciliation Committee headed by Alhaji Jalo Waziri, the then Speaker of the House of Representatives, was set up. This government committee, which was said to have "spent arduous hours with the leadership of the TUCN and the NTUC trying to iron out their differences and draw up a mutually acceptable constitution",⁴³ succeeded in scheduling a conference of all registered trade unions for Ibadan in May 1962. Among other things, a common leadership was to be elected and the issue of affiliation to international trade union federations settled.

At the conference, the delegates resolved to dissolve the NTUC and the TUCN, and to set up a United Labour Congress (ULC). But, again as in 1959, the ULC split instantly over the issue of international affiliation. The majority of the delegates had voted to affiliate the ULC with the ICFTU, but the NTUC claimed that the vote was rigged. It demanded that the number of delegates actually in the hall be checked against the

number of votes cast (1,025). The Chairman of the Conference, Alhaji Jalo Waziri, refused the demand made by the NTUC group, and the NTUC group walked out. The radicals met nearby and formed the Independent United Labour Congress (IULC). The IULC was to be unaffiliated internationally but was to have "fraternal relations with the international trade unions of the socialist bloc."

Meanwhile, at the Ibadan meeting (where many federal government officials - including the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Personal Adviser to the Prime Minister, Dr. K.O. Mbadiwe - were present), the ICFTU-affiliated TUCN group "won" both the Presidency and the General Secretaryship of the newly formed central labour organization. Thus, the TUCN leadership became the leadership of the ULC: Adebola and Borha became president and General Secretary, respectively. This was something the conservatives had never succeeded in doing before now, and it was a serious set-back for the NTUC radicals who have always had the upper hand in the leadership of the labour movement until now. In the light of the above, the federal government's quick recognition of only the ULC in 1962 lent credence to the NTUC's claim that the Ibadan elections had been manipulated.

Thus, the disunity within the labour movement was actually exacerbated by the state- and ICFTU-sponsored merger attempt: the labour movement not only returned to the status quo ante, but further fragmentation was in the offing. In December 1962, a third labour centre emerged on the scene.

Called the Nigerian Workers' Council (NWC), it was formed by a splinter group from the Federal government-recognized ULC. The NWC's President, N. Chukwura, had been a Deputy General Secretary of the ULC. Joining him in the NWC were three other members of the ULC's executive council, one of whom, N. Anunobi, was "the official representative in Nigeria of the Pan African Workers' Congress (PAWC) which was then the African Regional Wing of the International Federation of Christian Trade Unions (IFCTU) based in Brussels. The PAWC operated in Nigeria principally to organize a workers' education programme and its activities were wholly financed by the IFCTU."⁴⁴ To demonstrate their frustration with the situation in the labour movement after the Ibadan conference, the founders of the NWC resolved, under Article 1 of the NWC constitution, "To look into the cause of the rift in the Nigerian Labour Movement, with a view to uniting all unions in the country into one central virile and dynamic Trade Union Organization".⁴⁵ To be sure, the NWC merely paid lip-service to the idea of "uniting all unions in the country", since by its coming into existence, the number of central labour organizations increased to three. This was even more evident when an NWC constitutional amendment later sought to replace "uniting all unions in the country" with "projecting its own image". The NWC was affiliated internationally to the IFCTU (later WCL) whose promise of aid and support made the NWC's break from the ULC possible in the first place. As Cohen has observed, "The affiliation of the NWC to a largely Christian international should not be taken too liter-

ally - although both leaders are Christian by conviction, many of the workers they organized were Muslims - Anunobi and Chukwura can be thought of as being 'in the market' for a split".⁴⁶

The IULC was the next to be infected with the split virus. The crisis that caused a split in the IULC and resulted in the formation of the Labour Unity Front (LUF) in August 1963 was the "ideological" struggle between Dr. Tunji Otegbeye, Wahab Goodluck, and Sam Bassey who founded the Marxist Socialist Workers' and Farmers' Party (SWAFP) in 1963, on the one hand, and the veteran Imoudu and A. Ikoro, President and General Secretary of the IULC respectively, on the other. It would appear (from later developments in both the LUF and the IULC) that Imoudu and Ikoro sharply disagreed with the "internationalist" orientation of the Goodluck group, which the latter manifested in forging close ties with Moscow. The Goodluck group called the IULC's "First Revolutionary Congress" for August 2-4, 1963, succeeded in removing Imoudu and Ikoro from office (they were respectively replaced by Goodluck and Bassey), reverted to the NTUC (the latest name by which the radical section of the labour movement was known before the ill-fated Ibadan merger), and created SWAFP, "Nigeria's first Soviet-approved Communist party".⁴⁷ Thus, the split of the radical section of the labour movement was a direct result of the expulsion or self-exclusion of Imoudu and Ikoro who would neither accept Communism nor strongly ally with Moscow.⁴⁸ Imoudu and Ikoro formed the LUF soon after.

At this juncture, it is important to note a few

characteristics of the LUF, which will help shed some light on the groundswell movement for unity just before and after the Apena Cemetery Declaration⁴⁹ of September 1974. First of all, the LUF's constitution bears out the claim that it did not exist as another national labour centre at all, but rather as a body (within the radical section of the labour movement, that is) that would have as its main aim the achievement of labour unity. Under the heading "Aims and Objectives", the LUF resolved (a) "To unify and take every practical step to guarantee the unity of Nigerian trade unions on a permanent basis"; and (b) "To unite the Trade Unions in Nigeria and lead them in all forms of struggle - industrial, social, economic, political and otherwise - in furtherance, defence, and affirmation of the particular point of view, in the interest or purpose of the Nigerian Trade Union Movement and/or the Working Class Movement in general."⁵⁰ Secondly, in the words of the Adebisi Tribunal, "It (LUF) did not seek to expand its membership lest it be accused of poaching unions from the very organizations that it set out to reconcile in the struggle for unity. It did not affiliate with any international organization."⁵¹

The decision by the LUF not to affiliate internationally should be seen as part of its firm resolve to remain within the radical section of the labour movement; otherwise the LUF would have been tempted to seek affiliation (and hence financial support) with either the ICFTU or the IFCTU. Support from the WFTU was ruled out because LUF had just recently broken ranks with Moscow's allies in the NTUC.

Unlike the NWC which paid only lip-service to the unity of the labour movement, the LUF, according to its Minute Book (which was tendered to the Adebisi Tribunal), made numerous efforts to bring about unity in the labour movement.⁵² Thus, while the LUF's formation may give the appearance of further fragmentation of the labour movement, in reality its efforts later directly contributed to the shrinkage of the national labour centres from four to three.⁵³

However, even though the process of uniting the labour movement was propelled from above by the promulgation of the Trade Unions Decree of 1973, unity ultimately became an attractive option to the ULC, NTUC, and the NWC, because funds from the international federations dried up in the early 1970s following the detente between the super powers. Since finance was such a critical factor for the unions in this period, we must now discuss its implications for the labour movement.

Trade Union Finance and its Implications⁵⁴

At the onset of the 1970s, direct foreign cash subsidies/financial support and aid to the fractious Nigerian labour movement had started to dry up. This soon became a very serious problem for the three largest centres — ULC, NTUC and NWC — for whom such financial assistance and aid had been the main source of income. In fact, "financial assistance" or "aid" would be a misnomer, given that the national centres themselves generated a very small amount of income internally

from their affiliated unions and were thus financially exhausted in the early 1970s.

For example, the ULC only succeeded in raising N430.90 from its "Nigerian Worker Account" which covered affiliations fees and monthly dues from trade unions in the ULC fold in 1970. Affiliation fees were rarely, if at all, paid by the unions, neither were monthly dues paid to the Congress. Some affiliated unions, it was alleged, demanded money before paying their union dues, failing which they would either unilaterally cut down their membership figures, thereby reducing monthly dues, or arbitrarily switch affiliation, which was not widely discussed with their membership in the first place.

Therefore, in 1971, the ULC took steps to improve its financial position by setting up a "Self-Reliance and Development Fund" into which:

... every member of each affiliated union of the Congress was to pay a special levy of N1 [N2]. With a numerical strength of 751,919 spread among 325 affiliated unions; this could have yielded a handsome sum. But in spite of the elaborate arrangements made for the collection of the levy, which included tours by the top officers of the Congress, the exercise was a dismal failure. According to the audited accounts for 1971, only N1,340 [N2,680] was collected and paid into the accounts of the Congress.⁵⁵

In comparison, ICFTU aid and financial assistance amounted to more than N100,000 for the same period, which included the money it spent in co-sponsoring the 1962 Ibadan merger conference. The AFL-CIO's African American Labour Centre (AALC) spent a total of N453,336.00 on the ULC during the same period.

However, by 1971-72 financial assistance from the ICFTU had tapered off to N6,080, while money from the AALC fell to N50,289.85. It became increasingly difficult for the ULC to run such AALC-sponsored projects as the Trade Union Institute for Economic and Social Development and the Motor Drivers and Mechanics Vocational School. The ULC bulletin, The Nigerian Worker, became defunct, and fewer ULC leaders were being trained abroad by the AFL-CIO. By 1974-75, aid and financial assistance had terminated altogether.

In the WFTU-affiliated NTUC, the situation was very similar, although the NTUC got far less money from the WFTU than the ULC got from both the ICFTU and the AALC.⁵⁶ In the period 1967-74, the NTUC received a total of N43,500 from the WFTU. From February 1971 to June 1972, when both the President and General Secretary were in detention, the U.S.S.R. Embassy in Lagos donated a total of N22,612 to the Congress. The NTUC also received \$1,000 from the Chinese People's Republic.

By contrast, monthly dues collected from its two to three hundred affiliates, with a numerical strength of 247,490, averaged between N200 and N300 during this period. Yet, this was the national centre believed to be organizationally superior to the others.

As for the NWC, to quote the Adebisi Tribunal, "Dues collected from affiliates amounted to little or nothing in comparison with the amounts required to keep the organization going."⁵⁷ Whereas the NWC received N156,510 from the WCL between 1966 and 1974, when WCL assistance ceased, it succeeded

89

in collecting only N1,744 as dues for the same period. As in the case of both the ULC and the NTUC, the only thing that kept the NWC going for nearly a decade was foreign sponsorship. Similarly, the early 1970s saw money from the WCL fall from a high of N36,361.03 in 1966 to successive lows of N16,890, N12,534 and N7,680 for 1971, 1972 and 1974, respectively.

The unaffiliated LUF was the poorest of the four national centres. Up to the time of the merger into the NLC (1975), total payments by affiliates never exceeded N200, including special levies occasionally imposed.⁵⁸

This excessive dependence of the trade union centres on foreign funding had grave implications for the labour movement as a whole. The international federations frequently intervened in the affairs of the Nigerian unions and too frequently succeeded in doing as they pleased. With regard to the ULC, the Adibiyi Tribunal found that:

Largely because of the dependence of the Congress on the ICFTU and AALC for financial support, the leadership allowed the local representatives of these organizations to have a free hand in the running of the affairs of the Congress - they attended the Conference of the Congress and took part in the deliberations and meetings of some of the organs of the Congress, notably the Central Working Committee.⁵⁹

For example, in September 1969, George F. McCray, the Director of the AALC, plotted the replacement of H.P. Adebola as the ULC President, after Adebola claimed he "had information at his disposal to the effect that the AALC was connected with the CIA".⁶⁰ Also, McCray felt Adebola was developing a soft spot for LUF efforts to forge unity in the labour movement, and, asked whether the ULC would unite with the Communists;

Adebola replied that "The (proposed) unity is between Nigerians and Nigerians, not between Americans and Russians".⁶¹ However, at the ensuing Congress-in-Session in September, which McCray attended, Adebola was removed as ULC President, and Mallam Yunusa Kaltungo, an AALC nominee, replaced him as ULC President.

The NWC shared in this experience of external interference. In 1969, a purely intra-NWC matter attracted the attention of Mr. J. Bruck, the Director of the International Solidarity Fund (ISF) of the WCL:

The disagreement between the ... leadership of the NWC and Mr. Bruck started when the dismissed Deputy General Secretary, Mr. Olanrewaju, appealed for Mr. Bruck's intervention. Mr. Olanrewaju had been dismissed in accordance with the constitution of the NWC, but whilst Mr. Bruck enforced the regulations of ISF in stopping the subvention to the NWC, he paid Mr. Olanrewaju's six months' arrears of salary. At the Ibadan Convention the Secretary ... severely criticized Mr. Bruck's action and barely three months thereafter, Mr. Chukwura (the Secretary) and his colleague, Mr. Enigbokan, were overthrown.⁶²

This crisis virtually paralyzed the NWC. It continued to receive money from the WCL, but between 1970 and 1975, "the NWC virtually ceased to be a central labour organization. There were no meetings held and no Convention where the leaders could give an account of their stewardship was summoned".⁶³

A further insight into foreign interference in the national centres can be gained by looking at the crisis which resulted in the split of the largest national centre, the ULC, in 1971; which crisis not only left the ULC sufficiently weakened that it was unable to challenge successfully the trans-

formation of the LUF into the Nigerian Trade Union Federation (NTUF) in 1973, but also helped make cooperation and unity both attractive and possible in 1974-75. The occasion was the ULC Congress-in-Session held in September 1971, in Benin City, where quarrelling over money from the ICFTU stood out as the major cause of the split of the conservative labour centre. The two sides to the quarrel were the "rebel" side, led by J.O. James and E.U. Ijeh, Deputy President and Assistant General Secretary, respectively; and the "establishment" side, led by Mallam Y. Kaltungo and Chief E.O.A. Odeyemi, President and General Secretary, respectively. This is how Cohen summarizes the quarrel:

The 'rebel' side seems to have been almost exclusively geographically centred on the old Western State District Council (now called the Southern Zonal Council) of the ULC. They argued that the leadership of the national ULC was not militant enough over the Adebo awards, that large sums of money emanating from foreign sources were unaccounted for and that the leadership in Lagos had become bureaucratic and unresponsive to the demands of the district organizations. On the establishment side, Kaltungo argued that foreign sponsorship of the ULC had in any case dried up, so that there was no question of the Southern Zone not getting its fair share of ICFTU money. Ijeh and J.O. James were dismissed as being 'careerists and confusionists'. They ultimately led a walk-out from the Benin Conference and left the old leadership on its now somewhat shaken pedestal.⁶⁴

It was under these circumstances that many unions, including the National Union of Seamen (ULC affiliate) and the Shell-BP and Allied Workers' Union (NTUC affiliate), disaffiliated from their national centres and joined the LUF, because they wished to be members of "a single national front".⁶⁵

However, before we deal with the movement toward "a

single national front" and the crucial role played by the state in the process of centralizing the labour movement, it is pertinent here to attempt a summary description of the two terms that have frequently been used in this chapter, namely "radicals" and "conservatives". Therefore, in the next section, these two opposing, as well as opposite, groups within the Nigerian labour movement will be defined, both to guide an understanding of various references which would be made to them henceforward and to signal the different, as well as conflicting, roles they would play vis-à-vis corporatist developments in Nigeria from 1973 on.

"Radicals" versus "Conservatives"

Although the four national centres - ULC, NTUC, NWC, and LUF - maintained an independent existence and separate identity from one another from 1963 to 1973, the NTUC and the ULC can be seen to represent the radical and conservative sections of the labour movement, respectively. Not only were they the two largest national centres which became successors to the radical/conservative split that surfaced in the labour movement from 1945 onward, but also both represented, in the main, the "great ideological divide" in the labour movement for the longest period of time in its history. As we have seen, the NTUC was affiliated to the WFTU, while the ULC was strongly allied to the ICFTU. (Both the LUF and the NWC, it would be recalled, were splinter groups of the NTUC and the ULC,

respectively.) However, it should be stressed here that by "radical" and "conservative", we do not necessarily refer to international affiliation per se, but to the "basic attitudes and the ideologies" of the national centres vis-à-vis domestic (Nigerian) issues and institutions (see Table 7).⁶⁶

In broad terms, the NTUC favoured public ownership of the means of production and collective (strike) action as "a means of increasing the consciousness of the workers by struggle". Its leader, Goodluck, was generally seen as a threat to both government and business. The NTUC believed that political and economic struggles against the prevailing system are inseparable, hence the formation of SWAFP (cf. the NTUC's attitude to government, the ministry of labour, and political parties in Table 7).⁶⁷ On the contrary, the ULC favoured private enterprise and profit-taking. It detested strike action as "a regrettable recourse", and believed that "it is possible to have a meaningful dialogue with management". The ULC President, Adebola, was strongly identified with the pre-1966 civilian government (having been elected as a parliamentarian on the platform of the NPC-led ruling Nigerian National Alliance in 1964), and he "constantly stressed the desirability of institutionalizing conciliation, mediation and arbitration procedures and of developing a permanent consultative status with government".⁶⁸ The congruence, indeed the harmony, of the ULC's ideology to that of corporatism can neither be gainsaid nor over-stated. As we shall see, a central explanation of the breakdown of corporatism in Nigeria in the early 1980s is

TABLE 7

BASIC ATTITUDES AND IDEOLOGIES OF NIGERIA'S NATIONAL LABOUR CENTRES*NTUC (and LUF) LeadershipULC (and NWC) LeadershipCustomary 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')

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 workers and employers. ('Collaborationist')

*Source: Adapted from Robin Cohen, Labour and Politics in Nigeria (London: Heinemann, 1974), p. 103.

anchored precisely in the displacement of this ULC ideology from the top leadership of the NLC.

To be sure, this conservative ideology of the ULC was reflected in its organizational structure. As the richest national labour centre, the ULC built an elaborate organization to promote its ideology. Following Waterman, it can be said that the conservatism of the ULC was not the result of lack of industrial experience, of poverty, ignorance and powerlessness. Rather, it was a conscious policy option, actively propagated to Nigerian workers. As he has written, "In this way, the ULC leaders [were] active agents of conservatism among the workers".⁶⁹ This was attested to by the fact that the ULC had the greatest number of paid, full-time, professional secretaries. These secretaries, who usually referred to the unions they organized as their "portfolios",⁷⁰ were given cars and car allowances as well as salaries in addition to the incomes they derived from their "portfolios" (each secretary organized several unions at the same time).

In ~~contrast~~ distinction, the NTUC secretaries were far more plebeian: they stressed the organization of workers at the grassroots and at the factory level.⁷¹ They therefore intensified their drive to strengthen the organization of the house or company unions begun by Nduka Eze's UNAMAG in 1947, but which now lay proliferated and fragmented throughout the foreign corporate sub-sector of the private sector. Although the NTUC's effectiveness in this organizational drive was circumscribed because, as we have seen, it was not as wealthy as the

ULC (hence it could afford very few paid professional secretaries⁷²), still there was a strongly marked sense of identity and solidarity between the Nigerian proletariat proper — concentrated in large factories in big industrial estates (Ikeja, Ilupeju, Apapa, etc.), suffering the miseries of planless urbanization, experiencing rapid wage erosion⁷³ — and the NTUC. As we shall see, it was this class that propelled the NTUC onto the top leadership of the state-structured NLC in 1978, a process which was greatly enhanced by the fact that the restructuring of trade unions in 1977-78 left junior workers (the overwhelming majority of Nigeria's wage-earning population) as the sole constituents of both the restructured industrial unions and the NLC itself.

To summarize, we should bear in mind that when we speak of "radicals" (left) and "conservatives" (right) from here on, we refer essentially to professional trade unionists or (after the 1977-78 restructuring of unions) mainly to worker-unionists, who are of the NTUC (LUF) and ULC (NWC) background, respectively.

Before approaching the specific object of this study (corporatism in Nigeria), it is necessary to round off the discussion in the foregoing section by taking a brief look at the relationship between the national union centres and the Gowon (military) regime up to the eve of the promulgation of Decree 31 of 1973, which signalled the state's attempt to bring the labour movement closer under its direct supervision and scrutiny. This is because ideology and organization (such as

the NTUC's and the ULC's above) never stand alone: they always have a crucial bearing on action and are in turn shaped and re-shaped (in a dialectical fashion) by action itself. Thus, a glimpse of the union centres' relationship with the state in the period immediately proceeding 1973 will provide a vital link to Chapter 3.

The Union Centres and the Gowon Regime

A good starting point for a brief discussion of the relationship between the union centres and the Gowon regime would be the civil war which broke out with the Eastern Nigerian (Biafran) declaration of independence on 30 May 1967. As far as this tragic event was concerned, all four national labour centres, especially the NTUC and the ULC, supported the Gowon federal administration in the war against Biafran secession. But this support for the federal effort to "Keep Nigeria One" was the only common factor between the NTUC on the one hand, and the ULC on the other. Beyond this, the radicals and the conservatives were split in their relationship with the Gowon regime regarding state-labour relations.

While the ULC eagerly announced "a no-strike policy for the duration of the war";⁷⁴ the NTUC attempted to make a distinction between its support of the war to preserve national unity and its defence of workers' interests. The prosecution of the war had resulted in the massive recruitment of workers into the armed forces, in sharply rising inflation (between 60

and 100 percent), and in acute shortages of food items and essential commodities; all of which combined to increase the suffering of the working class. In addition, a wage freeze was imposed on the country, and workers had their wages slashed by both a compulsory contribution of 5 percent to the National Reconstruction and Development Scheme and 5 percent to the National Provident Fund.

Thus, rank and file workers began to see the prolongation of the civil war as inimical to their own interests, and the NTUC began to goad the government to do something about the effects of war shortages. Specifically, the NTUC criticized government policy on transportation and housing, and harangued businessmen for creating artificial scarcity by hoarding. In the circumstances, although still supporting the federal cause, the NTUC blamed the management who were "doing everything possible to divert the attention of the Federal Military government from the immediate task of keeping Nigeria together".⁷⁵ According to Cohen:

The NTUC leaders also made clear that they expected the military leaders to act as a 'corrective' regime whose task was to bridge the disparity in incomes, and that failure to act on this issue would ... produce 'industrial upheaval'.⁷⁶

However, the support of the war effort by the national leadership of the union centres (including the manifest ambivalence of the NTUC) resulted in a divergence of interests between them and the rank and file. In the event, rank and file workers, "feeling the effects of war shortages", took "industrial action in the early months of 1968 ... national

labour leaders lost credibility and influence while grass-roots militancy grew and flourished".⁷⁷ Herein lay the initial stirrings of the rank and file militancy that was to be the characteristic feature of the 1971-72 strikes.

In reaction, the military regime promulgated an anti-strike decree in May 1968. It must be stressed here that the cessation of industrial action by workers was not a direct outcome of the decree against strikes (as later events in the labour movement would show), but rather as a token of respect for Gowon himself. He not only successfully prosecuted the war, but promised a programme of economic and social reconstruction after the war.⁷⁸

Indeed, it was the expectation raised by this promise, coupled with the deprivation suffered during the war, that sparked workers' agitation after the war ended in January 1970. Gowon responded by setting up a Wages and Salaries Review Commission under the chairmanship of Chief S.O. Adebo in July 1970. The Adebo Report, released in December 1970, submitted that there was "intolerable suffering at the bottom of the income scale". It therefore awarded 17 kobo per day to the daily-paid workers and ₦4 a month to those earning less than ₦1,000 per annum. These awards were made to public sector workers, but the Commission also recommended that "the private sector should make similar adjustments to its workers in comparable circumstances".⁷⁹ This recommendation encouraged workers in the private sector to demand their own "Adebo". When their employers were not forthcoming with it, the workers went on

strike to force the implementation of the recommendation. Ultimately, the private sector employers complied.

But just as the strikes erupted in early 1971, both Goodluck and Bassey (NTUC President and General Secretary, respectively) were arrested and detained in February 1971 by the military regime, apparently in a bid to intimidate the national labour leaders over the Adebo Report. In this, the Gowon regime appeared to have succeeded: the leaders of the national labour centres were conspicuously absent throughout the industrial protests which shook the private sector in 1971-72. Of course, the NTUC leaders themselves were not released from prison detention until June 1972: they were never publicly charged with anything nor was any reason given for their arrest in the first place.⁸⁰

Soon after the strikes subsided, the Gowon regime set up the Udoji Commission to "recommend reforms" in the Public Services and the private sector; and, a little later, the military regime promulgated the Trade Unions Decree (No. 31) of 1973.⁸¹ From here on, the inclination of the military regime toward intervention in, and restructuring of, the labour movement was to become increasingly clear. We begin to examine this whole process in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

THE ORIGINS OF CORPORATISM IN NIGERIA, 1973-75

The post-civil war period in Nigeria witnessed the emergence of an increasingly more assertive state vis-à-vis the labour movement. This took the form of a statutory move in 1973, through Decree 31, to structurally realign the labour movement.

The origins of this change in the role of state may be traced to the civil war which served to increase the state's economic activities and, concomitantly, the federal (central) government's predominance vis-à-vis the regions. However, it was the 1971-72 strikes which provided an immediate cause for the military regime to take direct action to end the fragmentation of the labour movement. As we have seen, the fragmentation of the labour movement, as well as its overall structural weakness, allowed spontaneity and local level activities to become the dominant features of the strikes. But the decision by the state to restructure the labour movement also stemmed from the changing economic context in Nigeria in the early 1970s. This was a situation to which both oil revenues and the emerging alliance between indigenous capital and the state contributed.

Against this background, union restructuring by the state was clearly aimed at severely limiting the ability of the local unions to defend the rights and interests of ordinary workers: a higher degree of union centralization was sought to enhance the control of the rank and file from above.

However, the ability of the Gowon regime to control this process of union restructuring was increasingly circumscribed in the ensuing years. Beginning in 1973, when the population census results were fiercely disputed, the Gowon regime came under fire. Although the regime did not reject the census figures altogether, it was forced to declare them "provisional". The regime became even more unpopular in 1974 when, in the midst of accusations of widespread corruption and financial scandals involving some military governors and federal ministers, Gowon unilaterally postponed the return to civilian rule that he had promised would take place in 1976.

Besides, industrial action in the wake of the 1974 Udoji Commission's Report (discussed below) left the Gowon regime even more vulnerable and made it impossible for the government to intervene directly in the restructuring of unions begun in accordance with Decree 31. Not until Murtala Muhammed toppled Gowon in July 1975 would a new effort be made by those in the state to shape the process of union centralization.

The 1973 Trade Unions Decree

As indicated above, the background to the Trade Unions Decree, promulgated as Decree No. 31 of 23 July, 1973, was

provided not only by the 1971-72 strikes, but also by the changing economic context in post-civil war Nigeria which necessitated direct state intervention in internal union affairs. In Chapter 1, we discussed how in colonial and in the immediate (1960s) post-colonial Nigeria, economic growth relied heavily on agriculture. That changed in the 1970s, when economic growth derived mainly from oil extraction, and the appropriation of value from (industrial) workers became more important as a basis of accumulation. The direct subordination of wage labour to capital therefore became more urgent for the state which, at this juncture, had become more and more representative of capital in general.

Not only did oil revenues boost the confidence of the military government, but also they helped to reduce Nigeria's dependence on inflows of foreign capital. Concurrently, Nigeria learned a lesson (of such dependence) from the civil war during which the Western capitalist countries, notably Britain, France, and the United States hesitated to support Nigeria against Biafra. Britain, in particular, stoutly refused to observe the blockade imposed against Biafra by the Federal Government of Nigeria. The British went further to initially place an embargo on the sale of arms to Nigeria and to insist on paying revenues from oil concessions to Biafra which, at that time, produced about two-thirds of Nigeria's total crude oil output. Nigeria's only military support of great significance came from the Soviet Union.

Thus, the "nationalist" upsurge that paved the way for the indigenization decree of 1972 came from a new attitude in the Nigerian state (estranged from its old metropolitan partners, but victorious in war and really in less need of foreign capital) and a new crop of local/indigenous bourgeoisie. As already noted, this class was being fostered by the state; but also spawned by the civil war itself, in that its members accumulated easy wealth by supplying equipment and war material to both the Nigerian and Biafran governments.¹

Although the indigenization programme reflected a new alliance between the indigenous bourgeoisie and the state vis-à-vis foreign capital in Nigeria, this new alliance cannot be said to be antagonistic or in relative contradiction to foreign capital. Instead, this alliance was itself to increasingly seek improved access to foreign capital in the country.²

We have already (in Chapter 1) discussed how and why the central objective of the indigenization programme ("to obtain Nigerian control over the economy") was not achieved. Nonetheless, the indigenization programme increased Nigerian ownership by enabling both the indigenous bourgeoisie and the state to buy into foreign concerns, especially in the commercial sector, and to secure a minimum 40 percent ownership in the industrial sector (the revised 1977 decree raised this to 60 percent equity shareholding).

Therefore, the spate of industrial unrest that shook the foreign corporate sub-sector of the private sector in 1971-72 was seen in this new context as threatening not just foreign

capital or even the new bourgeoisie, but also the state which had by now extended its involvement in most commercial and industrial activities. As Billy Dudley has argued, by "having to nominate bureaucrats and technocrats to the membership of the boards of those enterprises in which the governments of federation have themselves taken up an equity shareholding", the state has actually fostered closer contact between state personnel and foreign business and financial interests, thereby bringing the state and the economy "into greater congruence than ever before".³

It is in this light that Decree 31 must be seen as a clear response by the state to the threat of a labour movement which had so recently demonstrated its restiveness, especially since the fragmentation of the latter had allowed spontaneous industrial action at the local level. As the most comprehensive labour legislation in post-colonial Nigeria, Decree 31 not only sought a higher degree of union centralization, but also officially sanctioned the existing national centres as the agencies of state structuring of the unions. The decree went further to impose constraints on the labour movement as a whole, a crucial constraint being the exclusion of trade unions from the political arena. The overall significance of the decree was that it marked the origins of corporatism in Nigeria.

Decree 31 made fresh provisions with respect to the formation, registration and organization of trade unions, federations of trade unions and central labour organizations as

the EXPLANATORY NOTE to the decree stated quite categorically.⁴ It also repealed the Trade Union Act of 1938, which provided that five people could form a union (the consequence of which we have seen in the last chapter). While raising the number of persons who could form a union to fifty (with a clause that "The Commissioner may authorize a lesser number of signatories to an application to be accepted by the Registrar of Trade Unions"), Decree 31 de-registered all trade unions in the country. According to Section 11(3):

As from the date of commencement of this Decree every trade union, which was in existence or which would have continued to be in existence as from that date, but for the provisions of this Decree, shall cease to exist and the certificate of registration of such trade union shall, within 30 days of the coming into operation of this Decree, be surrendered by the trade union to the Registrar, who shall take such steps in relation to the distribution of the assets of the trade union as he deems necessary or in accordance with its rules.⁵

In addition, Section 11(1) prohibited workers in eight named establishments (the Armed Forces, Police, Prisons, Customs, Security, Printing and Minting, Central Bank, External Telecommunications) and every Federal or State Government establishment the employees of which are authorized to bear arms from forming or joining trade unions. Also barred were workers in such other establishments as the Commissioner might specify from time to time. This clause gave the Commissioner sweeping powers over the labour movement as a whole, to the extent that he could arbitrarily ban any category of workers from unionizing.

Of crucial significance for the trend toward central-

ization was the clause entrenched in Section 33(1)(a):

Subject to this section, two or more bodies each of which is either a trade union or a registered federation of trade unions may form a central labour organization if, but only if, the total membership of all the trade unions concerned is at least forty percent of the total membership of all the trade unions for the time being registered under this Decree.⁶

While the forty percent requirement implied that no more than two central labour organizations could exist after the restructuring exercise, the government, nonetheless, demonstrated its clear preference for centralized union leadership and the existing national centres as the agencies through which the restructuring would take place by officially sanctioning both. Hence, the ambivalent provisions of Decree 31 which de-registered all the unions on the one hand, but made "special provisions as regards existing central labour organizations" on the other: Section 37(1) and (2) automatically registered the ULC, NTUC, NWC, and LUF.

Critically, however, perhaps in awareness of the merger efforts begun by the LUF in February 1973 which later resulted in the formation of the radical-led Nigerian Trade Union Federation (NTUF), the government was to make sure that the conservative section of the labour movement (ULC and NWC) would survive outside the NTUF fold. Therefore, the forty percent requirement would be sufficient to guarantee the separate legal existence of a conservative central labour organization. In this regard, the forty percent requirement could very well have served as a sufficient disincentive for both the ULC and the NWC from actively participating in the LUF-initiated merger

move already underway. The significance of the separate existence of a conservative central labour organization is underlined by the ideology of the institutionalization of dialogue, mediation and conciliation which it shared with the state vis-à-vis industrial relations in the country. This "collaborationist" ideology, unlike the "conflictist" ideology of the radicals which stressed an irreconcilable struggle between employers and workers, was essential to the establishment of corporatism in Nigeria.

Since Section 38 of the decree stipulated that "the registration of any central labour organization shall not be construed as entitling such central labour organization to any form of recognition by the Federal Military Government", it was clear, on past experience, that this power of recognition could only have worked to the benefit of the conservative section of the labour movement. Moreover, this particular provision of the decree (also) served notice that the LUF merger move, if at all successful, would come to nought if denied recognition by the government. In the circumstances, it was abundantly clear that Decree 31 was designed to bring any merger move under close government supervision and scrutiny; and, as it turned out, the government was to determine the final outcome of the restructuring exercise.

The crackdown on the labour movement was made more comprehensive by the crucial provision in Section 15(1) of Decree 31 which effectively barred trade unions from (party) politics, and stated that union "funds shall not be applied to

the furtherance of any political objective". Section 15(2) also categorically stated that every union official shall be guilty of an offence if subsection (1) is contravened; while Section 15(3) provided the following as political objectives:

- (a) the making of contributions towards the funds of any political party;
- (b) the payment of any expenses incurred (whether directly or indirectly) by a candidate or prospective candidate for election to any political office in Nigeria or any part of Nigeria being expenses incurred before, during or after the election in connection with his candidature or election;
- (c) the holding of any meeting or the distribution of any literature or documents in support of any such candidate or prospective candidate;
- (d) the maintenance of any person while he holds in Nigeria or any part of Nigeria a political office to which he has been elected;
- (e) the registration of electors in Nigeria or any part thereof; and
- (f) the holding of a political meeting of any kind or the distribution of political literature or political documents of any kind....⁷

Thus, unions were to be effectively excluded from electoral politics, and any links to the political parties or politicians effectively severed. This particular move by the state may be seen as a further reflection of the growing alliance between the indigenous bourgeoisie and the state, who were together now rather anxious to ensure that workers would play only a marginal role in the return to civilian "constitutional" rule promised for 1976 by the military regime. This indeed was a crucial element in the timing of the decree. Although, as noted above, Gowon later (1974) reneged on this promise by declaring 1976 "unrealistic" for returning the country to civilian rule, his military as well as civilian successors were to abide by this provision against labour's

involvement in politics even more faithfully.

In sum, while there is no evidence that Decree 31 was promulgated with the active support of the top leadership of the union centres, the registration of all four union centres was clearly designed to secure their passive accommodation, or at worst, their active collaboration with the corporatist project. By registering the union centres and leaving the union leadership secure in their positions, an inducement/incentive for collaboration was provided and, indeed, union leaders reacted favourably to the centralization provisions of the decree and moved swiftly to meet its requirement.

The Formation of NTUF and the Momentum to APENA

Although it was against the background of the crucial provision of Section 33(1)(a) of Decree 31 that the Nigerian Trade Union Federation (NTUF) was formed on 23 August 1973, it should, however, be emphasized that the formation of NTUF exactly one month after the promulgation of the decree is not to be seen as an automatic reaction by the labour movement.

The LUF, whose constitution and activities have already been discussed in Chapter 2, had held an important meeting on February 28, 1973, at which the Governing Board reiterated the stand of the Front on labour unity and, among other things, resolved that the Front should in furtherance of its primary aims and objectives explore the possibilities of merger with

the NTUC, NWC and even ULC if possible.⁸ Thereafter, the decision was conveyed to all the labour centres and a committee was formed under J.U. Akpan, General Secretary of the NWC, to arrange further meetings with a view to finalizing arrangements for the merger.

However, neither the NWC nor the establishment side of the ULC joined in the merger which was effected on August 23, 1973, and which included the LUF, the NTUC (the radical section of the labour movement), and the victims of the 1971 ULC conference in Benin City who by now had regrouped as the ULC (Reconstituted). Although no official explanation was provided by the leadership of both the ULC and the NWC as to why they did not join the merger, it is likely that a major factor in their decision was their desire to constitute the other "half" of the labour movement opposite the NTUF, and their hope (on past experience, assurance) that they (and not NTUF) would gain official recognition from the government.

Meanwhile, leadership positions in the NTUF were slated among the merging union centres in an effort to eliminate one of the usual sources of disunity in the labour movement. The LUF thus claimed the Presidency of the NTUF, and also one of two Assistant Secretaries, while the posts of Second Deputy President and Secretary-General went to the NTUC, and the ULC(R) received the offices of First Deputy President and Assistant Secretary.

At this juncture, it is important to note that the idea of slating offices, which later became a controversial issue in

the disbanding of the NLC by the government in 1975/76, was first introduced into the Nigerian trade union movement by the NTUF in 1973. The NTUF also decided against international affiliation (another usual source of labour disunity, but one which, as we have seen, had already started to yield rapidly diminishing returns), but announced that it would have fraternal relations with the ICFTU, WFTU, and WCL. A similar position was to be adopted by the NLC in 1975. However, the NTUF's decision to fraternize with the international labour federations provoked a letter from the rightist/conservative ULC to its patron, the ICFTU, warning against the NTUF's decision to fraternize as a:

... clever device aimed at convincing the world that the NTUC, which masterminded the merger, has thrown away its communist toga with a view to wearing a new face of neutrality ... it will amount to compromising the principle of free and democratic trade unionism for the ICFTU to have anything to do either formally or otherwise with this organization, which is a wolf in a sheep's skin.⁹

It may very well have been that, at that point in time, the ULC was flogging a dead horse, since the ICFTU had by then virtually withdrawn its active involvement in the Nigerian labour movement.

This was the situation in the labour movement just before the ULC National Treasurer, J.A. Oduleye, died in September 1974. He was the brother of the NTUF National Treasurer, S.O. Oduleye. It was to be a ULC funeral, but both the NTUF and NWC were at the Apena Cemetery for the burial ceremony to show their solidarity. Labour leaders took the solemn occasion

to discuss labour unity. In Nigeria, funeral/burial ceremonies take on added meanings. They are occasions to pray for the soul of the departed to return to a more fruitful and rewarding life next time around and they may also serve as a forum to enjoin the living gathered at the graveside to do good works. On this occasion (September 21, 1974), Okon Eshiett, Director of the ULC's Trade Union Institute (TUI), made some notes at the graveside. The notes constitute what is now called the APENA CEMETERY DECLARATION:

Today, we are conscious of the necessity for the workers of Nigeria to come together and to remain under one umbrella. A brother, Mr. J.A. ODULEYE, dedicated to the movement, is dead. We have all come in disparate groups to bury him. We feel ashamed that we had to come in groups. The finest thing would have been our coming as a group. This very occasion once more emphasizes the urgency for the building of a single centre for the workers of this country. Conscious of the historic mission of the labour movement, a movement that had never succumbed to any frontier, we, here in Nigeria, solemnly declare that we are now resolved to found a single national centre, which shall protect, defend and promote the interests of the workers and the community as a whole. By this declaration, we hereby recommend to the existing centres, the setting up of a working committee that shall arrange for the convening of a conference of all registered trade unions in Nigeria for the formation of a national centre. Such conference shall be convened within three months of this declaration. The working committee shall in the interim period represent and act on behalf of the workers of Nigeria.¹⁰

The name of this declaration is odd, and the circumstances surrounding its issuance are, perhaps, the most unlikely; but its signing by all the labour leaders present launched the Nigerian labour movement on the road to the formation of the NLC. Contrary to a widely held impression, the APENA ACCORD, itself, was far from an impulsive outburst

for unity in the labour movement.¹¹ While it revealed, more than anything else, the frustration which had burdened the union leadership for many years, it nonetheless proved to be the expedient thing for the union leaders to do in the face of the impending release of the report of yet another government wage commission (the Udoji Commission). This latter assertion can be supported by the immediate post-Apena activities in the labour movement. Ten days after Apena, labour leaders quickly set up two committees: one to consolidate the Apena Accord, the other to examine the freshly-released Udoji Report. A brief explanation of why the Udoji Report became a very important immediate concern of the labour leaders is pertinent here, before we return to the move toward the formation of a single central labour organization in Nigeria.

Workers, Unions and Udoji: Relief After the Wage Freeze?

Nigeria's national labour centres were so beleaguered when the Public Service Review Commission (the Udoji Commission) was set up in September 1972, that they could neither make an individual nor a joint representation before it. During the two years of the Commission's work, it "received 538 memoranda and heard evidence from 194 individuals and organizations at ... public sessions both in Lagos and each of the State Capitals".¹² Many public sector unions, such as the Electrical Workers' Union of Nigeria (ELECTRUN), the Nigerian

Civil Service Union (NCSU), the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT), the Nigerian Ports Authority Workers' Union (NPAWU), Railway Workers Union of Nigeria (RWUN), and the Union of Postal and Telecommunications Workers of Nigeria, to mention a few notable ones, submitted memoranda to the Udoji Commission. But the four union centres (ULC, NTUC, NWC, and LUF) were conspicuous by their absence.¹³

The failure of the national labour centres to make representations before the Udoji Commission is understandable in view of the fact that, by the early 1970s, they maintained only a shadowy existence. Foreign financing had dried up, and the national centres themselves had disintegrated to varying degrees from internal leadership squabbles and splinter groups. They had even ceased to hold annual meetings. In this regard, the absence of the national centres from the 1971-72 strikes was perhaps the first concrete outward manifestation of their continual weakening. Besides, in 1973 when the Udoji Commission settled down to carry out its review, its activities coincided with the promulgation of Decree 31. At this time, union restructuring, rather than public service review, became the major preoccupation of the national centres, especially as their role in the restructuring exercise was officially sanctioned by the decree.

The Udoji Commission generated a great deal of excitement among Nigerian workers. The 1970 Adebo Commission had undertaken a wage and salary review "not only as a means to assuage discontent but as an opportunity to stimulate the national

economy and reorient the supply of consumption goods and services from the constraints of a war economy".¹⁴ On that basis, it only made an interim award in 1971. But the Udoji Commission was mandated, inter alia, to:

... examine the organization, structure and management of the public services and recommend reforms where desirable ... investigate and evaluate the methods of recruitment and conditions of employment ... in the Public Services and in the private sector and suggest such changes as may be appropriate with a view to facilitating mobility within the Public Services, and also between those services on the one hand and the private sector on the other, while at the same time providing for the retention in the Public Services of qualified and efficient personnel; undertake with the aid of appropriate grading teams the regrading of all posts in the Public Services, establish scales of salaries corresponding to such grades and, as a result of a job evaluation of posts, recommend salary scales to be applicable to each post in the services ...¹⁵

By its terms of reference, the Udoji Commission was the most comprehensive of all Public Service Reviews ever carried out in Nigeria. Besides its mandate, the Udoji Commission generated considerable interest for two other reasons. First, between 1972-74, a wage freeze had been imposed on the country. The government explained that the wage freeze was meant to stabilize the economy following the Adebo awards, and the 1971-72 strikes. Meanwhile, workers' expectations had been heightened following the interim award in 1971, which had been wiped out by rising prices in the markets and housing. Secondly, the Udoji Report came out in the midst of the quadrupling of oil prices by OPEC. It was Nigeria's "golden age" of oil revenue. The timing of the Udoji Report was therefore critical.

Although the Udoji Commission "repaid its bureaucratic sponsors [in the upper echelon of the civil service] handsomely",¹⁶ lower income workers got very little relief from the review exercise. Granted that the Commission more than doubled the minimum wage in the public sector from N312 to N720 per annum, but it did boost the already fat salary of the highest paid public official, the Federal Chief Justice, from N9,300 to N16,200 per annum.¹⁷ Besides, the already privileged higher civil servants (senior staff) received huge increases in the aftermath of government adjustment of the initial Udoji recommendation (see Table 8 - "Old Scale" - this was the first comprehensive grading of salary levels in Nigeria's public service; the 17-grade-level structure is now standard). The resultant "New Scale" (cf. "Step 1" for grade levels 01 and 17, and their respective incremental rates for example) actually widened the gap between the bottom and the top levels. It would be five years before the NLC would mount pressure on the government to bridge the yawning gap in the salary scale by demanding a five-fold increase in the minimum wage for those at the bottom of the income scale.

As in 1964 and 1971, workers in the industrialized private sector had to go on strike in 1974 to secure the extension of the Udoji awards to themselves. This time the "Apena" committee set up to deal with the Udoji Report was able to pressure the government to comply with the Report. In the end, workers in both the public and private sectors were paid their "Udoji" in January 1975, with arrears, 50 percent of

TABLE 8
THE UDOJI COMMISSION'S ANNUAL SALARY GRADINGS*

OLD SCALE										
Grade Level	Step 1 N	2 N	3 N	4 N	5 N	6 N	7 N	8 N	9 N	10 N
01	720	745	770	795	820	845	870			
02	800	830	860	890	920	950	980			
03	900	940	980	1,020	1,060	1,100	1,140			
04	1,100	1,130	1,160	1,190	1,220	1,260	1,290	1,320	1,350	1,380
05	1,370	1,419	1,468	1,517	1,566	1,615	1,664	1,713	1,762	1,810
06	1,630	1,705	1,780	1,855	1,930	2,005	2,080	2,155	2,230	2,310
07	2,000	2,110	2,220	2,330	2,440	2,550	2,660	2,770	2,880	3,000
08	2,780	2,913	3,046	3,179	3,312	3,445	3,578	3,711	3,884	3,980
09	3,980	4,130	4,280	4,430	4,580	4,730	4,880	5,030	5,180	5,340
10	5,350	5,470	5,590	5,710	5,830	5,950	6,070	6,190	6,310	6,430
11	5,445	5,737	6,029	6,321	6,613	6,905				
12	6,129	6,453	6,777	7,101	7,425	7,749				
13	6,895	7,262	7,629	7,996	8,363	8,730				
14	7,760	8,170	8,580	8,990	9,400	9,810				
15	8,730	9,495	10,260	11,025						
16	9,819	10,623	11,547	12,411						
17	11,043	12,015	12,987	13,959						

NEW SCALE								
Grade Level	Step 1 N	2 N	3 N	4 N	5 N	6 N	7 N	Incremental Rates N
1	720	744	768	792	816	840	870	+ 24/30
02	804	834	864	894	924	954	984	+ 30
03	900	936	972	1,014	1,056	1,098	1,140	+ 36/42
04	1,164	1,206	1,248	1,290	1,332	1,374	1,416	+ 42
05	1,440	1,512	1,584	1,656	1,728	1,800	1,872	+ 72
06	1,908	2,004	2,100	2,196	2,292	2,388	2,484	+ 96
07	2,496	2,616	2,736	2,856	2,976	3,096	3,216	+120
08	3,264	3,414	3,564	3,714	3,864	4,014	4,164	+150
09	4,368	4,530	4,692	4,854	5,016	5,178	5,340	+162
10	5,460	5,622	5,784	5,946	6,108	6,270	6,432	+162
11	6,444	6,624	6,804	6,984	—	—	—	+180
12	7,104	7,320	7,536	7,752	—	—	—	+216
13	7,764	8,084	8,404	8,724	—	—	—	+320
14	8,868	9,188	9,508	9,828	—	—	—	+320
15	9,996	10,512	11,028	—	—	—	—	+516
16	11,268	11,844	12,420	—	—	—	—	+576
17	12,696	13,332	13,968	—	—	—	—	+636

*Source: Government Views on the Report of the Public Service Review Commission (Lagos: Federal Ministry of Information, 1974), p. 69; see also New Nigerian, Saturday, 28 December, 1974.

which was tax-free, back-dated to April 1, 1974. Consumers were supposed to join the government in the indiscriminate spending of oil money. But, as Williams and Turner have pointed out, "the massive spending spree which followed Udoji accentuated inflation, shortages and congestions. Farmers tried to hold up food deliveries and force down transport costs, increased by petrol shortage [even though Nigeria exports oil]. Far from buying off class antagonisms, the government accentuated them".¹⁸

Estimates of the hardships which faced workers vary, but they all point to the fact that wages lagged far behind constantly rising prices. For example, the ILO (see Table 9) reported that inflation gathered pace, prices almost doubling in the two years following the Udoji awards. Thus, there was a constant erosion of the gains achieved by workers. Whereas in the immediate post-Udoji period the real wage stood at ₦631 in terms of 1973 prices, by 1977 it had fallen to ₦380, and fell further in the next two years so that, by April 1979, the average unskilled worker was making no more in real terms than fifteen years earlier.¹⁹ Sayre Schatz estimated the price-level increases of 1975 at 75 percent,²⁰ while Paul Lubeck stated that while wages in Kano increased by 159 percent between 1971 and 1978, food prices soared by 387 percent.²¹ According to official statistics, the composite consumer price index for all items rose by 86.3 percent between 1975 and 1979 (1975 = 100). This was due to increases of 95.6 percent and 85.0 percent in the indices for all urban groups and all rural

TABLE 9
UNSKILLED ANNUAL WAGE IN CURRENT AND REAL TERMS,
1964 - 1979*

	Average Unskilled Wage (Naira)	Cost of Living Index (1973 = 100)	Unskilled Real Wage (1973 prices in Naira)
1964	180	59.3	304
1968	250	64.3	389
1970	280	81.7	343
1973	320	100.0	320
1974 (October)	360	107.8	334
1974 (October) ^a	680	107.8	631
1975 (March)	720	141.9	507
1976/77	740	194.9	380
1978 (April)	810	243.9	332
1979 (April)	810	266.7	304

a: Allowing for Udoji award.

*Source: First Things First: Meeting the Basic Needs of the People of Nigeria (Addis Ababa: Jobs and Skills Programme for Africa, 1981), p. 224.

households, respectively.²²

The decline in the real wage was accompanied by acute shortages of essential commodities and the inadequate provision of essential amenities such as electricity, pipe-borne water, medicine, and housing. Food prices continually rose, largely because of declining production in the agricultural sector. It was in these circumstances that efforts proceeded apace to form a new, single central labour organization.

The Steering Committee and the "Agege Deal"

The fifty-man steering committee (with representatives from all the national centres) set up by labour leaders began its work in October 1974, but only a few people believed that efforts at forging unity among the rival national labour centres would be long-lasting. As Waterman observed early in 1975:

The Press has implied that this is just another temporary alliance which, like the United Committee of Central Labour Organizations in 1970, will last no longer than the wage campaign that gives rise to it. This circular view of Nigerian labour history possibly fails to take into account the growing experience of union members, pressing from below for unity, and the strengthening desire of the government for some rationalization of union structure, thus increasing pressure for unity from above. Even if the leaders manage to stay together after the Udoji drama, one is sceptical about their ability to produce a programme relevant to workers' needs in the 1970s.²³

However, the committee, under the chairmanship of J.O. Adegbesan, President of the Nigeria Union of Railwaymen, and which also included trade unionists like H.A. Sunmonu and M.O. Anigbo, current NLC President and Assistant General Secretary (Organization) respectively, made important strides in the fifteen months that it was at work. On October 14, 1974, two weeks after it was set up, it adopted the name - Nigeria Labour Congress - for the new, united central labour organization to be formed. Next, the committee worked in close liaison with the rival national labour centres towards unifying the labour movement and the fulfillment of the crucial provisions of Section 36(1) of Decree 31 of 1973, which

stipulated that:

Subject to this section, two or more central labour organizations registered under this Decree may amalgamate and become one central labour organization, but shall not do so unless a ballot held at a meeting (whether annual or special) of delegates representing all the members of the unions comprised in each central labour organization, has been passed in circumstances such that votes cast in favour of the resolution represent a simple majority of the members of the unions comprised as aforesaid.²⁴

The industrial unrest which followed the Udoji Report had interrupted the process of meetings by rival national labour centres as required by Section 36(1), and the process was thus not completed until October 1975. The NWC became the last national centre to hold an annual or a special meeting to adopt a resolution to merge with the other national centres. Perhaps illustrative of the various merger resolutions was the LUF resolution adopted as early as February 22, 1975:

CONVINCED that permanent unity in the Central Labour movement is not only desirable but imperative: REALISING that without a united and virile labour movement, humane conditions of labour, living wage, social justice, equitable distribution of wealth, raising of the standard of life of the working people, etc., are unattainable: COGNIZANT of the urgent need to streamline and restructure trade unions on industrial lines which cannot be accomplished if the existing unions remain in mushroom and multiplicity of Central Labour Organizations: RECALLING the several fruitless attempts that have been made in the past at unifying the Central Labour Organizations: DETERMINED to establish and maintain permanent unity in the trade union movement: BE it resolved and it is hereby resolved that the Labour Unity Front merges with the Nigeria Trade Union Congress, United Labour Congress, and Nigerian Workers' Council to form one Central Labour Organization to be known and called "NIGERIAN LABOUR CONGRESS". May God bless this motion (resolution).²⁵

The draft constitution prepared by the Steering Committee called for the restructuring of "our present, over one thousand

unions into dynamic and national industrial unions" with each union representing a single trade or profession. On international affiliation, the NLC was to "keep its doors open to all friendly organizations". This was at best equivocal; it is not clear whether this meant that the NLC would only fraternize, or affiliate with the international trade union organizations.²⁶

In the end, it was the issue of elections and offices, as in the past, that proved to be the critical sore point of the draft constitution. The only difference from the bitter past experience with elections was that, in 1975, they were not to be held at all. At least, they would not be held at the launching conference of the NLC scheduled to take place at Lagos City Hall on December 18, 1975. This stemmed from the decision of the steering committee, which held a meeting at Agege barely three weeks before the scheduled launching of the NLC, to follow in the footsteps of NTUF which, it would be recalled, slated offices among its merging union centres in 1973. But the slating of NLC offices among all four merging union centres also represented a real attempt to come to grips with a perennial problem in the labour movement. As Umoh James Umoh and Augustine Ayo have pointed out: "Knowing too well that previous attempts to unite workers failed because of scramble and disputes over offices, the Agege meeting resolved not to allow the emergence of the NLC to be disrupted by dispute over offices."²⁷ However, the "Agege Deal", as the decision to slate offices became known, was only meant to be a temporary

measure. According to Hassan Sunmonu, the current NLC President who was then a member of the steering committee, "We decided that for an interim period of four years all members of the executives of the four merging bodies should be members of the executive of the new NLC."²⁸

The slating formula at Agege bore a very close resemblance to the NTUF formula. Simply put, the national offices of the NLC were distributed among the four merging union centres, with specific offices given to specific centres. For example, the Presidency of the NLC was awarded to the NTUC, the General Secretaryship to the ULC, while the Principal Deputy General-Secretaryship again went to NTUC. Both the NWC and LUF were awarded two of four Principal Deputy Presidencies and two of four Deputy General Secretaryships. The NWC was also required to provide the NLC with a National Treasurer.

Perhaps it is important to stress here that radicals have traditionally held leadership positions in all but one merger attempt before 1975. Briefly, the NNFL, formed in 1948, was led by Imoudu, Coker and Eze — all three of them radicals. The NLC, formed in 1950, was again led by these three radicals. Yet, the NLC was itself a merger of the radical NNFL and the moderate TUC(N). ANTUF, which succeeded the NLC in 1953 was led, once more, by the radicals with Imoudu at the head. No single central labour organization existed between the split of ANTUF in 1956 and the federal government's initiative to unify the labour movement in 1961-62. This was the only occasion when the conservatives gained leadership positions in a single

central organization, the resultant ULC being led by Adebola and Borha. But the ULC disintegrated as a single central labour organization within days, and four national centres (including the conservative ULC as one of them) came to exist between 1962 and 1973, when the NTUF was formed.²⁹ This time, however, no one was to be left out of the leadership structure: all the national officers of the merging labour centres were to become the principal officers of the NLC, while all the members of their executive committees were deposited in the national executive council of the NLC. One hundred and one (101) positions were created as follows:

- 1 President-General
- 2 Principal Deputy Presidents-General
- 4 Deputy Presidents
- 26 Vice Presidents
- 1 Secretary-General
- 1 Principal Deputy Secretary-General /
- 4 Deputy Secretaries-General
- 31 Assistant Secretaries-General
- 1 Treasurer-General
- 30 Other Members of the Central Working Committee.³⁰

The slating was meant to guarantee unity at the top of the labour movement, and may very well have succeeded. However, the accommodation which existed between the Gowon regime and the leadership of the labour movement regarding union centralization was upset by the coup of July 29, 1975 that led to the overthrow of the Gowon regime. The new regime in Lagos proclaimed itself a "corrective regime", and was soon committed to changing the "old" guard and establishing a "new" order. It went after the real and imaginary representatives and allies of the Gowon regime that it replaced. In its bid to

tighten its grip on society, the new regime intervened in the labour movement beyond the extent made possible by Decree 31, as well as that which the Gowon regime was prepared to go.

To conclude, the changing economic context in Nigeria had brought into sharp relief the confrontation between the state and labour. The period from 1973 to 1975 marked the origins of the state's attempt to intervene directly in trade union matters, with a view to controlling the working class. The exclusion of the trade unions from the political arena, as well as the ban on the unionization of workers in certain "essential" services (with an even more odious provision which left arbitrary powers in the hands of the government to ban any category of workers as it pleased) were particularly salient elements of the attempt by the state to further subordinate workers' legitimate interests and demands to those of an already over-privileged bourgeois class.

The rationalization of the union structure from above and the efforts made by labour leaders themselves to unify the labour movement (witness NTUF, Apena and Agege) did not necessarily conflict. But the objectives of the state markedly differed from those of the labour leaders and the workers they led. For the state, the centralization of the union structure would enhance the cooptation of the union leadership as well as the control of the rank and file from above, and thus curtail workers' ability to defend their interests and their rights. Whereas, for the unions, labour unity would produce the opposite effect, strengthening the working class in its

struggle against exploitation and injustice.

Herein lies the veritable/inevitable conflict: the interests of the ruling class in exploiting the working class versus the latter's struggle in resistance of such exploitation. In the Nigerian situation where workers' wages were speedily eroded by inflation, coupled with the grossly inadequate supply of commodities and the non-availability of essential amenities, workers have real objective grounds for militant action. Against this background, the state's attempt to impose a corporatist labour peace upon the working class was bound to raise opposition from the latter. How the self-styled "corrective" Muhammed regime went about implementing and extending the state's fledgling corporatist project is the task of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

THE "CORRECTIVE REGIME" AND UNION RESTRUCTURING, 1975-78

In this chapter, we analyze the growing direct intervention of the state in internal union affairs in Nigeria under the Murtala Muhammed/Olusegun Obasanjo regime.¹ Increased intervention produced its own contradiction in the long run; but, between 1975 and 1978, it was marked by considerable state action oriented towards the destruction of the established leadership of the labour movement and the administration of the labour movement itself, more or less, in a fashion resembling "state corporatism", culminating in the creation of the NLC in 1978.

The action of the Muhammed regime vis-à-vis the labour movement represented a considerable shift in emphasis from the Gowon regime which sought to centralize the labour movement under the established leadership of the union centres. Therefore, in this chapter, the growing direct intervention of the state in the labour movement will be discussed and an attempt will be made to explain why the Muhammed regime sought to subordinate and control the trade unions. As we shall see, the whole process of union restructuring was carried out within the framework of an attempt to institutionalize corporatism. The

emphasis of union restructuring by the state was on what Guillermo O'Donnell has described as "the tendency to institutionalize mechanisms of control of the popular sector, including at some point the statizing corporatization of its organizations."²

Here it will be argued that the self-professed "corrective" Muhammed regime, freed from the debilitating constraints which incapacitated the Gowon regime and riding the crest of popular support, felt strong enough (and was indeed strong enough) to attempt to consolidate the domination of the state over the labour movement from December 1975 on. However, the successor Obasanjo regime could not fully carry this through due to its programme of returning the country to democracy in 1979, and this allowed the unions to win some significant concessions toward the end of the restructuring exercise that the regime had embarked upon. As we shall see, more important was the fact that the actual implementation of union restructuring produced its own contradictions in terms of entrenching horizontal organizations in the labour movement (industrial trade unions and the NLC itself) along class lines. This distinctive character of the restructuring exercise was, in turn, to lead to the failure of the state to build a foundation for attaining its avowed objective vis-à-vis the labour movement, namely, "to ensure industrial peace and social harmony."³ As Bjorn Beckman observed:

When the unions in the mid-1970's were dangerously close to forming a united organization under radical leadership, the state stepped in, purged the leadership and set

up a new organization with state support, financed from deductions of union fees by employers. The state failed, however, to prevent radical elements from gaining an upper hand in the new organization.⁴

The Muhammed Regime and the Establishment of Bourgeois Hegemony

The critical task that faced the Muhammed regime was the attempt to establish bourgeois hegemony in Nigeria. The coup of July 29, 1975 (Nigeria's third coup d'état in nine years) represented an attempt to rescue bourgeois rule from a situation in which Gowon's inept administration was becoming increasingly unable to create a framework for strengthening the productive capacity of the economy and for enforcing social stability. Political disagreements over sites had delayed the implementation of plans for the establishment of an iron and steel industry, a petrochemical complex, and Nigeria's desperately needed second oil refinery. As Collins et al. noted, the Gowon regime's "mismanagement and lack of decisive initiative have thus produced ports and road congestion, increased labour and import costs, lack of water, fuel, and electricity supplies, and a costly and incompetent administration."⁵

In addition to the widespread corruption which the regime openly condoned and the industrial unrest which effectively eroded its legitimacy, the Gowon regime displayed gross incompetence in its handling of what became known as the "cement scandal" of 1974. It contracted for the supply of 20 million metric tonnes of imported cement valued at ₦600 million, all to

arrive at the same time. The cement was meant for the construction of military barracks (demands by the Ministry of Defence alone accounted for 16 million metric tonnes), even though Nigeria was already "spending on the army in two weeks what it used to spend on the military in a fiscal year of 12 months."⁶ The imported cement alone was ten times the known handling capacity of Nigerian ports. There thus arrived over 450 ships laden with cement waiting to berth, and the government was having to pay over ₦300,000 a day in demurrage charges (the ports were eventually decongested by the Muhammed regime), and this at a time when the country was short of much-needed imported food items.⁷ This is by no means a unique example. The Gowon regime had become truly decadent and it sought to buy support by the indiscriminate spending of oil revenues, thereby fuelling inflation and discrediting itself still further.⁸

Thus Muhammed's coup came as no surprise to Nigerians. What is more, they now came to expect some kind of "revolution" from Muhammed because of his reputation as a "tough soldier" and a "no-nonsense" commander during the civil war. The Muhammed regime began with the avowed purpose of improving the tarnished image of the military, eliminating the stigma of corruption with which the society had been tainted during the Gowon regime, and returning the country to democracy in 1979.

Proclaiming itself a "corrective regime", the Muhammed regime told Nigerians that "since the civil war, the affairs of state, hitherto a collective responsibility, became characterized by lack of consultation, indecision, indiscipline and even

neglect." He accused the state governors of running the states as "private estates", and said that the entire national administration was "lazy, idle and corrupt." Many Nigerians were in agreement with Muhammed's assessment of the situation and the coup of July 29, 1975 enjoyed popular support.⁹

The Muhammed régime was bold and decisive in many cases where the Gowon régime had prevaricated and procrastinated. For example, soon after taking power, it set a timetable for returning the country to civilian rule by October 1, 1979, and vowed to adhere strictly to this whereas Gowon had, in 1974, indefinitely postponed a return to civilian rule. The Muhammed régime also rejected the 1973⁶ ("provisional") population census figures which had sparked a considerable amount of trouble because, whereas figures for most of the northern states rose by nearly 100 percent, figures for some southern states actually dropped by some 10 percent. In fact, the embattled Gowon had earlier declared the 1973 figures "provisional", but it was Muhammed who finally rejected them altogether. Instead, Muhammed announced that the 1963 figures would form the basis for national planning and revenue allocation to the states.

The Muhammed régime also won the momentary support of the vulnerable leftist groups when, in October 1975, it threw Nigeria's weight behind the MPLA in Angola by donating about 30 million dollars and sending a crack Military Committee to the Liberation Movement. To the Nigerian public (at least most sections of it) therefore the Muhammed régime met with acclamation, and even received the support of the NLC steering

committee. This early 'cult' of hero-worship was to make subsequent opposition to any of the régime's policies particularly difficult.

However, the coup, more than anything else, reflected the dissatisfaction of a faction of the Army, which felt increasingly left out of the "show". The arrogant and cavalier manner in which General Gowon appointed I.G.T. Ordor as General Manager of the Nigerian National Oil Corporation (NNOC) after the Federal Executive Council spent hours rejecting him at a Council meeting on July 4, 1975, was symptomatic of the rift, not only within the army, but also in the executive apparatus of the state.¹⁰ The coup came twenty-five days after the fateful Council meeting. Ordor, whose appointment was terminated on August 6, 1975, became one of the first victims in the purging and sacking of the old guard that was carried out in the aftermath of the coup. The purge touched every facet of public administration in Nigeria, from the Atlantic to the Sahel. As Collins et al. put it:

The new Government ... retired large numbers of civil servants, from secretaries to military governors and permanent secretaries downwards in both federal and state administrations. They ... retired ninety-four senior police officers, a number of magistrates, and several judges, including the long-serving Chief Justice. These dismissals have been accompanied by a spate of exposures of quite remarkable misuses of public funds, many government contracts have been suspended, and certain assets have been reappropriated. The Military government ... established a panel to investigate the assets of retired officials and confiscate assets in excess of legitimate earnings. Tribunals in the different states ... explored the contracts awarded by military governors and key officials. Prominent public figures have been held in jail, and had their passports removed, pending investigation. In order to 'make the services fully account-

able for their action', and to 'consolidate and maintain efficiency and discipline', the Government plans to set up and entrench in the Constitution a Permanent Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau, as well as a Public Complaints Commission, and the Police Council. Civil servants will be barred from using their position to acquire land, from professional activity outside their jobs, and from keeping property in excess of their earnings.¹¹

Of crucial significance to our understanding of the nature of the Muhammed régime was its proclaimed goal of creating a constitutional framework within which conflicts among diverse interests could be managed without threatening the authority of the state and the stability of society. To this end, the constitution which the régime commissioned to be drawn up for a return to civilian rule was clearly designed to enhance the hegemony of the federal (central) government. Muhammed told the fifty-man Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC) he appointed in October, 1975, that "it would be unrealistic to proclaim any particular philosophy or ideology for Nigeria." In recommending the executive presidential system of government to the CDC, Muhammed stated that the new constitution should "discourage institutionalized opposition to the government in power and, instead, develop consensus politics and government based on a community of all interests rather than the interests of sections of the country."¹²

As it turned out, however, the new constitution was rather an attempt at ensuring the establishment of bourgeois hegemonic rule in Nigeria. This, in itself, was a project with which the military had become inextricably involved, because as Dudley has pointed out, "the effect of the oil boom was to

convert the military political decision-makers and their bureaucratic aides into a new property-owning, rentier class working in close and direct collaboration with foreign business interests with the sole aim of expropriating the surpluses derived from oil....¹³ Thus, the CDC may have represented all bourgeois sections/factions and their interests, but it neither included all shades of opinion and all interests nor did it adequately represent a cross-section of opinion in Nigerian society (see Table 10).

TABLE 10

Membership of the Constitution Drafting Committee*

<u>University Staff</u>		<u>Other Categories</u>	
<u>Position/Discipline</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Position/Type of Work</u>	<u>Number</u>
Political Science	4	Private Legal Practice	6
Economics	3	Businessman/Entrepreneur	5
History	3	Civil Commissioner	5
Law	2	Company Director or Chairman	4
Chemistry	1	Company Legal Advisor	2
Medicine	1	Army Chaplain	1
Public Administration	1	Chairman, Local Gov't Authority	1
Sociology	1	Chairman, Nigerian Indi-	
Registrar	1	genisation Board	1
Vice-Chancellor	1	Ex-Member of Parliament	1
	<u>18</u>	Farmer	1
		Newspaper Managing Director	1
		Permanent Secretary	1
		Private Medicine	1
		State Attorney General	1
		State Chief Justice	1
			<u>32</u>

*Source: Claude Phillips, "Nigeria's New Political Institutions, 1975-79", The Journal of Modern African Studies, 18, 1 (1980), p. 4.

As a matter of fact, the CDC members were predominantly of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois origins and functions. As Osoba describes them:

...12 were legal practitioners (24%), 4 of whom had also been either ex-ministers in the First Republic or ex-commissioners in the Gowon régime; 12 were businessmen (24%), 5 of whom had also served as ministers in the First Republic or as ex-commissioners in the Gowon régime; 22 were academics or university administrators (44%); 3 were ex-ministers in the First Republic and/or Commissioners in the Gowon régime, and 1 represented the armed forces. In all, there were 12 members who apart from serving other interests, had been ministers during the First Republic and/or Commissioners during the Gowon régime either at the Federal or State/regional level. The composition of the CDC also reflected a high degree of inter-locking bourgeois sectoral interests, which ensured a reasonable highly comprehensive coverage of overall ideological and valued commitments of the bourgeois ruling class. It also has a high component of people who had served in the two previous régimes that had been discredited (24%), thus ensuring a sense of continuity in the esprit de corps of the ruling élite class from 1960-1975. In contradistinction to this total dominance of the bourgeoisie, was the total exclusion of the representatives of the exploited, oppressed and marginalized working class and peasant masses.¹⁴

Thus, while the general public, in their own euphoria and bouts of wishful thinking, misrepresented the snappy and peremptory style of operation of the leaders of the régime as implying a commitment to a revolutionary transformation of society, it became increasingly clear that the new men of power seized control of the state to preside over the spending of oil money. It is against this background that the actions of the Muhammed régime vis-à-vis the labour movement must be analysed.

In attempting to organize and establish bourgeois domination, the régime had embarked upon widespread reforms. These reforms necessarily extended beyond the state itself. In

concretizing its reformist objective, the régime also turned its attention to the largest autonomous organisation in civil society, the trade union movement. Perennial problems in the labour movement provided the pretext, while the self-professed "corrective" nature of the régime provided the legitimation for announcing a "New National Labour Policy" (NNLP) in December 1975. The NNLP marked the beginning of the new régime's attempt to control the labour movement by laying the foundation for a more forceful and direct intervention in internal union affairs.

The NNLP and the Stillbirth of the NLC

Labour leaders were still fresh from the "Agege Deal" when they held their first meeting with the Commissioner for Labour (at his invitation), alongside the representatives of the Nigerian Employers' Consultative Association (NECA) in the Senate Chamber on December 4, exactly two weeks before the scheduled launching of the NLC. At the meeting, the Commissioner announced that "the Federal Military Government has decided that the time is opportune to formulate a New National labour Policy" based on "limited government intervention in certain areas of labour activity in order to ensure industrial peace and harmony," and that "in its new dimensions, the Federal Military Government is pursuing the policy of guided democracy in labour matters."¹⁵

Among the principal objectives of the NNLP were: (i) the

need to give a new sense of direction and new image to the trade union movement in Nigeria; (ii) the desirability of removing completely from the trade union arena ideological or external influences which have plagued Nigerian trade union unity for more than a quarter of a century; (iii) the need to rationalize the structure and organization of trade unions and to ensure that they are self-sufficient financially in future, and not dependent upon foreign sources of finance; (iv) the need to provide facilities for trade union education in order to improve the quality of trade union leaders and the general knowledge and understanding of the purposes of trade unions by the rank and file members of these organizations.

Concerning trade union education, the Commissioner announced that the government had decided (1) to establish a National Institute of Labour Studies in the Third National Development Plan period (1975-80) "for the purpose of equipping officials and members of trade unions to take their place in Nigerian society and to fulfill their social and economic functions and responsibilities as trade unionists and citizens;" and (2) to take over immediately all foreign sponsored labour institutions established and operating in Nigeria." By that announcement, the AALC-financed ULC's Trade Union Institute was compulsorily acquired by the Federal Government. The same fate befell the WFTU-financed NTUC's Patrice Lumumba Labour Academy. By the same token, the Commissioner announced that "the Federal Military Government had decided to exclude completely the presence and proscribe the activities of inter-

national trade union federations and their secretariats in Nigeria with the exception of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the Organization of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU), and any other organization approved by the government."

This pronouncement on trade union education was indeed a crucial element of the NNLP. The stress on providing facilities (in a National Institute of Labour Studies to be established) for trade union education would have been very important for the control of the rank and file whose spontaneous action back in 1971-72 provoked the Gowon régime's initial attempt at centralizing the labour movement, with a view to enhancing their control from the top. The state's intention of ensuring that officials and members of trade unions take their place in Nigerian society must be tied directly to its declared objective of ensuring "industrial peace and harmony." However, this educational proviso was preventative, as demonstrated by the fact that the state later decided that rather than allowing trade unions to "take their place", they should be put in their place. In the circumstances, the "statizing corporatization" (meaning, state control) of the labour movement between 1975 and 1978 not only reflected the growing impatience of the state to quickly bring to fruition the subordination of the working class, but also its desire to attempt to stabilize social relations before returning the country to democracy in 1979.

On trade union finances, the government sought to remove perhaps the major source of embarrassment in the Nigerian trade

union movement, namely, grossly inadequate internal funds. The Commissioner announced that "legislation would be introduced to make the 'check-off' system compulsory." The government's plan to introduce compulsory check-off might have come as a relief to the NLC Steering Committee which had written into the draft constitution of the soon-to-be-launched central labour organisation the usual sources: voluntary contribution of affiliation fees and monthly dues, in addition to special levies — sources which, on past experience, had proved most unreliable. But the granting of compulsory check-off by the state could produce ambivalent or even contradictory consequences for the labour movement. As Richard Sandbrook and Robin Cohen have pointed out:

Paradoxically ... a compulsory "check-off" system may prove detrimental to the development of a strong union movement. In principle, the financial viability accruing to unions from either "union" or "closed shop" variety of compulsory unionism should augment their effectiveness in pressing workers' claims. But, in practice, these schemes tend to undermine the members' power vis-à-vis their leaders, reducing the incentive for the latter to respond to the aspirations of the rank and file.¹⁶

Thus, a compulsory check-off system could all too easily compound the proven problem of a lack of rank and file orientation in the Nigerian labour movement, especially if, as David Collier has argued, a compulsory check-off system indeed creates a dependency of the leadership of the labour movement on the state: "This dependency accelerates the tendency for labour leadership to become an oligarchy less responsive to the needs of the workers than to the concerns of state agencies or the political elites with which the leaders interact."¹⁷

Nigerian labour leaders had hitherto depended mainly on foreign sources of finance. The substitution of state financial support (Collier treats compulsory check-off as a form of state subsidy, itself an inducement viewed as a mechanism of cooptation) for money that once flowed from the international labour federations may very well serve to reduce the labour movement to a dependent and auxiliary "corporation" of the state, particularly in the Nigerian context where direct state intervention in the internal affairs of the unions was increasing; and the intentions of the state vis-à-vis the labour movement were rapidly crystallizing as the former's attempt to conquer and subordinate the latter. In the circumstances, the compulsory check-off system could significantly increase the capability of the state to (all too easily) destabilize the union movement by cancelling or withdrawing the check-off, if it chose to bring the labour movement into line.

Above all, the "corrective regime" unveiled its plan to restructure the labour movement. Here, it would be useful to quote the Commissioner at some length insofar as his utterances help to clarify the government's thinking on this central issue of union restructuring and the motive behind it. First of all, the Commissioner condemned the present structure of the Nigerian trade union movement as "irrationally proliferated and out-dated", and stated that "the Federal Military Government would therefore adopt conscious methods to restructure trade unions preferably along industrial lines in accordance with the provisions of Decree 31, in order to accelerate the foundation

of amalgamated federations of registered trade unions into bigger and more viable organisations." Second, he provided the raison d'être of the NNLP: it "is predicated on the establishment and development of a suitable institutional framework for the effective prevention and expeditious settlement of labour disputes, the promotion of labour-management cooperation and of consultation at appropriate levels between workers, employers and government, and the vigorous enforcement of the provisions of labour legislation".

Third, was a warning from the Commissioner that:

The government will not tolerate any activities which are inconsistent with this policy. Provisions in our laws, which are designed to promote social harmony and industrial peace, will only yield the desired result if all concerned are willing to play their part honestly and sincerely. From now on, the government expects workers to observe strictly the provisions of the law made in their best interests. New legislation, as may be required, will be promulgated from time to time... Our industrial relations system will, from this day onward, acquire a new impetus.¹⁸

The question that does arise at this juncture is: why did the Military regime decide to come out with the NNLP just two weeks before the launching of the NLC scheduled for December 18, 1975? From the government's point of view, time could not have been more opportune. With the labour movement in (a state of) flux and with the new regime riding the crest of popular support, the time seemed ripe for the latter to seek direct intervention in the internal affairs of the former. In this regard, the "corrective" regime simply cashed in on its popularity at the direct expense of the labour movement. Another reason why this direct intervention came about was the relative

weakness (issuing from perennial fractious tendencies among the leadership) of the labour movement vis-à-vis the regime, and this was to make matters easier for the regime in the three-year period following the NNLP. Indeed, as we shall see, the first shots that actually occasioned the manifestation of direct state intervention in internal union affairs were fired by certain trade unionists who were apparently dissatisfied with the status quo.

Nevertheless, while the NNLP represented a more active and comprehensive (not limited) intervention by the state in the labour movement, (actual) control of the labour movement was to elude the state. A higher degree of union centralization did not necessarily "make the unions mere instruments of state control, but it did mark them with a high degree of political, economic, and ideological subordination."¹⁹ The leadership of the labour movement had sought the same goal of centralization/rationalization of the union structure, but for a different reason: from the standpoint of the union leadership, this would have removed a major source of the labour movement's weakness, namely its structural proliferation. For example, in the eyes of the NLC steering committee,²⁰ the government's position on trade union structure could have come directly out of their own draft constitution. In the draft constitution, which was to be submitted for ratification at the launching of the NLC, the steering committee had proposed to restructure trade unions along industrial lines and to reorganize the one thousand-odd unions into twenty-five unions.

However, against the background of the NNLP, the launching of the NLC was to become a nightmare for its slated leadership. Under a week before the date, opposition arose, from within the labour movement itself, to the "way and manner" (the "Agege Deal") in which the NLC top leadership was selected. As Dafe Otobo has written:

The drive towards unity among the top leaders generated opposition from within the labour movement itself. A group of younger men, mostly located in the middle rungs of the leadership of all central labour centres, took strong objection to the way and manner in which the top leaders literally shared out the top positions of the NLC among themselves.²¹

They harped on the undemocratic nature of the Agege slating exercise as well as the new regime's popular tune, namely, the eradication of corruption and dishonesty in Nigerian society. They alleged that these ills also existed within the labour movement. Significantly, the language of their petitions increasingly came to bear a striking resemblance to that of the "corrective regime."

One of the dissenting unionists, Paul Epuh, General Secretary of the Nigerian Hotels African Workers' Union, wrote a letter of protest to J.O. Adegbesan, Chairman of the NLC steering committee, on December 12, 1975. In it, Epuh denied any contact (in an effort to distance himself from the NNLP) with the military regime, insisting that his protest is over very serious mistakes made by the steering committee on the question of principles in the process of the formation of the NLC:

My union and I firmly believe that elections in keeping with the NLC constitution should be carried out at the forthcoming conference. No matter who leads the NLC, it is our view that he or she should be elected in keeping with the sacred principles of trade union democracy. There is no reason why anybody should be afraid of elections and contend that any attempt to elect officers will lead to the break up of the NLC or confusion...We believe that those guilty of corruption in the labour movement should be purged.²².

While there is indeed no evidence of any contact between Epuh and the military regime, the similarity of their respective positions, as well as the fact that Epuh took pains to deny making contact, may have suggested to some that some contact was made. On the other hand, it could well have been that Epuh, who was expelled from the NTUC in the early 1970s and later joined the ULC, and who, along with Paschal Bafyau and Ogbonna, later testified against the NTUC leadership before the Adebisi Tribunal in 1976²³), simply saw an opportune moment signalled by the NNLP and seized it. After all, the NNLP had as its first objective "the need to give a new sense of direction and new image to the trade union movement in Nigeria," and the "corrective regime" had left no one in doubt as to what it would like these to be. Indeed, the NNLP, based, as it was, on government intervention in internal union affairs, may have actually signalled the opposition to the established top labour leadership by Epuh and others.

Once begun, such opposition was to provide the military government with an opportunity to quash the formation of the NLC and to subsequently purge its leadership. In fact, Umoh James Umoh has argued that:

The new administration decided to act [when] the [NLC] leadership question was settled [and] it was obvious that a new central labour organization would emerge in December, 1975. The fear of the government was that some of the leaders of the NLC were the same leaders who were close to the Gowon government.²⁴

The closeness Umoh refers to here was the collaboration/accommodation between the Gowon regime and the top labour establishment regarding the move toward the formation of the NLC from 1974 onwards. This collaboration - as we already discussed in Chapter 3 - consisted of the state sanctioning the role of the top leaders of the national centres in return for their forging ahead with the centralization of the labour movement. On the contrary, the new regime clearly indicated that union restructuring and other aspects of the organization of state-labour relations would have to occur under close government supervision and scrutiny.

In time, the interests of Epuh and others (to do away with the established top leadership of the NLC) and the objectives of the state became mutually reinforcing. The denunciation of corruption and the espousal of democratic principles by the former came to provide effective legitimation for the latter's direct intervention in the labour movement. Whereas, lurking behind this veneer of democratic and anti-corruption crusading was the state's firm agenda to destabilize, subordinate and then control the labour movement in such a way that trade unions' demands upon the state would not only be minimal, but must also occur within the framework of the effective prevention of labour disputes.

Thus, union restructuring was principally aimed at the stabilization of social relations, that is, the attainment of the avowed goal of the state vis-à-vis the labour movement. Moreover, it was also the case that the state was determined to prevent the labour movement from regrouping and consolidating under a radical leadership, for the Agege slating exercise once again left the radicals (the NTUC/LUF alliance in NTUF) in control of the central labour organization.

It was therefore not surprising that when Epuh, this time leading three other unionists now grouped into a "Progressive Front of the Nigerian Labour Movement," called for the institution of a public inquiry into the trade union movement just three days before the launching of the NLC, the "corrective regime hastily obliged him. In a letter to the Commissioner for Labour, dated December 15, 1975, the "Progressive Front" demanded:

If Labour leaders will ever again enjoy the confidence of the Nigerian workers and people, it is imperative that the Federal Military Government should institute a public inquiry to probe the organization, financing, assets and liabilities and the goings-on between our four central labour organizations and our foreign backers. The probe will unearth the corrupt and dishonest trade unionists. The innocent ones will be able to operate without carrying the badge of dishonest saboteurs.²⁵

The government's response was to swoop down on the offices of the national centres on the night of December 17. The security police removed documents and files and arrested about 100 trade unionists (including all the top leaders).²⁶ They were not released until the evening of December 18, that is, after the Commissioner for Labour had addressed those union-

ists who escaped arrest and detention the previous night, and were gathered at the Lagos City Hall hoping to launch the NLC. At what was supposed to be the launching of the NLC, the Commissioner announced that the government had decided to probe the leadership of the labour movement. According to the Commissioner:

The Federal Military Government has recently completed a clean-up exercise of the public services, the Universities and Armed Forces. The government does not consider that the clean-up of the public sector necessarily completes the task of cleaning up the Nigerian society as a whole. The Federal Military Government has also decided that, in the interest of future orderly development of the Nigerian trade union movement, the clean-up exercise of society must be extended to the trade union movement. Accordingly, the government has decided that a judicial commission of inquiry would be instituted into the trade union organization and administration in this country in order to elicit the factors which have militated against the unity of Nigerian workers over the past two decades or so. The inquiry will cover the activities of the Central Labour Organizations, namely ULC, NTUC, NWC and LUF, in relation to the organization, financing, assets and liabilities of these organizations and their leaders. It will also extend to registered trade unions affiliated to these four central labour organizations and others which are independent of them. This decision is in response to legitimate demands made on government to undertake an exercise similar to that which has recently been completed in the public services of the country.²⁷

Thus, a letter (written only three days in advance of the launching of the NLC) from a group of four individuals with little support in the labour movement - as we shall see presently - was enough to spur the government into action. In the circumstances the NLC could not be launched on December 18, as the delegates decided to postpone the inaugural meeting pending the release of their detained leaders. As it turned out, the detained labour leaders were released later that day, and the following day, December 19, the trade unionists gathered again

at the Lagos City Hall to launch the NLC.

But, why were the detained unionists released so soon afterwards? In the absence of any official explanation, it would appear that the quick release of the labour leaders was an outcome of a combination of two factors. Briefly, the first was the hesitation on the part of the "corrective regime" to use repressive measures against the unions and their leaders, at a time when an expansive constitutional debate regarding the return to democracy in 1979 was going on in the country. (Hence, for example, the regime's careful phrase, namely "guided democracy in labour matters".) Rather, the regime sought to employ quasi-legal means in dealing with the labour movement from December 1975 onwards. Secondly, it could be that the state had hoped that Epuh and his group would be able to dominate the aborted December 18 inaugural meeting (or the state actually thought or even believed that Epuh had the support within the labour movement to do this) in the absence of the detained slated leadership of the NLC (given the arrest of about 100 trade unionists). It might have been hoped that Epuh would succeed in conducting an election for the leadership of the NLC. When this failed to happen, it probably was apparent to the regime that Epuh and his followers lacked real support within the labour movement. Epuh's failure may have also convinced the regime that the detained leaders had considerable support in the labour movement, in which case their prolonged detention could quite conceivably have precipitated a clash between the regime and the labour movement, thereby spoiling

the atmosphere of the constitutional work going on at this time. At any rate, the government had already announced it would probe the labour movement. So, the leaders might as well be available for the probe.

Be that as it may, the NLC was successfully launched on December 19, 1975, despite the threat of a probe which hung over its leadership. That the unionists were not intimidated by the state was also evident from the overwhelming rejection of a motion by Epuh which called for an election (as opposed to a slating) of NLC officers. This was in recognition of the fact that an election (again on past experience) would have been divisive, in terms of energizing the enduring fractious tendencies in the labour movement.²⁸ While the overwhelming endorsement of the Agege slating by delegates clearly demonstrated the support commanded by the detained leaders in the unions, it was also a demonstration of their determination to consolidate their newly forged unity.

Thus, Wahab Goodluck, the NTUC President, became the President of the newly formed NLC, making the labour movement, once again, a radical-led one. However, after the inauguration of the NLC, the state did not change its determination to subordinate the labour movement to itself.

The "Statizing Corporatization"²⁹ of the Nigerian Labour Movement

Although the NLC was successfully launched, it never really took off since the government, with the probe announce-

ment, had set the stage for further intervention in the internal affairs of the labour movement. For example, a five-page memorandum, dated December 20, 1975 and signed by six trade union leaders led by Hudson Momodu (himself, one of 6 Vice-Presidents of the NLC) demanded that the government: (i) should recognize the Nigerian Labour Congress as the only central labour organization in the country; (ii) should not recognize the officers who announced themselves but refused to submit to normal trade union democracy and thereby made a mockery of democratic processes and principles; (iii) should step into the situation and protect Nigerian workers from the fascist dictatorship [sic] of trade union leaders by arranging to conduct free, fair and democratic elections within the NLC in accordance with the original constitution of the congress, and (iv) should appoint, in the interim, a sole administrator to conduct the affairs of the NLC until after a proper conference of the affiliated unions would have been convened to undertake the elections. This last section anticipated government policy by only a few months (as will be seen below). The memorandum was followed in January 1976 by five different petitions against the slating of NLC offices. They came from the Epuh group and one each from four old ULC conservatives including H.P. Adebola, a former President of the ULC.

Responding to the petitions in a manner reminiscent of his probe announcement in December 1975, the Commissioner for Labour declared that:

In the face of these massive and impressive protests and condemnations of the methods of election of officers of the NLC and the drafting of the constitution, no responsible, let alone corrective government will proceed to accord legal recognition to a central labour organization established on such shifting foundations as the Nigerian Labour Congress under its present leadership.³⁰

Then he announced the following government decisions with regard to the labour movement: (i) The Federal Military Government does not intend to accord registration to the Nigerian Labour Congress, as at present constituted, under the Trade Unions Decree No. 31 of 1973, for reasons aforementioned; (ii) the Government has decided to appoint an Administrator, who will be assisted by a committee of trade unionists selected [appointed by the government] on their own merits, to co-ordinate and administer the affairs of all registered unions; (iii) the administrator shall act as a trustee for the protection and administration of the funds and properties of the four former central labour organizations until a general delegates' conference of all the affiliates of these organizations is convened for the purpose of ratifying the constitution of a new central trade union body and electing a new leadership. It should be pointed out here that the judicial commission of inquiry (the Adebisi Tribunal) instituted into the labour movement was still sitting when the government made this announcement which, to all intents and purposes, was prejudicial to the findings of the inquiry (discussed below). As a result of the announcement, the NLC ceased to exist and the government moved briskly to control the labour movement.

To bolster its efforts, the government promptly promul-

gated Decree No. 23, "Trade Disputes (Essential Services) Decree of 1976" which set up a National Industrial Relations Court (NIC) for enforcing wage settlements, banned strikes in essential services and empowered the government to proscribe unions which act to "disrupt the economy". The fact that Central Bank workers (already designated as belonging to an essential service and therefore prohibited from forming or joining trade unions by Decree 31 of 1973) went on strike over Udoji in 1975, may have provoked the promulgation of this decree.

By setting up an industrial relations court for enforcing wage settlements, Decree 23 signalled that the government was beginning to put corporatist structures in place. In addition to this decree, a wage freeze was declared until 1 June, 1977, after which wage increases were to be limited to 7 per cent in the coming year, despite an inflation rate of over 60 per cent since 1975 (the aftermath of the Udoji spending spree). Moreover, in August 1976, the military regime promulgated Decree No. 44 which cancelled the registration of the ULC, NTUC, NWC and LUF. In accordance with Section 2(1) of this decree, Michael Abiodun, a retired Labour Officer in the Ministry of Labour, was appointed the Administrator of Trade Union Affairs.³¹

However, the government's repeated commitment to founding a single central labour organisation served to calm trade unionists' anxieties about the restructuring exercise. Also, many of them were of the view that they could not strongly protest

the government's decision to restructure trade unions because they had such plans themselves. Hassan Sunmonu, for, one, believed that: "It was actually a blessing [for the government] to restructure over 900 unions into 42 industrial unions. The Second Congress [1975 NLC] also had in mind the restructuring of the unions through amalgamations, but it would have taken more than five years to achieve what the Federal Military Government achieved in just a single year."³² The restructuring exercise, with which the Administrator of Trade Union Affairs was charged, did not get underway until 1977 because of the work of the Adebisi Tribunal. We must now discuss the findings of this tribunal before returning to the restructuring of trade unions in Nigeria.

"The Activities of Trade Unions Tribunal of Inquiry"

This tribunal, announced by the government on December 18, was not actually appointed until February 12, 1976, under the Chairmanship of Justice Duro Adebisi (hence the Adebisi Tribunal). The next day, General Murtala Muhammed was assassinated and he was succeeded by his Chief of Staff, General Olusegun Obasanjo.³³ But Muhammed's assassination did not prevent the tribunal from carrying on its work. If anything, it made opposition to his policies (continued by his successor in significant respects) more difficult, as he became a martyr.

The Adebisi Tribunal submitted its Report on August 31, 1976,³⁴ which the government released on February 15, 1977. In

its statement on the report, the government agreed with the major findings of the Tribunal: (a) The affairs of some of the Central Labour Organizations between 1959 and 1975 were run with little regard for system and care. The leadership exhibited very little, if any, sense of responsibility and accountability to the unions and workers they represent; (b) The massive financial and material support from International Organizations was utilized recklessly, and wastefully. A good portion of the financial and material donations found their way into the pockets of individuals; (c) Some officers of Trade Unions were found to be dishonest and their actions dictated by selfish motives; (d) Central Labour Organizations were found to be run as cults with only a few top officials trusted to know how the affairs and finances of the organizations were managed, thus negating the much espoused Trade Union democracy which was replaced by a dictatorship of the absurd form; (e) Inter-union rivalry was found to be one of the causes of industrial unrest in the country where a test of strength, and inter-personal feuds led to unjustified strikes and confusion.³⁵ The government then declared that it:

... has responsibility to take reasonable measures, not only to enforce the fiduciary duties of trade union officials and ensure internal trade union democracy, but also to strike at the source of untrammelled power exercised by trade union leaders and submit their power to reasonable and civilized regulation... To this end, Government intends to stop the activities of criminal elements who force their way into the trade union movement and exploit the workers whom they pretend to serve. Racketeering, abuse of office, personality cult, politicisation, corruption, conflicts of interest and similar malpractices will be stamped out through appropriate legislation in the trade union movement... Moreover, the

outcome of the work of the Administrator of Trade Union Affairs, with particular reference to the restructuring of trade unions and the emergence of one Central Labour Organization would make possible the regeneration of trade union administration in the country.³⁶

While it would be difficult to disagree with many of the tribunal's findings, the point needs to be stressed that the government had made its intentions clear even before the tribunal could submit its Report. Above all, the appointment of a judicial commission of inquiry into the labour movement (with a similar exercise in the public sector as reference) represented a blatant intervention in internal union affairs, especially when the government did not similarly intervene in other organisations in civil society (e.g. private business) where racketeering and corruption were also prevalent. Indeed, item (e) of the tribunal's major findings served to unmask the government's real intentions vis-à-vis the labour movement, namely, to curb industrial unrest.

To be sure, the government's decision to proscribe eleven trade union leaders,³⁷ including the President and General Secretary of the 1975 NLC, from the trade union movement was in furtherance of its stated objective, and was aimed at achieving the removal of radical trade union leaders from the labour movement. Thus, while the Epuh group and conservatives in general welcomed the dissolution of the NLC and the proscription of the union leaders, even to the point of demanding that "criminal proceedings be taken against the discredited leaders and their collaborators";³⁸ the WFTU protested both their ban and the Nigerian government's action in crushing the

NLC to the International Labour Organization (ILO). The ILO Committee which considered "Case No. 878: Complaint Presented by WFTU Against the Government of Nigeria" recommended to the Governing Body (ILO):

to point out to the Government [of Nigeria] that administrative cancellation of the registration of trade union organizations runs counter to Article 4 of Convention No. 87 [Freedom of Association and Protection of The Right to Organize Convention of 1948] which Nigeria has ratified "... and to point out, more particularly, that trade union organizations should be left free to organize the trade union movement themselves, and that the duties entrusted to an administrator should not be such as to limit the rights set forth in Article 3 of Convention No. 87.³⁹

For its part, as has been the case since December 1975, the trade union movement took the news calmly but deplored the fact that the government had usurped the democratic and trade union rights of workers to hire and fire their leaders.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, the government extended the wage freeze beyond June 1, 1977 without much chagrin from the now leaderless and officially non-existent labour movement; and state control ("statizing corporatization") of the labour movement was to be reinforced by the restructuring of trade unions under direct state supervision.

The Restructuring of Trade Unions in Nigeria

The task of restructuring the labour movement commenced after the leadership purge. The administrator drew up the following guidelines (some of them very vague) which formed the basis of the restructuring exercise. First, the restructuring

of trade unions was to take full notice of recognized community of interests among workers. Second, no union was to be too large or too small as to impair organizational efficiency. Third, no union was to be too large as to impair democratic practices and effective control. Fourth, as far as possible, each union was to have clear and specific job territories and boundaries definable in terms of work operations, occupation or craft. Fifth, and finally, as far as possible, each union was to be made up of non-competing groups in the labour market.⁴¹

The Administrator, with his consultative committee, met with workers and trade unionists at selected centres throughout Nigeria in which large pockets of commercial and industrial workers were concentrated: Lagos, Kano, Jos, Kaduna, Ibadan, Benin City, Calabar, Port Harcourt and Enugu. At each centre, the Administrator emphasized that:

... the leadership of the proposed industrial unions must give thought to both internal and external structures of the unions. The creation of larger unions would, by itself, be fruitless unless the unions can be held together internally with the minimum friction among the leaders. Only thus can the goods be delivered promptly and efficiently. Also, I would advocate that the internal structure of each union should permit democratic ideals and practices as well as enforce the principle of accountability on the part of the officials.⁴²

However, soon after these pronouncements on "democratic ideals and practices", the government drew up guidelines for the "Selection of General Secretaries and Assistant General Secretaries of Industrial Unions". The guidelines stated that the "Federal Government has decided that the posts of general

secretaries and assistant general secretaries should not be elective but should be full-time and by direct appointment after a competitive interview by a special committee of ~~the~~ executive committee of each industrial union assisted by independent advisors preferably from the Centre for Management Development [a government agency] and this Ministry [Labour].⁴³ The ostensible intention was to attract the best candidates to the posts of secretaries of industrial unions. However, the real intention was to impose a leadership of the government's choice on the trade unions and to move further toward the "corporatization" of the labour movement.

In a swift reaction to the guidelines, full-time officers of the old (defunct) unions gathered in Lagos and formed the National Association of Professional Trade Unionists of Nigeria (NAPTUN). NAPTUN's main objective was to oppose the government's move to impose officers upon the new industrial unions. NAPTUN threatened to boycott the impending inaugural conferences of the industrial unions unless the future of their members was spelled out, and/or the guidelines withdrawn.⁴⁴ At a meeting between NAPTUN and Brigadier Musa Yar' Adua, the Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters of the Armed Forces (effective Prime Minister of Nigeria since Muhammed's assassination in February 1976), "he assured them [NAPTUN] that the Federal Government would not impose union leaders on workers."⁴⁵ With the government backing down, NAPTUN withdrew its boycott threat and consented to attend the inaugural conferences of the industrial unions.

The military regime's flexibility on this and subsequent matters requires a brief explanation. The point must be made that the confidence, dynamism and even the popularity of the military administration had started to wane considerably by the middle of 1977. Several reasons account for this. Principal among them was the fact that Muhammed's successor, Obasanjo, lacked both his dynamism and charisma. Also, the régime not only became more directionless, but started to run into other problems. The régime based its legitimacy on cleaning up the Nigerian society and handing over power to a constitutionally elected civilian government by October 1, 1979. The eradication of inefficiency, indiscipline and corruption to which the régime was committed and because of which it was popular with Nigerians, turned out to be a lost battle. Some retired public officials were not only reinstated, but the régime became more and more apologetic over its "corrective" posture.⁴⁶ Even the deposed Gowon (studying at Warwick University in Britain) was alleged to be receiving money from the régime.⁴⁷ Thus the troika of vices (inefficiency, indiscipline and corruption) remained very much in evidence in 1977, as they did in 1975, because the structures containing them remained intact.

At this point too, the régime was facing time pressures. Political parties were to be formed the following year (in 1978), and pressure was beginning to mount within the army as those officers, who felt left out of public (political) offices and hence of huge sums of money, were beginning to push for

their own share in the booty before the civilians would have their turn. Thus, state military governors became designated as "administrators" to reflect the temporary character of their posting, and they were shuffled and reshuffled to give everyone the opportunity to enjoy the plum of public office. Similar deployments were carried out at the Federal level and also within the Armed Forces establishment. A showdown with the labour movement, leaderless and disorganized as it was, could very well have served as a good excuse for the "Young Turks" in the army to stage a coup. In the circumstances, the trade unions, just regrouping, started to win important concessions not so much because they were strong vis-à-vis the régime, as the régime was not prepared to assert its own authority unnecessarily at a time when its popular support was fast dwindling. Indeed, timing became a very important element in the restructuring exercise, and it worked to the unions' advantage.

Thus, the industrial unions, which held their inaugural conferences at various centres between October and November 1977, successfully elected (not appointed) their principal officers: President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Internal Auditor, and Trustee (see Appendix C). Most of the industrial unions also went ahead and announced the names of their secretaries, deputy secretaries and assistant secretaries whom they appointed (mostly from within their own ranks in their own unions) without going through the process outlined by the government guidelines.

The "new structure of trade unions" in Nigeria, which

emerged at the end of the restructuring exercise, comprised the government-approved list of 70 "industrial unions" (see Appendix D). Of the 70, 43 covered junior staff unions which are the industrial unions proper and which solely constitute the NLC (henceforth the officially designated labour movement), 18 covered senior staff (middle class) associations (without a parallel central labour organization like the junior staff's NLC), and 9 covered employers' associations. This last category was run as a quasi-government organisation, given that the government - under the indigenization programme - was no longer just the major employer of labour in the country, but also a very powerful participant (having acquired 60 percent majority equity shares in banking, insurance, oil, manufacturing, and even cargo handling) in private industry. To illustrate this new linkage between government and business, a former Director of Industrial Relations in the Ministry of Labour was appointed the Executive Director of NECA, the umbrella organization for the employers.

Critically, however, this marked the first time in the history of the Nigerian labour movement that such a division along occupational (horizontal) lines was used in structuring national working class organizations (trade unions). Whereas the trade union movement in the past linked the working class with a large part of the middle class within the modern sector, the new structure under the NLC actually dissolved that linkage, thus making the NLC a more cohesive working class organization. As pointed out in Chapter 1, the working class itself

enjoy an overwhelming majority (94 percent) in the modern sector, most of it unionized.⁴⁸ Indeed, the "Trade Unions (Amendment) Decree 1978 (Decree No. 22)", which de-registered all existing (old) trade unions, and granted automatic registration and recognition to the 70 restructured (new) "unions" and the NLC as the "Sole Central Labour Organization in Nigeria", quite unambiguously (for the avoidance of any doubt) and categorically stipulated that:

On the registration of the Central Labour Organization, all trade unions other than associations of senior staff or employers, are hereby deemed to be affiliated to it. Executive or Senior Staff means any members of staff recognized as a projection of management, within the management structure, in terms of status, authority, power, duties and accountability, which are reflected in the conditions of service and by virtue of which the membership of a trade union of junior staff grade may lead to a conflict of loyalties to the union or to the management.⁴⁹

Thus, union restructuring in Nigeria had a distinctively segmentary character. The restructuring of senior staff (management) and employees' associations may give the impression that the labour movement was being widened; but, in real terms, the labour movement was actually being "contracted" or "truncated" into one solely for the junior staff; this was to subsequently affect the policy orientation of the NLC. The real purpose of this truncation of the (old) labour movement into one with a solid working class base can be surmised from the origins of corporatism in Nigeria. The spontaneous and widespread industrial unrest of 1971-72 (repeated in 1974-75) was essentially and largely a bottom-rung, lower (local)-level working class action. The creation of a single central labour organization solely constituted by the industrial unions of the

working class should therefore be seen as an imaginative attempt by the state (as the government itself put it) "to strike at the source of untrammelled power" hitherto exercised by the working class and their organization, an option which would have been particularly viable if the state had succeeded in imposing a leadership of its choice on the labour movement.

At the same time, the state restructured the middle class/senior staff associations separately to make it possible for these associations to act as a countervailing force in a situation of industrial conflict. This was indeed to occur in the general strike of 1981 (dealt with in Chapter 5), when the senior staff, eagerly claiming not to be part of the NLC, tried but failed to diminish the impact of the strike by striving to keep skeletal services in operation.

Union restructuring was therefore a means of putting workers "in their place" in society. As O'Donnell has argued:

The corporatism of the bureaucratic-authoritarian state corresponds to a significant weakening of the working class in that it appears as the dynamic channel for "subversion" and the main impediment to the reconstitution and stability of the new patterns of capital accumulation. Statizing corporatization is one of the most important means of defeating and excluding the working class.⁵⁰

Thus, the distinctive characteristic of the restructuring of trade unions in Nigeria was that it was segmentary in nature, i.e., its actual functioning and social impact differed systematically according to cleavages largely determined by social class.⁵¹ It was specifically aimed at subordinating and controlling the working class and their organisation. But herein lay a veritable contradiction: for such a policy to be

effective, it needed to be crystallized in the state muzzling, controlling and/or repressing the trade unions. This would have amounted to "state corporatism". But the military regime in Nigeria committed, as it was, to the establishment of bourgeois hegemony (as opposed to coercion) which it was demonstrating by assiduously cultivating the necessary constitutional framework and environment for returning the country to democracy in 1979, could not bring itself to establishing "state corporatism". Instead, it chose to pursue a policy of "guided democracy in labour matters." In consequence, a considerable amount of autonomy fell to the unions (as we have seen).

Moreover, a different dynamic was triggered within the labour movement by the segmentary character of the restructuring exercise itself. Within the 43 junior staff unions, a new body called the Co-ordinated Committee of Elected Principal Officers of Industrial Unions (CCEPO, for short) was formed in November 1977. CCEPO was different from NAPTUN. Whereas NAPTUN comprised, in the main, the well-paid professional secretaries (mainly ULC recruited) of the old (defunct) unions most of whom served several unions at once and on part-time basis,⁵² CCEPO comprised the new leadership of the restructured unions of junior workers. Although it was NAPTUN that successfully challenged the government's attempt to appoint and impose a new leadership on the trade unions, yet, most of its members did not succeed in getting elected to the national executives of the restructured unions. They were displaced by these "new leaders" who arose in the junior staff unions.

As noted above, the restructuring truncated the labour movement in real terms, separating lower-level junior workers' unions from both the middle- and upper-level senior staff associations. At the base, therefore, erstwhile lower-level leaders (shop stewards, shop delegates, etc.) came to dominate the new junior workers' unions. These were the people now elected as principal officers of the industrial (junior staff) unions proper. Most of these new leaders were essentially radical in orientation, having been spawned by the "house" or "company" unions organized by Nduka Eze in the 1950s and inherited by Wahab Goodluck's NTUC in the 1960s and 1970s. The restructuring, in effect, left workers more in control of their unions since most of the professional secretaries now physically existed outside the junior staff unions. The NLC was to provide the stage for an intense struggle within the labour movement between CCEPO and some NAPTUN members who found their way into certain NLC positions. CCEPO members were drawn mainly from the old NTUC group. A few of its members came from the old LUF. NAPTUN, on the other hand, drew its strength from the old ULC group. Thus, while the NAPTUN/CCEPO split represented the challenge of the old guard by the new guard within the junior staff unions, it soon crystallized into one of "conservatives" versus "radicals" within the NLC.

CCEPO, claiming to be the representatives of the working class in the strict sense, began to take charge just before the restructuring exercise was completed. The group met several times between November 1977 and February 1978 under the chair-

manship of Hassan Sunmonu, the newly elected President of the Civil Service Technical Workers' Union of Nigeria (CSTWUN). Sunmonu was a protégé of Wahab Goodluck, the proscribed President of both the old NTUC and the 1975 NLC.

CCEPO resolved to keep members of NAPTUN out of the NLC leadership at the level of the principal officers - President, Deputy President, Treasurer and Deputy Treasurer - who were to be elected at the February 1978 inaugural conference. After learning that NAPTUN members had actually slated these offices for themselves (echoes of Agege!), CCEPO responded by doing a slating of its own. As Sunmonu put it:

We kicked against the idea of professional unionists being elected national leaders of the NLC. We would not like the new NLC to be dragged into the schisms which beleaguered several earlier moves at unity. We resolved that only unionists from among workers rather than professional unionists were elected into NLC offices.⁵³

Therefore, on the eve of the Ibadan inaugural conference of the NLC, CCEPO finalized its own slating of offices. Fully aware that the draft constitution of the NLC (discussed in the next chapter) called for elections by secret ballot, Sunmonu stated that "CCEPO drew up a list of officers we wished our unions to vote for at the conference. All the four elective posts of the NLC were slated, and the committee unanimously put my name forward for the presidency. Others contested for nomination (within the committee) for the deputy presidency, treasurer, and deputy treasurer."⁵⁴

At this juncture, the contradictions of direct state intervention in the labour movement had become apparent. Not

only did the state fail to impose a leadership of its own choice on the unions, it had inadvertently restructured the labour movement in such a way as to actually diminish the role of the active agents of conservatism in it. This would have a critical effect on the outcome of the NLC elections at Ibadan.

Implementing a Corporatist Model

Merger attempts have historically resulted in the ascendancy of the radicals in the Nigerian labour movement. On February 28, 1978, CCEPO made certain that the Ibadan inaugural conference of the NLC did not produce a contrary result.⁵⁵ In the ensuing elections, CCEPO achieved a 75 percent success on its slate: Hassan Sumonu was elected President, P.O. Ero-Phillips was elected National Treasurer, while M. Mpamugo was elected Deputy National Treasurer. All three belonged to the old NTUC. Only J.O. Ogundipe failed to be elected on the CCEPO slate. He lost the Deputy Presidency to NAPTUN's D.C. Ojeli (see Appendix E for the list of candidates and votes scored). Ojeli was the President of Nigerian Civil Service Union (NCSU) and was the East-Central State General Secretary of the Old ULC.

The election, the first in the history of central labour organisations since 1962, was, according to Umoh, the most exciting in the trade union history of Nigeria: It was by secret ballot. It was free. It was democratic. Those who won the elections did so because they did a lot of ground work over months. Umoh, nevertheless, branded the Ibadan result an NTUC

coup:

The result at Ibadan was that the former NTUC interest group/coordinating committee [CCEPO] won the key offices of full-time president and the treasury. Since the constitution of the NLC provides that the president and the treasurer are automatically NLC trustees with one other person to be appointed from outside the labour movement, it means the former NTUC interest group/coordinating committee now controls the presidency, treasury and trustees of the NLC. They conceded the office of deputy president to an Enugu-based former ULC man.... Indeed, it was an NTUC coup.⁵⁶

Hassan Sunmonu saw the Ibadan elections differently: "What happened at Ibadan was not a coup by any individual or organization. It was the wish of workers to really run the congress and not to surrender their unions to the whims and caprices of professional general secretaries."⁵⁷

It is perhaps correct to state that the outcome of the election reflected the desire of workers to assert control over their own unions. The significance of CCEPO's ground work in this regard cannot be over-emphasized, but the state's unwillingness either to prevent the election or to force the appointment of the NLC's principal officers certainly allowed CCEPO its opportunity.

More importantly at Ibadan, high-ranking state officials made speeches which unequivocally represented a shift in the strategy of the military regime in its pursuit of the subordination of the working class to the capitalist state. The failure of the regime to impose a leadership of its own choice on the labour movement may have served to force it (the regime) to rethink its mechanism for enforcing social peace. Accordingly, the regime's next line of defence was to emphasize the

cooptation and incorporation of the labour movement. Nonetheless, this change of strategy (from the "corporatization" of the labour movement to coopting it) should not be seen as entailing any significant change in the objective of the state vis-à-vis the labour movement, namely the continual attempt by the former to induce the collaboration of the latter. Thus, the Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters, in his address to the NLC, emphasized:

... the need for the Nigerian Labour Congress to collaborate with employers and the Government to find solutions to labour problems through constant dialogue and a spirit of conciliation. A rational and conciliatory approach should replace those past tendencies which the trade union system in this country has manifested, namely, unrestrained use of economic power, acrimonious and hostile relationship between trade unions and employers and the exhibitions of intransigence, violence and blackmail in the conduct of trade disputes.... In this connection the Nigerian Labour Congress, as the only existing and recognized Central Labour Organization in Nigeria has the important duty to impress on the trade unions in the country that they should not selfishly pursue, in the present changed conditions, policies which can frustrate not only their collective objectives but also can be detrimental to the interest of the community at large as well as those of their members.⁵⁸

If the Chief of Staff was rather general in his conception of the problem, the Commissioner for Labour did not mince words in his own address:

If our trade unions are to make a constructive contribution to the future welfare of our country, they must come to terms with the market economy, which is an essential feature of a free society and not seek to prevent it from working. Thus the problem is one that can be solved only by the unions in cooperation with the employers and the government. There are solid grounds for believing that, given goodwill, tolerance and an appreciation of the issues at stake, a modus vivendi can be maintained in our present social and economic setting that both provides the maximum degree of personal freedom and encourages the optimum degree of public responsibility. My Ministry will call upon your Congress within the next few days to submit its recommendations for workers'

representatives on the National Labour Advisory Council, the Productivity, Prices and Incomes Board, and the Industrial Arbitration Panel, among others.⁵⁹

As can be seen, the state now wanted an NLC which would be coopted into a set of structures through which the organized working class, if not exactly controlled by the capitalist state, would nonetheless be coopted by it. Clearly, this should be seen to be consistent with the regime's programme of returning the country to democracy the following year (1979) and therefore in the long term interests of the state to attempt the institutionalization of mechanisms for the structuring (limitation and control) of pluralism within a democratic framework. However, insofar as the establishment of corporatism is concerned, it also in effect meant the combination (not merely an addition) of both "state" ("statist" or "statizing") and "societal" ("privatist") components of corporatism. This thus made the particular constellation of policy which emerged from the Nigerian experiment to appear as a certain corporatist model that is "bifrontal".

In other words, at the end of union restructuring in Nigeria, a bifrontal corporatist model (i.e. one that combines both "state" and "societal" components) was clearly evident; since the Nigerian state was offering the NLC leadership representation and cooperative mutual interaction (the "societal" component) with the explicit aim of using those in position of authority within the labour movement to legitimize state action in the eyes of the rank and file, who are in turn controlled (the "state" component) at the mass level.⁶⁰ It should be

stressed that the bifrontal character of this corporatism is not the result of the mere juxtaposition of both the "state" and "societal" components. On the contrary, the real functioning and impact of the "privatist" component (i.e. representation and cooperative interaction) remain conditioned by the presence or absence of the "statizing" component (i.e. control: conquest and subordination.)⁶¹ Thus, the "statizing" component of bifrontal corporatism is the critical background factor (one which is always required to give muscle to the "privatist" component) in the institutionalization of this mechanism of subordination and control of the working class. As we shall see, it was the apparent failure of the state to resolve the tension and contradiction between these two components in Nigeria's fledgling corporatist project that resulted in the breakdown of the experiment in the early 1980s.

To summarize, in return for the offer of representation, the NLC would be required by the state to "impress" class collaboration on the trade unions in the country. In effect, the Nigerian state sought to intrude into civil society with a view to dominating and subordinating the interests of the organized working class. Above all else, the main link which the state sought to establish with the labour movement was one of control.

It is against the background of this bifrontal corporatism by the Nigerian state that the restructuring of the labour movement it undertook can be fully appreciated and put in proper perspective. The restructuring exercise itself

entailed substantial state subsidies (as an inducement). All the organisation and travelling that were concomitant with the restructuring exercise, right through the inaugural conferences of the industrial unions, were financed by the state. The state also paid the claims of all the 420 delegates of the 42 industrial unions to the Ibadan inaugural conference of the NLC. All this, as the Chief of Staff was keen to point out, was to help the trade unions and the NLC adapt "to their new roles and responsibilities" (meaning, the substitution of class collaboration for class conflict). In furtherance of this objective, the government decided not only to make the recognition of trade unions by employers automatic on registration, but also to make the check-off system of payment of trade union dues compulsory. The recognition of the NLC by the government would also be automatic.⁶²

In sum, these inducements provided by the state were principally aimed at fostering a quiescent labour movement which "must come to terms with the market economy", and which must replace class conflict and resistance (class struggle) with collaboration, constant dialogue and conciliation. Henceforward, trade unions and the NLC would be required to function in a manner that would NOT disrupt the economy.

Thus, at the first meeting of the NLC's National Executive Council (NEC) held at Ibadan in March 1978, the Administrator of Trade Union Affairs, on behalf of the Commissioner for Labour, invited the Congress to submit its first budget to the government for funding. The NEC promptly submitted a

budget of N5 million for accommodation, equipment and staff salaries in its first year. At this time, the check-off system was not operational because, even though the unions were inaugurated in November 1977, the government had not yet promulgated the decrees establishing the unions and the NLC or authorizing the check-off. Employers (including the government itself) would not authorize the compulsory check-off from workers' wages because no law was made to back it up. It took six months after the NLC was inaugurated before the government promulgated Decrees 21 and 22, registering the industrial unions and the NLC and authorizing the check-off system. The government then gave the NLC a once-and-for-all take-off subvention of N1 million. The NLC in turn gave N10,000 to each of the 42 industrial (junior staff) unions to help them solve initial administrative problems.

Although an official of the Ministry of Labour blamed the delay in the promulgation of the decrees on the reshuffle of the Federal Executive Council and the appointment of a new Commissioner for Labour,⁶³ the First Deputy General Secretary of the NLC, L.A. Osunde (who served on the budget committee), claimed that the government's enthusiasm toward the NLC was dampened after it had had time to reflect on the outcome of the Ibadan elections. Osunde also said that the government was not happy with the way NLC secretariat positions were being filled. According to Osunde:

When we met the Commissioner of Labour, he gave us the impression that we were actually begging for the money. It was clear that the government wanted something from

us. But it could not come out in the open to say it. I think the government meant to ingratiate itself with the NLC through the subvention.⁶⁴

Regarding the NLC secretariat positions to which Osunde referred, the government succeeded in influencing the appointment of Aliyu Dangiwa, a northerner and lecturer at the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, who also served on the Abiodun (restructuring) Consultative Committee. He became NLC General Secretary. The government's argument was that his appointment would reflect a federal (national) character, since all other officers in the secretariat were southerners. However, CCEPO succeeded in getting Dangiwa flanked by two of its members who were appointed Deputy General Secretaries.⁶⁵

To conclude, the restructuring of trade unions in Nigeria produced its own contradiction: a disengaging military regime apparently failed to impose a leadership of its own choice on the labour movement, despite its direct intervention into union affairs. While a shift in the strategy of the state (from the outright conquest and subordination of the organized working class to an "intermediate approach", via bifrontal corporatism, oriented toward the cooptation and integration of the organized working class in the capitalist state) clearly reflected this failure; it remained to be seen how far the state would be prepared to go in enforcing labour peace. Thus, as the state got set to implement its corporatist project, the question loomed whether the NLC would serve as a vehicle of class collaboration or class conflict.

CHAPTER 5

THE NLC AND CORPORATISM, 1979-81

This chapter presents a substantive analysis of the state-created NLC. As a prelude, it is appropriate to recapitulate our analysis of the state's fledgling corporatism thus far. The corporatism established in Nigeria, with origins dating back to the Trade Unions Decree No. 31 of 1973, has existed within a framework consisting of the political and economic exclusion of the organized working class - i.e., the total prohibition of trade unions from political activities and the prohibition of their right to strike. Both prohibitions had a lot to do with the diagnosis that together they had an "excessive propensity" to give voice to "irresponsible" or "pre-mature" demands antagonistic to "social stability" and capital accumulation.¹ In addition, the top leadership of the labour movement had been purged by the state and a wage-freeze had been imposed on workers. All of this happened within the context of an economic situation characterized by growing oil revenues, but also by gross income and social inequalities strongly marked by the marginalisation and continuing impoverishment of a working class already among the hardest hit by spiralling inflation. The organized working class was there-

fore significantly weakened vis-à-vis the ruling class in the last years (1975-79) of military rule in Nigeria, and the weakness of this class was a "central requirement for the stabilization of social relations"² as the military prepared to hand over power to civilian politicians.

The period 1979-81 was to witness a continuing attempt by the state to use the NLC leadership to legitimize its own (the state's) action in the eyes of rank and file members of the trade unions. However, this attempt at state-induced class collaboration produced its own contradictions within the labour movement. For example, state procurement of the support of the NLC President for the anti-labour federal budget of 1979-80 set in motion a chain of events which, rather than helping in the selling of the budget to the organized working class, actually served to spark a leadership as well as an ideological (radical/conservative) struggle within the NLC itself. The upshot of this intra-labour struggle was the overall radicalization of the leadership of the central labour organization. This radicalization was in turn to crystallize in the shift of the NLC leadership from an initial position of collaboration with the state to one of increasing conflict with it. In consequence, the state was subsequently to attempt (unsuccessfully) to replace this radical leadership with a more moderate one.

Paradoxically, therefore, the state initiative in consulting the NLC leadership in 1979 over the preparation of the budget was to serve in providing an answer to the crucial

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question of whether the NLC would serve more to facilitate the suppression of workers' interests or to represent, articulate and give (militant) expression to the interests of the organized working class against the capitalist class and the state. In other words, would the NLC become a vehicle of corporatism? An attempt to provide an answer to this question is essentially the task before us in this Chapter.

We begin with a brief examination of the structure of the NLC, especially as it had significant ramifications for developments within the labour movement itself as well as in its relationship with the state. These ramifications are themselves considered against the background of the serious problem of the lack of rank and file orientation among the leadership of the labour movement - a theme dealt with earlier in this study and which was exacerbated by the existing structure of wage determination in Nigeria. Here, we argue that the structural centralization of the NLC actually accentuated the gap not only between the leadership and the rank and file, but also (as we demonstrate below) between Lagos (with its high concentration of NLC constituents) and the hinterland of the labour movement.

Our analysis will then proceed with a critical assessment of the budget struggle itself with particular emphasis on the (re)emergence of the radical (left)/conservative (right) split in the NLC that carried through the 1981 NLC elections. This section entails an explanation of the changing orientation of the NLC leadership in terms of a shift in its conscious policy

(method) from one of initial collaboration with the state in bringing forth the budget, to one of a more autonomous articulation (vis-à-vis the state) of workers' demands and goals. Indeed, we argue that the aftermath of the budget struggle was to become characterized by growing levels of conflict between organized labour and the state, rather than a continuation or a consolidation of the class collaboration that produced the budget in the first place.

In consequence, a distinctively different form of state-labour relations was to emerge in the wake of the budget struggle: "bargaining" between the trade unions/NLC and the federal government would no longer be at the level of governmental wage commissions as had hitherto been the case. This new form of state-labour relations arose from the fact that the horizontal class organisation concretized in the NLC was no longer to press demands which affected the modern sector as a whole (including the middle class senior staff, for example). Rather, the NLC — as a junior staff organisation — was henceforth to attend solely to its constituency, the working class.

This particular change of orientation was to render irrelevant and impracticable the institution of governmental wage commissions which hitherto determined wages and salaries, as well as fringe benefits across the board in the modern sector as a whole. For instance, while in the past there had been less autonomous initiative on the part of organized labour vis-à-vis the state regarding the setting up and timing of the Adebo Commission or even the Udoji Commission, henceforth the

initiative for the consideration of workers' conditions was to flow more autonomously from the labour movement (the NLC), with the state increasingly on the defensive. Critically, it was the attempt by the state to resist, and indeed to reverse, this changing orientation of the labour movement that in part resulted in the Nigerian general strike of May 1981.

The Structure of the NLC

The military regime decreed, upon the creation of the NLC, that "On the registration of the Central Labour Organization, all trade unions, other than associations of senior staff or employers are hereby deemed to be affiliated to it."³ This provision was reinforced by the NLC constitution⁴ which was drafted by the government and ratified by the industrial unions at the Ibadan inaugural conference in 1978. Hence, of the 43 junior staff (industrial) unions, 42 are affiliated to the NLC vide RULE 6 of the constitution. The errant union, the Nigerian Union of Pharmacists, Medical Technologists, and Professions Allied to Medicine, remains unaffiliated to date, the reason being that the union, by its composition, straddles both junior and senior staff grades. However, it comprises enough junior staff to make it likely that it will become the 43rd affiliate of the NLC.

RULE 5 of the constitution lists the ten organs of the NLC as follows: (i) the Congress-in-Session - the triennial all-delegates conference; (ii) the National Executive Council

(NEC) - the governing organ of the NLC; (iii) the National Secretariat - the administrative organ of the NLC; (iv) the National Departments - all 10 of them located in the National Secretariat; (v) the State Executive Councils - one for each of the present 19 states; (vi) the State Secretariats; (vii) the Representatives of the National Departments in the States - who man the State Secretariats; (viii) the Local Executive Councils in the local government areas of the country; (ix) the Local Congress Secretariats - which are interchangeable with the Local Executive Councils; and (x) the Advisory Councils.

RULE 5 thus seeks to organize the Congress in accordance with Nigeria's federal principle, creating organs that stretch from the national level right down through the states to the local government level. If fully implemented, this would be a gigantic organisation as it would comprise organisations from Nigeria's 19 states (with pressure mounting for the creation of more states) and well over 350 local governments (and growing with the state governments creating more at will). However, the national secretariat of the Congress has maintained that as a national institution and the only central labour organization in the country, the NLC could not do less.⁵ Properly implemented, it could mean real grassroots organizational support for the NLC, insofar as it would help to bridge the gap referred to above.

However, the NEC neither includes the local executive councils and secretariats, nor the advisory councils.⁶ As the

governing organ of the NLC, the NEC involves only the national secretariat (including all the principal officers), the industrial unions and the states. This, in effect, makes the NLC a top-heavy, Lagos-concentrated central labour organization; for, of all the NEC membership at the national level, only Deputy President David Ojeli resided outside Lagos in 1979. Besides, 34 out of the 42 affiliates of the NLC have their headquarters in Lagos. Therefore, out of a total NEC membership of 139, 92 (or better than 66 percent) resided in Lagos at the time of the 1979 budget struggle and throughout the numerous issues with which the NLC had to deal in its aftermath.

Thus, despite the elaborate provisions in the NLC constitution to make it (the NLC) a national as well as grass-roots organisation structurally, the central labour organization remains in effect, a Lagos-centred institution. While this is understandable, given that a majority of Nigeria's organized workers are concentrated in the nation's administrative and commercial capital city, it nevertheless poses a problem for the hinterland unions and the workers they organize. As soon became apparent, it was no longer just the problem of Lagos seeming a very distant place, as it was of the NLC leadership in Lagos sometimes carrying on without reference to the hinterland unions. The NEC membership in Lagos alone could easily provide the required 60 percent (to form a) quorum.⁷ Also clearly evident here is the complete reversal of the pre-restructuring tendency in the labour movement, whereby local union leaders took action often without reference to the

national centres. This, as we have argued, allowed for the kind of spontaneous outburst of industrial unrest witnessed in 1971-2 and 1974-5. It was therefore no mere coincidence that, after the restructuring exercise and the establishment of the NLC, local-level spontaneous action declined considerably in the labour movement. As we shall see, militancy in the labour movement was now more of a function of top-level (centralized leadership) action or inaction. This was perhaps to be the most crucial impact of corporatism on the Nigerian labour movement, in the period 1979-81. Besides being amenable to round after round of rather inconclusive negotiations, the top leadership was actually to move further apart from both the middle-level leadership (essentially the leadership of the industrial unions) and the rank and file in general.

As a matter of fact, the NEC, which was the main fulcrum as well as locus of NLC action in this period, has had enormous powers under the NLC constitution. As the governing organ of the NLC, the NEC has been much more effective than the Congress-in-Session, even though it formally ranks behind the Congress-in-Session which, according to the constitution, has "supreme authority over all matters concerning the labour movement within the competence of the Congress." But, the NEC, which is to meet at least once every three months (the Congress-in-Session only meets once every three years) with 60 percent of its members forming a quorum, shall have authority not only to direct the activities of the Congress during its term of office and to appoint all principal full-time officials of the

Congress, but also to invest and administer the funds of the Congress.

The functions of the NEC include keeping watch on all industrial movements in the country and co-ordinating industrial action; keeping watch on all legislation affecting labour, and initiating such legislation as the Congress-in-Session may direct; endeavouring to adjust disputes and differences between affiliated organizations; assisting trade unions in their bid to organize; and propagating the activities of trade unions to strengthen the Trade Union Movement. In addition, the national secretariat "shall operate as guided by the Congress Secretary, for the purposes of serving the National Executive Council (NEC)."

With so much power and control in the hands of the NEC, (concretely in the hands of those in leadership positions within it), the potential threat and debilitating effect of a coopted or incorporated NEC on the labour movement as a whole cannot be gainsaid. This is a point worth bearing in mind as we now discuss the activities of the NLC between 1979 and 1981. Above all else, the role of the formal leaders of the NLC was to become critical to the state's attempt to stabilize social relations and to attain its avowed goal of ensuring industrial peace and social harmony.

The 1979 Budget: Collaboration Engenders Conflict?

The first test of the NLC's role in the fledgling corporatist project in Nigeria came in early 1979. The military government attempted to use the NLC leadership to legitimize its own action in the eyes of the rank and file workers. The calculation was that NLC support would involve control of NLC's affiliates and the (rank and file) workers at the mass level. This particular action of the government, the harsh anti-labour 1979/80 Federal Budget announced on March 31, 1979, was taken after consultation with NLC President, Hassan Sunmonu, and his close aides in the national secretariat. As it turned out, the NLC President gave an undertaking to secure labour support for the harsh budget and to ensure that there would be no opposition from workers.. The events that followed in the wake of the budget not only proved both the state and the NLC President wrong, they also served to propel the NLC on a collision course with the state for more than two years following the budget fiasco. It took a general strike in May 1981 to finally reverse some of the harsh measures contained in the 1979/80 budget, measures which were continued by the new civilian administration installed in October 1979.

The budget was dubbed a "farewell budget" by the press because it was the last presented by the military government before it relinquished power to the politicians. As it turned out, the "farewell budget" increased the burden of workers. The wage freeze imposed in 1976, but which remained in place

throughout the probing and restructuring of unions, was continued for another year. In addition, the military government discontinued a long tradition (dating back to the 1950s) in the public sector (which also thrived in the large foreign company sector), namely, government advancement of vehicle loans and allowances. General Obasanjo announced that as part of new austerity measures (the oil glut had begun to take effect on the economy) being taken before the return to civilian rule, the federal government has decided to ban car, motor cycle and bicycle loans and allowances. Nigeria must cut its coat according to its cloth, because "the era of easy money and conspicuous consumption has been forced to a close."⁸

Both the continuation of the wage freeze and the ban on vehicle loans and allowances were particularly hard on the working class: the former because of the soaring inflation, the scarcity of basic amenities, essential goods and commodities, and the relatively low income of workers; the latter especially because of the gross inadequacy of the public transportation system in Nigeria and the additional inability of workers to afford vehicles on their own.

In the circumstances, the NLC's support of this budget raised questions about its representation of working class interests. Workers were thus sorely disappointed when, in an interview with the Daily Times (Lagos), NLC President, Hassan Sunmonu, described the budget as "desirable and in the best interest of the economy."⁹ The NLC President disclosed that a pre-budget meeting had taken place between labour leaders and

the government, and added, "we believe that the government has come out with a fair budget."¹⁰ According to Umoh James Umoh (Labour Editor of the Daily times - Nigeria's largest circulating and most influential newspaper), Sunmonu's endorsement of a budget which banned vehicle loans and basic allowances and continued the wage freeze sent shock waves throughout trade union circles in the country. As Umoh asked;

What was desirable in the budget? In the interest of which national economy? While the wage freeze meant economic stagnation for workers, it meant economic prosperity for employers (including the government, the major employer in Nigeria). It was the case of the Federal Government using its statutory powers to tie the hands of workers behind their backs and giving employers unrestrained freedom to maximise their profits from the toil and sweat of workers. How can any labour leader professing to serve the interest of workers endorse a budget of that nature as desirable and in the best interest of the national economy?...Did the NLC leaders in Lagos endorse the budget...because of the one million naira (subvention)?¹¹

However, unknown to Umoh and many in trade union circles at the time, was the fact that the military government appropriated N1.4 million in the same farewell budget for the completion and equipment of the NLC National Secretariat Building in Lagos.¹² Umoh's reference to "the NLC leaders in Lagos" clearly hinted at the fact that Sunmonu and his secretariat aides had neither consulted with the NEC nor with NLC principal officers outside Lagos. As a result, the labour movement as a whole was restive in the aftermath of the NLC President's support of the budget.

A few days after Sunmonu's interview appeared in the Daily Times, the Deputy President of the NLC (also President of

the large and powerful Nigerian Civil Service Union), David Ojeli, led off the opposition to Sunmonu's support of the budget. In a statement on April 10, issued at Enugu, he decried the budget as "another slap in the face of the workers of this country."¹³ Ojeli immediately drew the support of the industrial unions, many members of the NEC and the zonal councils in the states. As Umoh put it, "the courageous and bold stand taken by Ojeli provided a rallying point for leaders of the industrial unions to bring pressure to bear on the leadership of the NLC to let the Federal Government know the true feelings of Nigerian workers."¹⁴

Ojeli came to Lagos the following day to begin to mobilize support against the budget. He led a protest delegation to Sunmonu, who promised to reconsider his support for the budget. But matters took a turn for the worse when the leaders of the industrial unions, already angry at Sunmonu's action without reference to either them or the NEC, were incensed by the appearance on National Television of the NLC assistant secretary for Research and Economic Development, E.E. Amechi, who "vigorously defended the budget for over 30 minutes — much more eloquently than the people who prepared it."¹⁵ Pressure began to mount on the NLC leadership from below, and it became quite clear that Sunmonu had failed to carry the labour movement with him in supporting the budget.

Two parallel developments should be noted at this juncture. One is that the budget crisis set the stage for an intense leadership struggle between Sunmonu and Ojeli within

the NLC. In Chapter 4, we discussed Sunmonu's role as the Chairman of CCEPO, under whom the radicals gained the upper hand in the 1978 NLC elections. We also pointed out that he was the protégé of former NTUC and the 1975 NLC President, Wahab Goodluck. Ojeli, we noted, was the then East-Central State General Secretary of the old ULC and a leader of the conservative NAPTUN. It is thus possible to interpret the role Ojeli played in leading the opposition to Sunmonu's support of the budget as part of a new offensive by the conservatives within the NLC. But this was not the case for Ojeli drew broad support from conservatives as well as radicals, many of whom were disappointed by Sunmonu's singularly "un-radical" stance in supporting the budget. The point, therefore, is that, once having led a vigorous opposition to Sunmonu on the budget issue, Ojeli would increasingly see himself as an alternative to Sunmonu, thus triggering a power struggle which culminated in Ojeli's unsuccessful attempt to unseat Sunmonu as NLC President in 1981. While Ojeli's opposition to Sunmonu on the budget issue did not crystallize into one of conservatives versus radicals at this time, the rivalry between the two men later grew in intensity and deepened the conservative/radical split in the NLC.

Meanwhile, Sunmonu's position on the budget came both as a shock and as an embarrassment not only to his old NTUC colleagues within the NLC (many of whom sided with Ojeli against him), but also to the erstwhile labour leaders of the NTUC (especially Goodluck and Sam Bassey, both of them proscribed by

the military régime). Their action vis-à-vis the budget fiasco, constituted the other half of the two parallel developments referred to above.

After carefully gauging the reactions of the industrial unions, Goodluck and Bassey admitted that Sunmonu had made a great mistake in supporting the budget. These old NTUC colleagues quickly held a series of meetings with Sunmonu and his close aides in the national secretariat in late April 1979. At these meetings, it was widely perceived that workers' reactions had served notice to both the government and the NLC leadership that workers would not necessarily accept any deal between their leaders and the government. The present budget deal was clearly inimical to their interests. Thus, the NTUC labour leaders, now grouped together with their socialist allies (mainly in the universities) in the unregistered Socialist Working People's Party of Nigeria (SWPP), persuaded Sunmonu to change his position on the budget. Instead of supporting the budget, a counter position was carefully worked out, with the aim of seizing the initiative from Ojeli. As the Presiding Officer of the NEC, Sunmonu was urged to call a meeting of the NLC governing organ. Accordingly, an NEC meeting was called for May 22, 1979, and Segun Osoba, the well-known Nigerian Socialist, was slated to conduct a seminar for NEC members on 23 May.¹⁶

But Ojeli had sensed the flurry of activities both within the NLC national secretariat and outside in the old NTUC group. Seeing that the NLC was about to seize the initiative from him

in opposing the budget, Ojeli called a meeting of his own union, the NCSU, to take place May 18-19, the eve of the NEC meeting. As if to demonstrate his distance from the Lagos-concentrated NLC, the NCSU's meeting was held in Owerri, the Imo State Capital. Ojeli's NCSU came out with a communiqué on May 19, which resolved that:

- (1) The Federal Military Government should lift the wage freeze without further delay;
- (2) (a) The Federal Military Government should restore vehicle advances (loans) and basic allowances respectively from 1 April, 1979;
 (b) Pending the restoration of vehicle advances and basic allowances, civil servants throughout Nigeria should cease to use their private vehicles (motor-cars, motor-cycles, scooters, and bicycles) in performing official duties with effect from June 1st, 1979;
 (c) For the benefit of the Nigerian public, the Government should publish the Ola Vincent Report¹⁷ on Motor-vehicle advances and basic allowances;
- (3) The Federal Military Government should pay graduated rent subsidy to all workers on salary levels 01 to 07 (that is, the junior staff category) with effect from 1st April, 1979;
- (4) The Federal Military Government should release the long-awaited scheme of service on or before 15th June, 1979;
- (5) In view of the various unilateral actions of the Federal Military Government on our conditions of service, the President and General Secretary of this Union are hereby mandated to declare a trade dispute immediately with the Federal Military Government. The Union reserves the right to resort to any other action deemed appropriate if by 15 June, 1979, the dispute was not resolved.¹⁸

This was, in effect, an ultimatum.

The NLC communiqué issued at the end of the NEC meeting on May 23 was not much different from that of the NCSU, except that the ultimatum the NLC gave the government would expire a

day before the NCSU one, thus implying an intention to pre-empt the NCSU. It also included two demands not mentioned in the NCSU communiqué: (i), that the government should lift its embargo on all previously negotiated collective agreements, and (ii) abrogate all punitive and restrictive labour decrees.

For both communiqués, the demand that a rent subsidy be extended to all categories of workers was specifically made on behalf of the low-income workers because they had never been given a rent subsidy; it was therefore the most militant of the demands. Long ago, the state had concluded that they (junior staff) did not live in houses worthy of subsidy and that they should not be encouraged to aspire to decent accommodation by granting them rent subsidy. Only those who already earned relatively high salaries (Levels 8-17) and who could therefore comfortably afford decent housing, got a rent subsidy.

The NLC communiqué represented a radical shift from Sunmonu's earlier position vis-à-vis the budget, and was obviously an outcome of the series of meetings the NTUC held with him. Henceforth, the rhetoric of the NLC President was to become increasingly similar to that of the old NTUC, and the attitude of the labour movement to the government came to acquire the basic orientation of Goodluck's old national labour centre. For example, in a "Presidential Address" to the NEC on May 22, Sunmonu split developments since the Congress was launched into two phases. According to him,

The priority of the NLC after its launching is the strengthening and consolidation of the Industrial Unions and the NLC. This was the first phase. Regrettably, some comrades misunderstood the earlier commitment of the NEC to consolidate Congress and give it strength, in order to be well-prepared for future struggle and confrontation between labour and capital, as a sign of weakness.¹⁹

In the closest he ever came to explaining his earlier action in support of the budget, Sunmonu charged that "some well-meaning comrades forgot so soon that we all collectively decided to make the first year of Congress, a year of stability, consolidation and preparedness for the tasks ahead. This, our commonly accepted strategy of stability and consolidation, has been misconstrued by some to mean (a) that the NLC leadership is weak-kneed, and (b) that the Congress is a stooge of government because of the one million naira subvention."²⁰ Then, he explained his turn-around thus:

We were voted into office by Nigerian workers. We owed our primary loyalty to them. So, when they called for opposition to the budget, we were prepared at that point in time to do no less. As I have said many times, we are the voice of Nigerian workers, we say and do whatever they ask us to.²¹

Moreover, the NLC President later explained that a political calculation on his part had influenced his initial support of the budget. He suggested that, with the elections to return Nigeria to democracy so close (they were held in July and August 1979), he and some of his colleagues were prepared to give the military the necessary cooperation to ensure a smooth transfer of power (which took place on October 1, 1979). What Sunmonu strongly implied was that he and some of his colleagues were not about to provide the military with an

excuse to hang on to power.²²

Having described the first phase as one of consolidating the Congress, the NLC President called for a total change of gear. He described the second phase as the "Effective organization of the industrial unions from the grassroots to ensure full participation and education of the rank and file and democratization of all the organs of the unions, so that the unions will be built for the workers and not on behalf of the workers." Then in an apparent reference to David Ojeli, Sunmonu said, "Let no one confuse himself and the workers by putting up a 'holier than thou' attitude."

Now, what can one say of Sunmonu's self-defence? Given what we know about Sunmonu's role in the CCEPO and his background as a protege of Wahab Goodluck, his initial support of the budget was most unexpected. However, the critical question remains whether Sunmonu could have successfully resisted the government's attempt to induce (consider not just the N1 million subvention in 1978; but the additional appropriation of N1.4 million in the 1979 budget) his collaboration? "Corporatism is primarily about state-induced class collaboration."²³ Thus, even if Sunmonu's contention that his support of the budget was related to not wanting to hinder the return to democracy (as the NLC may have calculated that it would be relatively less difficult to deal with civilian politicians than with the military), however, Sunmonu's public endorsement of the budget clearly amounted to class collaboration. In which case, the 1979 budget issue was a crucial test for the

state's fledgling corporatism. Did the corporatist project then founder?

As we have seen, Sunmonu's initial collaboration could not be sustained. The state clearly failed in its attempt to use the NLC leadership to legitimize the budget in the eyes of the rank and file. The NLC leadership was quickly reversed not by the rank and file, but by the NLC leadership itself. While this clearly demonstrated that the Nigerian labour movement was not (at least not yet) led by "functionaries", that is "leaders ... who, in order to maintain their positions, depend as much on the benevolence of the state as on those they 'represent'";²⁴ the fact that the rank and file largely remained outside the stream of protest against the anti-labour budget suggested potential weaknesses in future confrontations. In other words, while a momentary victory was won by the labour movement, the proceedings of May 1979 also served notice that the tendency toward local level spontaneous action or grass-roots militancy which previously existed in the labour movement would henceforth become a rarity.

In the two-year period between May 1979 and May 1981, the role of the formal leaders of the labour movement became crucial in the state's attempt to stabilize social relations. State-labour relations were anything but cordial during this period, and the question at the outset was how the (disengaging) military regime would react to an oppositional NLC. In this regard, the NLC ultimatum was to set the tone, as well as the pattern, of the relationship between the state and the

central labour organisation from May 1979 henceforward.

Unaccustomed as it was to receiving an ultimatum from anyone (individual or group) within the country, the military government panicked. But for the fact that its reaction was tempered at the last minute, it could have actually exacerbated the crisis that loomed.²⁵ The new Commissioner for Labour, S.O. Williams, expressed surprise at the NLC ultimatum and then warned the NLC of the consequences of sponsoring industrial unrest in the country. The statement added that the government was aware that (un-named) foreign elements were collaborating with some Nigerians to cause unrest in the country and prevent the transfer of power to civilians, and that the NLC was being used by forces, both external and internal, to sabotage the programme for a smooth transition to civil rule.

But at the meeting with the NLC leaders, the Commissioner neither referred to his statement distributed among the press earlier in the day nor did he confront the NLC representatives with any other accusations. Rather he appealed for understanding and patience. The Commissioner's turn-around came as a result of a last minute decision of the military administration to negotiate instead of provoking confrontation with labour on the eve of its disengagement from power. The meeting therefore ended with both sides agreeing to prepare their respective positions on the issues before returning to the bargaining table at a later date.

However, the following morning the press carried the Commissioner's statement and stated that the Commissioner's

warning had been delivered at the meeting with the NLC leaders.

Needless to say, the labour leaders were infuriated by the stories. The Commissioner's statement had clearly jeopardised the negotiation process initiated at the meeting with labour leaders. Reaction from the NLC was swift. In a letter to the Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters, which was made public, the NLC denied the accusations and called on the government to substantiate its allegations.²⁶

At this point, the Commissioner publicly withdrew his statement, and called for negotiations with the NLC. The two sides agreed to negotiations which eventually began on June 12, 1979, two days before the expiration of the NLC's ultimatum. A tentative agreement, sealed by the "joint communiqué" below, was reached the day the NLC ultimatum was to expire. The carefully-worded joint communiqué stated that:

Agreements have been reached on several issues, on some other items agreements are close, whilst on some other issues further discussions are necessary. It is considered at this stage necessary for both parties to report: the Nigeria Labour Congress to its National Executive Council and the Commissioner of Labour to the Federal Government. Further information will be released as and when appropriate.²⁷

The communiqué co-signed by the Commissioner for Labour and the NLC President helped to calm the labour movement. But agitation was to begin all over again, when the "agreement" reached by both sides on July 4, after a series of further negotiations, contained only promises and equivocations on most of the demands and no real agreement on any of them. The agreement is reproduced, item by item, below so that its

inconclusiveness will be fully appreciated:

RENT SUBSIDY (ITEM 1): It was agreed that rent subsidy for all categories of workers in the private and public sectors is negotiable between the trade unions and employers of labour, that is, Government and private employers.

ABROGATION OF PUNITIVE DECREES (ITEM 2A): It was agreed that punitive decrees will be reviewed to avoid double punishment, taking into account that if measures for deterrence and punishment are provided in other laws like the penal and criminal codes, the decrees should be abrogated.

ABROGATION OF RESTRICTIVE DECREES (ITEM 2B): It was also agreed that the restrictive decrees will be reviewed to ensure that the extent of restrictions on persons or groups of persons from participating in Trade Union activities do not exceed those permitted by the Nigerian Constitution and ILO Convention.

WAGE FREEZE AND INCOME RESTRAINT (ITEMS 3A and 3B): Meaningful agreement (not specified) was reached on wage freeze and incomes policy. For the purpose of combatting inflation, it was agreed that Congress and its affiliates should be encouraged and assisted in their efforts to spread workers' consumer shops throughout the country.

VEHICLE LOANS AND BASIC ALLOWANCES (ITEM 4): No agreement was reached on their restoration. However, Congress strongly felt that if Government stuck to its policy, it should review its implementation drastically so as to avoid it resulting in a punitive measure both for those who already owned vehicles and for those who were yet to own vehicles. Such a review should cover the following areas: (i) Rate of interest should not exceed 5%; (ii) Employers should guarantee loans and in consequence the payment of one fifth (1/5) of the cost of the vehicles as deposit should be abolished; (iii) the period of the repayment should be increased to five (5) years for all vehicles; (iv) the allowance paid for use of the vehicles for the duty of employers should be increased; (v) A way should be found such that those who already owned vehicles but now get only half (1/2) of the former vehicle allowance should not be worse off until the loan is repaid.²⁸

The July 4 agreement, it would appear, offered enough to allow the NLC to play its role in the shift to democracy, and, in the face of the impending election, the NLC did no more than

hope that the incoming civilian administration would respond more positively than the outgoing military one. Meanwhile a confrontation between the NLC and the military regime had been averted, and the elections proceeded apace. The military government had succeeded in securing labour peace by adroitly shifting the orientation of the labour movement away from strike action to bargaining and negotiation. In the end, a central labour organization provided the military government with the mechanism to blunt not only (spontaneous) action by workers, but militancy in the labour movement as a whole. It remained to be seen, whether the civilians would be equally successful in pursuing the same strategy vis-à-vis the labour movement, or whether the labour leadership would acquiesce passively in inconclusive bargaining and negotiation clearly designed to stall as well as to deactivate the labour movement.

The NLC and the Second Republic

Nigeria's Second Republic, ushered in on October 1, 1979, had a rather shaky start. None of the five political parties registered for the 1979 elections was able to win a clear majority nationally.²⁹ The elections concluded with the installation of President Shehu Shagari's NPN administration on October 1, 1979. In an effort to make certain that the new administration would respond positively to the labour movement, the NLC was among the first to pay a courtesy call on the President-elect to offer him congratulations (September 14,

1979), even while his election was being challenged at the Supreme Court, and more than two weeks before he was sworn-in as President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.³⁰

The NLC delegation told Shagari that the wage freeze must be lifted, adding that "the consequence of the recent unjustified paradoxical stoppage of vehicle loans and allowances in the absence of adequate transportation system has resulted in workers' suffering and decline in productivity."³¹ The delegation then informed Shagari that the NLC was working out the details of Nigerian workers' expectations which would be subsequently submitted to his administration for due consideration and implementation. Given that Decree 31 (which the 1979 constitution did not alter) barred the labour movement from partisan politics, the NEC had set up a committee to prepare a "Charter of Demands" which would be submitted to the new civilian government. Sunmonu was later to stress that the NLC's "non-involvement in partisan politics should not be misconstrued to mean that Congress shall be apolitical and isolated from political issues."³² This thinking, more than anything else, influenced the contents and overall orientation of the Workers' Charter of Demands (hereafter referred to as WCD or the "Charter") which the NLC later submitted to the government.

Relations between the new administration and the NLC appeared to be headed in a good direction when, in his first nation-wide broadcast on October 1, Shagari was particularly warm towards the labour movement:

I particularly call on the labour movement to rise up to the challenge of our time. I am aware of constraints under which Nigerian workers have had to live in the immediate past. The wage freeze, in an era of biting inflation, has had to be maintained in view of the resource constraints of our developing economy, but there are certainly limits beyond which no democratic government will wish to demand sacrifices from workers. The wage freeze issue, the question of labour independence and the restoration of free collective bargaining rank as priorities in the labour policy of my government. Arrangements are on hand for a dialogue between government and the leaders of organized labour where these issues will be reviewed. Therefore, I will take necessary action to effect remedies in the interest of the nation and of the nation's workers. This administration stands committed to ameliorating the conditions of Nigerian workers through appropriate measures, including consultation and legislation. However, we must all be determined to see that higher wages and better conditions of service are matched by higher productivity in the interest of national development.³³

However, ultimately, the Shagari administration did not change the existing structure of wage determination in Nigeria. While the President announced that "the restoration of free collective bargaining" ranked as one of his priorities in formulating a new labour policy, he stressed only "consultation and legislation". The absence of collective bargaining from the government's list of "appropriate measures" is significant, in that it reflected the government's thinking vis-à-vis labour on the one hand, and towards NECA (the umbrella organization of "private" employers) on the other.

First, NECA's role has traditionally been limited to ceremonial functions or post-facto comments on public policy.³⁴ A good illustration of this point was NECA's role vis-à-vis the Adebo Commission in 1971, when it was only able to respond to the Commission's wage awards after the government had made

the decision to extend the awards to the private sector. As we shall see, the Shagari government only consulted with NECA with regard to the NLC minimum wage demand of 1980-81 after it had unilaterally offered an interim minimum wage of N100.

Then, in regard to labour, as we have seen, the colonial state and its peripheral capitalist successor in Nigeria never deemed it fit to bargain with labour. While even consultation was minimal (and almost always on the initiative of the state in periods of industrial unrest - 1945, 1964, 1971-72, 1974-75), legislation has been the standard norm as well as practice of industrial relations. A preoccupation of the state with legislation (meaning: dictation) in its relationship with labour was to affect the relationship between the Shagari administration and the NLC, especially as the latter sought to transcend its traditional role of waiting for the former (the state) to initiate the consideration of workers' conditions.

This tendency towards a more autonomous initiative was to grow in the NLC, especially as the central labour organization became more and more preoccupied with improving the material conditions of its constituency, the working class junior staff. In addition, the specificity of the NLC's (exclusive) demands for the working class served both to render the institution of wage commissions irrelevant as well as to shift the initiative for demand-making itself to the NLC. The net effect was that the NLC grew more and more autonomous in making its demands to the state.

Thus, when the Shagari administration did not redeem the

promise it made to workers in October 1979, the labour movement grew restive, especially as it became very clear that the civilian politicians had decided to look after themselves first. The politicians made their own salaries and fringe benefits the first business of the various Houses of Assembly (National and States'): not only did they award themselves attractive salaries, each legislator was to draw an annual housing allowance of ₦6,000, in addition to receiving a car loan ranging between ₦8,000 and ₦12,000. These were to be implemented at a time when (the) federal government deficit had soared to about ₦3,000 million from ₦1,693 million the previous year.³⁵ Given this situation, the NLC soon became exasperated and its relationship with the government rapidly deteriorated.

Having watched 1979 end with the government making no moves whatsoever to reopen talks or to begin to tackle workers' problems as Shagari had promised, the NLC opened 1980 with a strong statement condemning as unrealistic the remunerations of the politicians and questioning their demands for additional fringe benefits. An NLC communiqué, issued at the end of an NEC meeting in Lagos in January, called on all employers of labour to restore vehicle loans and allowances for bicycle, motor cycles and cars; and to grant rent subsidies to all categories of junior workers not later than March 31, 1980. The employers were specifically requested (a) to conclude arrangements with banks to grant car loans on the recommendation of the employer; (b) to conclude arrangements for direct grants, by employers, of bicycle and motor cycle loans; and

(c) to conclude arrangements for subsidizing heavily the interest on loans so that workers do not pay more than 5% interest. The NLC also threatened that it would embark upon nation-wide industrial action to back up its demands should the deadline pass without positive government response.³⁶

Perhaps more significantly for the overall orientation of the NLC, the NEC, at the same meeting, approved the WCD or the "Charter" prepared by its own committee and submitted to Shagari on February 22, 1980. Against the background of the provisions of the 1979 Nigerian Constitution, which formed the basis of government and politics in the Second Republic, the WCD was a very important political as well as socio-economic document. Whereas the 1979 Constitution provided for "laissez-faire" and "mixed-economy" as directive principles of the state in the determination of its economic orientation and in the achievement of its national objectives, the "Charter" condemned the "laissez-faire" formula of (capitalist) development through profit and competition which, it argued, had created growing and unacceptable inequalities. It called for "fundamental structural changes within the national economy with a view to establishing an internal economic and social order which would lead to the liberation of the workers and the broad masses from the conditions of exploitation, misery and poverty."³⁷

In contradistinction to the Nigerian Constitution which sought to strengthen the hegemony of the ruling class, the "Charter" stated quite unequivocally that "the structural changes recommended are those which lead to bringing the

economy under the ownership and control of the workers and the masses." It then demanded the creation of full employment, a fair distribution of income and wealth, and the satisfaction of basic needs for all - food, clothing, shelter, essential public services, adequately remunerated jobs and trade union rights.

The "Charter" also called for a national minimum wage, declaring that "taking into account the current economic commitment of the Nigerian worker in respect of rent and transport, Congress demands that the minimum wage required by an average worker to lead a tolerable life should not be less than ₦300 per month."³⁸ It further called for unemployment and old age assistance, adequate housing for low and middle income groups, abrogation of the daily pay system, raising the minimum monthly pension to the same level as the minimum wage, the abrogation of punitive and restrictive decrees, including Decree 31, the restoration of vehicle loans and basic allowances, the declaration of May Day as a public holiday in Nigeria, and freedom of the Press. These constituted the major items in the NLC's struggle against the state from 1980 on.

Above all, the WCD condemned sections of the 1979 Nigerian Constitution which clearly discriminated against the working class and its offspring, and which further manifested the determination of the ruling class to consolidate its domination.³⁹ Although Sections 15(3) and (4) and 277 of the Constitution encouraged "free mobility of people, goods and services throughout the Federation, as well as secure full residence rights for every citizen in all parts of the Federation",

nevertheless, these same sections enshrined the notion of an "exclusive state citizenship" which discriminated against workers who frequently worked and lived outside their "home states". Thus, the WCD argued that a critical way in which this concept of state citizenship is already affecting and will further affect working class migrants living away from their so-called "home-state" is the great difficulty that their children have and will continue to have in gaining access to educational institutions, especially post-primary institutions, under the control of the government of their "host state". The "Charter" then stressed that to heap this additional constitutional burden of state citizenship on working class children, who are already disadvantaged by poverty, wretched living conditions, poor educational background, etc., is virtually a declaration of war by the ethnically- and regionally- based Nigerian bourgeoisie against the workers. It is also a grim manifestation of the psychology of the chauvinistic ethnic bourgeoisie who do not mind having the labour of the migrant workers to exploit, but would have nothing to do with safeguarding their welfare and that of their families.

In an obvious reaction both to the NLC ultimatum due to expire at the end of March 1980 and the WCD, President Shagari decided to present his first budget to the National Assembly on March 18. (The budget was not due until March 31.) The government used the budget to respond to some of the demands made in the WCD, lifting the five-year old wage freeze and offering an interim minimum wage of N100 a month in the public sector as

against the former minimum wage of N60 (see Table 8 in Chapter 3). Also, a graduated rent subsidy was awarded to low-income (junior staff) workers: (i) N10 per month for employees on GL. 01-02; (ii) N15 per month for GL. 03-04; (iii) N20 per month for GL. 05-06; and (iv) N30 per month for GL. 07. Vehicle loans were "restored" without basic allowances (although a N10 flat rate was awarded as transport allowance to low-income workers), and applications for loans would have to be made directly to the banks by the workers. The loans were now refundable in six years instead of four years as previously obtained.⁴⁰ However, the commercial banks came out to say that they could not support such a loan scheme because the Central Bank had imposed a 10 percent excess-profits tax on them, in addition to reducing from 40 to 30 percent the permissible growth of any new lending, thereby curtailing their ability to create credit and hence money.⁴¹

The NLC rejected the interim minimum wage "as far below expectations", re-affirming its N300 demand and stressing that the minimum wage should apply to all workers in both the public and private sectors of the economy. Rejecting the budget proposals regarding vehicle loans and allowances, the Congress maintained that its original demands be met, namely, that employers should negotiate directly with the banks for the loans, and interest rate above 5 percent should be borne by the employers, and that basic allowances should be restored. However, both the rent subsidy and transport allowance were accepted as a basis for further negotiation. The NLC also

welcomed the lifting of the wage freeze and the government's promise regarding "the acceptance of collective bargaining as machinery for determining wages, fringe benefits and other conditions of employment."

Following a speech by Sunmonu at the 1980 May Day celebration, in which he pledged that the NLC would champion the cause of the oppressed and the exploited, tension between the NLC and the state grew. As Sunmonu declared:

The great lesson (of May Day) is that workers will not achieve anything except through struggle, unity and solidarity ... the NLC is the vanguard of the working class of Nigeria and the champion of the oppressed and the exploited. Its role is to continue to educate and to lead the masses, who produce the nation's wealth, in the right direction to ultimate victory in the working class struggle ... Our objective is the objective of all working-class struggle the world over, to ensure that, in the end, the wealth of the nation which is produced by the toiling masses and the labouring poor is so evenly distributed that class and property will be wiped out of our society once and for all time. In the final end of the struggle there should be no poverty because there will be no capitalism.⁴²

It was against this background that another meeting of the NEC held in Lagos on 21 and 22 July 1980, issued what it called its "final ultimatum" to the federal government. This was the second to the Shagari administration in just over six months, and the third to the Nigerian government in a little over a year. The NEC called for action on an acceptable national minimum wage (N300), as well as the issue of vehicle loans and basic allowances within 30 days (that is, until August 21). The NEC also decried the existing N33 per month minimum pension "as a national disgrace" and declared that the demand in the "Charter" (which says the minimum pension should not be less

than the minimum wage at any given time) also be implemented within 30 days. It warned that "the NLC would not be held responsible for the consequences of the failure to resolve the three sensitive issues within the stipulated period."

In a bid to forestall the threatened action by the NLC, the government hastily convened a tripartite meeting in Lagos on July 23, but the meeting failed to offer any solution because NECA (representing private employers) would not make any offer. NECA complained that the government did not bother to consult it before the N100 interim award and argued that its members were having problems with the N100 interim award. With the government holding firm on its N100 offer, and the NLC refusing to compromise on its N300 demand, the tripartite talks on minimum wage collapsed. The NLC then unsuccessfully sought to meet with Shagari.

Shagari's refusal to meet with the NLC clearly marked the turning point in the relationship between the labour congress and the new civilian administration. More than anything else, it reflected the response of a piqued administration which had not only had to deal with two ultimatums from the labour movement, but also had to deal with a compendium of socio-economic as well as political demands in the form of the WCD, which if implemented, would have amounted to a structural transformation of society. The pressure of the labour movement, it would seem, had begun to affect the civilian régime. The tense atmosphere was further aggravated by the fact that the NLC leadership was now being referred to as a "Marxist" clique bent

on making trouble for the government, as well as destabilizing the country. Copious references were made by the moderate Labour Editor of the government-owned and controlled Daily Times to the WCD (he compared it to the Communist Manifesto) which he said was "advocating socialist revolution for the purpose of enthroning the dictatorship of the proletariat", and to Sunmonu's May Day Speech as demonstrative of the NLC's "ideological shift to the left."⁴³ He also noted the fact that, of the 150 unionists sent overseas for trade union courses, 145 of them went to Eastern Europe — as further proof of the "Marxist" orientation of the NLC.⁴⁴ The Labour Editor then deliberately played up the old division in the labour movement by claiming the Sunmonu had alarmed (the) "democratic union leaders" (meaning old ULC unionists) in the NLC who:

... are therefore now regrouping and are now determined to halt this left-wing drift. A struggle between Marxists and democrats in the NLC for the control of the power structure will determine the pattern of industrial relations practice in Nigeria and may, in fact, determine the political future of Nigeria. The contest will be settled in March 1981, during the first convention of the NLC to elect a new leadership.⁴⁵

By mid-August, a stalemate had been reached and it was apparent that the Shagari administration urgently needed some form of mediation before the NLC's 30-day ultimatum expired. Therefore, the Chairman of the House of Representatives' Labour Committee, Bassey Etienam, intervened on August 18 to prevent an apparently inevitable confrontation between the NLC and the government. He called for a public hearing on the issue of the minimum wage "in order to give (all concerned) a chance to make

their case for the consideration of the National Assembly which has the final say on the issue of a national minimum wage under Item 32 of the Exclusive Legislative List of the Second Schedule to the Constitution."⁴⁶ After an elaborate tour of the country and after receiving representations from all interested parties (including the NLC, but excluding NECA which now rejected the idea of a national minimum wage), the committee recommended N120 to the National Assembly as (the) monthly minimum wage. It was now left to the National Assembly to legislate on a national minimum wage. Thus, the issue of a national minimum wage was effectively and constitutionally removed from the door-steps of the government and lodged in the nation's legislative body. The NPN-controlled labour committee had successfully "bailed" out the NPN federal government in a move that was skillfully designed to give the Shagari administration a breathing space. Significantly, this marked an attempt by the state to return to a legislated wage determination process and concomitantly to seize the initiative from the NLC.

In recognition of this development, the NEC held an emergency meeting in Lagos on September 16, and reiterated that the NLC stood by its demand for a N300 per month minimum wage. However, in view of the facts that the House of Representatives' Committee on Labour was looking into the national minimum wage; that the National Assembly could legislate on a legally enforceable national minimum wage; and in order not to prejudice the work of the House of Representatives' Committee on Labour, Congress decided to suspend further action on the

issue pending the outcome of the Committee's exercise and the legislation of a national minimum wage by the National Assembly. The NLC also made it clear that while further action on the minimum pension would await the determination of the minimum wage, it would nevertheless pursue the issue of vehicle loans and allowances with the Industrial Arbitration Panel (IAP). But the NLC later found it necessary to call a nationwide strike to force the Shagari administration and the National Assembly to act on these issues. Before we turn to an analysis of the Nigerian general strike of 1981, let us briefly discuss another significant event (in the labour movement) which preceded the strike, namely, the 1981 NLC election.

The 1981 NLC Election

Vigorous campaigning for the NLC presidency opened early in 1981, when in a dramatic move David Ojeli called on all civil servants throughout the federation to embark on a 72-hour "token" industrial action with effect from February 16 to back up their demand for the restoration of car loans and basic allowances. Ojeli said that the three-day "token" industrial action, during which he urged "civil servants to go to their places of work peacefully and stay there doing no work at all," was aimed at "forcing out the rulings of the Industrial Arbitration Panel on the 20-month-old dispute" his union had declared against the government back in 1979. Ojeli also warned of a more serious action should the "token" strike fail

to yield the desired results.⁴⁷

To all intents and purposes, it would appear that the first triennial delegates' conference of the NLC, due to be held in Kano from February 24-26, 1981 was the crucial factor in the timing of Ojeli's call for the "token" industrial action. Ojeli clearly was seeking the centre-stage barely three weeks before the conference at which he would contest the NLC presidency. As Dafe Otobo writes, "the point here for all vested interests would be the election of officials":

All of a sudden the information media, especially the newspapers, painted a picture of a struggle to the death between 'communists' and 'democrats' within the NLC and not too subtly implying that Hassan Sunmonu, the President of the NLC, belonged to the former camp hence his 'intransigence' over any issue. David Ojeli was presented as a viable and more reasonable alternative and who naturally was also a 'democrat'.⁴⁸

Ojeli's campaign increasingly bore all the earmarks of a carefully worked-out agenda "to halt the left-wing drift" of the NLC. Just two days before Ojeli announced his call for a "token" industrial action, the Daily Times labour column proclaimed that "Kano will determine the future of the NLC." As Umoh put it:

... the Kano convention will feature an open struggle for power between Marxists and Democrats in the NLC. The centre of attraction will be the contest for the NLC Presidency. The current national president of the congress, Mr. Hassan Sunmonu (a Marxist of the former pro-Soviet Nigerian Trade Union Congress) is seeking re-election. He will be opposed by Mr. David Chukwudebelu Ojeli (a Democrat of the former pro-west United Labour Congress) who is the deputy president of the NLC and national president of the powerful and influential Nigeria Civil Service Union.... The Kano convention will determine the future of the NLC.⁴⁹

Furthermore, in his article "The Budget that Shocked

Workers", Umoh reminded workers of Sunmonu's support of the 1979 budget. He declared that "the role which the leaders of the Nigeria Labour Congress played after the military régime had announced its farewell budget which reduced the take-home pay of workers, will be thoroughly evaluated before new responsibilities can be assigned to those aspiring to lead the workers."⁵⁰

Then, the government moved in, throwing its weight behind Ojeli's campaign by swiftly announcing the restoration of vehicle loans and basic allowances on February 16, 1981, the day the "token" industrial action was to begin. The IAP (constituted by government appointees) awarded the loans and allowances to all categories of workers with 11 months in arrears, retroactive from April 1980. But there was one very important rider which the government exploited immediately after the Kano conference of the NLC; for in announcing the awards, the Minister of Labour "requested both the Nigerian Civil Service Union and the Head of the Federal Civil Service (on behalf of the 20 governments in Nigeria) to inform him in writing, within 21 days, of their acceptance or objection to the IAP awards." In other words, the awards would neither be binding nor could they be implemented until at least one whole week after the Kano conference. Yet, on the basis of the government's handling of the IAP awards, Ojeli promptly called off the "token" industrial action (which did not begin at all) and proclaimed that workers had won the loans' and allowances' battle.⁵¹ But, as Otobo pointed out, "it was all too neat ...

it seemed more of a ploy to swing votes behind Ojeli, for the government deliberately withheld its reaction to the verdict until well after the NLC's conference when it had become clear that Sunmonu retained the presidency of the NLC."⁵²

However, that was not before the government itself made a final pitch in an effort to ensure Ojeli's election as NLC president. In his address to the NLC in Kano, Shagari not only extolled the ideals of "cooperation at all levels and of maintaining collaboration with the Nigeria Labour Congress and its member unions", but also "sincerely commended the leadership of the Civil Service Union for their maturity in adopting constitutional methods in the pursuit of their case." Shagari further stated that "laid down procedure may be slow, but it can, and does work without occasioning any disruption to normal economic life. The latest development therefore is a triumph for democracy." He then declared May Day as a Public Holiday in Nigeria as from May 1, 1981, "as a token of respect for the workers of this great nation."⁵³

Ironically, government's endorsement and commendation of Ojeli may have actually swung workers behind Sunmonu in Kano. This is not to discount the fact that Sunmonu had the support of the industrial unions (he has retained their support which he garnered as CCEPO Chairman back in 1977-78 and which first won him the NLC Presidency in 1978). Rather it is to stress that Ojeli's too close ties with a government increasingly distrusted by the generality of workers not only cost him the NLC presidency, but all his nominees also lost in Kano,

signalling the labour movement's rejection of the Ojeli position and its endorsement of Sunmonu's.⁵⁴ As if to illustrate this, despite Shagari's praise for the maturity of the NCSU leadership, the government nevertheless appealed against the recently announced IAP awards, after the NLC conference and Ojeli's failure to win the presidency. Thereupon, the IAP awards (which Ojeli had celebrated earlier) were referred to the National Industrial Court (NIC) where a new round of representations and hearings would take place all over again.

The government's handling of trade disputes or industrial petitions has a vicious circular ring to it: the IAP (government body) would hear both sides to a dispute (usually involving the government) and would refer its ruling to the Ministry of Labour which would announce or choose to sit on the ruling. If announced, the ruling upon its appeal would go to the NIC (another government body) which would give a final ruling or settlement, except that whatever the NIC would decide would go back to the Ministry of Labour, where again it could get buried, delayed, or so drastically watered-down that, if unacceptable to the unions, they would have to begin the process all over again. This is the "constitutional method" and "laid down procedure" that President Shagari referred to in Kano. In this particular instance, the IAP had ruled that vehicle loans should be given directly by employers and that interest rates should not be higher than 5 percent. Also recommended, was an enhanced monthly transport allowance which would involve a 50 percent rise in existing rates for workers

who did not own cars and 80 percent rise for those who had them. The government decided to grant car loans directly, but, wanting the interest to be 8 percent, turned down the IAP ruling. The government also objected to the effective date of the awards set at April 1, 1980 by the IAP. The government wanted the awards to take effect from January 1, 1981. Both the IAP awards in February and the government's objections to them in March were announced by the same person, the Minister of Employment, Labour and Productivity. Given this deliberate rigamarole, the issue of vehicle loans and basic allowances was still at the NIC when the NLC called a general strike on May 11, 1981.

May Day Celebration and the 1981 General Strike

Besides the Kano conference, two other important developments took place in 1981: one was the huge celebration of the first national⁵⁵ May Day public holiday in Nigeria, the other was the general strike. However, the immediate aftermath of Kano was the attempt by Ojeli to split the labour movement. Barely a month after Kano, he announced the formation of what he called the "Committee for Democratic Trade Unionism" (CDTU).⁵⁶ The CDTU announcement blamed "socialists in the NLC whose main objective was to foist a leadership hopelessly barren of ideas but securely committed to the Marxist confusionists and their Soviet and Libyan mentors on the Nigerian Labour Movement. And the mission is to create the basis for class

struggle for the establishment of class consciousness which is, in fact, another term for confrontation."⁵⁷ In addition to Ojeli, other CDTU leaders included its acting Secretary-General, Alphonsus Okwese, the General Secretary of Hotel and Personal Services Workers' Union (who announced the re-emergence of NAPTUN earlier in February⁵⁸), E.A. Ibikunle, the General Secretary of the national Union of Banks, Insurance and Financial Institutions' Employees, and D.N. Ofuokwu, the General Secretary of the National Union of Railwaymen. These last two contested and lost elections to the offices of treasurer and deputy treasurer respectively in Kano. Both Sidi Khayam of the National Union of Seamen and Water Transport Workers and Vincent Jack of the National Union of Road Transport Workers, later withdrew from the CDTU, because "We sincerely believe in the continuous existence of the Nigeria Labour Congress which is the umbrella of the 42 industrial unions in the country."⁵⁹ They added that their withdrawal from the CDTU was due to the advice of their unions. Although Ojeli claimed that the CDTU controlled 22 out of the 42 industrial unions, less than five unions were active in it (a fact to be confirmed by the May 11 general strike). Otobo claims that these unions shared two characteristics: (a) unions belonging to the establishments controlled by the federal government, and (b) leaders belonging to central organizations that had consistently affiliated externally to the Western-controlled International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)".⁶⁰ While the former characteristic was not shared by all the unions (Ibikunle's

union for one), the announcement of the formation of the CDTU at the end of March provided government officials and politicians with the opportunity to begin to consider an amendment to the Trade Union Acts 21 and 22 (formerly Decrees 21 and 22) of 1978. These two Acts deal with the registration as well as recognition of the NLC as the only central labour organization in Nigeria. An amendment to these Acts would create "the possibility of having more than one central labour organization in an attempt to weaken the NLC and the labour movement."⁶¹ Given the government's action before and during the Kano conference, it is not unlikely that it encouraged the emergence of the CDTU in the first place.

It was against this background that the first NEC meeting was held in Lagos from April 27-28. Two issues dominated the meeting: preparations for the celebration of May Day 1981, and unmet workers' demands on the minimum wage, a minimum pension, and vehicle loans and allowances. The NEC meeting, well-attended by the leaders of the industrial unions and the zonal executives (except CDTU leaders who boycotted), resolved to celebrate May Day in a big way and to use the occasion to drum up support for a general strike on May 11, 1981. The decision to go on strike over demands that had been pending for over a year, represented an unmistakable signal of the NLC's new attitude to a government it now clearly considered as hostile. As Sunmonu put it at a press briefing after the NEC meeting:

Since the Federal Government and the National Assembly have treated our case with perturbing levity, the Congress is left with no alternative than to lead a

nation-wide industrial action commencing from May 11. Until all our demands are met, we shall not go back to work.⁶²

Sunmonu also dismissed the CDTU as "jokers" in the "pay of the government, but who do not enjoy any popular following within the labour movement."

The atmosphere was tense in Lagos from the moment the strike call went out. For its part, the NLC further heightened the tension by having strike announcements made daily on radio and television for two weeks prior to May 11. Also, the workers' song, "Solidarity forever, for the union makes us strong", was played several times daily both on Lagos State Radio and on National Radio (Radio Nigeria). Its (accompanying) message called on workers to unite and organize, and to show solidarity on May Day as well as during the national strike.

The government's first response to the strike call came in President Shagari's broadcast to the nation on the occasion of the first May Day celebrations. He said that:

the plan to commence a general strike on May 11, 1981 is not in accord with the spirit of cooperation which should exist between the government and the labour movement, especially since the issues in dispute are under active consideration by the appropriate organs of government. It is my view that the strike weapon shall be used only as a last resort. I expect all trade unions to follow the laid-down procedures and henceforth cease taking the law into their hands. In this connection, I wish to appeal to all men of goodwill to prevail on the labour movement to place the interest of the nation above sectional interest.⁶³

In his own address to the 100,000 workers at the National Stadium on May Day, NLC President, Hassan Sunmonu, called for the unity of Nigerian workers against the capitalists who

control the economy and have political power. He reaffirmed the WCD as "our programme of action" and argued that a minimum wage of N300 was not unrealistic, in view of the fact that many in the society were becoming millionaires overnight by looting the public purse. He then demanded "nationalization of our major means of production and distribution" and condemned the poverty of bourgeois politics and the deepening political oppression and intolerance that attended it. He also called for the abrogation of the "obnoxious labour decrees", condemned racist South Africa, and expressed solidarity with workers all over the world. Finally, Sunmonu reaffirmed the stand of the unions to embark on a nation-wide strike on May 11.⁶⁴

From then on, it became clear that unless the government made a genuine move to avert the strike, the country would be paralysed from May 11 on. Rather than make a serious effort to meet workers' demands, attempts were made both outside and inside the labour movement to break the strike. On May 2, the Chairman of the Labour Committee of the House of Representatives described the strike threat as irresponsible and called on workers to ignore the NLC President.⁶⁵ Then on May 5, the NCSU led by David Ojeli announced that it would not join the strike, urging its members to await the decision of the NIC on vehicle loans and basic allowances.⁶⁶ On May 6, three more unions - the Hotel and Personal Services Workers' Union, the National Union of Banks, Insurance and Financial Institutions' Employees, and a faction of the Nigerian Union of Journalists

announced that they would not support the strike action. The first two unions were prominent in the CDTU and their leaders - Alphonsus Okwese and E.A. Ibikunle respectively - were also NAPTUN members. Ralph Igwa, President of a faction of the Nigerian Union of Journalists, said that his union would not participate in the strike because it did not take part in making the strike decision.⁶⁷

Meanwhile, the Chairman of the Senate Labour Committee, Senator Joseph Ansa, sent a letter to the NLC requesting a meeting between the Committee and the NLC at which the Senate President, Senator Joseph Wayas, would preside. Hassan Sunmonu called a Press Conference to announce that the NLC would refuse the Senate invitation, and that the strike action would not be called off "until we have won all our demands." The NLC later wrote to the Senate suggesting May 14 as a date for a meeting, that is, after the strike would have begun.⁶⁸

In an apparent attempt to confuse workers on the eve of the strike, the National Concord (owned by the International Telephones and Telegraph Nigerian magnate, Alhaji Moshood Abiola) wrote that the NLC has suspended the strike action: "the NLC has indicated that it would not embark on the proposed nation-wide industrial action on May 11, after all."⁶⁹ The NLC was quick to reaffirm its position on the strike, maintaining forcefully that the strike would definitely take place on May 11, 1981.⁷⁰ Meanwhile, President Shagari was forced by the impending strike to cancel his state visits to Mali and Guinea which were to begin on May 11. In a last-minute attempt to

avert a general strike, Shagari held an emergency meeting with the NLC executive on Sunday night, May 10, 1981, urging the NLC to call off the strike "in the interest of the nation." But the NLC leaders told him that the strike action would not be called off unless their demands were met.

Accordingly, the strike⁷¹ began on Monday, May 11. Lagos was severely affected by the strike. All government offices and factories were empty as junior workers stayed at home, including members of the NCSU, even though Ojeli had asked them to ignore the strike. Most economic activities were brought to a halt, services were paralysed, buses, trains and taxis were disrupted. Most cities were without water and electricity, even though the National Electric Power Authority deployed management staff to various sub-stations deserted by junior employees. Banks and post offices throughout Lagos were shut, and work at the ports came to a standstill. Schools and hospitals were similarly affected. Also shut were the department stores. The usually busy Marina was empty. Yet, some sections of the press (worked by management staff) repeatedly ran headlines like, "Work Goes on" even when their own junior workers had walked off their jobs!⁷² Meanwhile, the National Economic Council (a government body set up under the constitution to advise the President on economic matters) under the Chairmanship of the Vice-President, Alex Ekwueme, held an emergency meeting in Lagos. Mixed reports started filtering into Lagos from the states. In most of the northern states, the strike had hardly taken off. But work was stopped in most southern

states and services were disrupted. On the second day of the strike, air services were abruptly stopped. Two governors who had come to Lagos for the National Economic Council meeting were stranded. There were reports of police brutality to workers who picketed several offices.

However, just as the strike was beginning to gather momentum and take effect in the states, especially the hinterland ones like Kano, it was suddenly called off following an agreement reached between the government and the NLC leadership on Tuesday, May 12, the second day of the strike action.⁷³ But due to the fact that the agreement to end the strike was not reached until very late Tuesday night, a majority of workers could not return to work when the strike was called off on Wednesday, May 13.

In the strike settlement, the state made significant concessions on some NLC demands (even submitting itself to certain deadlines). The NLC won increases in transportation allowance ranging from 20 to 50 percent; the minimum pension was increased from ₦33 to ₦50 per month (as an interim measure), with a promise to review the pension of those who had served for 15 years and above. It was also agreed that vehicle loans and basic allowances should be reviewed within two weeks. The meeting noted the NLC's rejection of the (not yet implemented) ₦120 monthly minimum wage recommended by the House of Representatives' Labour Committee, and therefore requested the National Assembly (whose Senate President and House of Representatives' Speaker were among the government's negotiating

team) to conclude debate on the fixing of a national minimum wage within 30 days. Finally, the Federal government directed all employers of labour not to penalise any worker for taking part in the strike.⁷⁴

Nevertheless, the agreement the NLC reached with the government caused problems for the NLC leadership. The NEC met for more than five hours on Wednesday, May 13, and accused Sunmonu and the NLC negotiating team of exceeding the mandate given to them not to enter into any agreement with the government without first reporting back to the NEC. The NEC was also furious about the agreement itself. It felt that the package was far below expectation, and only grudgingly endorsed the agreement.

However, events later in the week helped to calm down many disappointed and furious union leaders. On Thursday, May 15, the NIC ordered employers (including the government) to grant car loans directly to workers at a reduced interest rate of 4 percent (the IAP had put it at 5 percent). It upheld the basic allowances awarded by the IAP, but rejected the April 1, 1980 effective date of the awards. The NIC ruled that they be effective from January 1, 1981 as the government wanted. While David Ojeli was given credit by the press,⁷⁵ it was obvious that the NIC ruling was a result of the strike. The announcement that the National Assembly would start considering the N120 monthly minimum wage recommended by the House of Representatives' Labour Committee served to relax the atmosphere both at the NLC secretariat (where NLC leaders were still

recovering from the confrontation with the NEC) and among workers generally. However, owing to the tedious legislative process it now involved, the issue of a national minimum wage was to drag on for another four months before President Shagari signed the bill passed by the National Assembly fixing the minimum wage at ₦125. In accepting the ₦125, the NLC announced that it formed a basis for fresh negotiations. Here, it should be realized that NLC demands and action directly resulted in more than doubling the minimum wage from the ₦60, before the interim award of ₦100 back in 1980, to the new legislated minimum of ₦125 in 1981. Meanwhile, many workers who heard the "return to work" call over the radio and on television simply ignored it because they thought that it was an attempt by the government to sabotage the strike. Thus, while the strike was officially called off on Wednesday, May 13, it was apparent that work had not returned to normal even by Friday, May 15: "In all, it took another couple of days before the message came across from NLC headquarters and workers were back to work on the 18th after a presumably restful weekend."⁷⁶

The 1981 Strike and the Corporatist Project: A Brief Assessment

First of all, what kind of strike was this, and was it successful? It is, perhaps quite correct to assert that the Nigerian general strike of 1981 represented the first time the Nigerian labour movement would embark on collective action mainly for the sake of the most miserable among the working

class. It was also the first general strike in Nigeria not to have come in the wake either of an across-the-board COLA award (the 1945 general strike) or of a government commission carrying out a general review of wages and salaries (the 1964 general strike). In the circumstances, Nigeria's third general strike not only struck a big blow for the working class qua working class, it also took a form which could facilitate increased class solidarity among the working class, who now recognized the potency of their collective power. In all, as Otobo has written:

... the material concessions (especially the 60 percent increase in pension rates) extracted gave workers a foretaste of what collective power could bring. Conversely, the economic and political elites, from all indication, seem to regard workers as a factor to reckon with. In other words, there is now the familiar feeling among the elites of a measure of accountability to the working class.⁷⁷

Strike action is labour's most important weapon and, as Richard Hyman puts it, "to go on strike is to deny the existing distribution of power and authority."⁷⁸ For this reason, were the 1981 general strike to be prolonged, it would have seriously undermined the power and authority of the Shagari administration. But, should labour have pushed its action against the state and thus precipitated a crisis which it could neither channel nor control, then an opportunity would have been delivered to the military "to take advantage of the political disjuncture."⁷⁹ It would appear that this was a crucial concern of the leadership of the labour movement:

Indeed, when a top NLC official was asked why the strike was called off on the strength of "promises" made by the

government, he noted that if the strike had been allowed to continue, and given certain passions, the leadership would not have been able to control events. At the worst they (the labour leaders) would have been killed or incarcerated; at best, the military would seize power and would by definition be more reactionary.⁸⁰

To conclude, given the background of the state's attempt to establish corporatism (with the concomitant centralization of the labour movement and the enhancement of the role of top labour leadership in it), the behaviour of the NLC between May 1979 and May 1981 seriously jeopardized the state's effort to stabilize social relations as well as to attain its avowed goal of ensuring industrial peace and social harmony. Corporatism had attempted to orient the Nigerian labour movement away from action diagnosed as antagonistic as well as inimical to social stability. It is in this light that the conspicuous absence of rank and file workers' protest, both in the budget struggle of 1979 and in the wake of the strike settlement of 1981, is to be seen. Evidently, rank and file militancy had ebbed considerably in the Nigerian labour movement, a far cry from the glorious days of 1971-72 when the rank and file were visibly in command.

However, it took the policy orientation of the NLC leadership to seize the initiative from the state and to then concentrate on issues directly affecting the working class and to finally come into conflict with the state in May 1981. The autonomous initiative displayed by the NLC leadership vis-à-vis the state is remarkable, not least because as Hyman reminds us:

... in their day to day activities, trade union representatives - including those with some form of socialist aspirations towards a radically different social and

economic order — are under intense pressures to behave as if capitalist relations of production are unalterable (except perhaps by gradual and piecemeal adjustment). The maintenance of orderly relationships with employers and government then easily become the overriding priority. In part this reflects an accommodation to the realities of external power; for a serious challenge to the established patterns of industrial relations (in which workers' organizations accept a subordinate and reactive role) would invite retaliation which in extreme circumstances could jeopardise union survival itself.⁸¹

But how serious a challenge does the NLC constitute to "the established patterns of industrial relations" in Nigeria? We attempt to answer this question in our concluding chapter. There, too, we discuss the problematic role of trade unions in the class struggle in general, as well as that of the NLC in Nigeria in particular.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The Parameters of Corporatism in Nigeria

Our argument thus far has been that the Nigerian labour movement (as is increasingly becoming the case elsewhere) has had to deal more often with the state than with private employers, and that state action or inaction has, in turn, directly affected the working class and its organisation. In Nigeria, government intercession, rather than collective bargaining, has been the governing norm as well as practice of industrial relations. Even the government recently stated that "incomes policy has continued, as in the past, to be based solely on the appointment of ad hoc wages and salaries commissions."¹ This central and direct role of the state in the wage "bargaining" and determination process has not only situated the state at the centre of almost every major industrial action in Nigeria (with the state often becoming the target of such action), but, coupled with the widespread resentment of the government prevalent in society, has also invariably transformed strike activity or industrial action into protest marches or political demonstrations involving not

just workers, but other strata of the poor majority as well.

The political as well as economic context in which the labour movement operates in Nigeria closely resembles what Clifford Geertz describes "in terms of a separation between a small group ... caught up in a modern form of life and a much larger group thrashing about, sometimes violently, more often dispiritedly in a half-traditional, half-detraditionalized steady state."² While this dichotomy between "town" and "country" may be misleading (insofar as it only situates the contradiction in peripheral capitalism between "town" and "country"), it is nonetheless instructive to bear in mind that the Nigerian government itself admits that "the masses of the people continue to be in abject poverty and lacking in basic necessities of life, particularly in a situation, such as in Nigeria today, where the momentum of growth derives from a sector whose direct impact on the bulk of the population is small."³ Yet, as we have also noted in Chapter 1 above, no strategy exists for combatting poverty despite populist/reformist protestations to the contrary. The state itself is widely perceived by the populace as the guarantor and dispensator of the existing pattern of rampant inequality in society, an inegalitarian social structure preserved only via its coercive intervention in society to maintain the non-hegemonic rule of the ruling class. Herein lies the leit motif of the state in mediating social relations.

The changing economic context in Nigeria in the 1970s brought into sharp relief the confrontation between the state

and labour: industry, propelled by oil revenue, had begun to replace agriculture as the mainstay of the economy in the 1970s. Not only had manufacturing recorded an average growth of 18.1 percent, the composition of the workforce had changed in favour of workers in the industrial sector of the economy. In the circumstances, the direct subordination of wage labour to capital therefore became an urgent need of the state which, at this juncture, had become more and more representative of capital in general. Moreover, the indigenisation programme begun in 1972 came to produce, in time, "a restricted group of nationals ... rather thoroughly integrated into the most advanced sectors of the modern world economy, and becoming more so all the time."⁴ Nigeria's indigenisation programme has brought the state and the economy into greater congruence more than ever before.

During the 1960s, state-labour relations were structured largely in an ad hoc manner. However, it was the wildcat strikes of 1971-72 that provoked state intervention in internal union affairs with a view to inducing working class collaboration in Nigeria. Decree 31 promulgated by the Gowon regime in 1973 marked the origins of corporatism in Nigeria: the decree represented a clear response by the state to a labour movement whose fragmentation had allowed spontaneous strikes at the local level (without reference to the national centres). It sought to centralize the labour movement (with a view to curtailing its autonomous action) within the initial framework of political and economic exclusion of the working class: not

only were the trade unions barred from (party) politics, certain categories of workers were also barred from unionizing. Both provisions were deemed to supplement the previous (1968) ban on strike activity, thereby raising the cost of workers' action. In all, the Trade Unions' Decree of 1973 was a major step taken by the state to institutionalize the subordination of workers' legitimate interests and demands to those of the capitalists in control of Nigeria's economy.

From 1975 on, the state changed its relationship to the established top leadership of the labour movement. Whereas the Gowon regime had worked with the established leadership of the labour movement, the Murtala Muhammed regime chose to forego this path. In fashioning a new constitution for Nigeria (in a bid to establish bourgeois hegemony), the "corrective regime" of Murtala Muhammed also formulated a new policy toward the labour movement. The New National Labour Policy (NNLP) which sought "to ensure industrial peace and harmony", was "predicated on the establishment and development of a suitable institutional framework for effective prevention and expeditious settlement of labour disputes."

The NNLP became the linchpin of an elaborate state strategy between 1975 and 1978 which was oriented towards the removal of the established leadership of the labour movement and promoting the administration of the labour movement itself in a fashion more resembling "state corporatism". Union leaders were detained in December 1975. A judicial tribunal of inquiry was appointed in February 1976 to probe the unions.

The 1975 NLC was deregistered in May 1976. A wage freeze was imposed in the same month. Decree 23 not only empowered the government to proscribe unions which acted to disrupt the economy, it also set up a National Industrial Court (NIC) to enforce wage settlements. An Administrator of Trade Unions was appointed by Decree 44 promulgated in August 1976. In February 1977, the government proscribed 11 trade union leaders from the labour movement for life. In 1978, the state-structured NLC was granted a N1 million subvention.

Union restructuring (1977-78) had a distinctively segmentary character in Nigeria: 42 unions were classified as junior staff unions (which solely constitute the NLC), the senior staff were grouped into 18 associations (without an umbrella organization), while 9 associations were created for employers (with NECA as their umbrella body). The decree which set up the NLC forbade executive or senior staff officers from joining it because membership in this junior staff organisation "may lead to a conflict of loyalties to the union or to the management". The key to making this strategy viable was the imposition of a leadership on the labour movement (the NLC and its constituent unions) which would have operated in the corporatist premises of the state. However, the state failed to impose a leadership of its choice on the labour movement. Moreover, the actual implementation of union restructuring produced its own contradictions in terms of entrenching horizontal (class) organisations in place of the vertical organisations which hitherto linked the working class (junior staff)

with a large part of the middle class (senior staff).

The reasons for the state's inability to carry through its strategy effectively are varied. The death of Muhammed in 1976 resulted in a more directionless military regime under Obasanjo. Under the latter, the regime moved towards the eve of its promised disengagement from government, and the military became more inward-looking, attending more to the tensions arising from its own officer-corps and less to issues in civil society. In this context, perhaps the most important factor in explaining why the military regime did not insist on appointing officers for the unions and instead allowed the unions to elect their officers themselves, was the fact that the regime's promise of a programme to return the country to democracy in 1979 (which it kept) also encouraged it to allow for some modicum of democracy in trade union matters from late 1977 on. In this light, it was not union resistance to the military regime's appointment of union officials that alone precluded this from happening, rather it was also the regime's willingness to accede to union demands (as part of the preparation for a return to democracy) that made it possible for the trade unions to elect their officials in 1977-8. Thus, the trade unions were able to win some significant concessions toward the end of the restructuring exercise that the government had embarked upon.

The question then was, what kind of leadership would the new unions get? Here, the segmentary character of the restructuring was clearly the decisive factor: the junior

workers now solely comprised the 42 industrial unions. What this meant was that erstwhile lower-level leaders, such as shop stewards and shop delegates, came to dominate the new junior workers' unions. Most of the professional trade union leaders and secretaries found themselves belonging to the senior staff associations, now physically separated from the junior staff unions. Moreover (and this was crucial for subsequent developments in the labour movement), these new leaders of the junior staff unions were essentially radical in orientation, having been traditionally organized since the 1950s by the radical section of the labour movement (namely, the NTUC and LUF in the 1960s and 1970s). These radicals not only gained control of an overwhelming majority of the 42 junior staff unions, they also succeeded (under the leadership of Sunmonu) in gaining control of the NLC in 1978, and again in 1981.

What all this meant was that there was, during the actual implementation of the corporatist strategy in Nigeria, a distinct bifrontal nature to the strategy. The statizing corporatization of the labour movement, more visible between 1975 and 1978, entailed considerable repression and the threat of direct state control. But this never stood alone, as the military regime, as part of its effective disengagement from direct rule, also increasingly emphasized the cooptation and incorporation of the labour movement. The bifrontal character of this corporatist model/experiment, which involved, as we have seen, considerable rethinking of the mechanisms of cooptation and incorporation, did not necessarily entail a change in the

objective of the state vis-à-vis the working class, namely the continual attempt by the former to secure the collaboration of the latter. The state's offer of representation and cooperative mutual interaction to the NLC leadership from 1978 was aimed explicitly at using those in a position of authority within the NLC to legitimize state action in the eyes of the rank and file. Even so, this did not mean the statizing component (for example, the political exclusion of the labour movement from party politics, the ban on strikes, and the unilateral imposition of a wage freeze) was removed. It remained the critical background factor, setting distinct limits to the cooptive mechanisms adopted increasingly after 1978.

How successful has this bifrontal variant of corporatist experiment been in Nigeria? The attempt by the state to induce the collaboration of the working class certainly seemed to have been somewhat effective in the case of the NLC's initial support for the 1979 budget. But in more general terms, the experiment appears to have failed. The NLC leadership has not preached the ideology of class harmony: on the contrary, it has adopted a confrontational rhetoric laced with evocative terminology from the radical socialist lexicon. This makes class collaboration - the sine qua non of corporatist structures - rather difficult to effect. This outcome has resulted partly from the state's rather ambiguous tactics vis-à-vis organized labour, and partly from the conscious policy orientation (method) of the new top leadership of the labour movement.

This conscious policy orientation of the NLC leadership is reflected in the tendency toward a more autonomous articulation of workers' demands and goals vis-à-vis the state. This autonomy has resulted in growing levels of conflict between labour and the state, instead of a continuation or even a consolidation of the class collaboration that marked the 1979 budget.

The NLC leadership's orientation, in turn, forced a distinctively different form of state-labour relations onto the industrial relations scene: the initiative for the consideration of workers' conditions henceforth flowed more autonomously from the NLC, rather than from the state. Consequently, the state came to experience increasing class antagonisms and class conflict emanating from the working class, rather than the class collaboration and social peace that it sought.

Here, the Workers' Charter of Demands (WCD) is conspicuously noticeable as a radical element in the NLC's overall autonomous strategy. Not only did the "Charter" represent a rather bold attempt of the NLC to seize the initiative for the setting of priorities for workers' conditions from the state, it also clearly represented, in the words of the documents' framers, "the working class' programme of action". By calling for fundamental structural changes within the national economy (bringing the economy under the ownership and control of the workers and the masses), as well as by demanding the creation of full employment, a fair distribution of income and wealth and the satisfaction of basic needs for all - food, clothing,

shelter, essential public services, adequately remunerated jobs and trade union rights, the NLC assailed the status quo and sought to put the ruling class on the defensive. Although the question remains how much of a fundamental challenge to the state the WCD really represents, it, together with the pronouncements by the NLC leadership, nevertheless marks the trade union movement as the most radical, and vocal, organized opposition to the ruling class. Sunmonu's 1980 and 1981 May Day Speeches strongly testify to this.

Early in 1981, Shagari spoke of the proclivity in the NLC to disrupt normal economic life, and his government unsuccessfully tried to change the leadership of the labour movement. In his 1981 May Day broadcast, Shagari not only appealed "to all men of goodwill to prevail on the labour movement to place the interest of the nation above the sectional interest", he also spoke of why he needed "the full cooperation of the Nigerian Labour movement":

I regret to say that recent events within the trade union movement have given me considerable concern. Several strikes have taken place without the organizers using the machineries that have been established for resolving trade disputes. Workers in certain organizations performing essential services and who are prohibited by the provisions of the Trade Disputes (Essential Services) Act of 1976 from going on strike have gone on illegal strikes. From January to December 1980, there was a total of 415 industrial disputes out of which 61 were declared by workers belonging to the essential services. The total number of strikes carried out was 265. The number of workers involved was 220,988 while the total man-days lost was 2,551,000 (2.5 million). I would like to mention here that "go slow", "sit-down strike" or "work-to rule", are by definition, strikes.⁵

To be sure, strike action has never been lacking in the

Nigerian labour movement, or among Nigerian workers, in general, for that matter (strike action — for example, the Lagos strike of 1897 — among Nigerian workers historically antedates the development of trade unionism in Nigeria⁶). Moreover, the inability of the national labour centres to restrain local unions — many of which have often embarked on wildcat strikes without reference to the national centres — has perhaps been the most striking feature of industrial unrest in the country. That the tendency towards strike action has continued under the NLC is not therefore indicative of the militancy of the central labour organisation as such. However, what does suggest such militancy is the fact that the NLC was created by the state with the explicitly stated goal of facilitating class collaboration. What is significant about the current conjuncture is that the NLC appears not to be doing that. Beyond reflecting the miscalculations of the state in this regard, the leadership orientation, self-confidence, autonomy, and militancy of the NLC bespeaks the apparent development of a greater positive class consciousness in the Nigerian labour movement than has heretofore been the case.

The outcome of Nigeria's corporatist experiment would appear to promote some reflection on theorizations regarding corporatism and trade unions in Africa. There can certainly be no question, any longer, that corporatism is not unique to the Latin American/Iberian political culture. Putting the issue in perspective, Richard Sandbrook writes (quoting Alfred Stepan) that:

Corporatist policies are not unique to Latin America. They appeal to ruling groups around the world who fear that the old modes of domination are breaking down, and also therefore search for 'new mechanisms to link the lower classes to the state and new formulas to legitimize such mechanisms'. In consequence, 'organic-statist or corporatist arguments about the need for unity, the legitimacy of the common good over individual or class interests, and the key role of the state in social engineering are as natural a political response for Africans as for Latin Americans'.⁷

As we have seen there were particular features in the Nigerian case that made a corporatist experiment there somewhat more likely than elsewhere in Africa. Given the multi-party political framework of Nigeria under civilian rule and given the absence of a single central labour organisation until the NLC was created in 1978, the Nigerian case thus stands in sharp contrast to other Africa examples, notable Kenya and Tanzania, where either trade union integration in the dominant/ruling political party or close partnership between the ruling party and the union movement has been the dominant feature of state-labour relations. In these latter cases, the governing parties have heretofore been rather successful in containing the labour movement via the party mechanism;⁸ while in Nigeria, the absence of this mechanism left the door open to direct restructuring of the labour movement by the state..

In terms of distinguishing different types of corporatism, Stepan's distinction of "inclusionary" and "exclusionary" poles of corporatism⁹ is much akin to Schmitter's "societal" and "state" corporatism or O'Donnell's "privatist" and "statist" corporatism. But O'Donnell's more dialectical, less taxonomic ("either - or") notion of the "bifrontal

character of corporatism", encourages an analysis of any particular corporatist policy or experiment as consisting of both statizing (state) and privatist (societal) components. What our Nigerian study shows is that these are not merely additive, but interrelated, indeed intermingled, components of corporatism, with the inflection to one pole or the other reflecting primarily the contradictions entailed in the actual implementation of certain corporatist strategies.

One critical question raised by modern corporatist strategies is whether corporatism can be stable or can function effectively (i.e. achieve working class collaboration with, and integration in, the state) in peripheral capitalist societies. Certainly, the Nigerian experiment adds grist to the mill of those who argue that corporatist structures are inherently unstable. One can see the logic of a state attempting to mediate its rule vis-à-vis the working class by the corporatization of trade unions (rather than rule by unmediated force over an atomized population or rule only via political party mediation), but one cannot overlook the contradictions in this either. For to operate as effective mediators for the state vis-à-vis the working class, union leaders require a modicum of legitimacy vis-à-vis their members. And the degree of inequality in Third World societies poses a limit to the extent to which union leaders can acquire or retain this legitimacy, insofar as they ignore this inequality.

The NLC and Class Struggle in Nigeria

But what does the instability of corporatism actually foretell? Of what significance is it when organized labour challenges the status quo? Can one speak of a revolutionary role by the NLC in Nigeria? Considerable caution is advised with regard to coming to conclusions about the revolutionary nature of the NLC, despite its struggle against incorporation in corporatist policies, and even despite its WCD and other activities in the early 1980s.

Most theories of trade unions tell us that the role of trade unions in the class struggle is problematic. As Perry Anderson has argued, "there are structural limitations inherent in the nature of trade unions as such." He argues, as have many others, that trade unions are "a type of proletarian organization specific to the period when capital dominates history ... an integral part of capitalist society, whose function is inherent in the regime of private property". They are, therefore, as Anderson puts it, "an essential part of a capitalist society because they incarnate the difference between Capital and Labour which defines the society."¹⁰

On the other hand, even if trade unions as an institution are "an integral part of capitalist society", they nevertheless do organize "proletarian individuals" into a class. The point, at least from a Marxist perspective, is not that unions as such necessarily are, or are not fundamentally opposed to capitalism, rather it is that the proletariat as a class is fundamentally

so opposed. As Marx and Engels put it:

The question is not what this or that proletarian, or even the whole of the proletariat at the moment considers as its aim. The question is what the proletariat is, and what, consequent on that being, it will be compelled to do. Its aim and historical action is obviously demonstrated in its life situation as well as in the whole organisation of bourgeois society....¹¹

What this means is that:

... the working class needs organization only in order to carry on its struggle; in order to submit, it needs no organization at all. The special function of class organization is class struggle present or potential, reality or threat. This is not gainsaid by the fact that the established powers try to persuade the class organization to think in terms of class collaboration.¹²

Critically, therefore, we do not have to measure class struggle only in terms of direct revolutionary stance or potential, but also in terms of the advancement of the autonomy of the working class, its militancy, self-confidence, and leadership vis-à-vis other subordinate classes in society. In this regard, it is possible to argue that the NLC has followed a "class struggle policy", insofar as:

A class struggle policy by a union does not mean one consciously embracing a revolutionary goal or ideology (whatever that may be taken to mean) or one that adopts a socialist program, whether or not the union is in fact led by socialists. A class struggle policy may be defined as one that defends the interests of the workers as such, against the employers as such, regardless of the consequences of the struggle for the capitalists, for their system, or for the government, without drawing back out of consideration for any interests other than those of the embattled class.¹³

As seen in this light, trade union activity which advances and defends the interests of the working class within capitalism can also promote the process of formation of a class which will struggle against capitalism. To be sure, the

conscious policies of a given union leadership could frequently contradict and negate this process, and this must direct any attention to the issues of policies and programmes pursued inside a given trade union movement. For example, we can say that the NLC, by struggling against incorporation and by demonstrating its autonomy through the seizure of initiative from the state, as well as presenting the WCD as an alternative programme to be followed by the state, has facilitated this process. On the other hand, had the NLC refused to withdraw its support for the 1979 budget or failed to mobilize behind a demand to end the wage freeze, it could have correctly been described as inhibiting the autonomous development of the Nigerian working class.

One of the lessons Marxists over this century have had to learn, of course, is that there is nothing inevitable about the transition from trade union practice to revolutionary practice or from socialist rhetoric to effective socialist politics. To illustrate, the NLC's WCD, while no doubt a carefully considered compendium of socio-economic as well as political demands which could amount to a structural transformation of society if implemented, cannot be taken at face value. It is one thing to make demands or even take actions that could produce the demise of the status quo, but quite another to have the resources as well as the organisational capabilities to steer society in the desired direction after the old order collapses. As we have seen, the NLC is clearly not in a position to take hold of the situation in the event of its

action directly or indirectly 'bringing about the fall of a regime, for instance. It is neither allowed to participate in politics nor does it possess any measure of influence over the coercive instruments of the state. It can offer all too little resistance when the chiefs of the armed forces pick up the power lying in the street.¹⁴

But if we recognize that we are talking of a process, rather than taking a snap-shot, we may see the NLC's growing opposition to the state, and the domination of bourgeois ideology (the WCD is of manifest importance in this regard) as of no little significance. It does suggest that forces are at work moving the Nigerian working class beyond struggles for the realisation of its immediate interests, towards the attainment of its fundamental interests as well. As Waterman has put it in the African context, "we need to look at class and class consciousness not as things that exist but as relationships that develop."¹⁵ It is certainly pertinent to bear in mind that revolutionary consciousness itself has a "dynamic nature" which, according to Miliband, marks

... its character as a process, which is constantly changing, and which is susceptible not only to advance but to regress, and certainly in no way unilinear.... revolutionary consciousness is not some kind of Marxist state of grace which, once achieved, is total and irreversible. It is a certain understanding of the nature of the social order and of what needs to be done about it. As such, it comprises many uncertainties, tensions, contradictions, open questions, and possibilities or error and regression.¹⁶

Therefore, what has meant the development of class consciousness in the Nigerian labour movement can be said to

confirm, following Miliband further, what a 'strict reading of the record, both of capitalism and of the working class, suggests: .i.e., "that the expectation of a growing development in the working class ... of a will for radical change is not in the least unreasonable or 'metaphysical'".¹⁷ Rather, what seems unreasonable, unrealistic, idealistic, and "metaphysical", is the expectation that the working class will forevermore continue to play a defensive role vis-à-vis capitalism, and relatedly that socialist theory and practice will be indefinitely confined to such a defensive role vis-à-vis a structure of subordination, domination and exploitation. The socialist rhetoric of the NLC's leadership, no less than the militancy of its economic demands or its resistance to corporatist integration, need to be treated seriously in the above light.

Even granting all this, however, one cannot forget one crucial aspect of the working class in peripheral capitalist societies like Nigeria: it is a minority of the population, by any definition. The NLC cannot be said to represent and organize the majority, or anything like it, of the population. Nor does it have the potential to do so, given the nature of the subordinate classes (mostly peasants, farmers, a large fraction of the petty bourgeoisie and the urban poor) who together constitute the majority. Owing to the "enclave" nature of the political economy, the working class is likely to remain a minority in Nigeria for the foreseeable future, and the role that the NLC can play (assuming the NLC itself remains

intact) in class formation for these subordinate classes is therefore very limited.

Industrialization in peripheral capitalisms is concentrated in very few centres. As Geertz has written, "what was not foreseen ... was the degree to which development could take place without involving the mass of the population in the countries where it occurred, the degree to which it could produce modern islands in unmodern seas."¹⁸ In Nigeria, the NLC, just as capitalist development itself, is Lagos-centred: 34 out of the 42 unions are located in Lagos with 66 percent of the NEC residing in Lagos. (We can see the full significance of this, if we bear in mind that only 60 percent attendance is required to form the quorum at NEC meetings.) We already observed the Lagos vs. "hinterland" problem as it arose regarding both the 1979 budget struggle and the 1981 general strike. There is clearly a contradiction in the militancy of the NLC, therefore reflecting a certain "isolation effect."

However, it must be said in the same breath, if we are to be properly dialectical, that to the extent that both the "politics" and the "economics" of the society are acted out in the urban arena, Lagos thus also becomes the forum of the class struggle. This concentration in the "modern island" does after all present its own opportunities: societal inequalities become more sharply defined in the full glare of the working class and the other urban subordinate classes. As Peace puts it:

Of such extreme inegalitarianism wage earners are acutely aware by virtue of the national elites being primarily Lagos-based. Perceptions of gross inequality are continually reinforced by day-to-day experience of exceptional conspicuous consumption in an urban arena overwhelmingly characterized by the poverty of the majority. More particularly, such social injustice includes the gradual elimination of workers' rights to personal improvement and, by implication, those of their children.¹⁹

What really needs to be assessed, therefore, is whether the NLC is giving or can give political leadership to other classes in society. The 1981 general strike (like the 1964 strike²⁰) clearly demonstrated that working class action provides one of the rare moments for solidarity among the subordinated classes or at least for those located in the enclaves. The strike, called by the NLC, offered the opportunity for the marginalized classes to pull together, a collective struggle in which students, market women, food hawkers, roadside sellers, petty-traders, petty-craftsmen, the unemployed and the urban poor in general participated. The same thing can be said about the May Day celebration. The fervour with which the general public has embraced collective action against the corrupt civilian government definitely has underlined the people's yearning for change.

Critically, however, other than articulating workers' demands in the "Charter" and speaking increasingly of the class struggle and its own vanguard role in such struggle (compare Sunmonu's May Day Speeches, 1980 and 1981), the NLC has not really transcended the terrain of trade union activity, characterized by its "sporadic, defensive and localized"²¹ nature. Nor can it; for the NLC has hitherto been unable to forge an

alliance with the potential allies of the working class, even though Sunmonu has referred to the need to work with "peasants, students and progressive intellectuals."²² As already noted, a few socialist intellectuals have participated in NLC activities. Students too showed up at the May Day Parade. But there is as yet no formal alliance between these groups and the NLC, neither has such an alliance been forged with peasants or, in any permanent fashion, even with the urban poor. Yet, the need clearly exists for all these subordinated, dominated and exploited classes to form a broad opposition front to bourgeois rule.

What all this suggests is an old dictum. There is no substitute for a revolutionary party not only to "integrate the totality of working class experience and demands" as well as "to catalyze, generalize, and raise to the national political level the struggle for workers' power,"²³ but also "to intervene politically in the routine process of resource allocation"²⁴ and thus speak to the needs of the dominated and subordinated classes who form the majority in society. It is therefore worrisome that, other than stressing at the Kano conference that the NLC's "non-involvement in partisan politics should not be misconstrued to mean that the congress shall be apolitical and isolated from political issues," Sunmonu has not actually mounted a serious challenge to (the Trade Unions) Act 31 (formerly Decree 31) which bars the labour movement from politics. The exclusion of the labour movement from politics has eliminated, in real terms, the possibility of the emergence

of a socialist political party that would found itself on the working class while reaching out to all subordinate classes.

Although the NLC has repeatedly called for the abrogation of punitive and restrictive measures, including Act 31, it is clear from the generalization of the issue that the NLC is not yet ready to challenge its exclusion from party politics. As long as this situation persists, the NLC will remain effectively sidelined in the struggle for political power, even though the labour movement palpably affects the political process.

The struggle for political power is going to be one long, uphill struggle. As it is, the present orientation of the Nigerian labour movement, including the conscious policy of its leadership, appears to signify that the NLC will continue to represent and give militant expression to the interests of the working class. Such an orientation will put the NLC in direct conflict with the state, in which case the NLC will continue to represent the main visible opposition (if not the only real one) to the Nigerian ruling class.

In the meantime, the present orientation of the NLC is already a troubling development for the Nigerian ruling class and its allies, who have so far attempted (unsuccessfully) to change the leadership of the labour movement to a pliant one that would think more in terms of class collaboration. An attempt (so far unsuccessful) has also been made to split the labour movement in a bid to weaken it. In 1981, both the Ojeli campaign and the CDTU alternative failed in this regard. It is possible, in fact it is to be expected, that the state will

continue to pursue tactics that will produce either of these results. At the same time, an attempt by the state to destabilize and/or quash the labour movement altogether or at least embark upon a new round of probing and restructuring of the working class organisation cannot be ruled out.

Already, the state is attempting to destabilize the NLC by withdrawing the automatic dues check-off which workers pay into the coffers of the NLC through their individual unions. The Registrar of Trade Unions has directed the 42 affiliates of the NLC to cease paying check-off contributions to the NLC or face the cancellation of their registration as well as the withdrawal of their recognition by the government. The Registrar has also announced the government's intention to cancel the registration as well as withdraw its recognition of the NLC as the only central labour organization in the country. The Registrar claims that the basis of this new offensive against the NLC was the failure of the latter "to make financial returns to the office of the Registrar of Trade Unions since its inception in 1978,"²⁵ as required by sections 39, 41, 42, 43, and 44 of Act 31. While not disputing the fact that audited accounts of the trade unions should be returned to the Registrar, the NLC revealed that the Registrar had refused to accept and approve its audited accounts and financial returns.²⁶

As the debate over the financial returns rages, one thing is, however, clear: Act 31 does not empower the Registrar to order the trade unions to cease the payment of check-off

contributions to the NLC. Meanwhile, Umoh James Umoh has proffered his own ready-made solution to the check-off crisis:

One way of procuring a peaceful settlement of the current dispute between the NLC and the Registrar is for the Congress to stop giving covert and overt support to the current wave of industrial action in the country ... If the NLC is seen to be giving vocal or active support to industrial actions, it would run into head-on collision with the government, who [sic] has many weapons, including the Registrar of Trade Unions, at its disposal.²⁷

For now, no one knows what will ultimately be the fate of the NLC. To the extent that confrontation between the state and organized labour is the most visible form of class conflict in Nigeria, and to the extent that the contradiction that does exist between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat is a real one (and does increasingly present itself as a more and more important one - to which both the need for corporatism, as well as its breakdown, attest), it would appear that the working class may yet lose many battles before it wins the war. It seems likely that the NLC will remain vulnerable as long as it cannot mobilize the other subordinate classes behind a revolutionary project. The prospects for this happening are rather dim at this time, given the political as well as socio-economic context in which the NLC currently operates - its exclusion from the political arena being a crucial limitation in this regard. One thing is sure: the denouement will be determined by class struggle itself.

APPENDICESAPPENDIX A

INDUSTRIAL UNIONS' MEMBERSHIP STRENGTH AND MONTHLY CONTRIBUTION:
UP-TO-DATE (DECEMBER 1980) TOTAL DUES PAYMENTS*

S/No.	Unions	<u>A</u> Total Dues Paid	<u>B</u> 28 Monthly Rate	<u>C</u> Membership Based on A/B
1.	Agricultural and Allied Workers Union of Nigeria	N2,925.00	N104.46	1,045
2.	National Union of Air Transport & Service Employees	800.00	28.57	286
3.	Nigeria Coal Miners Union	4,810.04	171.78	1,718
4.	National Union of Electricity and Gas Employees	24,400.00	871.42	8,714
5.	Medical & Health Workers Union of Nigeria	10,165.74	363.03	3,630
6.	Precision Electrical and Related Equipment Workers Union	17,400.00	621.42	6,214
7.	National Association of Nigeria Nurses and Midwives	10,000.00	357.14	3,571
8.	Nigeria Union of Journalists	6,324.00	225.85	2,258
9.	Nigeria Union of Seamen and Water Transport Workers	5,496.00	196.28	1,963
10.	Dock Workers Union of Nigeria	37,850.00	1,351.78	13,518

S/No.	Unions	<u>A</u> Total Dues Paid	<u>B</u> 28 Monthly Rate	<u>C</u> Membership Based on A/B
11.	Nigeria Ports Authority Workers Union	56,000.00	2,000.00	20,000
12.	Nigeria Union of Teachers	32,500.00	1,160.71	11,607
13.	Nigeria Union of Railwaymen	70,324.00	2,511.57	25,116
14.	Nigeria Civil Service Union	36,000.00	1,285.71	12,857
15.	Civil Service Technical Workers Union of Nigeria	117,421.81	4,193.63	41,936
16.	Nigerian Union of Civil Service Typists, Stenographic and Allied Staff	2,700.00	96.42	964
17.	Radio, Television and Theatre Workers Union	2,500.00	89.28	893
18.	National Union of Banks, Insurance, & Financial Institutions Employees	92,211.59	3,293.27	32,933
19.	National Union of Food, Beverages and Tobacco Employees	33,067.34	1,180.97	11,810
20.	National Union of Hotel and Personal Services Workers	2,000.00	71.42	714
21.	National Union of Shop and Distributive Employees	24,000.00	857.14	8,571
22.	Printing and Publishing Workers Union	6,000.00	214.28	2,143

S/No.	Unions	<u>A</u> Total Dues Paid	<u>B</u> 28 Monthly Rate	<u>C</u> Membership Based on A/B
23.	National Union of Paper & Paper Product Workers	1,500.00	53.57	536
24.	National Union of Postal and Telecommunications Employees	49,400.00	1,753.57	17,536
25.	Nigeria Union of Construction and Civil Engineering Workers	63,555.50	2,269.83	22,698
26	National Union of Furniture Fixtures and Woodworkers	14,586.70	520.95	5,210
27.	Metal Products Workers Union	41,749.38	1,491.04	14,910
28.	National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers	19,500.00	696.42	6,964
29.	National Union of Chemical and Non-Metallic Product Workers	53,178.76	1,899.24	18,992
30.	Footwear, Leather and Rubber Products Workers Union	1,000.00	35.71	357
31.	Union of Shipping, Clearing and Forwarding Agencies of Nigeria	16,188.22	578.15	5,782
32.	National Union of Textile Garment and Tailoring Workers	35,000.00	1,250.00	12,500
33.	National Union of Road Transport Workers	7,750.00	276.78	2,768

S/No.	Unions	<u>A</u> Total Dues Paid	<u>B</u> 28 Monthly Rate	<u>C</u> Membership Based on A/B
34.	Auto., Boat, Transport Equipment & Allied Workers Union of Nigeria	9,000.00	321.42	3,214
35.	Iron and Steel Workers Union	3,500.00	125.00	1,250
36.	Metallic and Non-metallic Mines Workers Union	8,500.00	303.57	3,036
37.	Recreational Services Employees Union	8,349.81	298.17	2,982
38.	Non-Academic Staff Union of Educational and Associated Institutes	50,000.00	1,785.71	17,857
39.	Nigeria Union of Local Govt. Employees	6,000.00	214.28	2,143
40.	National Union of Public Corporations Employees	11,720.00	418.57	4,186
41.	Nigeria Union of Pensioners	6,467.00	230.96	2,310
42.	Customs and Excise and Immigration Staff Union	22,400.00	800.00	8,000

*Source: Compiled from NLC files, 1981.

APPENDIX BSUMMARY CHART OF FORMATIONS AND SPLITS OF
CENTRAL LABOUR ORGANIZATIONS IN NIGERIA*

Date of Formation	Name of Organization	Leadership/Political Orientation
August 1943	Trades Union Congress (of Nigeria) TUC(N)	Led by T.A. Bankole, M.A. Tokunboh and F.O. Coker.
March 1949	Nigerian National Federation of Labour (NNFL)	Led by M.A.O. Imoudu, F.O. Coker and N. Eze. Set up as a rival to TUC.
May 1950	(The First) Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC)	Merger of NNFL and TUC dominated by radicals - Coker, Imoudu and Eze. Affiliated internationally to WFTU.
March 1951	Committee of ICFTU-affiliated Unions in Nigeria	Led by H.P. Adebola. Had covert support from conservatives in NLC.
August 1953	All Nigeria Trade Union Federation (ANTUF)	Led by Imoudu and G.C. Nzeribe. Set up after the collapse of the NLC. Unaffiliated internationally.
April 1956	Council of ICFTU-affiliated Unions	The successor to the Committee of ICFTU-affiliated unions. Support from N.A. Cole, H.P. Adebola and L.L. Borha, who retained positions in ANTUF.
April 1957	National Council of Trade Unions of Nigeria (NCTUN)	Led by Borha and Coker. Affiliated to ICFTU.
March 1959	Trade Union Congress of Nigeria (TUCN)	Led by Imoudu and Borha. Merger of ANTUF and NCTUN. Contested affiliation with ICFTU.
April 1960	(The First) Nigerian Trade Union Congress (NTUC)	Led by Imoudu and Nzeribe, split from the TUCN.

Date of Formation	Name of Organization	Leadership/Political Orientation
May 1962	United Labour Congress (ULC)	Led by Adebola and Borha. Merger of TUCN and NTUC. Affiliated with ICFTU.
May 1962	Independent United Labour Congress (IULC)	Led by Imoudu and A.N. Ikoro, NTUC personnel splitting from ULC. Had "fraternal relations" with WFTU.
December 1962	Nigerian Workers Council (NWC)	Led by N. Anunobi and N. Chukwura. Split from the ULC and affiliated to the IFCTU (WCL).
August 1963	Nigerian Trade Union Congress (NTUC)	Take-over of IULC by W. Goodluck and S.U. Bassey.
August 1963	Labour Unity Front (LUF)	Split from NTUC, led by Imoudu and Ikoro.
September 1963	Joint Action Committee (JAC)	Temporary Alliance of all trade union centres.
August 1970(a)	United Committee of Central Labour Organizations (UCCLLO)	Temporary alliance of NTUC, ULC, LUF and NWC.
September 1971	United Labour Congress (Reconstituted) ULC(R)	Split from ULC, led by J.O. James and E.U. Ijeh.
August 1973	Nigerian Trade Union Federation (NTUF)	Merger of LUF, NTUC, and ULC (Reconstituted), led by Goodluck, James and A.A. Ishola.
December 1975	(The Second) Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC)	Merger of all trade union centres, led by Goodluck and E.O. Odeyemi.
February 1978(b)	(The Third) Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC)	Single central labour organization by Law (Military Decree), comprises the industrial unions. Led by H.A. Sunmonu and D.C. Ojeli.

*Sources: (a) From August 1943 to August 1970 — Adapted from Robin Cohen, "Nigeria's Central Trade Union Organization: A Study Guide". Journal of Modern African Studies (9) (3), October 1971 pp. 467-8. Reprinted in idem, Labour and Politics in Nigeria (London: Heinemann, 1974), pp. 104-107.

(b) From September 1971 to February 1978 — my research notes from field work undertaken in Nigeria in 1981.

APPENDIX C

INDUSTRIAL UNIONS Results of Elections at Inaugural Conferences, 1977. POSITIONS CONTESTED - JUNIOR STAFF*

KEJIM CENTRE

Industrial Unions	President	Vice-President	Treasurer	Internal Auditor	Trustee
1. National Union of Shops and Distributive Employees	J.O. Ogundipe	A. Sowemimo	S.E. Bediare	J.C. Nwosu	D.E. Roberts R.A. Ikotun P.C. Iyama
2. National Union of Hotels and Personal Services	A.B. Oduduru	T.I. Nwakauba	C. Isi	A.D. Awah	T.B. Ibanga P.O. Ukrabi C. Ewuzie
3. National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers	J.E. Dubre	J. Akinlaja	P.E. Asuqub	S.E.M. Okoturo	E.T. Okene J.A. Aloye A.O. Aigbokan
4. National Union of Chemical and non-Metallic Products Workers	K.A. Akinbode	M.E. Onoabhagho	D. Bassey	S.A. Yusoof	S.A. Afuwape O. Okinlaja B.A. Musa
5. Automobile, Boat-yards, Transport Equipment and Allied Workers Union of Nigeria	L.T. Braimah	O.E. Nwabia	Mrs. O.O. Ehaghe	A. Oyeniran	P. Ogoro M. Kolawole Alb. Y. Mustapha
6. Nigeria Union of Journalists	Chief Michael Asaju	Bassey E. Bassey	J.O. Odesanya	Sam. Ogwua	Pls! Oloyede Lanre Yussuf Alhaji K. Fagge

INDUSTRIAL UNIONS Results of Elections at Inaugural Conferences, 1977. POSITIONS CONTESTED - JUNIOR STAFF

KADUCU CENTER

Industrial Unions	President	Vice-President	Treasurer	Internal Auditor	Trustee
1. Civil Service Technical Workers Union	H.A. Sunmonu	C.E. Ese	H.K.I. Ramos	M.A. Sunmonu	E.A. Ejiwunmi D.M. Airede F.S. Adesanya
2. Nigerian Coal Miners Union	F.O. Ude	E.O. Nnaedo	B.B. Nwodo	K. Obute	I. Nwankwo S. Iwule M.O.C. Ene
3. Nigerian Union of Seamen and Water Transport Workers	J.M.O. Jatto	O. Davies	J. Uzoigwe	S. Osagiede	C.C. Ezeike T. Okurwagbe C.A. Frank
4. Nigerian Civil Service Union	D.C. Ojelli	S.A. Ayorinde	A.E. Odogun	A.E. Abia	D.C. Ojelli A.E. Odogun C.A. Anedi
5. Nigerian Union of Civil Service Typ- ists, Stenographic and Allied Staff	E.S. Ojelwas	E.O. Taiwo	S.A. Imolode	Mrs. M.T.O. Ajayi	
6. Non-Academic Staff Union of Educational and Associated Institutions	L.A. Afolabi	E. Edogun	I. Babarimwa	K.S.K. Umunnakwe	E.O. Ojo A. Agundejai Mallam I.Y. Musa
7. National Union of Public Corpor- ations Employees	O. Sule	S.I. Alagbe	D.A. Adeyemo	F.S. Ewenla	S.A. Ajoyi A. Aldimeji J.O. Agbe

INDUSTRIAL UNIONS Results of Elections at Inaugural Conferences, 1977. POSITIONS CONTESTED - JUNIOR STAFF

IBADAN CENTRE

Industrial Unions	President	Vice-President	Treasurer	Internal Auditor	Trustee
1. Agricultural and Allied Workers Union of Nigeria	L.A. Ayorinde	A. Megbata	Joseph Akpote-hori	B.M. Igweonu	P.N. Dantoro L. Olatunde S.A. Adefola
2. Radio Television and Theatre Workers Union	Isaak Chuku Mgboahuruike	V. Taylor	Agbo Sokunbi	P. Obomanu	C.O. Olude O. Adigun A. Salawu
3. Nigerian Union of Pensioners	Chief L. Adegun	Chief D.A. Ike	Alhaji M. Adesanya	Mr. Opeola	Alh. L.A. Olatéju J. Ayejoto S.O. Agbi
4. Printing and Publishing Workers Union	Daniel Mangga	H.A. Mxenwa	J.O. Collisto	J.O. Aluko	P.I. Iretele J. Ayejoto S.O. Adbgi
5. National Union of Paper and Paper Products Workers	B.A. Muritala	J. Akpede	G.A. Famojuro	S.E. Ekiye	M. Anakwe A. Soetan J.I. Egboh
6. Metal Products Workers Union of Nigeria	M.E. Mpsmugo	E. Anyin	P. Aghedo	L. Ogbondo	M. Umaru K.A. Lawal C.U. Agbi
7. National Union of Road Transport Workers	M.A. Bakare	E.O. Bamiboye	T.A. Bello	A. Achinda	C.U. Okoro Mallam M. Gombe D. Odewale
8. National Union of Local Government Employees	E.O. Irelewiyi	Mal. M. Jumare	K.A. Giwa	L.O. Olomufiyi	S.A. Taiwo Mr. Kushimo

INDUSTRIAL UNIONS Results of Elections at Inaugural Conferences, 1977. POSITIONS CONTESTED - JUNIOR STAFF

KADUNA CENTRE

Industrial Unions	President	Vice-President	Treasurer	Internal Auditor	Trustee
1. Nigerian Union of Construction and Engineering Workers	R.O. Sanyaolu	J. Ikaegbu	A.M. Eda	L. Otamewo	P.I. Ighedusa S. Okeowo J. Oriyabieh
2. Medical and Health Workers Union	A.A. Akinbola	Alh. A. Chiroma	A.O. Joshua	A. Oyayode	I.E. Korubo Mrs. E.T. Oyeanya Mrs. E.A. Olagbaiye
3. National Association of Nurses and Midwives	Mrs. H.E. Omole	Mrs. J.U. Anigbo	Mrs. M.M. Ade-Onojobi	R.A. Amande	Mrs. C. Wakama Alhaji S. Bala Mrs. V. Ajayi
4. National Union of Furniture Fixture and Woodworkers	Lst. Oyebola	A.L. Kantlock	N.O. Nwachuku	B.C. Zor	James Oldipo G. Adeleye S.O. Okeun
5. Footwear Leather and Rubber Products Workers Union	E.E. Aigbata	S.N. Okafor	J.O. Ogunrinde	Y. Bello	E.A. Ituen K. Adedokun T. Oba
6. National Union of Textile Garment and Tailoring Workers	Bello Mohammed Ajibade	Prince R.G. Ajibade	D.D. Suleman	C. Nwaogugwu	E.C. Balonwu A. Obatayo H.U. Nwachukwu
7. Iron and Steel Workers Union of Nigeria	Alhaji A.A. Bakare	K. Kadiri	T. Dokunmy	T. Njoku	E.A. Azuike M.F. Akintoye H. Ekocho
8. Metallic and Non-Metallic Mines Workers Union	Alhaji Danladi	M. Mnate	Alhaji A. Abubakar	J. Isa	S. Pam Y. Davou

INDUSTRIAL UNIONS Results of Elections at Inaugural Conferences, 1977. POSITIONS CONTESTED - JUNIOR STAFF
LACOS (CITY HALL) CENTRE

Industrial Unions	President	Vice-President	Treasurer	Internal Auditor	Trustee
1. National Union of Air Transport Services Employees	Alhaji A. Yusuf	A.B. Olumo	S.O. Opayemi	C.O. Ahiwe	G.L. Awodeyi T.A.D. Okunwole
2. National Union of Electricity and Gas Workers	P.O. Ero-Phillips	O.A. Adedji	T.A. Tijani	Yusuf Musa	I.O. Sangobiyi M.B.O. Ewakunor M.O. Omokoro
3. Precision Electric-ai and Related Equipment Workers Union	A. Adeniran	A.O. Onubu	F. Adeleye	J.A. Odufuwa	J. Omokaro A. Akwari A. Ighodaro
4. Nigeria Union of Teachers	Chief A.A.O. Ezenwa	Chief D.O.A. Adebamobi	M.A. Omisore	I. Oyeneye	Chief A.A. Ezenwa M.A. Omisore S.K. Bablola
5. National Union of Banks Insurance and Finance Institution Employees	A.A. Eyenike	E.A. Olugbami	M.O. Ogebor	A.K.A. Akinola	E.J. Oletu J. Aynwa J.O. Ojo
6. Nigeria Union of Pharmacists, Dental & Paramedical Technologists	No Conference held on scheduled date. Component parts of union have forwarded a petition to the Federal Commissioner for Labour.				
7. Dock Workers Union of Nigeria	J. Ogunleye	M.L. Sobrowe	G. Raji	I.D. Olusanya	Dr. I. Awani J. Ogunleye A. Asagie
8. Nigerian Ports Authority Workers Union	A. Agbonikena	O. Attie	S. Diko	A.O. Thomas	Mrs. O.A. Onifade S.W. Ogaram J.E.B. Okoro
9. Nigerian Union of Railwaymen	J.O. Adegbesan	T. Abu	D.N. Ofuokwu	J.C. Madu	A.O. Ibirogba E.J. Obot I.P. Adeipe

INDUSTRIAL UNIONS Results of Elections at Inaugural Conferences, 1977. POSITIONS CONTESTED - JUNIOR STAFF
LACOS (YABA COLLEGE) CENTRE

Industrial Unions	President	Vice-President	Treasurer	Internal Auditor	Trustee
1. Customs Excise and Immigration Staff Union	Mallam S.M. Umaru	L.V. Mangete	U.E. Udoh	J. James	O.O. Eziakor P.A. Gboshe Mal. M.D. Hozeah
2. Recreation Services Employees Union	E.E. Omenu	A.L. Okwuosa	S.W. Wachuku	E.E. Odoh	B.A. Ajibade R.O. Fabunmi O. Saibu
3. Union of Shipping Clearing and Forwarding Agencies	F.A.K. Woede	R.A. Agbola	S. Sambo	O.B. Efekeh-rohobo	E.O. Odoh E.O. Duru C.C. Chinagoro
4. National Union of Postal and Telecommunications Employees	J.D. Iruoje	A.A. Agunwande	O.A. Sodade	P.N. Eze	S.C. Onowu P.E. Mbene E.O. Imagie
5. National Union of Food, Beverage and Tobacco Employees	K.O. Lawrence	A. Detade	A. Ajiduah	T. Ojulari	P.I.I. Nwosu J.A. Afolabi Ahaji M. Awalu

*Source: Michael Abiodun, Restructuring of Trade Unions in Nigeria: 1976-1978 (Jos: Salama Press, 1978), pp. 44-47.

APPENDIX D**NEW STRUCTURE OF TRADE UNIONS (1977)*****1. AGRICULTURAL AND ALLIED WORKERS' UNION OF NIGERIA**

Agriculture and Livestock Production. Agricultural services including Animal husbandry and horticulture, veterinary services, pest control and irrigation services. Forestry, logging, fishing and game reserves.

2. NATIONAL UNION OF AGRICULTURAL AND ALLIED EMPLOYERS

All employers in Agriculture, Logging and Fishing.

3. NATIONAL UNION OF AIR TRANSPORT SERVICES EMPLOYEES

All employees of commercial airlines and Travel Agencies other than aircraft pilots, aircraft engineers.

4. NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF AIRCRAFT PILOTS AND ENGINEERS

Aircraft pilots and flight engineers, including flight officers and ground engineers.

5. NIGERIAN COAL MINERS' UNION

Extraction of coal including prospecting for coal and preparing sites for the extraction of coal.

6. NATIONAL UNION OF ELECTRICITY AND GAS WORKERS

Generation, transmission and distribution of electric light and energy for public consumption. Manufacture of gas in gas works and other forms of energy.

7. ELECTRICITY AND GAS SENIOR STAFF ASSOCIATION

All senior staff employed in electricity and gas industries other than senior staff of NEPA.

8. MEDICAL AND HEALTH WORKERS' UNION OF NIGERIA

All medical and health workers including the paramedical staff published in L.N. NO. 30 in Federal Gazette No. 28 of 8th June, 1972 but excluding medical doctors, pharmacists, radiographers, medical Laboratory technologists, dental technologists, nurses and midwives.

9. NIGERIA MEDICAL ASSOCIATION (NOT REGISTERED)

Medical and Veterinary doctors registered to practice in Nigeria.

10. NIGERIA UNION OF PHARMACISTS, RADIOGRAPHERS, LABORATORY AND DENTAL TECHNOLOGISTS

All radiographers, pharmacists, dental technologists, medical and veterinary laboratory technologists qualified to be so classified in Nigeria.

11. PRECISION, ELECTRICAL AND RELATED EQUIPMENTS WORKERS' UNION

Manufacture, assembly, sale and service of electronic, precision and electrical equipments and appliances, measuring, controlling, laboratory and scientific instruments; surgical, medical and dental instruments, optical and photographic goods; watches, clocks and other horological equipment; musical instruments; security equipment.

12. NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA NURSES AND MIDWIVES

All nurses and midwives of all grades and by whatever name called, qualified to register and practice in Nigeria.

13. NIGERIA UNION OF JOURNALISTS

Newspaper editors, reporters, feature writers, newspaper and similarly classified workers in the newspaper industry. Daily Times Group of Companies Senior Staff Association.

14. NIGERIA UNION OF SEAMEN AND WATER TRANSPORT WORKERS

All persons employed in the manning of ocean going, inland waterways, coastal and harbour vessels or crafts afloat, including fishing vessels but excluding persons in the officer cadre of such vessels or crafts, civil service employees of inland waterways, and employees of the Nigerian Ports Authority.

15. NIGERIAN MERCHANT NAVY OFFICERS AND WATER TRANSPORT SENIOR STAFF ASSOCIATION

All senior staff in Water Transport as described in respect of junior employees in the Water Transport group.

16. DOCKWORKERS' UNION OF NIGERIA

All dockworkers excluding those employed by the Nigerian Ports Authority.

17. NATIONAL UNION OF DOCK LABOUR EMPLOYERS

All employers of dock labour excluding the Nigerian Ports Authority.

18. NIGERIAN PORTS AUTHORITY WORKERS' UNION

All employees, excluding senior staff of the Nigerian Ports Authority.

19. NIGERIA UNION OF TEACHERS

Teachers employed in educational institutions of all types excluding universities and associated institutions.

20. ACADEMIC STAFF UNION OF UNIVERSITIES AND ASSOCIATED INSTITUTIONS

Academic staff of all types employed in Universities, Research Centres and other institutions of higher learning.

21. NIGERIA UNION OF RAILWAYMEN

All categories of employees, excluding senior staff employed in Railway Transport.

22. NIGERIA CIVIL SERVICE UNION

All junior employees of Federal and State Governments excluding Customs, Immigration, technical, Typists and Stenographic staff.

23. ASSOCIATION OF SENIOR CIVIL SERVANTS OF NIGERIA (NOT REGISTERED)

All employees, other than junior staff of Federal and State governments.

24. CIVIL SERVICE TECHNICAL WORKERS' UNION OF NIGERIA

All junior staff employed in the civil services of the Federal and State Governments classified as technical employees.

25. NIGERIA UNION OF CIVIL SERVICE TYPISTS, STENOGRAPHIC AND ALLIED STAFF

All typists, stenographic and allied staff, by whatever name called, employed in the civil services of the Federal and State Governments.

26. RADIO, TELEVISION AND THEATRE WORKERS' UNION

Employees in Radio, Television, Theatre, Motion Picture Production, Distribution and Projection. Operation of Cinema Services allied to the foregoing.

27. NATIONAL UNION OF BANKS, INSURANCE AND FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS EMPLOYEES

Banks and closely related institutions, such as mortgage companies, industrial loan institutions, agricultural credit agencies, cooperative credit societies, investment companies and holding companies. Insurance carriers of all kinds; insurance agents and brokers; organizations servicing insurance carriers; consultants for policy holders; adjusting agencies; other closely related institution not otherwise mentioned. All types of dealers in Real Estate.

28. ASSOCIATION OF SENIOR STAFF OF BANKS, INSURANCE AND FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Senior staff of Banks, Insurance Companies, Real Estates and closely related institutions as described in group 27.

29. NIGERIA EMPLOYERS' ASSOCIATION OF BANKS, INSURANCE AND ALLIED INSTITUTIONS

Employers in Banks, Insurance, Real Estates, and closely related institutions as described in group 27.

30. NATIONAL UNION OF FOOD, BEVERAGE AND TOBACCO EMPLOYEES

Manufacture of food for human consumption and of related products such as chewing gum, spices, prepared foods for animals and fowls. Slaughtering preparation and preservation of meat. Manufacture of dairy products. Canning and preserving of fruits and vegetables. Canning and preserving of fish and other sea foods. Manufacture of grain mill products. Manufacture of bakery products. Sugar factories and refineries. Manufacture of cocoa, chocolate and sugar confectionery and miscellaneous food preparations. Distilling, rectifying and blending of spirits. Wine industries, Breweries and manufacturing of malt, manufacture of non-alcoholic beverages such as soft drinks and carbonated mineral waters. Manufacture of tobacco products. Stemming redrying and other operations connect with preparing raw tobacco leaf for manufacturing.

31. FOOD, BEVERAGE AND TOBACCO SENIOR STAFF ASSOCIATION.

All senior staff employed in food, beverage and tobacco industries.

32. ASSOCIATION OF FOOD, BEVERAGE AND TOBACCO EMPLOYERS

All employers in food, beverage and tobacco industries.

33. NATIONAL UNION OF HOTEL AND PERSONAL SERVICES WORKERS

Services generally involving the care of the person or his apparel, hotels, restaurants, cafés, taverns and other drinking and eating places. Laundries and laundry services, cleaning and dyeing. Barber and beauty shops. Domestic services. Portrait and commercial photographic studies. Shops and offices cleaning and related services.

34. HOTEL AND PERSONAL SERVICES EMPLOYERS' ASSOCIATION

All employers in the hotel and allied services as-described in respect of junior staff.

35. NATIONAL UNION OF SHOP AND DISTRIBUTIVE EMPLOYEES

Wholesale and retail trade. The re-sale (sale without transformation) of goods to business units and to institutions and Government. Importers and Exporters, Manufacturers' sales offices and agents. Commission merchants and commodity brokers. Assemblers and buyers of farm products and cooperative agricultural marketing associations. Re-sale of industrial and construction materials, machinery and equipment, and business and professional equipments. Warehousing, Grading and sorting, breaking bulk and re-packing. Re-sale (sale without transformation) of goods for personal or household consumption or utilization. Petrol filling stations, consumer cooperatives.

36. SHOP AND DISTRIBUTIVE TRADE SENIOR STAFF ASSOCIATION

All senior staff employed in the shop and distributive trade.

37. PRINTING AND PUBLISHING WORKERS' UNION

Printing, lithographing and publishing newspapers, periodicals, books, maps, atlases, sheet music and directories. Commercial or job printing. Commercial lithographing. Manufacture of greeting cards. Book-binding, paper ruling and other work related to book-binding. Services for the printing trade such as type-setting, engraving, copper plates, making woodcuts, photo-engraving, electro-typing and stereotyping.

38. NATIONAL UNION OF PAPER AND PAPER PRODUCTS WORKERS

Paper and paper-board mills and the manufacture of articles of pulp, paper and paper-board. Manufacture of pulp from wood, rags, and other fibres. Manufacture of pressed and moulded pulp goods, such as pulp plates and utensils, paper bags, boxes and other containers, cards, envelopes and stationery, wall-paper, toilet paper, straws and other articles made of paper and paper-board.

39. NATIONAL UNION OF POSTAL AND TELECOMMUNICATION EMPLOYEES

Communication services rendered to the public whether by post, telegraph, telephone or radio including the installation and maintenance of such service.

40. NIGERIA UNION OF CONSTRUCTION AND CIVIL ENGINEERING WORKERS

Construction, repair and demolition of buildings, highways, streets, and culverts. Heavy construction of such projects as sewers and water mains, railroads, piers, tunnels, subways, bridges, viaducts, dams, drainage projects, irrigation, flood control projects, hydro-electric plants, gas mains, pipelines and all other types of heavy construction. Marine construction such as dredging, land draining and reclamation, construction of harbours and waterways, airports, communication systems, such as telephone and telegraph lines, All other construction. Special trade contractors in the field of construction, such as carpenters, plumbers, plasterers, electricians, civil, architectural, structural and soil engineering, surveying and related services.

41. CONSTRUCTION AND CIVIL ENGINEERING SENIOR STAFF ASSOCIATION

Senior staff employed in the construction and civil engineering industry.

42. CONSTRUCTION AND CIVIL ENGINEERING EMPLOYERS' ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA

This union is open to all employers in the construction and civil engineering industry.

43. NATIONAL UNION OF FURNTIURE, FIXTURES AND WOODWORKERS

Manufacture of household, office, public building, professional and restaurant furniture. Office and Store fixtures, window and door screens and shades, regardless of materials used. Sawmills, and planing mills. Manufacture of lath, shingles, cooperage stock, veneers, plywood, and excelsior. Wood preserving and manufacture of finished articles made entirely or mainly of wood, bamboo, cane and cork. Manufacture of lumber, wooden building materials and pre-fabricated parts and structures. Manufacture of boxes, crates, drums, barrels, and other wooden containers. Manufacture of baskets and other rattan, reed or willow containers.

44. METAL PRODUCTS WORKERS' UNION OF NIGERIA

Manufacture of basic metal forms into finished products such as tin cans and other tin ware, hand tools, cutlery and hardware, hollow ware, metal stampings, lighting fixtures, fabricated wire products, metal shipping

containers, safes and vaults, steel springs, bolts, nuts, washers, rivets, collapsible tubes, ordnance including small arms and accessories. Fabrication of steel works, including the erection of steel works such as welding for bridges, industrial warehouses, tanks and motor lorry bodies. Industries engaged in enamelling, japanning and lacquering, galvanizing, plating and polishing metal products, blacksmithing and welding. Manufacture of silverware and jewellery.

45. NATIONAL UNION OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS WORKERS

Oil well and natural gas well operations, including prospecting, drilling, crude oil and natural gas extraction and oil and natural gas pipelines. Refining, distribution and marketing of natural gas and petroleum products including petroleum tanker drivers.

46. PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS SENIOR STAFF ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA

All senior staff employed in petroleum and natural gas described as for junior staff.

47. NATIONAL UNION OF CHEMICAL AND NON-METALLIC PRODUCTS WORKERS

Manufacture of basic industrial organic and inorganic chemicals, except products of petroleum and coal but including fertilizers. Explosives and fireworks, synthetic fibre and rubber, resins, plastics, elastomers and vegetable and animal oils and fats including the production of cake and meal by crushing or extraction from oilseeds and nuts. Manufacture of medicinal and pharmaceutical preparations, perfumes, cosmetics and other toilet preparations. Soaps and other washing and cleaning compounds including detergent. Polishes, inks, matches, candles and insecticides. Manufacture of clay products such as bricks, tiles, pipes, crucibles, architectural terra cotta, stove lining, chimney pipes and tops and refractories. Manufacture of glass and glass products except the grinding of optical lenses. Pottery, china and earthenware. Manufacture of all types of hydraulic cement such as portland. Manufacture of concrete, gypsum and plaster products, stone products. All other similar chemical and non-metallic products.

48. CHEMICAL AND NON-METALLIC PRODUCTS SENIOR STAFF ASSOCIATION

Senior staff employed in activities already described under this group.

49. FOOTWEAR, LEATHER AND RUBBER PRODUCTS WORKERS' UNION OF NIGERIA

Manufacture of all kinds of foot-wear, leggings and gaiters from leather, fabrics, plastics, wood and other materials. tanning, currying finishing embossing and japanning of all kinds of hides and skins and the manufacture of leather products (other than footwear and wearing apparel) such as luggage, handbags, pocket-books, cigarette and key bases, coin purses, saddlery, harness whips and other articles made of leather and leather products. Manufacture from natural or synthetic rubber of all kinds of rubber products such as tubes and tyres, vulcanized footwear industrial and mechanical rubber goods and rubber sundries such as mats, gloves, sponges and other vulcanized articles. The reclaiming of rubber from used tyres, scrap and miscellaneous waste rubber. Rebuilding retreading and vulcanizing of tyres. Dipping, mixing, rolling, cutting, and related processing of natural rubber, except on rubber plantations.

50. FOOTWEAR, LEATHER AND RUBBER PRODUCTS SENIOR STAFF ASSOCIATION

Senior staff engaged in Footwear, Leather and Rubber Products Industries.

51. UNION OF SHIPPING, CLEARING AND FORWARDING AGENCIES WORKERS OF NIGERIA

All employees excluding senior staff engaged by Shipping, Clearing and Forwarding Agencies.

52. SENIOR STAFF ASSOCIATION OF SHIPPING, CLEARING, AND FORWARDING AGENCIES

Senior staff of Shipping, Clearing and Forwarding Agencies.

53. NATIONAL UNION OF TEXTILE, GARMENT AND TAILORING WORKERS

Manufacture of textile including the preparation of textile fibre for spinning, weaving and finishing; knitting mills, cordage, rope, twine, and thread industries. Manufacture of weaving apparel and made-up textiles. Manufacture of carpets, rugs, oilcloth, linoleum, artificial leather waterproofing fabrics and jute mills.

54. TEXTILE, GARMENT AND TAILORING SENIOR STAFF ASSOCIATION

Senior staff engaged in industrial activities described as for junior staff in the industry.

55. NATIONAL UNION OF ROAD TRANSPORT WORKERS:

Transportation of passengers and foods by road, excluding the transportation of petroleum by road and transportation undertaken by self-employed persons.

56. ROAD TRANSPORT EMPLOYERS' ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA

Employers in the Road Transport Industry.

57. IRON AND STEEL WORKERS' UNION OF NIGERIA

The manufacture of basic iron and steel products consisting of all processes from smelting in blast furnaces to the semi-finished stage in rolling mills and foundries - that is, the production of billets, blooms, slabs or bars, re-rolling and drawing into basic forms such as sheets, plates, strips, tubes and pipes, rails, rods and wires, tin-plate, rough casting and forgings. Coke ovens associated with blast furnaces. The manufacture of basic non-ferrous metal products, consisting of all processes from smelting, alloying and refining, rolling, drawing, founding and casting.

58. AUTOMOBILE, BOATYARD, TRANSPORT EQUIPMENT AND ALLIED WORKERS' UNION OF NIGERIA

The manufacture and assembly of complete motor vehicles such as passenger automobiles, commercial cars and buses, truck and truck trailers, universal carriers, and special purpose motor vehicles such as (ambulances, taxi-cabs, etc.). Manufacture of motor vehicle parts and accessories such as engines, brakes, clutches, axles, gears, transmissions, wheels and frames, but excluding tyres and tubes. Repair of motor vehicles. Manufacture of motor-cycles, scooters, bicycles, tricycles, pedicabs and parts, including animal-drawn and hand-drawn vehicles. Shipyards and boat yards engaged in building and repair work. Specialized marine and ship parts manufacture and assembly. Ship breaking yards. Manufacture and assembly of other types of transport equipment.

59. AUTOMOBILE, BOATYARD, TRANSPORT EQUIPMENT AND ALLIED SENIOR STAFF ASSOCIATION

Senior Staff engaged in industrial activities described as for junior staff in the same industry.

60. METALLIC AND NON-METALLIC MINES WORKERS' UNION

Extraction of metalliferous and non-metalliferous ores, excepting coal and petroleum but including prospecting and preparing sites for the extraction of these ores. Also included are all supplemental operations for dressing and beneficiating ores and other crude minerals, such as

44

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breaking, milling, grinding, pulverizing washing, cleaning and grading. Quarrying, salt mining, chemical and fertilizer mineral mining are also included in this group.

61. METALLIC AND NON-METALLIC MINES SENIOR STAFF ASSOCIATION

All senior employees of metallic and non-metallic mining establishments described as for junior staff of this group.

62. NIGERIA MINING EMPLOYERS' ASSOCIATION

All employers in metallic and non-metallic mining operations other than petroleum and coal mining.

63. RECREATIONAL SERVICES EMPLOYEES' UNION

Stadia employees and related workers, Recreation Clubs by whatever name they are called, swimming pools, amusement centres including carnivals, circuses, zoological gardens and services similarly classified.

64. NON-ACADEMIC STAFF UNION OF EDUCATIONAL AND ASSOCIATED INSTITUTIONS

All non-academic staff employed in education, research and associated institutions.

65. NATIONAL UNION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

Employees of Local Government Councils

66. NATIONAL UNION OF PUBLIC CORPORATIONS EMPLOYEES

All junior employees of Federal and State Statutory Corporations, and companies other than Nigeria Railways, Nigeria Airways, Nigerian Ports Authority, National Electric Power Authority, Nigeria Coal Corporation, Broadcasting and Television Authorities and any other similar bodies already covered by industrial unions.

67. SENIOR STAFF ASSOCIATION OF STATUTORY CORPORATIONS AND GOVERNMENT-OWNED COMPANIES

Senior staff of Federal and State Statutory Corporations, and Companies other than those engaged on activities which are strictly commercial.

68. NIGERIA UNION OF PENSIONERS

All pensioners from the public services of the Governments of the Federation including Local Government, Statutory Corporations, Government-owned Companies, educational institutions for which the Governments of the Federation are responsible. All such similar establishments.

69. NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVANCY EMPLOYERS

Conservancy Contractors.

70. CUSTOMS' EXCISE AND IMMIGRATION STAFF UNION

All employees excluding senior staff of the Customs and Excise Department of the Federal Ministry of Finance, and the Immigration Service of the Federal Ministry of Internal Affairs.

*Source: Michael Abiodun, Restructuring of Trade Unions in Nigeria: 1976-1978 (Jos: Salama Press, 1978), pp. 34-39.

APPENDIX E

From the: REPORT ON THE INAUGURAL CONFERENCE OF THE NIGERIA LABOUR CONGRESS, held at the Western Hall, Ibadan on 28th February and 1st March, 1978.*

ELECTION OF PRINCIPAL OFFICERS

The election of principal officers proceeded as indicated hereunder:-

(a) President

Before election was conducted for the post of the President of the N.L.C., the Administrator announced the withdrawal of three of the candidates, namely:- Alhaji Agboola of the Union of Shipping, Clearing and Forwarding Agencies Workers, Alhaji Chiroma of Medical and Health Workers Union and Mr. Etienam of Customs Excise and Immigration Staff Union. Mr. Etienam in a note to the Administrator said that he was withdrawing from the contest because the post of the President was retained full-time in the constitution of the Congress. The Administrator presented the remaining six candidates to the delegates and also read out the 'curriculum vitae' of each contestant. The names of the contestants and the votes scored were as follows:-

(i) Mr. N.M. Ezenwugo (Nigeria Civil Service Union)	-	9	Votes
(ii) Mr. Jerome Alajo (Medical & Health Workers Union)	-	29	"
(iii) Mr. J.O. James (Printing and Publishing Workers Union)	-	39	"
(iv) Mr. H. Momodu (National Union of Air Transport Employees)	-	57	"
(v) Mr. J.O. Adegbesan (Nigerian Union of Railwaymen)	-	115	"
(vi) Mr. H. Sunmonu (Civil Service Technical Workers Union of Nigeria)	-	163	"

Mr. Sunmonu was declared elected as the first President of the Nigeria Labour Congress amidst a great ovation.

(b) Deputy President

Three candidates - Messrs A.O. Laniyan of Metallic and Non-Metallic Mines Workers Union, Mr. E.O. Ajiboso of National Union of Local Government Employees and Mr. T. Ojulari of National Union of Food Beverage and Tobacco Employees withdrew from contesting the election. Six candidates contested. The contestants and the votes scored were as follows:-

(i) Mr. M.E. Magete (Customs Excise and Immigration Staff Union)	- 10	Votes
(ii) Mr. M.A. Bakare (National Union of Chemical and Non-Metallic Products Workers)	- 17	"
(iii) Mr. K.A. Akinode (National Union of Chemical and Non-Metallic Products Workers)	- 26	"
(iv) Mr. S.A. Oduntan (National Union of Shop & Distributive Employees)	- 41	"
(v) Mr. J.O. Ogundipe (National Union of Shop & Distributive Employees)	- 81	"
(vi) Mr. D.C. Ojeli (Nigeria Civil Service Union)	- 214	"

Mr. D.C. Ojeli was declared elected as the Deputy President of the Nigeria Labour Congress.

(c) National Treasurer

The scores of the contestants were as follows:

(i) Mr. S.M. Umaru (Customers Excise and Immigration Staff Union)	- 19	Votes
(ii) Mr. M.A. Omisiore (Nigeria Union of Teachers)	- 27	"
(iii) Mr. J. Afolami (National Union of Food, Beverage & Tobacco Employees)	- 34	"

(iv) Mr. N.F. Pepple (National Union
of Banks, Insurance & Financial
Institutions - 106

(v) Mr. P.O. Ero-Phillips (National
Union of Electricity and
Gas Workers) - 202

Mr. Ero-Phillips was declared elected National
Treasurer of the Nigeria Labour Congress.

(d) Deputy National Treasurer

Mr. I.C. Mgbearuikwe of Radio Television and Theatre
Workers Union withdrew from the contest.

The scores of the contestants were as follows:-

(i) Mr. Lawrence Oyebola (National
Union of Furniture Fixture and
Woodworkers) - 143 Votes

(ii) Mr. M. Mpamugo (Metal Products
Workers Union of Nigeria) - 212 Votes

Mr. Mpamugo was declared elected Deputy National
Treasurer of the Nigeria Labour Congress.

*Source: Michael Abiodun, Restructuring of Trade Unions
in Nigeria 1976-1978 (Jos: Salama Press, 1978),
pp. 54-55.

NOTES

Introduction

1. (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1974), 304 pp. In a similar vein, this thesis carries forward studies of the Nigerian labour movement and of industrial relations in Nigeria by Wogu Ananaba's The Trade Union Movement in Nigeria (London: C. Hurst and Company, 1969), 336 pp., and T.M. Yesufu's An Introduction to Industrial Relations in Nigeria (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 190 pp., respectively.

2. Silvio Duncan Baretta and Helen Douglass, "Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Latin America: A Review Essay," in James Malloy (ed.), Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Latin America (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburg Press, 1977), p. 524. The fifteen other essays in this volume constitute, on the whole, a useful source for the study of corporatism in Latin America. I have found Guillermo O'Donnell's essay on "Corporatism and the Question of the State" to be particularly fruitful and this is evident in my attempt to come to grips with Corporatism in Nigeria. A very important single country study of the attempt to establish corporatism is Alfred Stepan's The State and Society: Peru in Comparative Perspective (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 348 pp. Stepan deals with the attempt to restructure state-society relations in post-1968 Peru (1968-1975).

Chapter 1: The State and Labour in Nigeria

1. For a discussion, as well as definition, of the ruling class, see section on "The Nigerian Ruling Class" below.

2. We prefer the term "peripheral capitalist" to "post-colonial", because the former, unlike the latter, denotes a more precise materialist assignation in regard to the nature and role of the ex-colonies vis-à-vis the metropolitan capitalist countries. Nonetheless, we shall use the term, "post-colonial" wherever it is appropriate.

3. Gavin Williams and Teresa Turner, "Nigeria", in John Dunn (ed.), West African States (London: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 137.
4. For figures in this paragraph, see F.A. Olaloku, "A Profile of the Nigerian Economy", and S. Tomori, "Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing", in F.A. Olaloku et. al., Structure of the Nigerian Economy, (Lagos: Lagos University Press, 1979), pp. 6-9, and 11-14.
5. See Billy Dudley, An Introduction to Nigerian Government and Politics (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 230 for this point.
6. See Wayne Nafziger, African Capitalism (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1977), pp. 56-7.
7. Ibid., p. 57.
8. For the details of these provisions, see Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Decree 1972 (Decree No. 4) and Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Decree (Revised) 1977.
9. See Williams and Turner, op. cit., p. 153.
10. See Thomas Biersteker, "Indigenization and the Nigerian Bourgeoisie: Dependent Development in an African Context" (mimeo, 1980), pp. 19-20 (emphasis added).
11. A similar conclusion was reached by Ankie Hoogvelt who carried out a "survey of Kano-based industries affected by the indigenisation programme". See Hoogvelt's "Indigenisation and Foreign Capital: Industrialisation in Nigeria", Review of African Political Economy, No. 14, January-April, 1979, pp. 56-68, and also her "Indigenization and Technological Dependency", Development and Change, Volume 11, No. 2, April 1980, pp. 257-72.
12. See Paul Collins et. al., "Capitalism and the Coup", in Gavin Williams (ed.), Nigeria: Economy and Society (London: Rex Collings, 1976), esp. p. 191.
13. Biersteker, op. cit., p. 31.
14. See Bjorn Beckman, "Whose State? State and Capitalist Development in Nigeria", Review of African Political Economy, No. 23, January-April, 1982, p. 40.
15. For this description of the modern sector in Nigeria, see Third National Development Plan 1975-80 (Lagos: Central Planning Office, Federal Ministry of Economic Development, 1975), p. 360; also see Fourth National Development Plan

1981-85 (Lagos: National Planning Office, Federal Ministry of National Planning, 1981), p. 424.

16. See Peter Waterman, "Conservatism Amongst Nigerian Workers", in Williams (ed.), op. cit., pp. 161-163 for details on these different sub-sectors.

17. See E.O. Wright, "Varieties of Marxist Conceptions of Class Structure", Politics and Society, 9, No. 3 (1980), p. 330; also see pp. 328-333 for Contradictory locations within Class Relations: Structural Version". Cf. G. Carchedi, "On the Economic Identification of the New Middle Class", Economy and Society, Vol. 4, No. 1, November 1975, pp. 1-86.

18. For figures in this paragraph, see "Nigeria: Twenty Years of Independence", Financial Times, September 29, 1980.

19. See, First Things First: Meeting the Basic Needs of the People of Nigeria (Addis Ababa: ILO, Jobs and Skills Programme for Africa, 1981), p.v.

20. Reported by the Nigeria Tribune, Wednesday, February 11, 1981.

21. See African Business, August, 1981, p. 53, for this point and the data in the next two paragraphs.

22. Quoted in The Punch, Monday, June 1, 1981.

23. Oil figures in this paragraph and the next are from African Business, op. cit., pp. 49, 63-65.

24. See Social Statistics in Nigeria (Lagos: Federal Office of Statistics, 1981), p. 1. Also, the ILO Report to the Government of Nigeria is full of complaints about the non-availability and/or shaky foundation of social statistics in Nigeria, see First Things First, op. cit., pp. 2, 6, 10, 28, 29, 30-31, 208, 212, and 223. Researchers who have worked in and/or on Nigeria also bemoan the country's statistical weakness, cf. Nafziger, op. cit., pp. 3 and 31. The Economist was particularly scathing in its recent survey of Nigeria: "It may well be admitted from the start. This is the first survey published by The Economist in which every single number is probably wrong. There is no accurate information about Nigeria. Nobody knows, within a margin of error of about one third, how many people the country contains, where they live or how much they produce", see "The Most African Country - A Survey of Nigeria", The Economist, January 23, 1982.

25. See First Things First, op. cit., p. 232.

26. For figures in this paragraph, see Social Statistics in Nigeria, op. cit., p. 61, First Things First, op. cit., p. 91,

and Adrian Peace, Choice, Class and Conflict (Brighton: The Harvester Press Limited, 1979), p. 125. A detailed discussion of the inflationary spiral in the aftermath of the 1974-75 Udoji Award is undertaken in Chapter 3.

27. See First Things First, op. cit., p. 231. For the World Bank estimate of Nigeria's GNP per capita, see World Development Report 1982 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), Table 1.

28. See Third Plan, op. cit., 29.

29. For much of the material in this and the next two paragraphs, see Dudley, op. cit., pp. 264-273.

30. Ibid., pp. 270-1.

31. For a discussion, as well as a definition, of the working class, see section on "The Nigerian Working Class" below.

32. The grade levels are derived from the Udoji Commission's 17 - Grade Level Structure for the public sector introduced in 1974-75. Grade Levels (GL.) 1-7 fall into the lower income group category (working class) who, as would be seen subsequently, solely constitute the NLC. GL. 8-17 are general referred to as "Senior Staff": GL. 8-12 being, strictly speaking, supervisory in function, while GL. 13-17 constitute the managerial category, corresponding to middle and upper income groups respectively. For the details of the Udoji salary gradings, see Table 8 in Chapter 3.

33. Dudley, op. cit., p. 268.

34. Ibid., p. 269.

35. See Martin Dent, "Effective and Ineffective Constitutions", West Africa, 29 September, 1980, p. 1887, for the figures in this paragraph.

36. Ibid.

37. Peace, op. cit., p. 140-1; I also drew much of the description here from him.

38. See Williams and Turner, op. cit., p. 165, for this point. For details of the cocoa farmers' action, see the discussion of the Agbekoya Rebellion ("farmers renounce suffering") by C.E.F. Beer and Gavin Williams, "The Politics of the Ibadan Peasantry", in Williams (ed.), op. cit., pp. 135-158, especially 143-157.

39. See Ralph Miliband, Marxism and Politics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977). pp. 20-26. For a substantive theor-

etical exposition of the class structure of capitalist societies, see G. Carchedi, op. cit., pp. 1-86; also E.O. Wright, op. cit., pp. 323-370 or idem, Class, Crisis and the State (London: New Left Books, 1978), esp. Ch. 2.

40. Miliband, op. cit., p. 26.

41. Ibid., pp. 29-30 (emphasis added).

42. For this point, see Bjorn Beckman, op. cit., p. 50.

43. See Miliband, op. cit., p. 107.

44. Hamza Alavi, "The State in Post-Colonial Societies: Pakistan and Bangladesh", New Left Review, 74, July-August 1972, p. 62 (emphasis in original). Alavi's thesis of the "overdeveloped" post colonial state generated considerable debate in the literature on the theory of the state in peripheral capitalist societies. For the notable contributions to this debate, as well as critiques of Alavi, see John Saul, "The State in Post-Colonial Societies: Tanzania", in The Socialist Register, 1974 - eds. R. Miliband and J. Saville (London: The Merlin Press, 1974), pp. 349-372; Colin Leys, "The 'Overdeveloped' Post Colonial State: A Re-evaluation", Review of African Political Economy, 5, January-April 1976, pp. 39-48; W. Ziemann and M. Lanzendorfer, "The State in Peripheral Societies", in The Socialist Register, 1977 - eds. R. Miliband and J. Saville (London: The Merlin Press, 1977), pp. 143-177; and Morten Ougaard, "Some Remarks Concerning Peripheral Capitalism and the Peripheral State", Science and Society, Vol. XLVI, No. 4, Winter 1982-1983, pp. 385-404.

45. Miliband, op. cit., p. 107.

46. Ibid., pp. 108-9 (emphasis added).

47. See Nicos Poulantzas, Classes in Contemporary Capitalism (London: New Left Books, 1975), p. 71; also idem, "On Social Classes", New Left Review, No. 78, March-April 1973, p. 39.

48. The following summary is drawn from Miliband, op. cit., pp. 109-110.

49. For a detailed discussion of "praetorianism" and the lack of legitimacy prevalent in "Third World" societies, see S.P. Huntington, Political Order in Changing Societies (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), esp. pp. 192-263.

50. Antonio Gramsci, Collected Works, Volume IV (Einaudi, 1949), p. 70, quoted and cited by Joseph Femia, "Hegemony and Consciousness in the Thought of Antonio Gramsci", Political Studies, Vol. XXIII, No. 1, p. 30, (emphasis added).

51. Ibid., p. 31.

52. See Williams and Turner, op. cit., pp. 171-2.
53. Cf. Ziemann and Lanzendorfer, op. cit., pp. 161-2.
54. Ibid., p. 162 for this point.
55. See Beckman, op. cit., p. 50.
56. In this section, all figures relating to 1975 are those estimated/"confirmed" by the Third National Development Plan 1975-80, op. cit., pp. 369-395, unless otherwise stated; while 1980 figures, as well as increases relating to 1975-80, are those estimated/"confirmed" by the Fourth National Development Plan 1981-85, op. cit., pp. 421-444, unless otherwise stated.
57. This orientation to classes is derived from a combination of Carchedi, op. cit., esp. pp. 10-48, and Wright "Varieties", op. cit., esp. pp. 323-328 (emphasis added).
58. Miliband, op. cit., p. 24.
59. See Adrian Peace. "The Lagos Proletariat: Aristocrats or Populist Militants?", in Richard Sandbrook and Robin Cohen (eds.), The Development of and African Working Class (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), p. 281.
60. This is discussed fully in Chapter 4.
61. Cf. Peter Waterman, "Communist Theory in the Nigerian Trade Union Movement", Politics and Society, Vol. 3, No. 3, Spring 1973, pp. 299-300.
62. See Waterman, "Conservatism", op. cit., p. 162.
63. Poulantzas, "On Social Classes", op. cit., pp. 30-31.
64. Idem., Classes, op. cit., p. 212.
65. Guglielmo Carchedi, On The Economic Identification of Social Classes (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), pp. 9-10 (emphasis in original).
66. See Ellen Meiksins Wood, "The Politics of Theory and the Concept of Class: E.P. Thompson and His Critics", Studies in Political Economy, No. 9, Fall 1982, p. 58.
67. See Carchedi, On the Economic, op. cit., p. 9.
68. See Wright, "Varieties". op. cit., p. 348.
69. See Waterman, "Conservatism", op. cit., p. 162.
70. Nafziger, op. cit., p. 68, makes this point.

71. See Ministry of Labour, Annual report, 1963/64, p. 57, cited by Robin Cohen, Labour and Politics in Nigeria (London: Heinemann, 1974), p. 184.

72. Ibid., pp. 185-6.

73. See O. Sonubi, "Trade Disputes in Nigeria", The Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies, 15(2), 1973, p. 229.

74. Ibid., p. 207.

75. Ibid., p. 235.

76. First Report of the Wages and Salaries Commission, 1970 (Lagos: Federal Ministry of Information, 1970), p. 11 (emphasis in original).

77. Cohen, op. cit., p. 210.

78. Ibid.

79. Waterman, "Communist Theory", op. cit., p. 283.

80. Ibid., p. 304.

81. See Richard Joseph, "Political Parties and Ideology in Nigeria", Review of African Political Economy, No. 13, May-August, 1978, p. 80.

82. Adam Przeworski, "Toward a Theory of Capitalist Democracy" (mimeo, 1977), p. 7; drawing from Harold Lassell, Politics: Who Gets What, When, How (New York: McGraw Hill, 1936), and T.B. Bottomore, Classes in Modern Society (New York: Vintage Books, 1966).

83. See West Africa, 6 June 1964.

84. Our overall approach to corporatism is strongly influenced by that of Leo Panitch, whose approach to corporatism is in terms of social classes. According to him, "Corporatism is primarily about state-induced collaboration. Above all else, it is a political structure designed to integrate the organized working class in the capitalist state", see Leo Panitch, "Recent Theorizations of Corporatism: Reflections on a Growth Industry", British Journal of Sociology, Vol. 31, No. 2, June 1980, p. 175; also cf. idem, "Trade Unions and the Capitalist State", New Left Review, No. 125, January-February, 1981, pp. 21-43.

85. For the Tanzania example, see M.A. Bienefeld, "Socialist Development and the Workers in Tanzania", in Sandbrook and Cohen (eds.), op. cit., pp. 239-260; also see Wogu Ananaba, The Trade Union Movement in Africa (London: C. Hurst and

Company, 1979), pp. 34-37.

86. For Kenya, see Richard Sandbrook, Proletarians and African Capitalism: the Kenyan Case, 1960-1972 (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 222 pp., also see Ananaba (1979), op. cit., pp. 38-40.

87. Cohen, op. cit., p. 235.

88. Peace, Choice, op. cit., pp. xi-xii.

89. Alfred Stepan, The State and Society: Peru in Comparative Perspective (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 47.

90. See Panitch, "Recent Theorizations", esp. p. 159; also Guillermo O'Donnell, "Corporatism and the Question of the State", in James Malloy (ed.), Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Latin America (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977), p. 47.

91. Timothy Shaw, "Beyond Neo-Colonialism: Varieties of Corporatism in Africa", Journal of Modern African Studies, 20, 2(1982), p. 255.

92. See Aristotle, The Politics - Translated by E. Barker - (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), Book 1, Ch. 11, Sections 12 and 13, p. 66, quoted in Stepan, op. cit., p. 29.

93. Panitch, "Recent Theorizations", op. cit., p. 160.

94. See Stepan, op. cit., p. xii.

95. Philippe Schmitter, "Still the Century of Corporatism?", Review of Politics, Vol. 36, No. 1, January 1974, pp. 85-131; cf. O'Donnell's "statizing" and "privatist" corporatism, see O'Donnell, op. cit., p. 48.

96. See Schmitter, op. cit., pp. 103-105; also Stepan, op. cit., pp. 93-74 (fn. 4).

97. See O'Donnell, op. cit., p. 48. According to him, "bifrontal corporatism" is both "estatizante" ("statizing"), i.e., "it consists of the conquest and subordination by the state of the organizations of civil society," and "privatista" ("privatist"), which "entails the opening of the institutional areas of the state to the representation of organized interests of civil society." For O'Donnell, bifrontal corporatism ("corporatization") so defined tends to appear in situations of authoritarian domination, whereas the corporatism of political democracies in the central capitalist countries is basically privatist.

98. Ibid (emphasis added).

99. Cf. David Collier, "Inducements versus Constraints: Diaggregating Corporatism", American Political Science Review, vol. 73, No. 4, December 1978, p. 968 (emphasis in original), and pp. 969-980; also see David Collier and Ruth Berins Collier, "Who Does What, to Whom and How: Toward a Comparative Analysis of Latin American Corporatism", in Malloy (ed.), op. cit., p. 493. Cf. Schmitter's definition of corporatism in idem, op. cit., pp. 93-94.

100. See Stepan, op. cit., pp. 14-17.

Chapter 2: The Nigerian Labour Movement: Background to Analysis

1. Quoted in T.M. Yesufu, An Introduction to Industrial Relations in Nigeria (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p.30; also see Robin Cohen, Labour and Politics in Nigeria (London: Heinemann, 1974), p. 181.

2. See Cohen, loc. cit., p. 71.

3. For details of "The Cola Agitation" and "Imoudu the Martyr," see Wogu Ananaba, The Trade Union Movement in Nigeria (London: C. Hurst and Co., 1969), pp. 26-39.

4. In the following sections, only the salient developments in the labour movement will be dealt with. For details of the formations and splits of central labour organisations in Nigeria, see Ananaba, op. cit., and Cohen, op. cit., Also see Yesufu, op. cit., for the early beginnings. Much of the material here is drawn from these sources, especially from Cohen, whose analysis of events in the Nigerian labour movement from 1945 to 1971 this researcher has found particularly useful. This chapter as a whole relies heavily upon Cohen, and the debt is owed.

5. See Ananaba, op. cit., pp. 40-41.

6. Ibid., also see Cohen, op. cit., p. 72.

7. Ibid., pp. 32, 45.

8. See Cohen, op. cit., p. 159.

9. Ibid., p. 161.

10. For the details of this strike, see Ananaba, op. cit., Chapter 7.

11. Ibid., p. 51.

12. Ibid., p. 54.

13. The West African Pilot, June 20, 1945, quoted in Ibid.

14. Cohen, op. cit., p. 162.
15. Report of the Tudor Davies Commission into the Cost of Living in the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria (London: HMSO for the Colonial Office, No. 204, 1946), p. 10.
16. Cohen, op. cit., p. 163.
17. Ibid.
18. The NCNC later became known as the National Convention of Nigerian Citizens when Western Cameroon joined the rest of the Cameroons in 1959/60.
19. For these accounts, see T. Hodgkin, African Political Parties (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961), pp. 51, 53; Cohen, op. cit., pp. 73, 161-4.
20. See Robert Melson, "Marxists in the Nigerian Labour Movement: A Case Study of the Failure of Ideology" (Ph.D. dissertation, MIT, 1967); cited by Cohen, op. cit., p. 161.
21. See Cohen, p. 163.
22. Political party is in the singular form because, not only was the NCNC the first major party to be formed - the Action Group (AG) was formed in 1950, while the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) was formed in 1951 - it was also the only one to profoundly affect the fortunes of the labour movement in the early period.
23. See Cohen, op. cit., p. 164.
24. The NCNC's new disenchantment with radicalism was also reflected in the expulsion of several members of its militant youth wing, the Zikist Movement, from the Party.
25. See Cohen, op. cit., pp. 73-74.
26. See Ananaba, op. cit., p. 95.
27. Ibid., p. 111; also see pp. 98-119 for the details of the "Enugu Blood Bath and After."
28. See Cohen, op. cit., p. 75.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.

31. The restructuring of trade unions will be discussed in Chapter 4.

32. For full descriptions of the activities of the general secretaries, see Umoh James Umoh and Augustine Ade Ayo (eds.), Historic and Unforgettable Labour Events (Lagos: Ade Oshinde, 1980), p. 65.

33. For the details of these developments, especially with regard to the nefarious activities of the ICFTU (and the AFL-CIO and the AALC) in the Third World in particular, see Don Thomson and Rodney Larson (eds.), Where Were You, Brother?: An Account of Trade Union Imperialism (London: War on Want, 1978), esp. Chapters 5 and 6.

34. See Cohen, op. cit., p. 123.

35. Ibid., p. 99.

36. The centralization provision of the Trade Unions Decree (No. 31) of 1973 are discussed in Chapter 3.

37. See Cohen, op. cit., p. 78.

38. For the details of these developments, see Ananaba, op. cit., pp. 141-154.

39. See "Treachery and Betrayal in Nigeria", in Thomson and Larson (eds.), op. cit., pp. 60-62, esp. p. 61.

40. Ibid., also see Ananaba, op. cit., Ch. 16, and Yesufu, op. cit., Ch. 8.

41. See Cohen, op. cit., p. 82.

42. Report of the Tribunal of Inquiry into the Activities of the Trade Unions (Lagos: Federal Ministry of Information, 1977), p. 10 (emphasis added).

43. See Cohen, op. cit., pp. 84-85.

44. See Report of the Tribunal, op. cit., p. 11.

45. Ibid., p. 50.

46. Cohen, op. cit., pp. 87-88.

47. See Peter Waterman, "Communist Theory in the the Nigerian Trade Union Movement", Politics and Society, 3:3, Spring 1973, pp. 287-288.

48. Ibid., p. 288. For a detailed discussion of the split, see Cohen, op. cit., pp. 88-90.

49. See Chapter 3 for a discussion of the "Apena Cemetery Declaration"

50. See Report of the Tribunal, op. cit., p. 59.

51. Ibid., p. 12.

52. Ibid., p. 61.

53. See Chapter 3 for a discussion of LUF's efforts toward the formation of the NTUF in August 1973.

54. The "Financial Affairs" of the trade unions are amply documented by the Adebisi Tribunal. See Report of the Tribunal, pp. 17-25, 32-49, 54-58, and 62-64. Also see pp. 82-86 for the Assets and Liabilities of Trade Union Officers".

55. Ibid., p. 18, also see pp. 17-25 for the facts and figures in the next two paragraphs.

56. Ibid., pp. 32-49 for the facts and figures in this paragraph and the next.

57. Ibid., p. 55, also see pp. 54-58 for figures in this paragraph.

58. Ibid., p. 64.

59. Ibid., p. 25.

60. Ibid., p. 20.

61. Quoted in Cohen, op. cit., p. 230.

62. See Report of the Tribunal, op. cit., p. 54.

63. Ibid., p. 58.

64. Cohen, op. cit., p. 232.

65. Ibid., p. 231.

66. Ibid., cf. pp. 102-104.

67. Ibid., p. 157. For a detailed discussion of the differing ideologies of the union centres, see pp. 111-158; also see Peter Waterman, "Conservatism Amongst Nigerian Workers", in Gavin Williams (ed.) Nigeria: Economy and Society (London: Rex Collings, 1976), pp. 171-183. Cf. fn. 47 above.

68. See ULC Information (Monthly Newsletter of the ULC), March 1968, 1(7), cited by Cohen, p. 153; also see pp. 172-176.

69. Waterman, "Conservatism", op. cit., p. 183.
70. See Cohen, op. cit., p. 120. Cf. fn. 32 above, also see Chapter 4.
71. Cf. Waterman, "Communist Theory", op. cit., p. 300.
72. See Cohen, op. cit., p. 158.
73. See Waterman, "Communist Theory", op. cit., p. 300.
74. See Cohen, op. cit., p. 224.
75. See Sunday Times (Lagos), 11 February 1968; cited, and quoted by Cohen, p. 224.
76. Ibid., p.228.
77. Ibid., pp. 224-225.
78. Ibid., p. 229. General Gowon was considered patriotic, foresighted and virtually corruption-free at this time. This image of Gowon held on through most of 1972.
79. See First Report of the Wages and Salaries Commission, 1970 (Lagos: Federal Ministry of Information, 1970), p. 15.
80. For the account in this paragraph, see West Africa, 30 January - 5 February 1971; 6-12 February, 1971; 27 February - 5 March, 1971; 6-12 March, 1971; March 19, 1971; and 9 June 1972.
81. Both the Trade Unions Decree (No. 31) of 1973 and the Public Service Review Commission will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: The Origins of Corporatism in Nigeria, 1973-75

1. See Thomas Biersteker, "Indigenization and the Nigerian Bourgeoisie: Dependent Development in an African Context" (mimeo, 1980), p. 12, for this point. For a somewhat similar account of this development, see Adrian Peace, Choice, Class and Conflict (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1979), pp. 147-9.
2. For this point, see Biersteker, p. 13. Also see, Omafume Onoge, "The Indigenization Decree and Economic Independence: Another Case of Bourgeois Utopianism", in Nigeria's Indigenization Policy (Proceedings of the Symposium organized by the Nigerian Economic Society, University of Ibadan, 1974); P.C. Asiodu, "Closing Remarks," in Nigeria's Indigenization Policy; Paul Collins, "The Policy of Indigenization: An Overall View,"

Quarterly Journal of Administration, January, 1975; Paul Collins, et. al., "Capitalism and the Coup"; and E.O. Akere-dolu-Ale, "Private Foreign Investment and the Underdevelopment of Indigenous Entrepreneurship in Nigeria", both in Gavin Williams (ed.), Nigeria: Economy and Society (London: Rex Collings, 1976); for a general discussion of the emerging alliance between indigenous capital and the state and the indigenization programme that it gave rise to.

3. Billy Dudley, An Introduction to Nigerian Government and Politics (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 273.

4. See Extraordinary Official Gazette, Vol. 60, No. 38 (Lagos: Federal Ministry of Information, 1973).

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid., (emphasis added).

7. Ibid.

8. See Report of the Tribunal of Inquiry into the Activities of the Trade Unions (Lagos: Federal Ministry of Information, 1977), p. 61.

9. Ibid., p. 62.

10. See Umoh James Umoh and Augustine Ade Ayo (eds.), Historic and Unforgettable Labour Events (Lagos: Ade Oshinde, 1980), p. 2. This is the full text of the historic and monumental APENA DECLARATION. Prominent among its signatories are: M.A.O. Imodu, Wahab Goodluck, H.P. Adebola, S.U. Bassey, Okon Eshiett, J.O. James, N.F. Pepple, A.I. Okwese, E.O.A. Odeyemi, J.U. Akpan, and R.A. Ramos.

11. For example, see "Nigerian Unions Look for Unity," West Africa, 10 February 1975, Gavin Williams, "Nigeria: A Political Economy", in idem (ed.), op. cit., p. 50; Wogu Ananaba, The Trade Union Movement in Africa (London: C. Hurst and Co., 1979), p. 15; and Umoh and Ayo (eds.) op. cit., pp. 1-3. Only Barry Cohen appeared to hint somewhat at the background to Apena: "In September 1974, at the time of the death of the National Treasurer of the ULC, J.A. Oduleye, the union movement as a whole seemed to be breathing its last. This event, however, served as a catalyst in the attempt to recreate unity." See, "Supplement on Nigeria - On the Threshold of Industrialization: The Relative Weakness of the Union Movement," in Le Monde Diplomatique, November 1980 (English translation).

12. See Public Service Review Commission: Main report (Lagos: Federal Ministry of Information, 1974), p. vii. This report is commonly referred to as the Udoji Report (named after its

Chairman, Chief J.O. Udoji). Also see, pp. 202-210, for a List of Individuals and Organisations that submitted memoranda.

13. Ibid.

14. See First Report of the Wages and Salaries Commission, 1970 (Lagos: Federal Ministry of Information, 1970) p. 11.

15. Udoji Report, op. cit., p. iii.

16. See "Nigeria: A Political Economy", op. cit., p. 32.

17. See West Africa, 6th January, 1975.

18. See Gavin Williams and Terisa Turner, "Nigeria", in John Dunn (ed.), West African States (London: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 166.

19. See First Things First: Meeting the Basic Needs of the People of Nigeria (Addis Ababa: Jobs and Skills Programme for Africa, 1981), p. 223.

20. See Nigerian Capitalism (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), p. 36.

21. "Labour in Kano Since the Petroleum Boom", Review of African Political Economy (ROAPE), No. 13, May-August 1978, p. 42; also see Bill Freund, "Oil Boom and Crisis in Contemporary Nigeria", ROAPE, No. 13, May-August 1978, p. 95.

22. See Social Statistics in Nigeria (Lagos: Federal Office of Statistics, 1981), p. 61.

23. See West Africa, 17th February, 1975.

24. See Extraordinary Official Gazette, op. cit.

25. Report of the Tribunal, op. cit., p. 63.

26. See excerpts from the (1975) NLC Draft Constitution in Umoh and Ayo (eds.), op. cit., p. 17.

27. Ibid., p. 4.

28. Interview with Sunmonu on January 9, 1981, in his office at Association Avenue before the NLC Secretariat moved to the impressive building on Alajuwon Street, Surulere, Lagos.

29. For the details of these developments, see Chapter 2.

30. See Umoh and Ayo (eds.), op. cit., p. 57.

Chapter 4: The "Corrective Regime" and Union Restructuring, 1975-78

1. Brigadier (later General) Murtala Muhammed came to power on 29 July, 1975. Although Muhammed himself ruled for six and a half months before being assassinated in the abortive coup of 13 February, 1976; not only was he the only top federal leader eliminated by the unsuccessful coup attempt, there was also no marked change in his policies after his death. Muhammed's successor, General Olusegun Obasanjo - who was in power until the transition to civilian rule took place on October 1, 1979 - was generally seen as one of Muhammed's men, hence no attempt is usually made to differentiate the Muhammed and the Obasanjo administrations. For our purposes, the continuity that marked both administrations is especially pronounced by the singularity of their policy toward the labour movement as attested to by the regime's New National Labour Policy (see fn. 3 below). The impact of Muhammed's death on the regime's policy vis-à-vis the labour movement is indicated later in this chapter. In broad terms, the period between July 29, 1975 and October 1, 1979 is usually referred to as that of the Muhammed/Obasanjo regime. For a similar description of this period of military rule in Nigeria, see Billy Dudley, An Introduction to Nigerian Government and Politics (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), pp. 100-1; and Henry Bienen and V.P. Diejomah (eds.), Inequality and Development in Nigeria (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1981), p. 2.

2. See Guillermo O'Donnell, "Corporatism and the Question of the State", in James Malloy (ed.), Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Latin America (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977), p. 55; also see p. 60. In the main, our analysis in this chapter draws heavily on O'Donnell's theorization of Bifrontal Corporatism; see idem, p. 48.

3. This was the primary objective of the Muhammed regime's New National Labour Policy (NNLP) announced in December 1975. See discussion of the NNLP throughout this chapter, especially in the section on "The NNLP and the Stillbirth of the NLC."

4. Bjorn Beckman, "Whose State? State and Capitalist Development in Nigeria", Review of African Political Economy, No. 23, January-April 1982, p. 46.

5. See Paul Collins et al., "Capitalism and the Coup", in Gavin Williams (ed.), Nigeria: Economy and Society (London: Rex Collings, 1976), p. 187.

6. See A.A. Ayida, The Nigerian Revolution, 1966-1976 (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1973), p. 19. Ayida, who later became head of the Civil Service, was Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Finance and President, Nigerian

Economic Society, at the time this text was published.

7. For details of the "cement scandal", see Billy Dudley, op. cit., p. 81; also see Collins, et al., op. cit., p. 187.

8. See Collins, op. cit., p. 186.

9. For Muhammed's speeches following the 1975 coup, see Daily Times, 31 July and 1 August, 1975. I have also injected my own close observation of events in the media at that time. I was the regular host (moderator) of the discussion panel on Midwest Television (now Nigerian Television), Benin's weekly programme, "Accent on Youth" for the duration of the long vacation (July-September, 1975). Also see Collins et al., op. cit., pp. 185-192, and Gavin Williams and Terisa Turner, "Nigeria", in John Dunn (ed.), West African States: Failure and Promise (London: Cambridge University Press, 1978), especially pp. 166-172.

10. For an analysis of the coup from this point of view, see Terisa Turner, "Multinational Corporations and the Instability of the Nigerian State", Review of African Political Economy, No. 5, January-April 1976, especially pp. 73-76.

11. See Collins et al., op. cit., pp. 188-189.

12. See Brigadier Muhammed's address to the CDC, Sunday Times, (Lagos), 19 October, 1975, quoted and cited in Williams (ed.), op. cit., pp. 189-190.

13. Dudley, op. cit., p. 116.

14. Segun Osoba, "The Nigerian Constitution and the Working Class" (mimeo, 1979), pp. 8-9; paper presented at the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) Seminar for its National Executive Council Members held on Wednesday, May 23rd, 1979, at the Congress National Secretariat, Lagos. Segun Osoba was himself a member of the CDC. Together with Yusuf Bala Usman, he disagreed with the CDC's draft constitution and produced a Minority Report on the Constitution which castigated the "Majority" draft constitution as being primarily concerned with "provisions for the formal and dubious accountability of one set of members of the bourgeois political class to another..". Osoba has been described by Peter Waterman as "the most radical of Nigeria's historians", see "On Radicalism in African Studies", Politics and Society (3:3), Spring 1973, p. 276.

15. See "Address by Major General H.E.O. Adefope, Commissioner of Labour, to Representatives of the Four Central Labour Organizations and the Nigerian Employers' Consultative Association on the New National Policy on Labour, at a meeting held in the Senate Chamber on Thursday, 4th December 1975, at 11.00 a.m.", in Umoh and Ayo, (eds.), Historic and Unforgettable Labour

Events (Lagos: Ade Oshinde, 1980), pp. 20-25 (my emphasis). All quotations in several paragraphs that follow are from this "Address" (Emphasis added).

16. Richard Sandbrook and Robin Cohen (eds.), The Development of an African Working Class (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), pp. 134-135.

17. David Collier, "Inducements versus Constraints: Disaggregating 'Corporatism'", American Political Science Review, vol. 73, No. 4, December 1979, p. 970.

18. See "Address by Major-General H.E.O. Adefope", in Umoh and Ayo (eds.), op. cit., pp. 24-25 (emphasis added).

19. See O'Donnell, op. cit., p. 67.

20. The following views were those expressed to me by some members of that committee, including Hassan Sunmonu, whom I interviewed in Lagos between January and May 1981.

21. Dafe Otobo, "The Nigerian General Strike of 1981", Review of African Political Economy, No. 22, October-December 1981, p. 66 (emphasis in original).

22. See, "First Letter After Agege Deal," in Umoh and Ayo (eds.), op. cit., pp. 28-30 (emphasis added).

23. See Report of the Tribunal of Inquiry into the Activities of the Trade Unions (Lagos: Federal Ministry of Information, 1977), pp. 32, 37, and 92.

24. See Umoh James Umoh, Politicians, Unionists, Employers: Enemies or Partners (Lagos, author, n.d.), p. 19. Umoh made a similar point in an interview with me on April 8, 1981 at his Daily Times office, Ikeja, Lagos.

25. Umoh and Ayo (eds.), op. cit., pp. 31-32.

26. See Otobo, op. cit., p. 66.

27. Ibid. See pp. 33-36 for the full text of the Commissioner's address (emphasis added).

28. Ibid., p. 38.

29. This is O'Donnell's terminology, meaning, an attempt by the state to directly administer the trade unions. See discussion below; cf. fn. 2 above.

30. Ibid.; see pp. 56-60 for the Commissioner's press statement on May 21, 1976, and the memorandum and petitions referred to in the foregoing paragraph (emphasis added).

31. See Supplement to Official Gazette, No. 44, Vol. 63, 26 August, 1976 - Trade Unions (Central Labour Organizations) (Special Provisions) Decree, 1976 (Lagos: Federal Ministry of Information, 1976). A Consultative Committee was also appointed to assist the Administrator. Aliyu Dangiwa, then a Lecturer at the Institute of Administration, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, who later (1978) became the General Secretary of the NLC, was appointed a member of the Consultative Committee.

32. Interview with Hassan Sunmonu, January 9, 1981.

33. The coup makers (as Colonel Buka Dimka, its main architect, explained) wanted to bring Gowon back to power. As already indicated, no significant change in policy resulted from Muhammed's death. Cf. fn. 1 above.

34. The tribunal itself sat for 80 days in Lagos during the period March 3 - August 17, 1976. See Report of the Tribunal, op. cit., p. 8.

35. Ibid., Ch. 10 (emphasis added); also see Federal Military Government's Views on the Report of the Tribunal of Inquiry into the Activities of Trade Unions (Lagos: Federal Ministry of Information, 1977)..

36. Federal Military Government's Views, pp. 4-5 (emphasis added).

37. The proscribed trade union leaders were M.A.O. Imoudu, W.O. Goodluck, S.U. Bassey, E.O.A. Odeyemi, R.A. Ramos, J.U. Akpan, P.A. Isagua, J.O. Orotunde, S.O. Adeniran, P.A. Nwaneri, and M.J. Sule. The government also promulgated the Trade Unions (Disqualification of Certain Persons) Decree No. 15 of 1977 to give legal sanction to the proscription.

38. See Umoh and Ayo (ed.), op. cit., pp. 43-44.

39. See International Labour Conference, 63rd Session, 1977, Report III (Part 4A): Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (Geneva: ILO, 1977), pp. 156-157.

40. Umoh and Ayo (eds.), op. cit., p. 53 (emphasis added).

41. See Michael O. Abiodun Restructuring the Trade Unions in Nigeria: 1976-1978 (Jos: Salama Press, 1978), Ch.2; also see Umoh and Ayo (eds.), op. cit., pp. 109-110.

42. Ibid.

43. See Umoh and Ayo (eds.), op. cit., pp. 65-66 (emphasis added).

44. See Umoh and Ayo (eds.), op. cit., p. 65.

45. Ibid.

46. For this point, see Dudley, op. cit., pp. 83, 104-105, and especially footnote 49 on p. 321.

47. The regime was quoted as angry with General Gowon for carrying a food tray in a cafeteria at Warwick: "Gowon was to be advised to stop disgracing and embarrassing Nigerians with such schoolboy behaviour ... in spite of all the comfort and facilities made available to him by the Federal Government." See West Africa, 22 March, 1976, pp. 392-393.

48. See discussion in the section on "The Nigerian Working Class" in Chapter 1.

49. See Trade Unions (Amendment) Decree 1978 (Decree No. 22) (Lagos: Federal Ministry of Information, 1978).

50. See O'Donnell, op. cit., p. 70. Also, I have drawn a substantial portion of the argument in this and subsequent paragraphs from him, as well as from Phillippe Schmitter's concept of "state corporatism". For a full discussion of "state corporatism" in contradistinction to "societal corporatism", see "Still the Century of Corporatism?", The Review of Politics, Vol. 36, No. 1, January 1974, pp. 85-131, esp. p. 102 ff. Also, see Chapter 1 of this Thesis, the section on "Corporatism: The Nigerian Context."

51. See O'Donnell, op. cit., p. 8.

52. For this point, see Robert Cohen, Labour and Politics in Nigeria (London: Heinemann, 1971), p. 123.

53. Interview with Sunmonu, Lagos, February 9, 1981 (emphasis added).

54. Ibid.

55. The launching ceremony was a very grand affair and it had all the trappings of a state function. Besides the 420 delegates (10 from each union - equality of unions was maintained for the purpose of the inauguration) representing 42 industrial unions, there were in attendance hundreds of workers, senior officials of the Federal Ministry of Labour, including the Commissioner, the Director of the ILO Area Office in Lagos; members of the diplomatic corps and the press; the Administrator of Trade Union Affairs and his Consultative Committee; and the Head of State's representative, the Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters; all of whom gathered inside Parliament Building, Ibadan, to witness the occasion.

56. Umoh James Umoh, Politicians, op. cit., p. 2, also see p. 1.

57. In fact, as Sunmonu explained to me, "How can anyone call workers' attempt to genuinely control their own organization a coup. Mr. Umoh can say whatever he likes as he usually does. What we have here is a real attempt by the working class, for the first time in the history of our labour movement, to assert control over their own unions and the Congress. It is succeeding, and it is not workers who are complaining about it. If it was otherwise, workers would be justifiably opposed." Interview with Hassan Sunmonu, February 9, 1981.

58. For the text of the "Address by the Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters, Brigadier Shehu Yar'adua, to the Inaugural Conference of the Nigeria Labour Congress held in Ibadan on 28th February, 1978", see Abiodun, op. cit., pp. 62-63 (emphasis added).

59. Ibid., pp. 59-61; for "Address by Major-General H.E.O. Adefope, Federal Commissioner for Labour, to the Inaugural Conference of the Nigeria Labour Congress" (emphasis added).

60. For this formulation on "corporatism", see Leo Panitch, "Recent Theorizations of Corporatism: Reflections on a Growth Industry", British Journal of Sociology, Vol. XXXI, No. 2, June 1980, pp. 159-187, esp. pp. 173-178; and G.A. O'Donnell, op. cit., pp. 47-87, esp. pp. 47-54, and 77-81.

61. See O'Donnell, op. cit., p. 75 (emphasis added).

62. See Abiodun op. cit., p. 63.

63. The former Commissioner, General Adefope, was elevated to External Affairs, while Mr. S.O. Williams was moved from the Ministry of Communications to replace him.

64. Interview with L.A. Osunde on February 5, 1981.

65. At its registration in August 1978, the NLC had elected its principal officers, as well as filled most of its secretariat positions. The full list of elected and appointed NLC officers read:

President: Hassan Sunmonu
 Deputy President: Mr. D.C. Ojeli
 Treasurer: Mr. P.O. Ero-Phillips
 Deputy Treasurer: Mr. M.E. Mpamugo
 General Secretary: Mallam A. Dangiwa
 1st Deputy General Secretary: Dr. L.A. Osunde
 2nd Deputy General Secretary: Mr. B.N. Obua
 Assistant General Secretary,
 (Administration and Establishments): Mr. M.O. Funmilayo
 Assistant General Secretary,
 (Finance): Mr. E.B. Thomas
 Assistant General Secretary,
 (Organization): Mr. A.M.O. Anigbo

Assistant General Secretary,
 (Education and Training): Mr. E.O. Taiwo
 Assistant General Secretary,
 (Research and Economics): Mr. I.E.E. Amechi
 Assistant General Secretary,
 (Cooperative and Social Welfare): Mr. R.M. Shodeinde.

Chapter 5: the NLC and Corporatism, 1979-81

1. See Guillermo O'Donnell, "Corporatism and the Question of the State", in James Malloy (ed.), Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Latin America (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977), p. 71.
2. Ibid., p. 80.
3. See Trade Unions (Amendment) Decree 1978 (Decree No. 22) (Lagos: Federal Ministry of Information, 1978).
4. See Nigeria Labour Congress Constitution (Motto: "Labour Creates Wealth") (Ibadan, 1978).
5. Interview with M.O. Funmilayo, Assistant General Secretary (Administration and Establishments), NLC, Lagos, February 5, 1981.
6. According to RULE 5(6)(a) of the NLC Constitution, the NEC shall be composed of the following: President, Deputy President, General Secretary and two Deputy General Secretaries, Treasurer and Deputy Treasurer, Heads of Department (ten Assistant Secretaries), the president and general secretary of each of the 42 industrial unions affiliated to the NLC, and the chairman and secretary of each of the 19 states' executive councils. The NEC therefore has a total membership of 139.
7. Geographically, a north-south distinction is also apparent. Since the greatest concentrations of workers are to be found in the southern cities, all but two of the 42 industrial unions have their national headquarters in southern (below the Niger-Benue confluence) Nigeria.
8. See General Olusegun Obasanjo's "Budget Speech to the Nation, March 31, 1979", Daily Times, April 2, 1979. Also see New Nigerian, April 3, 1979.
9. See Daily Times, April 4, 1979.
10. Ibid.; also see Umoh James Umoh, Politicians, Unionists, Employers: Enemies or Partners? (Lagos: author, n.d.), p. 36.

11. Umoh, loc. cit., p. 37.

12. Hassan Sunmonu first revealed this in Kano in 1981, when he "craved the indulgence" of the Congress-in-Session "to express the gratitude of Nigerian workers to the defunct Federal Military Government" for the N1.4 million, which is totally different from the N1 million subvention given to the NLC in 1978. See "Presidential Address to the First Triennial Delegates' Conference of the Nigeria Labour Congress, Holding in Kano, 24-26 February, 1981" (mimeo). Whether this appropriation for the NLC was instrumental to Sunmonu's public support of the budget is unclear. Nobody at the time heard any such thing, other than the fact that the NLC leadership was briefed before the budget was announced, and gave its commitment to support the budget.

13. See Daily Times, April 10, 1979.

14. Umoh, op. cit., p. 38.

15. Ibid., also see p. 55.

16. See Segun Osoba, "The Nigerian Constitution and the Working Class" (mimeo., 1979), paper presented at the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) Seminar for its National Executive Council Members held on Wednesday, May 23rd, 1979, at the Congress National Secretariat, Lagos. In fact, the part of this paper dealing with "The anomalous Issue of 'State Citizenship'" was later written in toto into the NLC's "Workers Charter of Demands" under this same heading.

17. The Ola Vincent Committee on Motor Vehicle Advance and Basic Allowances was appointed by the Federal Government early in 1978 to consider the ban on car loans. At a meeting of the NEC of the NLC in Lagos on May 4, 1978, a memorandum was drafted to be presented to the Vincent Committee:

The NLC regards car loan and basic allowance as a fringe benefit which the workers have been enjoying over the years and which should never be discontinued. This is an incentive which has an objective effect on the moral and productive capacity of the workers. The NLC therefore suggests that car loans should be progressively increased to bring them in line with the prevailing prices of cars in the country. In addition, the period of refunds of motor vehicle loans in the public and private sectors should be harmonized to cover a period of five years. (See Umoh, op. cit., p. 30.)

18. Ibid., pp. 39-40.

19. Ibid., p. 43 (emphasis added).

20. See Umoh, op. cit., p. 43.
21. Interview with Sunmonu, Lagos, January 9, 1981.
22. Ibid.
23. See Leo Panitch, "Recent Theorizations of Corporatism: Reflections on a Growth Industry", British Journal of Sociology, Vol. 31, No. 2, June 1980, p. 175.
24. See O'Donnell, op. cit., p. 75.
25. For an account of the events in several paragraphs that follow, see Umoh, op. cit., pp. 49-66, 73-74.
26. Ibid., p. 50.
27. Ibid., p. 73.
28. The timing of the agreement might have been crucial to the reaction of the NLC: it came only three days before the first of five separate elections held in 1979. The NLC, it would appear, could not insist on its demands being fully met precisely for this reason.
29. The five political parties registered to contest Nigeria's 1979 general elections (the first since 1964) were the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), the Nigerian People's Party (NPP), the Great Nigerian People's Party (GNPP), and the People's redemption Party (PRP). The NPN won the Presidency, in addition to the gubernatorial race in seven states; the UPN won in five; the NPP in three, while both the GNPP and the PRP had two apiece.
30. For details on the elections, see Special Edition of ISSUE ("Perspectives on the Second Republic in Nigeria"), Vol. XI, Nos. 1/2, Spring/Summer 1981, esp. the contributions by C.S. Whitaker, Jr., Richard Sklar, and Richard Joseph. Also see, The Story of the Nigerian General Elections, 1979 (Lagos: Federal Ministry of Information, 1979).
31. See "Address Presented by the NLC to President-Elect Shehu Shagari, September 14, 1979", in Umoh, op. cit., p. 76.
32. See "PresidenAlso see, The Story of the Nigerian General Elections, 1979 (Lagos: Federal Ministry of Information, 1979).
33. Shehu Shagari, "Presidential Address to the Nation, October 1, 1979" (emphasis added).
34. Cf. O'Donnell, op. cit., p. 73.

35. See Sayre Schatz, "Nigeria's Petro-Political Fluctuation", ISSUE, op. cit., Table 1, p. 36; also see fns. 35 and 36 in Chapter 1.

36. This is a summary of the NLC communiqué issued after an NEC meeting held in Lagos on 9-10 January, 1980.

37. See Workers' Charter of Demands (NLC Document) (February 1980). Quotations and citations in the several paragraphs that follow are from this document, unless otherwise stated.

38. In a memorandum to the Tripartite Negotiating Committee on National Minimum Wage, the NLC provided the basis for the ₦300 demand as follows:

Accommodation	60.00
Food	105.00
Clothing	15.00
Transport	30.00
Drinks	5.00
Health Care	10.00
Tobacco	3.00
Laundry	6.00
Entertainment	15.00
Savings	15.00
Fuel and Light	15.00
Education	10.00
Miscellaneous	25.00
Total ₦	<u>314.00</u>

This is how the NLC explained the "miscellaneous" item:

A young man beginning life as a worker expects, sooner or later to be coupled. In the meantime, he may have a girl friend to care for, who may later become his wife. Most probably, he has an old mother, or father or both, brothers and sisters, nephew and niece. By our custom and tradition of our extended family, he is expected to contribute to their upkeep. For these reasons, we consider that the sum of ₦25 against miscellaneous is adequate.

See "Memorandum on Minimum Wage and Living Conditions for Low-Income Workers in Nigeria" (mimeo, 1980), p. 9.

39. The argument articulated by the WCD in this paragraph was borrowed entirely from a section on "The Anomalous Issue of State Citizenship" in a paper presented by Dr. Segun Osoba at the NLC Seminar for NEC members in May 1979; see fn. 16 above.

40. See the "1980 Budget Speech", in West Africa, 31 March, 1980.
41. For this point, see Schwarz, op. cit., p. 38.
42. Quoted by Umoh James Umoh, West Africa, 26 May, 1980.
43. Ibid.; also see West Africa, 2 June 1980, and Daily Times September 8 and 23, 1980.
44. The NLC explained that it had also sent union officials to the ILO in Geneva, Western Germany, France, U.S.A., Israel, and Cuba, in addition to the number quoted for Eastern Europe by the Labour Editor of the Daily Times; see "The Daily Times and the Nigeria Labour Congress" (mimeo, 1980).
45. See West Africa, 26 May 1980 (emphasis added).
46. See the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1979, (Lagos: Federal Ministry of Information, 1979) p. 106. Item 32 of the Exclusive Legislative List, referred to by Etienam, covers: labour, including trade unions, industrial relations, conditions, safety and welfare of labour; industrial disputes; prescribing a national minimum wage for the Federation or any part thereof; and industrial arbitrations.
47. For two separate reports on the NCSU's "token" industrial action, see National Concord, Thursday, January 29, 1981; and Daily Sketch, Thursday, January 29, 1981.
48. See Dafe Otobo, "The Nigerian General Strike of 1981." Review of African Political Economy, No. 22, Oct.-Dec. 1981. p. 75.
49. See Daily Times, Monday, January 26, 1981.
50. Ibid., Monday, February 2, 1981.
51. Ibid., Tuesday February 17, 1981.
52. See Otobo, op. cit., p. 75.
53. See, "An Address Delivered by the President of Nigeria, Alhaji Shehu Shagari, on the occasion of the Triennial Delegates' Conference of the Nigeria Labour Congress, Holding at Kano on the 24th February, 1981" (mimeo).
54. All Sunmonu's nominees won in Kano. A constitutional amendment created two vice-presidential positions won by A.A. Chiroma and J.E. Dubre. The national treasurer, P.O. Ero-Phillips was re-elected, a new deputy treasurer, M.E. Onabagbe, was elected with the blessing and support of the incumbent, Mr. Mpamugo. Harrison Ekeocha, first appointed NLC

trustee to replace Dr. Bala Usman who was appointed Secretary to the People's Redemption Party (PRP) government in Kaduna State, was returned unopposed.

55. May Day was first observed as a public holiday in some parts of Nigeria in 1980, when the so-called "Progressive Governors" (that is, Governors of the nine states controlled by the UPN, the GNPP and the PRP opposed to the Shagari NPN administration) declared May 1 as a workers' holiday in their states - Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Ondo, and Bendel (UPN), Borno and Gongola (GNPP), Kaduna and Kano (PRP).

56. See Daily Times, Monday, March 30 1981.

57. See The Punch, Wednesday, April 8, 1981; also The Punch, Wednesday, April 29, 1981.

58. See Weekly Focus, February 2-8, 1981.

59. See The Punch, Wednesday, April 8, 1981; also see the edition of Wednesday, April 29, 1981.

60. See Otobo, op. cit., pp. 75-76.

61. Ibid., p. 76.

62. See The Punch, Wednesday, April 29, 1981.

63. For the full text of the President's broadcast, see New Nigerian, Thursday, 7 May, 1981.

64. See "May Day Address" by Hassan Sunmonu, President, NLC, Friday, 1 May, 1981 (mimeo).

65. See Sunday Punch, May 3, 1981.

66. See Daily Times, Wednesday, May 6, 1981.

67. See National Concord, Thursday, May 7, 1981.

68. See Daily Times, Wednesday, May 6, and Thursday, May 7, 1981.

69. See National Concord, Friday, May 8, 1981.

70. See Sunday Sketch, May 10, 1981.

71. This researcher was an "eye witness" to the strike, having been in Lagos before, during and after the nation-wide industrial action. Much of what follows is therefore an eye witness account.

72. For example, see National Concord, Tuesday, May 12, 1981.

73. For various accounts of reports reaching Lagos from the hinterland, see Daily Times, and The Punch, Wednesday, May 13, 1981.
74. See Daily Times, Thursday, May 14, 1981.
75. See Daily times, and The Punch, Friday, May 15, 1981.
76. See Otobo, op. cit., p. 78.
77. Ibid., p. 81.
78. Richard Hyman, Strikes (2nd - Revised ed.) (Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1979), p. 166.
79. See James Petras, "State Capitalism and the Third World", Development and Change, 8 (1977), p. 10.
80. See Otobo, op. cit., p. 80.
81. Hyman, op. cit., p. 192.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

1. See Third National Development Plan 1975-80 (Lagos: Federal Ministry of Economic Development, 1975), p. 283.
2. Clifford Geertz, "The Judging of Nations", European Journal of Sociology, Vol. XVIII, 2, 1977, p. 258.
3. See Third Plan, op. cit., p. 29.
4. See Geertz, op. cit., p. 257.
5. See "Full Text of President Shehu Shagari's Broadcast to the Nation on the Occasion of the First May Day Celebrations", New Nigerian, Thursday, 7 May, 1981.
6. See A.G. Hopkins, "The Lagos Strike of 1897: An Exploration in Nigerian Labour History", Past and Present, December 1966, pp. 133-155; also see Arnold Hughes and Robin Cohen, "An Emerging Nigerian Working Class: The Lagos Experience 1897-1939", in P.C.W. Gutkind, et al. (eds.), African Labour History (Beverly Hills/London: Sage, 1978), pp. 31-55; T.M. Yesufu, An Introduction to Industrial Relations in Nigeria (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), Chapter 1; and Wogu Ananaba, The Trade Union Movement in Nigeria (London: C. Hurst and Company, 1969), Chapter 1.

7. Richard Sandbrook, The Politics of Basic Needs (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), p. 203; quoting Alfred Stepan, The State and Society: Peru in Comparative Perspective (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 58.

8. See Sandbrook, op. cit., pp. 202-207.

9. See Stepan, op. cit., Chapter 3.

10. See Perry Anderson, "The Limits and Possibilities of Trade Union Action", in Tom Clarke and Laurie Clements (eds.), Trade Unions Under Capitalism (Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1977), p. 334.

11. Marx and Engels, The Holy Family (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1956), p. 53; quoted in Ralph Miliband, Marxism and Politics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 38 (emphasis in original).

12. See Hal Draper, Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution, Volume II: the Politics of Social Classes (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1978), p. 88 (emphasis added).

13. Ibid., p. 116 (emphasis added).

14. For this point, see Sandbrook, op. cit., p. 210.

15. See Peter Waterman, "Conservatism Among Nigerian Workers", in Gavin Williams (ed.), Nigeria: Economy and Society (London: Rex Collings, 1976), p. 184 (emphasis in original).

16. Miliband, op. cit., p. 35.

17. Ibid., p. 41.

18. Geertz, op. cit., p. 256.

19. Adrian Peace, "The Lagos Proletariat: Labour Aristocrats or Populist Militants?", in Richard Sandbrook and Robin Cohen (eds.), The Development of an African Working Class (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), p. 296.

20. For a discussion of the 1964 general strike in Nigeria and the role played in it by the marginalized classes, see Robert Melson, "Nigerian Politics and the General Strike of 1964" in R.I. Rotberg and A.A. Mazrui (eds.), Protest and Power in Black Africa (Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 771-787. Peace, citing this source, writes, "Historically a most noteworthy expression of such solidarity occurred during the 1964 general strike, when the market women of Lagos, always a most potent political force, gave full support to workers' actions by joining in protest marches", see Sandbrook and Cohen (eds.), op. cit., p. 297; also see Emile Braundi and Antonio Lettieri,

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21. See Leo Panitch, "The Importance of Workers' Control for Revolutionary Change", Monthly Review, 29(10), March 1978, p. 46.

22. See "May Day Address 1981" (mimeo), by Hassan Sunmonu, NLC President, Friday, 1 May, 1981.

23. See Panitch, op. cit., p. 46.

24. See Gavin Williams, "Nigeria: A Political Economy", in idem (ed.), op. cit., p. 42.

25. See New Nigerian, Wednesday, February 2, 1983.

26. Ibid., Saturday, February 5, 1983.

27. Umoh James Umoh, "Struggle for Union Dues", West Africa, 28 February 1983, pp. 545-6.

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