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Conservatism amongst Nigerian Workers

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1. Introduction

In a recent paper (Waterman 1974) I discussed the debate that has been taking place, largely amongst socialists, over the role of workers and unions in Africa. I identified three major positions that have emerged. One was the traditional Communist position that the workers and unions are the leading force for national and social revolution in Africa. Another was the Fanonist thesis (as well as a common liberal one) that the regularly-employed workers and their unions are a privileged and conservative 'labour aristocracy'. The third was the new Marxist one that whilst workers and unions could not be categorised wholesale as a labour aristocracy (having considerable radical potential), such a group did exist significantly amongst them.

I rejected the first position on the grounds that (1) it builds its conclusions about the present role of workers and unions into its premises about the revolutionary nature of the class and its organisations, and (2) that whatever its ideological or futurological value, it was no use to the analysis of real workers and unions in Africa now. I rejected the second position on the grounds of its evident fallacies (economic, social, political), its theoretical inconsistencies, and its speculative nature generally. As for the third position, I suggested that it had opened the way to a serious treatment of the problem by (1) making the essential minimum distinctions between proletarians and wage-earners, between union members and union leaders, and (2) by basing itself on serious empirical research. Yet it seemed to me that even this third group had not finally come to terms with the problem. All that it had proven was that the industrial proletariat was *not* such a labour aristocracy. Its positions on privileged and conservative groups amongst or around the workers were neither empirically well based nor conceptually clear.

This paper is a contribution to the necessary empirical research. It is concerned with the attitudes of workers and trade union officers in only one country - Nigeria. It begins with the suggested relationship between privilege and conservatism. It assumes that a serious search for such a relationship should be carried out in all those places that the literature on the labour aristocracy (classical or modern, outside Africa or within it) suggests that it might be found. This implies the necessity of looking at the wage labour force and trade union movement as a whole, because the working class is surrounded by non-workers, both within the wage and salary force and within the unions. We must thus look at the specific sectors that exist amongst and around the workers and unions. The sectors requiring investigation would seem to be the following:

1. *Occupational sectors*, since it has been suggested that conservatism is a function of employment within the privileged clerical/technical/managerial grades. (Hobsbawm 1964: 297, 325).
2. *Employment sectors*, since it has been suggested that conservatism is a function of employment within the privileged public and large foreign private sectors. (Arrighi 1970, Arrighi and Saul 1973).
3. *Trade union sectors*, since it has been suggested that conservatism is a function of privilege springing from professionalisation (Hobsbawm 1964: 301) or from ties with and dependence on wealthy

and pro-capitalist groups external to the movement or the country concerned. (Woddis 1972: 123).

The investigation has been carried out by means of interviews with 59 groups or individuals widely spread throughout the wage-earning category and the trade union movement in Nigeria. The survey enables us to first discover the general attitudes and then to identify such category differences as exist. The paper proceeds as follows. Section Two provides a brief background analysis. Section Three describes the interview procedures. Sections Four and Five report on the general and category responses. Section Six discusses the findings, distinguishing different kinds of conservatism amongst the workers and relating them to the structure and situation of workers and unions in Nigeria. It concludes by returning to the labour aristocracy debate.

2. Background¹

We still have to make do with unsatisfactory data from the mid-1960s on the size and structure of the wage- and salary-earning force. At that time some two million, or three percent of the population, were wage- and salary-earners. Some 60 percent of these were in the public sector, which includes a few factories but consists basically of the usual services. Concentration was quite high, with establishments employing 500 or more being responsible for some 300,000 employees. At the other end of the scale, however, perhaps another 300,000 workers might be found in the myriad establishments employing 10 or less. From equally unsatisfactory data on occupational groups, one might hazard that in the 'enumerated sector' (establishments employing 10 or more), the professional, administrative and managerial group (known collectively and loosely as 'senior service') accounts for at most five percent, clerical and lower professional for around 20 percent, the remaining 75 percent being skilled, semi-skilled or unskilled manual workers.

2.1 Occupational groupings

At least four significant occupational levels can be identified within the wage-labour force. These are groups which I will call by names common in Nigerian industry, the 'senior staff', the 'junior staff' (clerical, lower professional, technical and supervisory), usually monthly paid and enjoying certain privileges), 'operatives' (the term used for machine operators), and 'labourers' (the unskilled and often casually-employed pushers, heavers, cleaners, diggers, etc). The first two may well be totally dependent on wages for their income but their relationship to the means of production excludes them from the working class *sensu stricto*.² Together they form part of the middle class, but a middle class that is significantly divided. The difference is one of power as well as of income. But it does find open expression in the income hierarchy. Thus a table of government wage scales from 1967 (Fajana 1971: Table 4.4) shows the following: there are increases by small steps between the rate for an unskilled labourer and that for a clerical officer. There is then a 300 percent

increase to the starting rate for an executive officer. This is followed by two other small steps, followed by a 200 percent increase to the rate for a permanent secretary (head of ministry).³ The position of the mass of clerks, teachers and technicians - divided both from senior staff as a whole and the manual workers - is expressed thus by Gavin Williams (1972):

Clerical workers are usually concerned to defend and advance their real wages ... But in view of the relative inflexibility of wages and salaries in the public sector, clerical workers are often as concerned about the regrading of posts as about changes in wage levels. Younger clerks look to further education as a means of advancement. They are often more concerned to seek the favour of their seniors ... in so far as their promotion structure is more favourable than that of factory workers. They also have greater security of tenure and better prospects of a gratuity which can be invested on early retirement in commercial activities.

The second two categories are working class in the strict sense.⁴ But in the Nigerian case it should be noted that there is a significant division within the working class occupational hierarchy. Here again there is a vast gap in income, opportunities and power. This, however, is a division not so much within the same workplace or even the same sector as between different employment sectors.

2.2 Sectoral distinctions

We can distinguish significantly between at least four sectors 'occupying structurally different positions in the national political economy' of Nigeria (Remy FC).

Firstly, there is the large foreign company sector.⁵ This consists of the local subsidiaries of multinational corporations based in the major industrialised capitalist countries. These dominate the Nigerian economy, the other sectors (public and private, large and small) being organised in dependent fashion around them to provide a complex array of inputs and services. It is also the most dynamic sector, backed by all the technical and financial resources of international capital. These companies are usually highly capital intensive and therefore favour a comparatively educated and stable workforce and 'industrial peace'. They actively promote 'house unions' and procedures for consultation and bargaining. They offer various fringe benefits (canteens, clinics, sports and pensions schemes). Commerce and manufacturing, which predominate in this sector, may offer the highest wages, but the sector is as a whole subject to market vagaries and therefore to redundancy and unemployment.

Secondly, there is the public sector, consisting of the ministries, public corporations (electricity, rails, ports), services (education, health, housing, roads) both at national and local levels. Employing most of Nigeria's middle class and much of its working class also, it plays a key role in the political economy. Into this sector was brought the complex British apparatus of public sector grading, training, promotion and negotiation. Employees benefit from the opportunities thus provided. They are also protected

from most changes in market conditions and thus enjoy relatively high job security. Despite the fact that they are the first to benefit from government awards, this does not necessarily mean that they are the highest paid. Since colonial times public sector labour has been the trigger of labour conflict in Nigeria; it has been by creating pressure for reviews of wages and conditions here that the most dramatic changes have occurred. Improvements won by political pressure in this sector provide a public standard which can then be fought for industriously in the private one.

Thirdly, there is the Nigerian and 'Third World' (Pakistani, Levantine, Hong Kong, Sudanese) capitalist sector⁶. This consists of consumer goods industries (e.g. sweets, kitchenware), processing industries (e.g. groundnut crushing, wood sawing) construction and transportation companies. These are medium-sized firms, commonly financed jointly by Nigerian capitalists and the Nigerian state. They usually operate in a competitive market. They tend to pay below government minima and accept a high turnover amongst a largely-uneducated work-force. Conditions are bad. They are hostile to unions, the style of management being 'paternalistic under its best conditions and labour exploitative under its worst' (Lubeck FC). Collectively this group corresponds to what Cox (1971: 146) has called 'a small manufacturing system'.

Fourthly, there is the small Nigerian private sector. The distinction between this and the third sector may seem to be no more than that between two points on a continuum (Remy FC). But there is a distinction in terms of ownership between that of capitalists in the last sector and a specific 'petty-bourgeoisie' in this one. Speaking of this stratum in Jamaica, Ken Post describes them for Nigeria also:

Though they might employ a few workers, their own labour [is] not qualitatively different from that of their employees. In this they differ...from small capitalists, whom they might otherwise resemble in such matters as income. The watershed between the two [is] also an ultimate dependence upon wage labour for the continuation of the business, a mark of small capitalists but not of the petty-bourgeoisie, who depend... primarily on their own and family labour.

A survey of small-scale industry in Western Nigeria (Aluko et al 1972) suggested that there might be as many as 35,000 such enterprises in that state alone. Extrapolation from the employment figures given suggests a possible state total of 90,000 employees, including the self-employed. Ninety percent of the establishments consisted of the owner and a few employees. The most common trades were tailoring, carpentry, goldsmithing, car repairing, cycle repairing, in that order. Average hours worked were 55-60, compared with 40-44 in large-scale industry. Average annual earnings of employees were £45-60, compared with an official government minimum of over £108 in the Western State at that time. Despite the modern nature of many of their activities, employer-employee relations are of a decidedly pre-industrial type. The workers find themselves in a 'primitive market system' under which they 'have some choice of employment and thus some individual bargaining power' (Cox 1971: 146). But the sector is non-unionisable. The worker's one weapon is to quit, his one hope to become a small master himself.

2.3 Geographical distinctions

The wage-earners, then, are split into two classes, each of which is itself significantly divided. They also find themselves in contrasting urban environments. These geographical differences are partly those of earlier or later industrialisation. They are also those of greater or lesser concentration within a certain environment. They largely coincide with the North-South distinction, since the greatest concentrations of workers tend to be in the Southern cities. The South was the earliest industrialised, and there is a gap of 300 to 600 miles between the several industrial cities of the South and the few industrial islands in the North. But there are great distinctions between the urban environment of workers in Lagos and Ibadan, 80 miles from each other in the South. And there are analogous distinctions between Kaduna and Zaria, 40 miles from each other in the North. In both Ibadan and Zaria there exist only a few factories, surrounded by a 'bazaar economy' oriented to agriculture and the farmers. In both Lagos and Kaduna there are large industrial estates. Their bazaar economy is largely oriented towards big industry and commerce and therefore to the wage-earners.⁹ This not only implies a different relationship between the workers and those in the bazaar sector in the two types of city, but also between the working-class and middle-class wage earners. In Ibadan and Zaria those in the bazaar sector are likely to show little solidarity with striking workers, and the middle-class wage earners are likely to still consider themselves part of the 'modern educated elite', rather than workers with white collars.

2.4 Union structure

Union structures reinforce some of these divisions and break down others. Thus, at the bottom end of the enterprise scale, the Nigerian petty-bourgeois sector is evidently non-unionisable, and the Nigerian capitalist sector has so far been only marginally so. Geographically, unions are concentrated in the South. The fact that in Kano unions exist in the public sector but not at all in industry (Lubeck FC) suggests that there might be a different class balance in the unions of North and South. Unions are concentrated in the large foreign private and public sectors. This implies that several sections of the working class are practically cut off from the rest. Within the modern sector, however, the trade union movement unites the working class with a large part of the middle class. The role of the middle class in the movement may be suggested by the following facts: 1) Several associations of *bank managers* have been affiliated to the national trade union centres; 2) The National Union of Teachers, which has always kept some relationship with the movement in general, has five or six times the members *claimed* by its nearest industrial rival, the Nigerian Textile, Garment and Allied Workers Union;¹⁰ 3) The National Union of Bank, Insurance and Allied Workers, an eminently middle-class union, is one of the strongest and best-organised in Nigeria. Its General Secretary, N.F. Pepple, is a major influence in the United Labour Congress, of which he is the Treasurer.

Within the modern sector, therefore, the unions unite the working class with the lower middle class. But they also largely

divide both off from the upper middle class - the senior staff. Most of the organisations of the senior service - doctors, university lecturers, senior civil servants - call themselves associations and keep themselves apart from the trade union movement in general, operating more on a pressure-group basis.

The organisational framework of the trade union movement in Nigeria is complex. The movement has been permanently marked by extreme heterogeneity, chronic instability and multiple cleavage at every level. Heterogeneity is evidenced in principle of organisation - there are many enterprise unions, many regional unions, few industrial or semi-industrial national unions. Instability is indicated by the high birth and death rate of basic units, industrial federations, national centres. And cleavage occurs along lines of ideology (amongst leaderships), of international affiliation (amongst national centres), and of ethnic/regional identification.

Division between leaders and members is evident even at enterprise level. Widespread illiteracy combines with patron-client traditions to incline the workers towards choice of a more-educated workplace leader. Complex bureaucratic bargaining procedures imported from the metropolis, reinforce the necessity for qualified officials. The widespread employer practice of promoting or sacking workplace militants makes the existence of the 'external secretary' common. Trade union leadership is thus professionalised at ground level, creating even here tension between leadership as a voluntary service and as a paid career. It is therefore not surprising to find at national level the oligarchy, bureaucracy and careerism typical of the US business union. Factory-level militancy in Nigeria is repeatedly producing leaders who reject this pattern. But the common professionalisation of such leaders into a career combining the entrepreneurial and bureaucratic values of the Nigerian ruling strata has largely prevented militant surges from translating themselves into solid organisations with consistently radical leaders. (See Waterman 1973).

However, the spread of the check-off (by which the employer agrees to subtract union dues from the wages of workers so desiring) has begun to provide unions with a high and steady flow of income, and thus has encouraged a change in the style of leadership from an entrepreneurial type (funds to be plundered, members to be cheated, unions to be used as stepping stones to any other profitable career) to a bureaucratic one (commitment to an organisation offering a career structure, careful attention to laws and constitutions, etc).

The unions have been traditionally organised into one of a number of national trade union centres. The major ones since independence have been the moderate-reformist United Labour Congress of Nigeria (ULCN) and the communist-led Nigerian Trade Union Congress (NTUC). Two minor centres preserved a shadowy existence, the radical Labour Unity Front (LUF) and the christian Nigerian Workers Council (NWC). These centres have been divided by ideology and strategy into the militant-radical NTUC and LUF and the moderate-reformist ULC and NWC. They have also been divided from each other by international affiliation as follows : The NTUC was affiliated with the Communist-led,

Prague-based, World Federation of Trade Unions; the ULC with the reformist-led, Brussels-based, International Confederation of Trade Unions; the NWC was with the one-time Christian, Brussels-based, World Confederation of Labour; the Labour Unity Front remained unaffiliated. International affiliation provided a source of financial and moral support to the national leaderships, imported cold-war divisions into the trade union movement, and financed the real or imaginary differences in strategy. Speaking of the different national leaderships, Eskor Toyo(1967: 62) says that

The local head or heads of the empire will hear nothing of labour unity ... [since] each group of trade union emperors will lose the reason for their own existence ... [and] there is the risk that the foreign power will lose interest in financing a centre that has lost its significance as a separate unit.

Since this time, however, the great powers have come to realise that their investments were largely counter-productive, and the international trade union organisations have tended to withdraw or reduce direct cash subsidies. As a result, the national centres have begun to look towards their members and affiliates more, whilst usually retaining foreign links and largely-imported ideologies. But the United States retains a major local base in the Afro-American Labour Centre school operated for the ULC. And the two major international tendencies still have a presence in Nigeria.

2.5 The political environment

The political environment of labour relations has passed through two main phases in the post-colonial period. During the first of these government was in the hands of the three 'elites' created under the colonial political economy. These were the colonial chiefs and kings, the upper sections of the middle class (administrative, managerial, military, technical, educational, ideological, juridical, etc), and a repressed and weak capitalist class. Lacking the long-term rational self-interest of a historically developed class bloc, and faced with the considerable resources that the colonial and post-colonial state drew from the peasant surplus, the new rulers tended to turn themselves personally into capitalists, rather than serve the long-term interests of international or local capitalism. Their competitive style of rule led them to preserve the permissive and liberal labour legislation of the British. And the feuding ethnic or regional leaderships granted competing wage claims in region after region in an attempt to gather the workers' votes. Labour leaders were offered party positions, parliamentary candidacies and government board appointments. These did not satisfy the workers who came out in a major national strike in 1964. Government mishandling of this first major class threat was a symptom of the regime's incapacities to control the system. But, despite the effort of the radical leaders to capitalise on worker discontent, the attempt to organise a political general strike at the end of 1964 was a failure. The workers remained attached to the various elite parties, and the regime fell to a military coup.

Under military rule (1966-present day), government has rested in the hands of upper middle-class bureaucrats (civil or military), increasingly capable of long-term action in the interest of both international capitalism and a growing dependent national capitalism. The civil war represented the victory of the long-term and general interests of international and national capitalism over the short-term and immediate interests of one ethnic mini-capitalism. The centralised (though not overly-autocratic) regime does not need to woo the worker vote, nor does it tolerate any political threat from the workers. During the civil war there were brought in the first restrictive labour laws, including Decree 53, the 'strike ban'. After its end a group of NTUC leaders was detained for periods of 15 to 22 months, and even a group of ULCN leaders was detained for three or four weeks. Faced with the option of either working within a restricted area for economic advance or running the risk of total destruction, even the radicals chose for the first. They accepted prison quietly and thanked the regime when it released them. All the leaders worked together for a postwar increase through the customary government enquiry. When the ensuing 'Adebo Award' appeared to be limited to the public sector there was a brief, spontaneous but nation-wide strike wave amongst private sector workers, which led immediately to concessions to them also.

On the one hand the labour leadership has been unable to produce a realistic and convincing class strategy, and there is no effective solidarity with farmers, even when they protest violently. On the other hand the leadership is capable of uniting and developing a common strategy on at least wages issues. The latter, however, offers decreasing returns; inflation eats away any increase almost as soon as it is received. Moreover, Nigerian workers are faced with a multiplicity of problems - job security, social security, housing, education + that such a limited strategy cannot solve however successful it may be.

2.6 Recent developments

It is necessary, finally, to mention a series of issues significant for wage earners that were being publicly discussed in the summer of 1973.

The first was a 'rationalising' labour decree, Decree 31 of 1973, intended to strengthen union structures while discouraging political links. This did not imply the incorporation of the unions that has occurred in most other African countries, but it did imply a continuation of strike and other restrictions, and also that no more than two central organisations would exist. The major effect of this at the time of the survey was to push three different radical or militant groupings to form one united body (the Nigerian Trade Union Federation, founded September 1973), and the major moderate organisation, the United Labour Congress, to carry out an organising drive and press its claim as the sole worthy representative of the Nigerian workers. The second development was less dramatic. It was the widening newspaper debate on a return to civilian rule (promised by the military for 1976). Although most of this discussion was couched in a legalistic idiom that conceals the real social issues even from those using it, the discussion none the less gave

some legitimacy to criticism of the existing regime and must have heightened consciousness of political issues. The third issue was 'indigenisation', the Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Decree, under which a range of smaller foreign enterprises were to pass partially or fully into Nigerian capitalist hands by March 1974 (see Collins FC). This was a matter of direct concern to workers in foreign-owned companies, since there was a general fear that employment conditions would worsen.

3. Procedure

The interviews were intended - within limits of time and money - to give a general coverage of wage/salary-earners and trade union officials. They were thus held with employees in different economic sectors (large foreign private, public, small Nigerian private), different skill, power and income categories (manual, clerical, supervisory, managerial), in bureaucratic and industrial establishments, and in different types of city (Lagos as the coastal capital, Kaduna in the Northern interior). They also covered different trade union levels (member, voluntary officer, paid officer, national leader) and different trade union tendencies ('radical' and 'moderate').

The selection of enterprises, unions and respondents was arbitrary since neither time nor conditions permitted systematic sampling. Thus, if we look at the geographical distribution, this was 60% in Kaduna, 40% in Lagos. Employment sector distribution was as follows: around 30% public sector, around 27% large foreign private, around 16% small Nigerian private, and around 27% were trade union employees. By occupational category (excluding trade union employees) there were around 10% senior staff, 40% junior staff (clerical, supervisory, technicians), 30% operatives (skilled, semi-skilled), 20% unskilled. If we take the trade union dimensions, around 50% of the employees were unionised, around 60% in the 'moderate' unions, 40% in the 'radical' ones. This series of disproportions must be born in mind when considering the findings.

The recording of interviews was done by written summary. Interviews were semi-structured in the sense that questions were intended to cover the areas mentioned below. But the actual wording was not standardised, three languages were used (English English, local English or the common local language, as appropriate), and it was not always possible to ask the full range of questions. Given the open-ended nature of the questions, it was possible for a single respondent to give a complex or contradictory reply. Even more was this the case with group interviews. Where, in the latter case, differences were simply those of nuance or focus, they were integrated into a common protocol. Where contrary views arose they were recorded as such.

The purpose of the interviews was to find out how workers and union officials expressed their aspirations, assessed their environment, and oriented themselves towards action. Questions were intended to discover whether workers and unionists have their own specific aspirations (different from those of others),

identify their own interests (in opposition to those of others), and see the necessity for their own specific forms of action (in conflict with others) in order to achieve them. The questions therefore fell into three groups: Aspirations, Attitudes, Action:

1. *Aspirations*. The question here was what job or trade was most desired, the intention being to discover the extent to which wage employment is accepted as a way of life.

2. *Attitudes*. This group was further subdivided into sections on:

(a) *Social stratification*. In order to find out whether it was thought that anyone could rise to the top, it was asked how one could become a 'big man' (rich and powerful) in Nigeria. A second question was aimed at discovering whether it was thought that a privileged and self-interested group existed amongst wage and salary earners. A third one was whether it was thought such a group existed amongst union officers.

(b) *Property ownership*. In order to find out whether it was thought that the dominant pattern of industrial control was fair, respondents were asked who they thought should own firms like the United Africa Company (a major multinational combine), Odutola Tyres (a well-known Nigerian capitalist company), the banks and textile mills.

(c) *Political power*. In order to find out whether there was satisfaction with those who have ruled Nigeria, respondents were simply asked who they thought should rule Nigeria in 1976 (when the military has announced its intention to hand over power to civilians).

3. *Action*. This group was also subdivided into sections:

(a) *Forms*. In order to find out whether respondents thought in terms of collective action, they were asked by what means they thought workers could get a better life.

(b) *Means*. In order to discover whether workers considered industrial militancy as necessary they were asked whether they thought the current strike ban was good for them or not.

(c) *Allies*. In order to find out whether they felt their allies were amongst the rich and powerful or amongst the masses, the question was asked of who they considered to be helping workers like themselves.

4. The general response

As a first step in analysing replies the total response to each question was examined in order to find the major categories mentioned ('mentioned' because alternative or opposing categories came up within a single interview). In each case the categories will be illustrated by examples. Even in a survey of this kind proportions are not without significance. We will therefore use the following terms: 'tiny minority' (about 15% or under), 'small minority' (about 15-25%), 'large minority' (about 25-50%), 'small majority' (about 50-75%), 'large majority' (about 75-85%), 'overwhelming majority' (about 85% or over).

4.1 Aspirations

Interviewees in Kaduna only were questioned. Replies fell by a large majority into the following two categories and were divided equally between them:

Wage employment: 'The same job but with better qualifications. There is no money to set up on our own and we have no time to work in the evening' (Craftsmen, Foreign Textile Company, Kaduna). 'I will like to continue with my present job' (Gardener, Bank, Kaduna). 'To be professional in this present field ...' (Labourer, Nigerian Private Company, Kaduna).

Self employment: 'We would both like to be in printing our own boss, then you have self control' (Printers, Small Nigerian Company, Kaduna). 'I do sewing and dress-making after office hours. I would like to be a trader' (Woman Clerk, Bank, Kaduna). 'To be a farmer, or, if I had money, a trader. Farmers make money. They have rice, yam and guinea corn' (Messenger, Bank, Kaduna). 'Nursing'; 'Photography'; 'Trading' (Semi-skilled Workers, Foreign Textile Company, Kaduna).

The motives and hopes for wage employment are well exemplified in the replies. In the case of those opting for private enterprise these were in some cases (such as those of the printers or the clerk) based on saleable skills, and in the other cases apparently little more than an aspiration. As they stand, the replies suggest the partial acceptance of wage employment and the continuing hope to become one's own boss.

4.2 Attitudes

4.2.1 Social stratification

The first question was on how one became a 'big man' in Nigeria. A large majority of responses fell into the group below. Within this group, the 'self-help' category covered a small majority, the 'nepotism/corruption/influence' one a small minority, and the 'providence' one, a tiny minority.

Self-help: this consisted of the following sub-categories:

Hard work: 'First of all by hard work. Secondly by sincerity and honesty. Thirdly by obeying seniors. If somebody is like this he will succeed' (Supervisor, Ministry, Kaduna).

'Through hard work, and people must be very responsible and honest in anything they do' (Foreman, Ministry, Kaduna).

Education: '... by obtaining sound educational qualification' (Unemployed School-Leaver, Kaduna). '... by attending school.

If parents can afford to sponsor you and you have brains, eventually you will become a big man' (Supervisor, Bank, Kaduna).

Business (Trade/Craft/Modern Farming): 'By being a middleman between a government agency or company and the one that does the job. That is the easiest way, but you need proper connections' (Paid Union Leader, ULC, Lagos). '... or if one has big capital and starts trading ... A big farmer who earns a lot from the sales proceeds of his crops can also become

a big man and especially if he invests that money in business' (Semi-Skilled Worker, Foreign Textile Company, Kaduna).

Nepotism/corruption/influence: Well, if you are a businessman you build up your future. You also get by with 'godfathers' ... without connections all your hard work and saving doesn't carry you anywhere' (Senior Officer, Bank, Lagos). 'When you know government official or have some family. You can get some contracts if you are a friend of one brigadier. In Nigeria I can say there is no justice' (Paid Union Officer, NTUC-affiliated, Lagos).

Providence (God/Luck): '... people can win the lottery and pools and thus become rich overnight ...' (Taxi Driver, Kaduna). '... Someone can become a rich man if he has good luck and if God puts hand in whatever one does. Through the will of God one can become a big man. Whatever God says one will be in this world one is bound to achieve that status' (Labourers, Small Nigerian Company, Kaduna).

Only a small minority of responses suggest that one gets to the top by unfair means in Nigeria. Despite the continuous public discussion about corruption and other unfair practices, the overwhelming majority still suggest that one can reach the top either by one's own efforts, or by those of providence. But what is felt about those who have reached the top?

A second question was a 'labour aristocracy' one, i.e. it was concerned with perceptions of the existence of a privileged and exploiting stratum amongst salary-earners e.g. 'Do you think some salary-earners are rich and living from the poor in Nigeria?' An overwhelming majority of replies fell into the following group. Of these, the first category covered a small majority, the second a small minority, and the two last together only a tiny minority.

Yes: Professionals/Top Bureaucrats/Officers/Managers: 'The upper segment in Nigeria is really exploiting. They get more money and they live in government quarters ... Maybe someone who is earning 22 Naira¹¹ per month in Nigeria is paying as much rent as someone on 400 Naira a month' (Paid Union Officer, NTUC-affiliated, Kaduna). '... some managers do nothing and don't even know the job, yet they get ten times more. They get special allowances and amenities, car allowance, house allowance, family allowance - up to pet allowance and servant allowance. Some doctors work for government and they are paid for skilled work but others also have private hospitals' (Semi-Skilled Worker, Foreign Factory, Lagos).

No: They deserve it: 'Some are rich, but I do not think that they are living off the poor, because they do great work, those at the top' (Gardener, Bank, Kaduna). 'I do not agree with the word 'exploit'. If they are paid high salaries then I think the work is commensurate with the salary' (Staff Officer, Ministry, Kaduna).

Yes: Dishonest ones: 'Those who are in a position to employ people and demand gratification. Nobody else' (Clerk, Ministry, Kaduna). 'There are some rich salary earners who do exploit the daily-paid. They give promotion by favouritism' (Voluntary Union Officer, NTUC-affiliated, Kaduna).

Yes: Privileged workers: 'Not all workers in government and companies are rich. They are better off, more secure. In some well-established companies they look after workers, in others not' (Labourer, Nigerian Factory, Lagos). 'It is difficult to say that the clerks help the workers. The trade unions favour the clerks most in our place here because they are more important to management' (Labourer, Public Corporation, Lagos).

Thus, despite the fact that over half of the response suggested that it was possible to get to the top by fair means and hard work, over half also felt that top salary-earners are privileged and exploiting. The large proportion of the response critical of or antagonistic towards the dominant group in Nigerian society is significant.

Is there a similar attitude towards a 'trade union aristocracy'? A third question was about whether there was not a rich and exploiting group amongst the trade union leaders. A large majority of responses fell into the three categories below:

Yes: '... they try to enrich themselves instead of helping the workers. They are having their own job and they don't take good care of the workers ...' (Unskilled Workers, Foreign Company, Lagos). 'Certainly. When they get foreign aid to be used for the unabled, it is not properly utilised. These are rampant. You find these men on all sides. Most of the top officials are not honest. Money is not used properly. It is used for women, hotelliers, etc.' (Paid Union Officer, ULC-Affiliated, Kaduna).

No: '[Their pay] is not too high because the post they occupy depend on their educational qualifications, because no one can get a top post in Nigeria without a good educational qualifications' (Semil-Skilled Workers, Foreign Company Kaduna). 'No, we even think that the leaders of the NTUC are not opposed to the interest of the workers' (Voluntary Union Officers, ULC-Affiliated, Lagos).

Some: Disunity and leadership competition leads this. The people who are really doing trade unionism are suffering more than us. ... Leaders deceive the workers with management because of disunity and some are taking advantage of the workers' (Skilled Workers, Public Corporation, Lagos). 'Some of them combine trade unionism with business and this is reflected in their attitudes. There are those who combine a trade union salary with patronage from management, such as getting materials from the factory. For example, there are textile trade unionists who are in the textile business on their own' (Paid Union Leader, NTUC, Lagos).

Only a small minority of replies fell into the first category. The rest fell into the two following ones (mostly into the last). Thus a small majority of the response suggests at least some paid union officials to be rich and exploiting. The sources of corruption appear from the examples above - foreign aid, management patronage and business activities. The pattern of response also suggests that part of the trade union leadership is seen as behaving in the same way as the salaried elite.

4.2.2 Property ownership

The question on who should own the big companies in Nigeria received a bewildering variety of responses since it allowed for combined answers like 'government and foreign owners', 'government and Nigerian private', etc. There did, however, appear to be a spectrum, running from a conservative position to a radical one, with some indefinite ones between. They were as follows:

1. 'Present Owners' (foreign and Nigerian private);
2. 'Nigerian Private' (implying complete indigenisation);
3. 'Government and Foreign Private' (implying nationalisation of some foreign firms and no confidence in Nigerian private);
4. 'Nigerian Government and Private' (implying a Nigerianised mixed economy);
5. 'Government' (implying complete state ownership);
6. 'The People' (implying some form of workers' control).

Only two categories received a significant number of replies, the first and the fifth. Between them they received a large majority, divided equally between them. All the other categories together collected only a small minority, again divided equally between them:

Present owners: 'Why or how should anybody own them besides their owners?' (Tailor, Kaduna). 'Their owners are those who open these businesses and how can it be that someone else should own them?' (Labourer, Nigerian Company, Kaduna). 'Entrepreneurs should. Private investors, because management would be better as opposed to government machinery. Either Nigerian or foreign owners. Whomever can run the industries well. There is no nationalistic sentiment here'. (Senior Officer, Bank, Lagos).

Nigerian private: 'I am thinking it is high time for the indigenous businessmen of this country to be encouraged to group themselves together to take over all of these companies - like Odutola and Dantata [The latter is the best-known Kano business group - PW] and such worthy sons of our country. They can team up and take over from foreigners who are dominating our country' (Paid Union Officer, NTUC-Affiliated, Kaduna).

Government and foreign: 'Government and expatriates. Many people who work for local Nigerian contractors are cheated' (Skilled worker, Public Corporation, Lagos). 'Government and foreigners together. Government should have UAC' (Labourer, Public Corporation, Lagos).

Nigerian Government and Private: Nigerian businessmen, or government and Nigerian businessmen, so that our economy may be safe. Our independence is not complete unless we have our business controlled by ourselves so that our money will remain with us ... we will be helping each other, unlike the foreigners who do not help at all' (Tailor, Nigerian Company, Lagos).

Government: 'The public corporations. Government should take over indigenous companies. I see that proper things don't go to proper people in Nigerian private companies. In the corporations you can't jump grades, but in companies you can if you have influence' (Clerk, Public Corporation, Lagos).

'I believe that the means of production should be in the hands of the government, because with private entrepreneurs

property and wealth is in the hands of the few. If it is in the hands of the government there will be less unemployment and a sort of widespread distribution. The rich do not spend their money wisely ' (Paid Leader, Labour Unity Front, Lagos). *The People*: 'The people, the Nigerian people, the indigenous people. The Nigerian workers should own the means of production so that their lot would be better ' (Clerk, Foreign Company, Kaduna). 'The common man, because workers' problem can be heard, while government will not listen to us. The salary is not fixed, and you can become board of directors and very easy to approach ' (Labourer, Foreign Company, Lagos). 'The state ... By state ownership I mean socialisation, where the labour force is actively and effectively involved in production and administration ' (Paid Leader, NFUC, Lagos).

The minority categories are illustrated here for their intrinsic interest. It is to the two major categories that we should apply ourselves. They could be interpreted as showing a division in opinion between a clearly conservative position and a rather radical one. But this requires an understanding of the significance of such options within the Nigerian context which will be carried out below. In the meantime, we may note that amongst the arguments for 'present owners' there are both naive and sophisticated positions. And amongst the arguments for state ownership, there are those concerned with working conditions and others with general social benefits.

4.2.3 Political power

Answers to the question of who should rule Nigeria in 1976 fell by an overwhelming majority into the following three categories, the first collecting the majority, the second a large minority, the third and fourth tiny minority each.

Civilians: 'We hope politicians will come back. It is the party that commands the majority that will rule. It consists of intellectuals, professors, professionals, workers, women youth leaders and even the peasant: it must be a broad-based government ' (Paid Leader, ULC, Lagos). 'Civilian rule. Progressive ones. New parties, national in outlook. They should cater for the poor, not leaving us at the slums ' (Printer, Corporation, Lagos). 'The civilians, the same as before. The politicians, because I did not experience much difficulties in the political days. Now it is harder to get into school and to get a job for your brother. At least then you could get hold of a politician and ask him to help you ' (Supervisor, Bank, Kaduna).

Military: 'If we allow old politicians it is bad. Since army takeover there is very big improvement. It is for government to decide. We are minority, we have no say. The military helps construct roads, bridges, markets. During political days they looked after themselves, but army cater for everyone. During time of politicians there were many robbers, but army does them in.' (Labourer, Nigerian Company, Lagos). 'The military should continue ... If we have one central organisation and farmers' trade union then it would be different. I don't want the old politicians. There were hooligans and people being killed in the

civilian days. Now all these things have stopped. The roads are repaired and new companies are set up, and I am very sure that soon the army will think of something for the workers ' (Paid Secretary, ULC-affiliated, Lagos).

Labour Movement: 'The workers. The politicians ruled before and still the workers were behind. The army is worse; there is corruption and no public criticism. A workers' executive could rule in each government department and workers could send representatives from each department to rule the country ' (Voluntary union official, NTUC-affiliated, Ministry, Kaduna). 'If it is possible for ordinary men, I prefer it: the common man, the workers ' (Labourer, Corporation, Lagos). 'The working class, because they are the only people to provide a government on socialist line. It should be the trade unions, carrying along the peasants, the petty traders and so on ' (Paid Leader, NTUC, Lagos).

Mixed/Indifferent: 'Personally, I have no objection to any dress - khaki, agbada [Yoruba gown - PW], anything. We want anything. We want maximum benefit for all ' (Leader, ULC, Lagos). 'Those who have not smelled politics before: government officials, people from universities, even some military ' (Clerks, Corporation, Lagos). 'After eight years the military should make way for civilians. This should not be automatic. The takeover should be gradual so that the experiment can continue for about five years ... (Clerk, Foreign Company, Lagos).

The first point to note here is the apparent dissatisfaction with the present military regime, indicated by the fact that it collected only a minority of support. The second point of interest is the diversity of opinions about a civilian regime, ranging from those who want back the old politicians (and for the old reasons) to those who want new and progressive politicians, and to those who want some kind of functional popular front. As with the property ownership issue, only a tiny minority chose an extreme radical position.

4.3 Action

4.3.1 Forms

Interviewees were asked by what means workers in general could get a better life in Nigeria. The replies this time fell into categories running along a line from collective-dependence to collective-independence as follows:

Help from Above: 'The workers cannot do anything about that. It is only the government who is in a position to do something about that ' (Semi-Skilled Workers, Foreign Company, Kaduna). 'They must cry to the government to make things all right for them. And they must also work hard. The government ought to do something for the workers ' (Labourer, Nigerian Company, Kaduna). '... there is nothing workers can do to find a better life than for the management or the government to pay them reasonable salaries ' (Semi-Skilled Workers, Foreign Company, Kaduna).

Self-Help: 'They should do work very well. They should do what the master says. They should not associate with ruffians and [should] maintain their activity' (Paid Officer, ULC-affiliated, Kaduna). 'There is nothing to do to bring us workers together. They ban trade unions that fight. So unless an individual struggling ... So unless an individual has time for spare-time job ...' (Labourer, Nigerian Company, Lagos). 'By hard work, by good care, by educating themselves. They should practice economies by making good use of their salary' (Technician, Foreign Company, Kaduna).

Mutual self-help: '... by the self-help workers association like the one we have, a messengers' cooperative, to help each other in the Ministry ' (Messenger, Ministry, Kaduna). 'By developing the workers' economy via co-ops. Thus this minimizes the incessant demand for wages which leads to inflation ... I think we should copy the Israeli pattern with the trade union economic activities ' (Paid Leader, ULC, Lagos).

Trade Union Demands: 'By working hard and striking if necessary. But working hard is often no good. You need backing, industrial backing'; '... not all managers see that you work hard. This is why it is necessary to have action ' (Clerk and Skilled Worker, Public Corporation, Lagos). 'They can negotiate with government. If there is breakdown then we can go slow. If there is breakdown again then strike. But we do not talk of strike, we talk of a "practical demonstration" ' (Voluntary Union Officer, Ministry, Kaduna). 'They have to rely on the support of their trade unions. Thus they can get better living for themselves. There is no other way than through trade unions ' (Leader, ULC, Kaduna).

These four categories again represented the overwhelming majority. The two top ones, the 'self-help' and 'trade union demands' ones, each received a large minority, the 'help from above' one a small minority, the 'mutual self-help' one a tiny minority. It is striking that although the question was specifically phrased to refer to workers collectively, the response divided equally between individual action ('self-help') and collective action through the trade unions. Furthermore, a small majority fell in the first two categories, implying a rejection of collective forms of action.

4. 3.2 Means

If this is the implication, then it must be set alongside the response to the question on strikes. The question was whether it was thought that the ban was good for the workers, and it allowed for a simple division of answers that fell by an overwhelming majority into the following two categories:

No: 'No, because without the strike employers can treat their workers in any way they please. It is not good for them because they cannot get salary increases now, and they cannot say what is in their minds ...' (Labourers, Nigerian Company, Kaduna). 'It is a complete deprivation of the right of the trade unions and the working class. It is in the interest of the ruling class,

the military, national bourgeoisie, intellectuals, and some of the middle class such as contractors ' (Paid Leader, NTUC, Lagos). '... Now the military are millionaires in Nigeria. That is why they are against strikes ...' (Clerk, Corporation, Lagos). 'The strike is an instrument of last resort but that none-the-less is necessary. It is the weapon of the workers ' (Paid Leader, ULC, Kaduna).

Yes: 'The whole effect is good for the economy of the country because unfortunately we have a group of trade unionists who do not believe in power of dialogues, thus disrupting the rapid development we want ...' (Paid Leader, ULC, Lagos). 'It is good. Even if there is strike, requests are not granted immediately by employers. So it is more harm than good by strike ' (Messenger, Bank, Kaduna). 'The strike ban is good for the workers provided the unions which fight for the workers can negotiate with the government for better conditions of service for the workers. ' (Semi-Skilled Worker, Foreign Company, Kaduna).

Responses fell into the first category by a large majority. This suggests the existence of a basic class consciousness somewhat at variance with the previous reply.

The third question in this section was on who respondents considered to be helping workers like themselves. By an overwhelming majority replies fell into the following categories:

Government: 'The government, who increases the workers' salaries and wages from time to time ' (Clerk, Bank, Kaduna). 'The government, by giving me work since I have no education ' (Messenger, Ministry, Kaduna). 'The government which sees to it that those who are looking for work get something to do ' (Unemployed School-Leaver, Kaduna). 'The government, which provides security for people's life and property for everyone to enjoy. ' (Semi-Skilled Worker, Foreign Company, Kaduna).

Trade Unions: 'I would say I have not seen anyone apart from the struggle of the workers themselves trying to survive ' (Paid Secretary, ULC-affiliated, Lagos). 'The trade unionists. Nobody else. Only the trade unionists are interested. Therefore they are always treated as madmen or rascals ' (Paid Secretary, un-affiliated, Kaduna). '... Labour leaders help us because they can inform the government about workers problems. ' (Tailors, Nigerian Company, Lagos).

Higher-Ups: 'Only help we get is from the oga [Yoruba term of respect for a senior, in this case the owner - PW] who establishes enterprises to help some applicants [unemployed job-seekers - PW] in town' (Labourer, Nigerian Company, Lagos). 'In the organisational ladder the higher portions help the workers' (Labourer and Semi-Skilled Worker, Nigerian Company, Kaduna).

Nobody: 'Nobody' (Taxi Driver, Kaduna). 'You have to help yourself, nobody helps' 'I do not know of anyone who is helping the workers' (Labourer and Semi-Skilled Worker, Nigerian Company, Kaduna).

Responses fell by a large majority into the first two categories, dividing equally between them. But if one adds together the first and third category (both referring to external patrons) one finds the trade union category in a minority position.

The conclusion here would seem to be that although workers are aware of the necessity for radical industrial action, they do not recognise unions as their main instrument or their main ally. Faith still lies in the possibility of advancement through one's own individual efforts or through the help of the rich and powerful.

4.4 A Summary

Let us recapitulate by referring to the purpose of the questions: to what extent do workers and unionists in Nigeria have their own specific aspirations (different from those of others), identify their own interests (in opposition to those of others), and see the necessity for their own specific forms of action (in conflict with others) in order to achieve them?

On the one hand we see that of the total response around half shows an aspiration towards petty-entrepreneurship, that a majority suggests one can reach wealth and power through individual effort, that only a minority favours the takeover of private industry, that only a minority has faith in collective trade union action, and that a majority suggests that the workers' friends are the rich and powerful. On the other hand, we see majority criticism of what is, in fact, the salaried elite, the political elite and the trade union elite, and we have just noted the large majority in favour of the right to strike as a necessary weapon of the workers. We should also note that on the two questions that received strongly radical replies (in favour of workers' control and working-class power), these views were in a tiny minority.

Even without specific information about the values of other significant social strata in Nigeria (which must, however, be considered in the discussion below), we can see that the response shows a clear contradiction between a set of individualistic or deferential attitudes apparently implying acceptance of the status quo, and a set of critical ones implying opposition and supporting the necessity of collective action in conflict with it. Evidently the wage-earners and unionists questioned do not have a revolutionary consciousness. But nor can it be said that they have a simply conservative one. Before discussing this issue further, it is essential to in some way disaggregate the response and see what indications there might be of category differences in attitudes.

5. The category response

Both the literature on the 'labour aristocracy' and that on Nigerian workers and unions suggest the existence of a series of contrasts amongst the wage-earners and their representatives. The 'labour aristocracy' debate suggests that the privileges of some sectors is related to conservative attitudes amongst them. An examination of the interviews revealed striking patterns of response. They seemed at least highly suggestive and worthwhile reporting and comparing. Cases have therefore been selected to

illustrate differences of attitude as between 1. occupational categories; 2. employment sector categories; 3. trade union categories.

5.1 Occupational categories

In this section we will examine the attitudes of 1. senior staff and junior staff within a Ministry in Kaduna, and of 2. junior staff and operatives within a public corporation in Lagos.

1. The four senior staff were of different ages (33-48), at different salary levels (₦ 1824-5472 per annum), and of very different educational backgrounds and generations. The two older ones had incomplete secondary education plus some training courses, aspired to private business careers and had more than one wife each. The two younger ones both had university degrees, liked their present jobs and had only one wife each. Despite these differences, and the fact that they were interviewed separately, there was a remarkable consistency in their attitudes. They held the following positions, with only one exception or qualification: that one became a big man through self help; that there was no rich and exploiting group amongst the salary-earners; that there was such a group in the unions; that the present ownership pattern was satisfactory; that civilians should be in power; that workers could get a better life through hard work; that the strike ban was good for them. They would seem to hold to the 'developmentalist' ideology of the present governing group. They have no views critical of the status quo at all, except in relation to political power and the trade union elite.

The junior staff were a senior clerical officer, a woman accounts clerk, and two foremen. They were interviewed separately. Their salaries were between ₦89 and ₦107 per month, their formal education varied between four and six years of primary school. The clerk and one foreman were members of different unions. Unlike the foremen, both clerical officers were covered by a non-contributory pension scheme. There was little agreement amongst them. Thus, they held that (universally here) one became a big man through self help; that senior staff were not rich and exploiting; that either some or no union leaders were; that property should belong to present owners, government and private or government alone; that (universally again) power should be in civilian hands, a better life for workers came through self help, aid from above or trade union action; and on strikes they held the whole range of attitudes. This group seems to have varied from the previous one only in being less consistently uncritical of the status quo.

2. The groups examined and compared in the public corporation in Lagos consisted on the one hand of a group of seven or eight unskilled labourers, and on the other of two groups of seven or eight skilled workers and clerks. The pay of the labourers was about ₦312-48 per annum, for the skilled and clerical ₦506-1260. The skilled and clerical were all on permanent staff, but only one long-employed labourer was. Trade union membership ran across both categories, with non-members in both and trade union officers in both. There was so much agreement across the two categories that it is pointless to deal with them apart.

Thus, there was agreement that one became a big man through self help (though the higher category mentioned nepotism as well); agreement that property should belong to either government and foreigners or to government alone; agreement that power should rest with a mixed regime (although the lower category mentioned workers' power also); there was agreement that workers could get a better life through both self help and union action; and agreement that the strike ban was bad for the workers. It is thus not possible to say that one of the two categories was more critical than the other, but collectively they were distinctly more so than the senior staff mentioned above. But they were also more critical than the junior staff. This points to the possibility of a Lagos-Kaduna contrast which must be examined separately below.

5.2 Employment sector categories

The sectors selected for examination and comparison are 1. the Public or Foreign Private and the Nigerian capitalist Sector, 2. the Industrial and 'Bureaucratic' (basically clerical) Sector, and 3. the Northern and Southern Sector.

1. The cases selected from the contrasted enterprises are those of a group of five semi-skilled machine operators (the majority type) at a large foreign-owned textile company and five unskilled labourers (again the majority type) at a Nigerian-owned block-making company, both in Kaduna. The five operatives and five labourers fell into the same age group, had similar farming backgrounds and family patterns. But, whilst all the operatives had completed primary school, all the labourers were illiterate. And while the operatives earned ₦36-38 per month and were covered by the National Provident Fund, the labourers earned only ₦30 (the official minimum) and stated that they were not covered by the NPF, even though the size of the firm makes this legally obligatory. Whilst the textile company was typical of its category, the Nigerian one was not in so far as it was on the edge of an industrial estate, and within easy purview of the labour inspectors. But the non-existence of NPF coverage (or the labourers' ignorance of it if it existed) is symptomatic of the group. So were the physical conditions and hierarchical relations observed. The labourers were ragged, had most fingers of both hands bandaged, and were instructed to stand for interview. The operatives, on the other hand, were overalled and sat for interview in a room placed at our disposal by the Personnel Manager. The operatives all aspired to self-employment. Their positions were as follows: that one became a big man through self help; that top salary earners were rich and exploiting; that there was such a group in the unions; that the present ownership pattern was alright; that Nigeria should be ruled 'by any group who are competent'; that a better life could be achieved through self help; that the strike ban is good 'provided the unions ... can negotiate ... for better conditions of service for the workers'; and that the government was helping workers. In sum this group was very close to the ministry junior staff, showing little sign of any particular extra industrial militancy.

The labourers (whose common ambition was to be 'a professional')

in their present occupation) shared the same general pattern, varying mostly in their mode of expression. Thus on the big man question, they shared the self-help reply but added the trust in God that has been quoted on p. 12 above. On rich and exploiting salary earners, they said that some were too rich, but added that 'it cannot be said they are living off the poor because it is God who has given them their own luck in life'. On who should have power in Nigeria, one replied 'Anybody whom God has ordained. Who am I to say who it should be?' They actually opposed the strike ban, but added 'here in our own work it does not make any difference; even if we go on strike there is no difference'. And on those helping the workers, one said, 'I do not know of anyone who is helping the workers'. What comes out of this interview is the greater ignorance, sense of isolation and fatalism of the group compared with the operatives.

2. A comment has already been made on the lack of any obvious contrast between the attitudes of workers in the industrial and 'bureaucratic' sector. And this is borne out when a direct comparison is made between a group of skilled artisans in a large foreign factory and two clerks in a foreign bank, both in Kaduna. The artisans and clerks were both on permanent staff, covered by the National Provident Fund, and members of unions affiliated to the moderate UIC, which in both cases is recognised by management. Although the salaries of the clerks were higher, they overlapped with those of the artisans. The similarity between their attitudes was considerable. And when there were differences, these were matters of degree, with the artisans being marginally more critical than the clerks. Thus, on rich and exploiting salary earners, the clerks considered either that few got rich or that it was deserved, whilst the artisans said that those at the top in the government sector did not work for their money. On the strike ban, the clerks were prepared to accept it, while the artisans were opposed. And on allies, the clerks mentioned government and farmers (who produce food for workers) whilst the artisans mentioned trade unions and government (which controls rents) - but one qualified this by adding 'there is no rent control in Kaduna. Those men supposed to control rents have houses to rent themselves!.

3. The North-South contrast will be illustrated by comparison of two pairs of firms from Kaduna and Lagos. Although Kaduna is not a typical Northern city (being created as a colonial administrative centre and having been extensively industrialised since 1960) it shares the common isolation by 4-600 miles of savannah from Lagos. Lagos is the major port, the centre of commerce, industry and political life, and the base of the labour movement. We will compare unskilled labourers from a Nigerian capitalist firm in Kaduna (mentioned above) with those from a similar firm in Lagos, and semi-skilled machine operators from a large foreign factory (mentioned above) with their opposite numbers in Lagos.

The Nigerian-owned factory in Lagos is similar to that in Kaduna in being well-capitalised, having over 20 workers, and being non-unionised. It differs in that it is in the forest and five miles away from the edge of town. The ages and family backgrounds of the Lagos labourers are similar. But they were earning less (N27.50 on average), their rent was double, and they were paying higher fares.

Moreover, all the Lagos workers had some education, two having completed primary school. And one of the Lagos workers had trade union experience.

The Lagos labourers showed significant similarities and significant differences from the Kaduna ones. Thus, asked how workers could get a better life, they mentioned self help and trade unions, but said 'They ban trade unions that fight. So unless an individual struggling, so unless an individual has time for a spare-time job ...' On the workers' friends, they were the ones cited on p. 18 who referred to their oga, saying in answer to another question, 'Baba' ['father', a term of respect for their employer - PW] is our trade unionist and director. So what he wants is OK for us'. But on the big man question, they said 'It is hard unless you are from a royal [chiefly-PW] family ... Maybe by trading, but not everyone in Nigeria can be traders'. And on property ownership, they said 'Indigenisation will only profit those who are already profiting ... but we have no objections if government takes over'. They favoured military rule on grounds of the corruption of the old politicians. And, in answering the rich and exploiting salary-earners question, they produced this statement: 'Not all workers in government and companies are rich. Government workers are more recognised. They are better off, more secure. In some well-established companies they look after workers, others not ... in government offices and companies [there is] bribery and corruption ...' Thus, in some ways the Lagos labourers showed the sense of isolation and the dependency of their opposite numbers in Kaduna, but they were far more articulate, and they were significantly more critical.

The Lagos semi-skilled workers were again of similar age and background to the Kaduna ones, but they were earning much more - ₦40-80 per month - and paying out much more in rent and fares. They were more highly educated, all having some secondary education and one having completed it. Like their opposite numbers in Kaduna, they were all members of a recognised trade union, this time affiliated to the radical NTUC. Although their views overlapped on some issues with those of the Kaduna group, they were usually more radical even on these issues. Thus, in the big man question they mentioned self help but added, 'this is not happening. You are buying your rights. The manager will expect something from you. You can only get on by favour.' And on the rich and exploiting salary-earners, they added this to the end of a detailed attack on managers and doctors: 'Graduates are also living from the workers. They come to the company and they don't know the job ... These graduates have to be trained and then they are recommended for promotion on top of that.' They also criticised trade union officers, stating of their own paid secretary, 'We don't even know how many trade unions [he] has. So many! So he doesn't do the job properly ... In the headquarters there are some people who convert money for their own use. Some foreign bodies like Russia sent money for a labour house, but this money was mis-appropriated.'¹² On property ownership, they were for extensive nationalisation: 'Government should have a share, 75 percent share, in industry. All workers are suffering now and managers are driving cars ...' In answer to another question they added, 'Most cases

in the indigenous companies the workers belong to one ethnic. The common man not in that group has no chance'. On political power, they favoured 'The workers' union of Nigeria. We have clerks and engineers, teachers and people with the GCE [secondary school leaving certificate - PW]. They know what the people need. They can run the country. Tunji Otegbeye can help ...' On the means to a better life, they spoke strongly for the union. They were strongly opposed to the strike ban. And although they thought that teachers and the press were helping workers, they spoke mostly of the unions and socialist labour leaders. The radicalism of this particular group of workers might have been exceptional, but their general social awareness and critical attitudes are not. Their views make a striking contrast with those of their opposite numbers in Kaduna.

5.3 Trade union categories

We will look here firstly at interviews with two of the top paid national leaders, secondly at two paid officers, and thirdly at two volunteer enterprise-level officers. In each case we will take one 'radical' and one 'moderate', thus allowing us to compare these two categories also. Finally, we will consider the leaders-led dimension.

Top national leaders: These were both well-known national executive officers of their respective federations. The NTUC leader is around 50, married with five children, and living in a rented four-roomed house. The ULC leader was around 40, married with six children, and has his own five-bedroomed house. Both have cars. The NTUC man has been a professional for some 20 years, and as the national secretary of several unions claims to earn the incredible sum of ₦6,000 a year. The ULC man has been a professional for 13 years, claims to earn around ₦2,000 as a union secretary, and another ₦1,300 as a member of two government boards. The first has had secondary and clerical training, the second complete secondary, three years vocational, and industrial relations training in the United States. Both have travelled widely abroad.

The two leaders agreed broadly on the questions concerning trade unions. They opposed the strike ban, considered that collective action by the workers was necessary for a better life, and that the workers' allies were the unions. But the ULC leader indicated that his side did 'not like strikes', and for the NTUC man the necessary collective action of the workers was specifically for socialism. The tendency suggested here became clearer in most of the socio-economic-political questions.

They agreed broadly on the big man question, each speaking of self help and education, the second referring also to destiny. They also agreed that rich and exploiting salary earners existed at the top. But on other social and political questions they disagreed. The NTUC leader favoured property ownership in public hands, the ULC man said, 'People like Odutola got where he is by sheer hard work. I would not like it to be taken by anyone else. It is the same with the foreign companies. If they had not invested nobody else would.' On political power, the first favoured working-class

rule, saying, 'It should be the trade unions, carrying along the peasants, the petty traders and so on'. The second hoped for, 'The best, ordinary men, intellectuals, trade unionists.' The only issue on which the NTUC man appeared more moderate than his opposite number was when discussing rich and exploiting union officers, since he considered the rich ones 'the embodiment of the [poor] strata'. However, the second evidently aspired to the position of the first - and the castigated salary earners - stating that union leaders should be paid 'in the range of Permanent Secretaries'.

Paid officers: The two paid officials selected are both regional secretaries of national trade unions in Kaduna. Both are in the mid-30s and from the most southerly Northern state. Neither has any transport of his own, and neither has private insurance, although both hope to. There were further similarities. Neither would state his salary (other local trade union officers earned ₦ 300-960), they had been professionals for 10-12 years. Their training and work experience was not too different. One had had some secondary education and been a railway craftsman, the other had only primary education but had been a government clerk.

The attitudes of the two coincided or overlapped on most of the socio-economic and trade union questions. Both gave self-help type answers on the big man question, both considered the top men as rich and exploiting, and both favoured property ownership in private Nigerian hands (the NTUC man now, the ULC man 'as time goes along'). They disagreed clearly (and along lines of their affiliation) on only two of these issues. Thus, on allies the ULC man referred firstly to 'brothers from West Germany, who are sending a certain aid', and to union secretaries, whilst the NTUC man referred by name to three veteran radical union leaders, two ULC leaders who split off to the left, and another ULC leader who had been forced out of his position. And on political power, whilst both favoured the politicians, the NTUC man added, 'What Goody says is OK¹³ but the workers are not ready. Leaders have not prepared for rule of the workers. The majority of workers after all are still not well informed.'

Broad agreement existed also on the union questions. Both opposed the strike ban (the ULC man more strongly). And they spoke in similar terms on rich and exploiting union officers. The ULC man complained of misuse of foreign funds by both sides in the unions. The NTUC man also thought leaders from both sides were corrupt. 'But the ULC gets more cash from abroad. If the NTUC got as much money as the ULC, then the NTUC has been able to convert aid for the purpose meant'.

Voluntary officers: We will compare here interviews with a ULC affiliated union secretary and two NTUC-affiliated union officers of two textile mills, both in Kaduna. The ULC-man was a junior supervisor, earning ₦840 per annum, and the owner of a motorbike. The two NTUC-men were both poorer. One was a section-head on ₦510 per annum, the other a machine operator on about ₦360. The ULC man had some secondary and trade union training, had worked in textiles since 1962 and been involved in four strikes. Of the NTUC

men, one had a teacher's certificate, the other only some primary education, they had been in the factory some 6-7 years, and been involved in two strikes.

There was less consistency between the two sides than with the two previous sets, and the radical-moderate division appeared more marked. Thus, the NTUC men favoured ownership in government hands, the ULC man was opposed. The first thought there were rich and exploiting salary earners - dishonest ones - but the second said 'Even if you have a big salary there is the extended family and you may not be better off than someone earning less.' On collective action the NTUC men spoke only of union action, favouring a 'united front... so that all conditions of textiles will be one then. They will be able to contribute to the farmers. They can talk to the government with more voice'. The ULC man spoke of union action but added a self-help element. On the trade union questions this difference came out most sharply in discussing the strike ban. The NTUC men described the strike as 'a last step' but directly opposed the ban. The ULC man opposed it, but added, 'this right should be left with the national trade union leaders. The trouble is that workers just take the law into their own hands and face the leaders with problems.'

However, there were issues on which there was more agreement. Thus on political power, both favoured worker rule. The NTUC men put it this way: 'Unless the labour movement should have one voice and form one labour party ... with the politicians we will fall into the same dilemma as before.' Whilst the ULC man said, 'This should be left to the politicians. When unions have learned to team up and work together I think the working class should.' On only one issue was there a contrast in which the NTUC men appeared the more conservative. This was on the big man question. And here it was more a matter of nuance, the first side concentrating on self-help, the second clearly stressing the corruption element.

Radicals and moderates. If we take the two leaders we can see a clear radical-moderate divide on the issues of ownership, political power, attitudes towards strikes (though not the strike ban). There also exists (stated in the ULC interview, unstated in the NTUC one but present in interviews with other NTUC leaders) a standard criticism of the other. The ULC side criticises the radicals (both in and outside the NTUC) for extremism and irresponsibility, the NTUC criticises the ULC for its corruption and compromising. This tendency runs down the union hierarchy in the other interviews, although both the local paid officers deviated considerably from their official affiliation. Evidently, the contrast here is not simply a matter of leading personalities, of foreign affiliations, or of ideological postures. The differences are those of both strategy and tactics and (as the above interviews with ordinary workers at different places and different levels suggest) they find echoes in the working class itself. However, on what might be called bread-and-butter questions, such as the rich-poor gulf, ending the strike ban, and issues of collective action there appears to be considerable overlapping.

Leaders and led. The four levels here are the top national, the local paid secretaries, the voluntary enterprise-level officials, and the members. There is an immense gap between the income and living style of the first and second category, but little if any between the others (although local paid officers would certainly be earning more than the average of voluntary ones and even voluntary officers get expenses and other perquisites of office). Do these gaps lead to common differences or oppositions between the levels? All that one can say from these interviews is that the lower officials sometimes differ from their respective leaders on the major issues mentioned above. However, if we extract all paid unionists from the interviews and then compare the attitudes of the rest with the national leaderships, we get a different result. On *politics* we find that only a small minority supports the NTUC option, whilst a large majority supports broadly that of the ULC. On *ownership* we find they divide half and half between the two positions. And on strikes we find a small majority supporting the NTUC option of simple opposition, whilst a small minority supports a qualified position like that of the ULC. In each case the moderate position tends to be proportionately better supported in the North, and the radical one better in the South.

5.4 A Summary

What we have been looking for in this chapter is evidence of a relationship between privilege and conservatism.

Amongst the different *occupational categories*, the one most identified with the status quo was the senior service group. The junior staff group of clerks and supervisors was marginally more critical. No significant difference was found between the privileged group of skilled and clerical permanent workers and the un-established labourers. And collectively they were moderately critical in attitude. Thus the relative privilege of the senior staff group as against the junior staff group finds an expression in attitudes, whereas that of the junior as against the labourers does not.

Amongst the different *sectoral categories*, we find the following. The difference between the relatively privileged workers in the large foreign enterprise and the underprivileged ones in the Nigerian one was also not reflected in a greater conservatism of the superior group. It was, rather, the less privileged one that was more conservative. Despite the relative privilege and prestige of those in the 'bureaucratic' sector over those in the industrial one, there seemed to be only a marginally more critical attitude amongst the latter. The most striking sectoral difference, it turned out, was not based so much on relative privilege as on differential regional development. Thus, both employees of the small Nigerian firm and of the large foreign company in Lagos were significantly more critical than their Kaduna opposite numbers, even if the differences between them repeated the Kaduna pattern.

Amongst the different *union sectors* we find the following. Firstly, that the lower levels are not markedly more critical than the higher (despite the differences in power and privileges), except in their criticism of the trade union elite. The conservatism-

radicalism gap seems to run - as one might expect - down the levels and between the two tendencies, although the lowest officers deviated considerably from the highest ones. Secondly, the gap between the top paid national leaders and the wage-earners appears to be a gap between the most extreme and characteristic attitudes of both leaders and those of the ordinary workers. Neither the most radical positions of the NTUC leader, nor the most conservative ones of the ULC leader receive majority support.

To sum up, conservatism seems to be more marked amongst the top occupational category in the large modern sector, amongst the poor workers in the small Nigerian sector, amongst Northern workers, and amongst the moderate trade union tendency. But this 'conservatism' is not necessarily either of the same degree or of the same kind, a matter which must be discussed below.

6. Discussion

We have so far examined the attitudes of wage-earners and unionists in general, and of different groups within the occupational, enterprise and trade union structures. Certain attitudes have been identified as 'deferential', 'individualist', or 'developmentalist', all three being treated as species of conservative ideology. It is now necessary to consider more carefully the meaning of 'conservatism' within the Nigerian context, to differentiate between types of conservatism found amongst the workers, to consider the structural determinants of such conservatism, and to return again to the question of the labour aristocracy.

6.1 Conservatism in the Nigerian context

I take as conservative those values, ideas or ideologies that are in any society supportive of the existing social structure, and in any class-divided society supportive of the ruling and exploiting strata. In a capitalist society, the ideas of competitive individualism (or the ideology of Liberalism), ideas of deference to those naturally or supernaturally ordained to wealth and power (or the ideology of Conservatism), and ideas of transition to a democratic and egalitarian society through incremental social, economic and political change (or the ideology of Reformism) are all conservative in the sense suggested.

Such ideas are common, as we have seen, amongst wage earners and trade unionists in Nigeria. That they are, indeed, supportive of the ruling and exploiting strata is suggested by the fact that they are or have been used and actively propagated by such strata. Thus, as Segun Osoba states of one of the Northern Muslim rulers transformed into political agents of imperialism during the colonial period:

'Ahmadu Bello, in his autobiography, acknowledged the NPC's lack of ideological content, its subservience to British paternalism and its fatalistic and unenterprising attitude to the destiny of the country: "You will see", he wrote, "that we were never militant 'nationalists' as some were. We were sure that in God's good time we would get the power.

The British had promised this frequently and we were content to rest on these promises." The same man spoke with pride, at a Conservative reception given him in London of a congratulatory telegram which he sent to Mr. Macmillan in 1959 from the "Conservative Party of Nigeria" in commemoration of the electoral victory of the Conservative Party in Britain' (Osoba 1969: 33, f.n.1).

Ideas of competitive individualism were most openly and forcefully expressed by the racketeering politician-businessmen created as political agents of imperialism during the period of decolonisation. Their ethic finds expression in the words of Azikiwe, the businessman-politician who led the radical nationalist tendency in the late-colonial period and became the President of Nigeria later. Although decked in socialist and biblical finery, the substance of the free enterprise spirit comes through in his personal credo:

Let us not make a popular mistake by assuming that a normal acquisition of wealth is wrong for society. It is not inconsistent with Socialism for a Socialist through hard and honest work to acquire a limited amount of wealth to enable him to co-exist successfully with his capitalist counterparts. It is not the volume of wealth that makes it obnoxious to the socialist, but it is the use to which wealth is put that matters ... (T)he well-to-do among us must now use their wealth in a philanthropic manner, if they had not already been doing so, for it is said: 'Unto whom much is given, much is expected'.¹⁴

And the ideology of reformism, in a peripheral capitalist variant known as 'developmentalism'¹⁵ is the preferred idiom of the 'functional elites', created in the metropolitan (or metropolitan-dominated Nigerian) institutions of higher education as agents of a rationalised neo-colonialism in the post-independence period. It finds clear expression in, for example, the 1970 Plan, where the persuasive intent is also clearly laid out:

'... progress would be faster if the nation is motivated in its economic activity by a common social purpose ... What Nigeria lacked most in the past has been the national sense of purpose, particularly in economic matters. The Federal Government will, therefore, occupy the commanding heights in the quest for ...

- (i) a united, strong and self-reliant nation;
- (ii) a great and dynamic economy;
- (iii) a just and egalitarian society;
- (iv) a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens; and
- (v) a free and democratic society ...

Emphasis has been placed on growth as a pre-condition for a meaningful distribution of the fruits of development. The "national cake" must first be baked before it is shared; and the bigger the cake, the more it can go round at each succeeding round of the sharing games. But distribution is no less important for a country dedicated to the objectives of national unity and social integration ...

A just and egalitarian society puts a premium on reducing

inequalities in inter-personal incomes ... It organises its economic institutions in such a way that there is no oppression based on class, social status, ethnic group or state ...' (FRN 1970, 31-3)

Although in certain conditions each of these three ideologies could be the dominant one, in the Nigerian case they have never gelled into a coherent and persuasive whole.¹⁶

6.2 Popular conservatism

Both the appeals and limitations of conservative ideologies amongst workers in Nigeria can be understood when we consider their sources. Thus, the values and ideologies of deference express in mystified form the social relationships of pre-colonial - even pre-class - societies. They carry decreasing conviction amongst workers as they see personal ties being increasingly transformed by the market into cash relationships. The values and ideology of competitive individualism express in mystified form the social relationships of early capitalist society. They can thus have considerable appeal where simple commodity production or small-scale expanded commodity production is developing. And petty commodity production - the bazaar sector - is still the *most visible* aspect of capitalism in Nigerian towns and villages. But this historical era is that of international monopoly capitalism, and it is large foreign monopoly companies, supported by state and state-subsidised local companies, that *predominate* in Nigeria. The behaviour of this sector constantly undermines the myths of competitive individualism amongst those it employs - and these are the majority of Nigerian workers. Developmentalism would seem to be the most appropriate national myth for Nigerian conditions but this, as Latin American experience suggests (Spalding 1973) requires dramatic political, economic and social concessions by the state to effectively incorporate the workers. And so far Nigeria's colonial and post-colonial rulers have felt required to make such concessions only to the top sections of the middle class and the most pliable trade union leaders, rather than to the workers or any considerable section of them.

The conservatism of the workers is, therefore, not a modern one springing from such privileges as one might consider them to enjoy within the wage-employment sector,¹⁷ but one that they share with the rural and urban poor from whom they spring and amongst whom they live. The competitive individualism and deference we have noted can be found equally amongst the petty traders and the urban unemployed. Generalising about Ibadan, a town with very few workers, Gavin Williams points out the following: that the rich are admired for their success; that 'God, fate and luck are common (and not unwarranted) categories for the explanation of success or the lack of it'; that farmers

remain dependent on the educated, urban elite for the provision of amenities. They know that the educated have failed them and have indeed used farmers' organisations and money to cheat the farmers. But even Tafa Adeoye [their leader during an uprising in 1969 - PW] himself looks to the educated to turn the government away from its evil ways and save the farmers from their suffering (Williams 1974 a, 112-14).¹⁸

In so far as the workers have notions of common action against the rich and powerful, this finds its complement (and origin?) in what Williams calls, 'the ideology of brotherhood':

The category 'brothers' is flexible and defined only by context, along lines of kinship, community or neighbourhood. 'Brothers' are peers who are expected to assist one another. They provide a measure of security in an uncertain world, assist one another in meeting social obligations and promoting each other's affairs. (Williams, 1974 b).

The conservatism of the workers (again like that of the poor in general) is itself ambiguous. It represents a *claim* on the rich and powerful that they should protect their poor brethren, a *demand* on the economy that it should permit everyone to become a successful trader. And when such values increasingly become an 'ideological fig-leaf for monopoly capitalism' (Williams, 1974 b) then an appeal to them can become for the poor and exploited a motive or justification for radical action against monopoly capitalism. We will see below that in Lagos petty-bourgeois aspirations of workers has motivated their militancy, and in Kano that traditional religious beliefs have motivated strike action.

6.3 The conservatism of privilege

The conservatism of the senior service, on the other hand, is quite unambiguous - however sophisticated and hypocritical the language in which it is presented. It is well exemplified in the demand of the university vice-chancellors to the Adebayo Commission (Committee of Vice-Chancellors n.d.) for increases in the pay of academic staff. There is first the obligatory gesture towards egalitarianism:

The Universities ... feel that it is desirable that the nation should evolve a programme which embraces a social welfare scheme for all levels of society and an economic system that seeks to rationalise remunerations for services rendered in a way to reduce the gap between the incomes and standards of living of the elite class and the masses.

Then comes the rejection of structural change:

... such a programme would necessitate a radical change from the existing economic, political and social systems. It will require a good deal of social engineering which, even in a revolutionary situation, will take a long time to implement ... (I)t cannot be obtained in the foreseeable future. In the meantime, problems which arise have to be solved within the context of the realities of the economic and social systems ... In a competitive labour market the question of rarity is important in fixing the wages of an employee who has several alternative prospective employers.

Finally, there is the hope that the state will take over the traditional paternalist role of the rich so that they can use their personal incomes for themselves alone:

... salaries need not be as high as they are at the moment if they are tied to a system of rigid price control. And shorn

of the responsibilities which the elites bear for the welfare of their relations, they could represent greater real income and bring greater contentment. There would then be no need to argue periodically for more pay because the nation would have catered for the basic needs of the people at large and the individuals would be free to use their incomes for their own special needs and those of their immediate families.¹⁹

The difference between this conservatism and that of the workers corresponds precisely with the distinction that Mio Vianello makes between active and passive alienation. The first is that of 'capitalists, key managers plus intermediate managers' (in Nigerian terms, perhaps, the capitalists, perm secs and senior staff), the second is that 'suffered by the working class directly in contact with the machines as destruction of one's personality' (Vianello, 1974:32). Of the first group only a few factory owners or key men have a substantial influence over control of surplus value,

The large majority does an essentially repetitive activity, which marks it off sharply from the former. Since a pre-requisite for their being hired in or promoted up the hierarchical ladder is their adhesion to the order and the ideology of capitalism, they are all imbued with careerism ... Objectively they are exploited who help the exploiters to exploit; but subjectively they identify with the exploiters, their individual goal is to share in the ... privileges of the ruling class. The style of life, inspired by the canons of the latter, becomes their main concern. (Vianello 1974:32).

What of the conservatism of the ULC? As with the senior service men there seems to be no limit to the privileges its leaders seek, no feeling of brotherhood that requires them to share the poverty of their members. As with the senior service, the conservatism of the ULC wears modern dress. The ULC has consistently and enthusiastically endorsed and propagated the values and policies of succeeding ruling groups.²⁰ They evidently see themselves as managers - perhaps in the classic role assigned to US trade unionists as 'managers of discontent'. To them could well be applied Vianello's judgement on the mediating role of managers:

... we cannot ignore the role intermediate levels play ... in the general tension and specific struggles between top and bottom levels. Their role, objectively, is to smooth this tension and these struggles. In the end, they develop the attitude which is typical of mediators: to feel above the parts (Vianello, 1974:32).

But in the attitude to private ownership the statements of the ULC officials strike a popular note. In some sense and in some part, the ULC could claim that *its values* are the 'embodiment of the poor strata'.²¹ But the conservatism of the ULC is not based on inexperience in the industrial mode, on poverty and ignorance. It is a conscious option, made in the name of the workers collectively, and it is propagated to them. To this extent the ULC leaders are acting, like the senior service, as active agents of conservatism among the workers.

6.4 Structural determinants: some case study evidence

A survey of values unrelated to a study of behaviour and an analysis of structures provides a weak basis for any conclusions. Fortunately, there have recently been carried out a series of studies of Nigerian workers that are linked with this one by general approach but which compensate for such shortcomings. The research referred to is the earlier-mentioned work of Adrian Peace (1974; FC) on industrial workers in the large foreign factories on the Ikeja estate, Lagos, of Dorothy Remy (FC) on workers in a large foreign-owned factory in the northern city of Zaria and that of Paul Lubeck (FC) on workers in the locally-owned and labour-intensive factories in the old Northern trading city of Kano. These are all local studies focusing on the circumstances of the Adebo strikes of 1970-71 (although the Zaria study covers a broader time span). Each of the studies reveals and analyses workers attitudes and compares them with those of union officials. But the focus on situation provides a means of *explaining* attitudes where a survey such as that above tends to merely *state* them.

Dorothy Remy states a position common to all three researchers when she argues that

the behaviour of industrial workers is strongly influenced by the type of industry in which they are employed and by the nature of the wider urban environment in which they live.

In her case the factory is more capital intensive than most of even the foreign companies, and the 'informal economy' (the bazaar sector) is still dominated by local residents and oriented towards the agricultural sector. Unskilled migrants are unable to enter the bazaar sector and are attracted by high wages in the one major factory. Competition for scarce jobs implies the use of ethnic patronage networks to obtain them. The patrons tend to be the better-educated, better-qualified, English-speaking workers, the mechanics amongst whom also tend to become worker-spokesmen or union-officials. But, in Zaria, these skilled men have opportunities for personal advancement both in large-scale enterprise and within the bazaar economy. The protests of the unskilled and uneducated fail because their natural leaders are able to advance personally, inside or outside the factory, through education or through the ethnic networks. Dorothy Remy concludes:

As long as economic security remains bound to schooling and patronage in Zaria, working-class solidarity cannot develop. Industrial unions become then not an expression of a class interest, but rather another institution within which conflicting interests can be pursued.

Paul Lubeck summarises the situation in Kano as follows:

... while factory workers are undergoing rapid distributive changes such as rural to urban migration, wage labour in highly stratified industrial organisations, 'commoditisation' characterised by profound job insecurity, as well as the concomitant powerlessness to alter any of their life conditions, as yet these industrial workers have been unsuccessful in mobilising their felt deprivations into viable workers or-

ganisations. Yet, in spite of these distributive changes and the demoralising effects of several abortive attempts to organise at the factory level by rank and file workers, certain normative changes associated with industrial inequality, that is a limited class consciousness, are unequivocally present, especially among the more experienced factory workers.

The Kano bazaar economy is of a similar type to that of Zaria, but on an infinitely larger scale. However, the factories differ, commonly being Third World capitalist or locally-owned, labour intensive, paying below the official government minimum, and accepting a high turnover amongst the illiterate peasant youths who work in them. In this situation formal and nationally-affiliated trade unions tend to be organised from above and outside by educated business-minded individuals who do not bother with the factories. Unions built from inside tend to be dominated by supervisors, who frequently have extracted *kudin sarautu* (office money customary amongst the Hausa) from workers in exchange for jobs and who continue to extract payments in trade union forms. As a widely-spread pre-industrial ideology with an emphasis on rights and duties, Islam provides the illiterate Kano worker with 'the only known and accepted standard of legitimacy'. Deference is paid by the poor to the Islamic learned man, or *mallam*, as someone able to 'question the legitimacy of established authority ... and sanction movements designed to redress grievances'. In one case a dispute was caused by the disciplining of a worker caught praying without permission, in another a key role was given to and played by a conservative *Imam* (prayer leader). Despite the common scorn of workers for unions organised from outside, or by political parties, they managed in the situation of high expectations aroused by the Adebo award, to develop their own strike committees, led by headmen (lower-level supervisors engaged in the productive process). These turned protest from destructive into constructive and effective channels, and they took forms that were open and democratic in nature. 'Promote or fire' policies of the employers prevented strike committees from developing into permanent organisations. Lubeck's conclusions point in two directions. On the one hand he agrees with Remy that

As long as the mass of workers believe that mobility is possible either outside the firm in the commercial sector or within the factory organisation ... it will be difficult to maintain class-based, rank and file workers' committees.²²

On the other hand he points to the possibility of a 'viable understanding' or 'at least a marriage of convenience' between the workers and the paid outside union officials. This could, he believes, be achieved if the officials addressed themselves to the over-riding local problems: job security, NPF benefits, etc.

Both the studies of Adrian Peace are concerned with workers in Nigeria's largest industrial estate, at Ikeja on the edge of Lagos. The big foreign companies that have their factories here practice Western-style industrial relations. The local bazaar economy is geared to the needs of the large numbers of factory workers. The findings of Peace are as follows. Firstly, the rural and urban poor (from whom the workers spring or amongst whom they live) are not themselves conscious of being exploited, but recognise the existence of exploitation in the

factory sector. Secondly, the national trade union leaderships are ineffective (although their head offices are only five or ten miles away), exploitative, and are widely distrusted by the workers. As for the industrial workers themselves, they see no future within the 'closed system' represented by the industrial sector (higher positions depend on education, and access to this is closing in southern Nigeria), and they generally aspire to become small-scale entrepreneurs within the 'open system'. This, however, *stimulates* militancy for if they cannot save they cannot obtain the capital necessary for entry into trade.²³ Because of this, and because they live at the hub of Nigerian political life, they are exceptionally class and politically conscious. They are capable of creating and controlling their own local-level leadership - in which they have considerable confidence - and of taking powerful and sustained industrial action. The rest of the poor benefit from working-class action, sympathise with it and support it. Therefore:

the Lagos proletariat is best viewed as the *political elite* of the urban masses ... who rely on the prevalent wage and salary structure for the satisfaction of their own interests in the urban arena, and furthermore look to wage-earners for expression of political protest against the highly inegalitarian *status quo* (Peace FC).

The emphasis on structure and situation in these papers may help us to interpret the general significance of our findings. They provide evidence that relates directly to certain dimensions of the survey. These are the North-South contrast, the unskilled-skilled, and the officials-members one. We can also draw out implications for the findings on the sectoral, bureaucratic-industrial, ULC-NTUC and senior-junior contrasts.

The contrast between the consciousness and capacity of Southern and Northern workers comes out even more strongly in these studies than in the survey. Dorothy Remy's point on different work and urban environments certainly provides part of the explanation.

On the skilled-unskilled dimension,²⁴ both the Northern studies suggest an element of 'co-exploitation' of which I found no reflection in my survey. But such evidence is absent also from the Ikeja study. This leads to the hypothesis that co-exploitation is related to recent proletarianisation and that it is likely to disappear with the consolidation of the workforce over time. The possibility of this is suggested in the Kano study, where worker leadership was tending to move to lower-level supervisors, and is hinted at - negatively - in Remy's conclusions about Zaria.

Concerning officials and members, the Zaria study indicates a conflict between members and voluntary officials, the Kano study one between members and both workplace and paid local officials, the Lagos study one between members and local officials on the one hand and the national leadership on the other. All three show us the member-official relationship dialectically, enabling us to see how worker inexperience creates dependence on privileged and qualified strata which can easily be detached from their followers. The Lagos study also shows how a more experienced wage labour force is able to

exercise considerable control over local officials. But the national leaderships are presented in the Lagos study largely as exploiters unrelated to the workers. My findings suggested there was both criticism and dependence on headquarters officials. And this in turn suggests that the member-official relationship at the higher level is analogous to that at the lower one. The universal dependence of the Lagos leaders (at least till recently) on external sources of finance, patronage and ideology does not imply that they have no roots in the class they rest on, nor that they provide no service for it. The problem is whether the service is relevant or not.

Now for the indirect implications. Although Lubeck's study is of *large* Nigerian and Third World companies, his evidence on the relative conservatism of workers in this sector confirms the findings of the survey. The Kano workers, however, appear more militant than those I interviewed, this presumably being a function of the greater size of the units and their greater concentration.

Now for the ULC-NTUC contrast. Adrian Peace's work condemns both leaderships indiscriminately. Dorothy Remy does not comment on either, but we may note that the successive self-seeking leaders of the Zaria union were affiliated to the radical NTUC. Paul Lubeck's criticism is, in fact, based on three officials leading the Kano branch of the United Labour Congress, one being a public sector clerk and a wealthy trader, the other two waiting to receive advanced training at labour relations institutes in Israel, Western Europe or the US. Workers' attitudes towards these was a 'fee for service' one. The exception to this relationship and attitude was of an NTUC organiser who was respected and trusted by some more experienced workers. This man, Lubeck notes, was detained by the regime at the time of the Adebo unrest. Whilst one should avoid the temptation of generalising from this example, we may note that the behaviour of the ULC officials is consistent with its attitude towards private enterprise, whilst that of the NTUC official is consistent with its proclaimed socialist principles.²⁵

Finally, the senior-junior contrast. This is not dealt with explicitly in any of the three studies, which take an owners-workers contradiction for granted. But all three cases show the efforts of both management and government to suppress or syphon-off protest. And both the Kano and Ikeja cases show sharp - even physical - confrontation between the two sides. Since the Northern studies confirm that continued deferential attitudes to the higher strata are a function of later industrialisation, there seems to be a likelihood that (other things being equal) such class tension may increase as industrialisation continues.

6.5 Conclusion

We are now in a position to reconsider the suggested relationship between relative privilege and conservatism amongst the workers and unions. As far as attitudes are concerned, there seems to be such a correlation only in the case of the senior service and the right-wing trade union leadership. But it would seem to stretch the concept to breaking point if one was to treat the senior service

stratum - middle class grouping that could be considered part of the ruling stratum - as a 'labour aristocracy'. And to call the ULC leaders such would be to conceal the relationship that exists between their conservatism and that of the workers in general.

The notion of 'labour aristocracy' thus seems as useless analytically as it is striking metaphorically. It is useless analytically because it does not tell us the conditions that are necessary for certain attitudes or behaviour to exist. It thus does indeed appear to be 'an impatient shortcut through the real historical difficulties of uneven proletarian consciousness and industrial sectionalism' (New Left Review 1973: 38). In explaining conservatism amongst workers we need to refer to positions within the ensemble of the social division of labour, 'including positions within the division of labour that exists inside the working class movement'.²⁶ We need to look at class and class consciousness not as *things* that *exist* but as *relationships* that *develop*. If we see the working class as something that is not yet fully developed anywhere in the world, then we will be neither surprised nor dismayed to find that now in Nigeria (or elsewhere) its gradually coalescing components and its leaders may be attached to the values of the past and present as well as those of the future.

If we take this attitude, then we will be better able to appreciate what novel contribution to social development is being made by workers and their unions *despite* such conservative attitudes as they might have. Students of African trade unionism might well note this judgement made by Hobsbawm (1964:323) on the conservative trade unionism that dominated the labour movement of Britain in the third quarter of the 19th century:

If it fought against the rest of the working class for its special position, it also fought against the boss (until recognition, at any rate), for the right to a share of his profits - a small and stable share. In the course of this fight it established not merely a series of devices and institutions which have become the common property of the movement since - Trades Councils, the Trades Union Congress, the efficient way of running union business, the strategy and tactics of short-term campaigning - but a whole system of the ethics of militancy. The labour aristocrat might think on business matters exactly like his employer, but when the pickets were out against the boss, he knew what to do. Moreover, he developed, if on a narrow basis, a solidarity and class-consciousness, a belief that so long as a man worked for wages his interests were exclusively determined by that fact The secretary of the spinners' or glassblowers' union might become a mill manager or entrepreneur: but while he was a union man, he behaved like a union man.

Armed with this sensitive attitude towards African workers and their movement, we will see conservatism amongst them not as a crippling disability disqualifying them from effective action against their respective dependent capitalisms, but simply as a problem to be recognised, fought against and overcome.

FOOTNOTES

1. Basic background information on industrial relations and trade unions in Nigeria is provided in a short paper of Yesufu (1967) and a recent book by Robin Cohen (1974). The standard work on industrial relations (Yesufu 1962) is now out-dated. I have drawn on the first two items for this section. But for interpretation I have followed the more recent case studies of trade unions by Dorothy Remy, Paul Lubeck and Adrian Peace. Apart from one item by Peace (1974), these are collected in a book edited by Robin Cohen and Richard Sandbrook (FC). Remy, Lubeck and Peace have all attempted Marxist analyses. So has Gavin Williams in a number of case studies and theoretical papers on Nigeria (1972, 1974a, 1974b) to which I am similarly indebted.
2. They sell their labour power, but they do not produce surplus value. They belong to what Ken Post (FC:Ch.4) has called the 'middle class'. This is a class that carries out functions necessary for the extraction of the surplus from the workers and farmers - supervision, multiple services, education, policing, judging, preaching, etc. Post distinguishes this from another 'intermediate stratum' of capitalist society, the 'petty-bourgeoisie' of small producers and property-owners.
3. This suggests another division which is also significant in power terms. Since 1966 the 'perm secs' have ruled Nigeria jointly with the top military and the appointed commissioners.
4. Post (FC:Ch.4) includes in the working class those 'who take part directly or indirectly in creating or preserving the use value of commodities by transporting, storing and maintaining them'. Therefore he includes agricultural labourers, factory workers, railwaymen, warehousemen and mechanics, etc.
5. Dorothy Remy distinguishes within the large foreign company sector between two groups. The first are 'subsidiaries of multinational companies' operating in a limited product market, highly capital intensive. They have wages above government minima, conditions comparable to parent companies, and house unions. The second are 'international corporations which produce and market a single product in several countries', operating in a more competitive market, less capital intensive. They offer wages at the government minimum, and few amenities. Although she seems to be distinguishing between, say, the Nigerian Tobacco Company on the one hand and Norspin Textiles on the other, this is not made clear, and one is not convinced that the distinction is generally valid.
6. Remy refers only to Nigerian-owned processing industries. Perhaps she can be excused for anticipating the effects of the Indigenisation Decree, the effect of which was by March 1974 to transfer many of the small foreign-owned ones into Nigerian hands.
7. This is characterised by the formation of an urban proletariat, greater stability of employment, greater skills on the part of the workers and the beginnings of trade union organisation. Employers tend to be paternalistic: but the efforts of the state to extend more impersonal forms of protection into the employment situation may be thwarted by employers who are also suspicious of and hostile to trade union growth'.

8. The situation is captured in a short play called 'Sorrows of a Worker', published in an Onitsha Market pamphlet for the newly literate. In the final scene the worker's friend reads him the lesson of his sad experiences:

Well, what did I tell you the other day? I told you that he won't pay you in full. This is the method most of the employers use in order to retain their workers. They will not pay you in time at the end of the month. And then they will pay you half of it and wait for some days before they will pay you the remaining half of the salary ... (If they pay in full at a time some of their workers ... might resign ... So I can tell you that your boss is afraid you might resign from his employ. And I want you to resign from him.
(Raphael n.d.)

The moral of this tale is that 'IT IS BETTER TO EMPLOY ONE'S SELF THAN TO BE EMPLOYED'.
9. Dorothy Remy first argued the significance for worker behaviour of his relationship to different kinds of urban environment and 'informal economy'. I differ from her, however, in what I find significant in such environments and relationships.
10. The NTGAWU claimed a membership of over 20,000 in 1971. Its income, however, was for the same year only £2,382. Even if dues were only ten shillings per year, this would imply a paid up membership of less than 5,000. The membership figures for the NUT, on the other hand, tallied with its stated income. It claimed 135,196 members in 1971. (Source: 1971 Annual Returns to the Registrar of Trade Unions).
11. Following decimalisation the Nigerian Pound became two Naira. 1 Naira (100 Kobo) was in 1973 worth around £0.64 or US\$ 1.90. At this time the official government monthly minimum was ₦ 18.20-26.
12. A reference to the 1972 crisis in the NTUC, during which a group around Wahab Goodluck and S.O. Basseyy accused a group around the Communist leader and medical doctor, Tunji Otegbeye, of misuse of Soviet funds. And vice versa. This led to a split between Otegbeye and the bulk of the NTUC Communists and the eventual creation of the NTUF. Further background is provided in Waterman (1973).
13. A reference to NTUC leader, Goodluck, who had just been reported again in the press as favouring worker power in 1976.
14. Azikiwe's Presidential Address to the 1957 Convention of the NCNC, cited Sklar (1963:230).
15. As Spalding has defined it in its Latin American setting, 'Developmentalism is closely allied to nationalism. This ideology also assumes a continued capitalistic framework, although at times of a decidedly statist variety ... Developmentalism ... never calls on the national bourgeoisie to give up its class privileges or wealth and seldom, despite its rhetoric, meaningfully strikes at the bases of a nation's dependency upon the capitalist super-powers.' (Spalding 1973).

16. But conservative values and ideologies have been effective by default in Nigeria. Their lack of coherence is in large part explained by the lack of any effective challenge to them. Democratic, egalitarian or socialist values and ideologies were little developed by the intelligentsia during the nationalist period, and were pushed to the periphery once independence was gained. (See Osoba 1969). Whilst pre-colonial egalitarian values retained their grip on the masses (See Williams 1974a, 111-14) and whilst modern democratic and egalitarian values developed amongst the workers, these have never been transformed into a consistent, relevant and attractive ideology of revolution. The most structured and coherent ideology was that of the Communists, but it was largely irrelevant to the specific conditions of independent Nigeria, and was limited in its appeal to a section of the labour movement (See Waterman 1973).
17. Keith Hinchliffe (1974) demonstrates for Kaduna textile workers that these are few if any.
18. Just as their conservatism is shared with the rest of the poor, so is their radicalism. Thus Williams also shows that the admired rich are also 'berated for their selfishness', that fatalistic explanations are often supplemented by secular ones that 'refer increasingly to the structured discrimination against the poor', that government is often accused of looking after the interest of the rich. And Peter Gutkind, surveying a group of Ibadan men unemployed for five years or more, noted the following views amongst them: the belief that 'the rich were in a position to acquire ever greater wealth (invariably, it was thought, by dishonest means)', complaints of how the big men had failed the ordinary people, talk of the necessity for collective action: they spoke of demonstration, petitions, associations and some even suggested there should be a political party composed entirely of the unemployed and the poor (Gutkind 1973, 191-5).
19. For a pungent critique of this document, see Nduka (1971).
20. Most recently its President, Yinusa Kaltungo, has added his distinctive word to the indigenisation debate by proposing that the government should 'set up "stock purchase plans" for the workers working in the affected businesses to help them buy shares. He was of the view that "if given the necessary assistance, workers organising themselves as unions, could effectively buy some of the affected businesses".' (*New Nigerian*, March 15, 1974).
21. There is a problem here of whether one should contrast the conservatism of the ULC leadership with the radicalism of the NTUC. The interviewed NTUC leader was himself already in 'the range of permanent secretaries'. And the NTUC itself officially approved of the 1970 Development Plan (Waterman 1973:291). Much of the NTUC leadership's radicalism is of a declamatory variety, and therefore as far distanced from the real and immediate needs of the workers as the conservatism of the ULC. Perhaps the problem arises from the very attempt to isolate one kind of false consciousness - conservatism - rather than dealing with it as a whole. Or possibly it follows from the isolation of ideology

from action. The imbalance present in this paper must be righted by a study of the nature of radicalism amongst Nigerian workers.

22. Lubeck suggests that a major motivation for demanding the Adebo award was that it involved an arrears payment of up to ₦ 36 (10 or 11 weeks salary), that could be used, amongst other things, for capitalising a second occupation like tailoring or petty trading.
23. The entrepreneurial aspirations of Lagos wage-earners are confirmed in a survey reported by Margaret Peil. Asked how they would spend a hypothetical lump-sum of £ 100, 43% of respondents stated that they would use it 'to provide their wives with trading capital, to start trading on their own account, or to increase their own or their wives capital' (Peil 1973: 15). Another 43% would use it for school fees, savings, housing or furnishing.
24. Hobsbawm (1964: 297-300) introduced this concept in reference to the sub-contracting relationship between workers that he saw as a source of privilege and conservatism in 19th century England. The term would seem appropriate to this different relationship also.
25. The man was, I believe, imprisoned for 22 months, considerably longer than any other NTUC officer detained during this period. The depth of the socialist principles of the NTUC may, perhaps, be judged by the fact that his name was hardly mentioned in its paper during this period, and seems to have been forgotten at the time that Bassey and Goodluck, the two top NTUC men, were released.
26. This suggestive point is made in the process of an otherwise careless discussion of the labour aristocracy problem in an article on class by Nicos Poulantzas (1973: 36).

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