

ROGER SCOTT'S (331)

# THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRADE UNIONS IN UGANDA

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## THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRADE UNIONS IN UGANDA

ROGER SCOTT

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ROGER SCOTT'S (831)

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The Development of  
Trade Unions in Uganda



*Written under the auspices of  
The East African Institute of Social Research,  
Kampala*

# The Development of Trade Unions in Uganda

by ROGER SCOTT

East African Publishing House

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## PREFACE

This book is a product of three years' research as Rockefeller Foundation Teaching Fellow of the East African Institute of Social Research in Kampala. Field work, in the sense of exclusive concentration on primary research, was conducted in two sections: a four months' visit immediately preceding Uganda's independence in October 1962 and the twelve months from July 1963. The material used in the case studies of individual unions was prepared at the beginning of 1964 although an attempt has been made to take account of subsequent changes by revision at the editorial stage.

Because of the almost total absence of published records, apart from press reports, the book depends heavily upon interview material and unpublished files. The nature of the information being sought excluded the possibility of using a standard pattern of questionnaire. This raises the general problem of identification of sources and documentation. In defence of my failure to produce specific references for many statements, I would subscribe to the view on this propounded by William Foltz:

"Because of the conditions imposed on many of the interviews and even more in consideration of the use to which such information might be put, I have, as a general rule, not identified my respondents. Similarly, I was granted privileged access to some private and governmental documents not normally available to the public, and have felt obliged not to reveal these sources. I am certain that anyone who has done recent political research in Africa will appreciate the need for such reticence." (Foltz, 1965, p. viii).

I must, however, acknowledge my debt to several people whose advice was especially valuable at various stages in the writing of this work. Professor Colin Leys, now of the University of Sussex, first interested me in the possibility of doing this type of study; Mr. Martin Byers (Uganda Labour Commissioner), Mr. George Foggon (Labour Adviser to the Ministry for Overseas Development), Dr. Walter Elkan of Durham University, Mr. George Bennett and Mr. Allan Flanders of Oxford University all read the early drafts of what was then a doctoral dissertation; Dr. Joseph Gugler and Professor James Coleman have provided a number of useful suggestions in their capacity as Directors of Research at the East African Institute. Finally, I must thank my wife for typing and



## PREFACE

correcting innumerable drafts and for acting as my most trenchant critic.

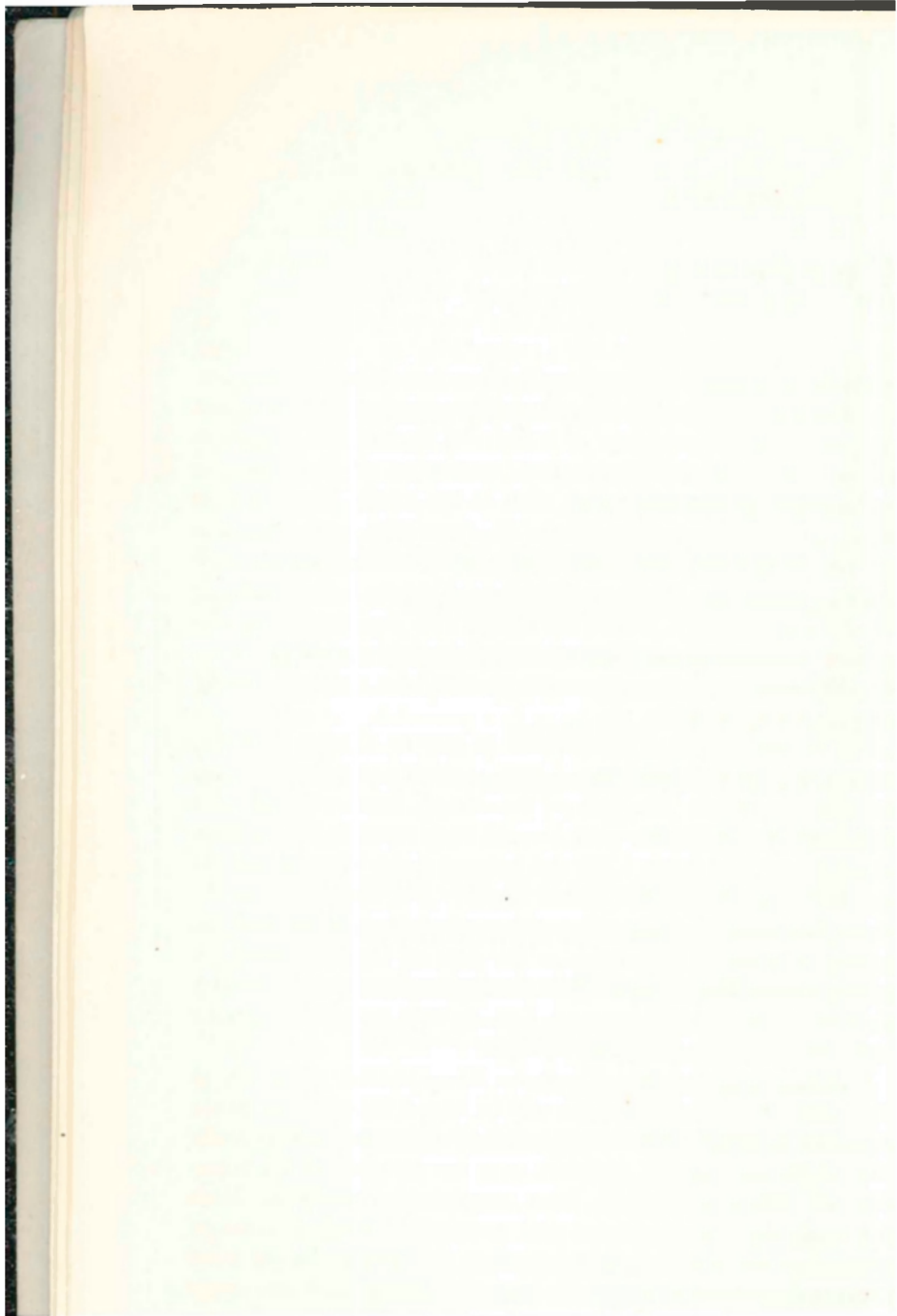
A work of this sort could not have been written without the active and willing assistance of a very large number of people who gave up their time to submit to interviews and also made available written sources of information. The opinions and errors herein remain my responsibility but I freely acknowledge my great debt to Ugandan hospitality.

R. D. Scott

*Kampala*  
*December, 1965*

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## Chapter One

### THE UGANDAN SETTING

Uganda is isolated geographically from non-African influences, a fact which helps to explain the relatively late contact with European civilisation and the retention of traditional institutions. Although Uganda forms the main basin and headwaters of the Nile, the country looks to the east rather than to the north. There is little contact with the Sudan or Congo (Leopoldville), and Uganda's main communication link is the 800 miles of railway line through Kenya to the Indian Ocean at Mombasa. Uganda is essentially an East African territory, linked to Kenya and Tanganyika by the common focus of Lake Victoria and a diminishing range of co-ordinated government services made possible by a common history of British administration.

The country itself is comparable in size to Ghana or Great Britain, although its 91,000 square miles support a population of less than 7 million people. The bulk of the country forms a plateau just under 4,000 feet above sea-level, sloping away towards the north so that the River Nile drops 1,700 feet between Lake Victoria and the point where it crosses the Sudan border. The formation of the African rift valleys produced a string of shallow lakes and the towering Ruwenzori Mountains in the west of Uganda, while the volcanic Mount Elgon (14,000 feet) dominates the eastern boundary with Kenya. The altitude provides Uganda with an equable climate despite its location astride the equator.

Although some mixing of cultures has occurred, especially in urban areas, a clear division can still be drawn between the Bantu around the Lake and in the west, and the Nilotic and Nilo-Hamitic in the north and east. In addition, over ten per cent of the population are recent immigrants from neighbouring countries. Most come from the over-populated and politically disturbed areas of Rwanda and the Southern Sudan to work as labourers in the more prosperous agricultural areas. An important group have also come



main centre of commerce, education and, since independence, of government. It is also in the centre of the most prosperous agricultural area in Uganda. Jinja, with a population of 39,000, is the second largest town and might be termed the country's industrial centre. Situated at the point where the Nile flows out of Lake Victoria, Jinja has grown from a minor administrative centre and lake port as a result of the Owen Falls hydro-electric power station. There are a number of smaller towns which were developed under British administration for commercial and administrative purposes.

The vast majority of land in Uganda is held by Africans, without formal lease, according to tribal custom. Only 1.5% of the total area is held in freehold, half of which was given as gifts to early European pioneers. Government policy subsequently opposed alienation to non-Africans except for purposes demonstrably in the interests of the African population.

The colonial administration lasted over 60 years, being terminated in October 1962. Where traditional ruling systems existed with a well defined structure of administration, an attempt was made to use these systems as a channel for colonial authority. Thus, in the case of Buganda, an agreement was signed which guaranteed a wide area of autonomy to the traditional rulers. In areas without traditional kings, a system of rule through appointed administrative chiefs was imposed.

In keeping with the general trends of imperial policy, a process of handing over political power to a democratically elected government began after the Second World War. Nation-wide political parties were slow to emerge because of the absence of specific popular grievances and the strength of tribal loyalties. In Buganda these loyalties had been fostered by the long period of semi-autonomous control by the traditional rulers. The possibility that Buganda might lose its privileged position and a fear of East African federation led to a crisis in relations with the Protectorate Government, culminating in the deportation of the Kabaka in 1953 (Low and Pratt, 1960). His return two years later, after vigorous protests from all sections of political opinion, tended to reinforce particularist attitudes in Buganda and slow down national political development.

During the 1950's a number of small elite parties emerged and then either disappeared or coalesced into new groupings. The first party to establish itself on a permanent basis was the Democratic Party, under Benedicto Kiwanuka. This party tried to bridge the gap between Buganda and the rest of the country, but was hampered in this by its dependence on the support of the Roman Catholic

Church, a reflection of the important role played by religion in the political history of Uganda.

The successful opponent of the Democratic Party was the Uganda Peoples Congress (UPC), a more radical nationalist party which emerged from a coalition of non-Ganda local leaders in 1960. The history of recent Uganda politics is the history of relations between this party and the Kabaka Yekka, the organisation representing the forces of Buganda traditionalism. In the elections of March 1961, an electoral boycott by the supporters of the Kabaka allowed the Democratic Party to win all but one of the seats in Buganda and thus gain control in parliament. At the pre-independence constitutional conference in London at the end of 1961, Kabaka Yekka and the UPC reached a compromise by which the UPC agreed to support Buganda's demands for a federal constitution, allowing greater autonomy to the Kabaka's Government, in return for an electoral alliance to oust the Democratic Party at the crucial next elections (Low, 1962).

Thus Uganda achieved independence under the direction of this paradoxical coalition of radicals and traditionalists. After independence, relations became strained between the members of the coalition as the UPC was able to increase its strength in areas outside Buganda at the expense of the Democratic Party. The personal position of the Kabaka was compromised by his appointment as constitutional head of state, a largely ceremonial position, which practically subordinated him to the direction of the Prime Minister, Dr. Milton Obote. At the end of 1964, matters came to a head over the transfer of an area of disputed territory (the Lost Counties of Bunyoro) away from the control of Buganda. The alliance was broken and the UPC was able to continue in power alone, supported by defections from both the Democratic Party and Kabaka Yekka.

Although Uganda's African population is so ethnically diverse, certain generalisations can be made regarding the role of Africans in the country's labour force. Of particular importance is the degree of stability in the labour force and the extent to which it depends upon wage-earning employment as these are major factors in determining the pattern of industrial relations. A report of the International Labour Organisation (ILO, 1955) noted that the gap between the independent producer whose life is spent totally within the framework of a subsistence economy and the worker who is wholly dependent on permanent wage-earning is bridged by distinguishable intermediate types. The Ugandan Labour force may be separated into three of these distinguishable types, all intermediate between subsistence existence and total dependence on



wage-earning: the short-term migrants (or "target workers"), the long-term migrants more committed to a working life of wage-earning and the resident workers.

In all three types, the dominant factor is the complex relationship between the Africans and their land. Short-term migration remained the dominant feature of the labour structure in Uganda until recently because, in the words of the East Africa Royal Commission: "it appears as the most economic choice which the African can make . . . the only system through which a considerable section of the African population can meet its needs, because the economic opportunities for specialisation have either been absent or have been seriously circumscribed by legal and customary restrictions." (CO, 1955, p. 154). In Uganda, the main restriction was the continued existence of customary land tenure practices.

Two very different types of labourer were more committed to the wage-earning labour force in Uganda than these short-term migrants (Elkan and Fallers, 1960). The first group was the Ganda. They enjoyed three important advantages over other tribes. Because Buganda was the base from which both the colonial administration and the missions operated, the Ganda had greater educational opportunities and consequently occupied more skilled clerical positions. Another legacy of the colonial regime was the special *mailo* land tenure system which provided 9,000 square miles of African freehold under the Agreement of 1900 between the British Government and the Kabaka. Buganda is naturally well endowed, so this special freehold tenure system allowed the alienation of land rights to raise fluid capital and also the development of agricultural enterprise beyond the simple peasant level. Finally, the Ganda were able to join the urban labour force without leaving home because the major centres of employment were within easy reach of their tribal territory.

This meant that the Ganda could move easily between agriculture and urban employment and simultaneously combine the two sources of income. As a result they tended to stay in employment for longer periods because there were fewer pressures to leave the job. As wages rose, the incentive to leave the town decreased, so it might have been expected that wage employment would become a perpetual necessity. Yet, sooner or later, most did leave. They used the capital they had

After the Ganda, the Luo and Luhya from Kenya were the most stable members of the labour force. Like the Ganda, they had integrated long periods of town labour into their pattern of socio-economic behaviour. But, unlike the Ganda who commuted daily or weekly, the Luo and Luhya had to travel long distances to find a market for their labour. Their tribal territory (above Kisumu in the Nyanza Province of Kenya) provided insufficient jobs because that area was not as naturally well endowed, and was twice as densely populated, as Buganda. Consequently, they travelled widely over East Africa and often stayed away for periods of twenty years. Kampala and Jinja could be reached quickly and cheaply by rail or lake steamer and attracted a large number of Luo and Luhya migrants.

From this description of the African labour force in Uganda, it can be seen that the degree of commitment to urban living varied between tribal groups and that there was no equivalent to the fully urbanised body of wage earners found in more developed western societies. This fact had important implications both for industrial development in general and for the growth of trade unions in particular.

There were two major non-African immigrant races in Uganda: the Europeans, mainly British, and the Asians, a term used to include people originating from the sub-continent of India (i.e., Indians, Pakistanis and Goans). Without the prospect of permanent settlement along the Kenya pattern, the Ugandan Europeans regarded their role as essentially temporary and were mainly occupied in the higher ranks of the civil service and in the management of large-scale commercial organisations. By contrast, the Asians often regarded Uganda as their home and faced the problem of coming to terms with the unfriendly situation arising from the transfer of power to an African government (Ghai, 1965).

As Elkan and Fallers point out, the Asians were concentrated in occupations which aroused "the envy of the multitude" and owned a great deal of the visible capital of the country. They handled a large proportion of retail trade and the marketing of agricultural produce. Asian businessmen also controlled the two large sugar estates and many small factories.

Although racial jealousies and frictions lacked the intensity of other areas in Africa, they were an important environmental factor



fill the middle positions as skilled clerks and technicians. Writing in 1955, Sofer noted that:

“Frictions between the various ranks of workers in industry requires interpretation in the light of the larger social structures within which industrial firms operate and in the light of the distinctive culture of each participating group.” (Sofer, 1954, p.77).

This, in turn, had important repercussions for the development of trade unions. Because all groups in Uganda saw their occupational interests in racial terms, the early unions tended to be racially exclusive. In some cases, Asian unions preceded African; in others, the Africans kept out Asians who appeared as direct barriers to their own advancement. An ICFTU Mission in 1958 noted that, throughout Africa all three racial groups were suspicious of submerging their identity in a common trade union organisation. In Uganda, the racial organisation of industrial associations was most accentuated in the railways. A report on the industrial relations in the railways noted the strains placed on workplace relations by this situation of racial exclusiveness, causing every complaint to be tainted by racial prejudice and suspicion. The report noted that:

“Apart from the fact that this method of organisation (by race) would appear to be completely contrary to the fundamental principles of trade unionism, it is inevitable that each union or association looks on all aspects of employment from a racial point of view.” (EAHC, 1960, p.2).

The modern cash economy involved relatively few Africans (only 200,000 wage-earning employees and perhaps 500,000 cash crop farmers). It was statistically unimportant when compared with the numbers engaged in peasant subsistence agriculture. In general, Uganda's economic prosperity depended upon her ability to produce crops which could find a profitable sale on the world's markets. The country relied heavily upon cotton and coffee but produced only a small percentage (5%) of the total world output in both. Thus she could not exert a controlling influence over fluctuating world prices and suffered from world-wide depression in the price of these two commodities.

Both cotton and coffee were grown on small scale farms where they formed subsidiary cash crops to supplement subsistence agriculture. A later development in Buganda was the large scale African-owned coffee plantation employing significant numbers of migrant

tea was grown by African small-holders. The bulk of Ugandan tea, however, was produced on large estates owned by individual Europeans or public companies such as the Uganda Company. Two Asian families, Madhvani and Mehta, also had large tea interests as well as exercising a monopoly over domestic sugar production. Sugar depended upon a protected market within East Africa, but tea was an increasingly important export crop.

All other forms of economic activity depended upon agriculture, in particular upon the prosperity of the coffee and cotton industries. During the boom period following the Second World War, high export prices encouraged the development of service industries and small scale production of consumer goods. Uganda's geographical isolation limited export prospects but it offered protection for producers of bulky or perishable consumer products. This spontaneous response to an increased domestic market usually took the form of small scale and locally financed enterprises. Only a few establishments existed which employed more than two hundred people in 1956; most industrial expansion had taken the form of "backyard factories" financed by local Asian entrepreneurs and employing only a handful of labourers.

At a later period, the Government began taking an interest in industrial expansion. Taxation was used to drain off agricultural profits into special development funds as well as into price equalisation reserves to offset any future price slump. The Government hoped that a measure of industrialisation might offset the inherent instability of total dependence on the world market for agricultural commodities. Consequently, large scale development projects were encouraged and, in some cases, directly financed by the Government.

By 1956, the boom in primary products was over. The price equalisation reserves prevented an immediate general slump, but Government and private investment slackened. Numbers in employment began to decline, and continued to do so for a number of years. The rise in statutory minimum wage rates in 1959 and 1962 probably accentuated this trend by encouraging employers to adopt more efficient methods of labour utilisation (Scott, 1965(a)). Earlier, the prevalence of short-term labour meant that workers did not stay in jobs long enough to acquire the specialised skills needed in mass

1965). It was no longer in the best economic interests of the urban worker to leave his job at regular intervals and return to his farm. Wages were now high enough to compensate for any loss of cash crop income and he would find it extremely difficult to get another job on his return. Close links were still maintained with the tribal area but visits were confined to short trips made possible by the generous leave provisions allowed by most of the larger companies. It should be borne in mind, however, that stabilisation of labour was a relatively new phenomenon and that, during the formative period of union development, migrant labour posed special problems for those trying to build up industrial organisations.

## Chapter Two

### THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF TRADE UNIONS

The early development of trade unions in Uganda falls clearly into two stages. In the first stage, trade unions served as a vehicle for political expression in the absence of any alternative. Industrial relations were neglected because of the ignorance and relative prosperity of the migrant wage-earning groups. In the second stage, the political functions of the so-called unions were taken over by overtly political organisations. At the same time, economic depression provided a stimulus for activity in the unions' normal field of industrial relations and external influences began to take effect.

As far back as 1938, a body was founded in Uganda calling itself a trade union. However, it is clear that this was associated with the earliest stirrings of political nationalism without any concern for the regulation of industrial relations (Apter, 1961, pp. 202-205). Political parties were out of the question at this time, viewed by officialdom as a challenge to the authority of the administration and the traditional rulers. The trade union was an approved organisation, sanctioned and encouraged by the Colonial Office. Thus a trade union could be used to give some appearance of legitimacy to the statements of aspiring political leaders.

In this case, a group of Ganda politicians formed the Uganda Motor Drivers Association. Its founder was Mr. James Kivu and he was assisted by Mr. I. K. Musazi, one of the key figures in Buganda politics. The association was duly registered with the Labour Department, but it rarely functioned as a trade union throughout its six years of activity. Instead it provided a platform from which its political leaders directed criticism towards the policies of both the Protectorate and the Buganda Kingdom Government. Its members were drawn from the young and politically aware group of taxi drivers in Kampala. It included both employers and employees so that it demanded higher wages and, at the same time, high government subsidies for the owners. Yet basically it was a political organisation. The 1944 Labour Department Report noted that:

“The main activities of the Association continue to be directed towards internal political affairs, especially those concerned with the Kingdom of Buganda.” (LDR, 1944, p. 7).



In January, 1945, strikes and violent rioting occurred. A wildly unrealistic wage claim seems to have been used to encourage support for a general strike. However, a Commission of Enquiry found that the motives behind the riots were political rather than economic: Buganda "was badly infected with the political virus", a phrase which gives an insight into official attitudes towards political parties (UP, 1945, p. 32.). Members of the Motor Drivers Association were deeply involved; Kivu, Musazi and other leaders were deported and the union folded up.

The causes of the 1945 disturbances had not been removed. Young Ganda radicals still chafed at the policies of their own rulers and the union was still the only vehicle for political expression. Musazi was released in 1946 and returned to "union" organising. In April, 1949, the Transport and General Workers Union was registered. The intention was to form a comprehensive union for all workers in Uganda. Once again, the hard core of members were Kampala taxi drivers, although recruitment was also successful among transport workers in Busoga. Musazi also founded the Uganda African Farmers Union as a focus for opposition to the Protectorate's marketing control of cotton and coffee. Both organisations were purely political in aim and involved themselves in further political disturbances in 1949. Again the unions were banned and the leaders rusticated. Musazi had collected funds from his two organisations to back a trip to Britain to put the case of his members directly to the highest colonial authorities. He was forbidden to return. A British politician visiting these nationalist leaders noted confusion about the political role of unions—"The Africans thought it would solve a lot of their problems if they could have a TUC". (Stonehouse, 1960, p. 56).

In the meantime, there was little interest in the formation of trade unions outside the realm of party politics. This was partly a result of the constant economic and social factors discussed earlier. But the particular circumstances of the period also influenced this lack of interest. Most farms produced enough food for family subsistence with a surplus for cash sale. From 1938 onwards, these cash crops of cotton and coffee began to fetch high prices with wartime shortages and the post-war boom. There was little incentive to leave the traditional agricultural economy while these conditions continued. As a result, urban and plantation labour was in short supply. Even large scale migration from Rwanda-Urundi, the western areas and later from Kenya did little to ease the shortage. The employers were forced to compete for the scarce commodity by offering reasonable pay and conditions. Only the sugar plantations,

using a system of direct recruitment from the western and northern border areas, could dictate harsh terms. Significantly, it was only in these plantations that serious strikes occurred as workers sought to improve their relatively bad conditions (UP, 1942).

The bulk of the work force, in their short spells away from agriculture, seem to have found conditions reasonably satisfactory. Consequently they displayed little interest in official attempts to sponsor union organisations or the rabble rousing activities of politicians. An official report summed up the situation:

“Under local conditions in which ties of family and locality are still dominant and where few of the African population have yet to seek paid employment in order to live, it is not expected that much interest will be shown in trade unionism . . . Economic prosperity plus an unsatisfied demand for labour, which means that a man has a full choice of employment, continue to serve as an insurance against unrest.” (LDR, 1951, p. 16).

Throughout this early stage the railway workers were the only group organised into genuine trade unions, free from party politics. With the extension of the railway, a large number of Kenyans were transferred to Uganda. They brought with them the ideas of unionism already well developed among Kenya railwaymen and a branch of the Kenyan union was set up in 1946. Initially this seems to have been a multi-racial organisation, but the Labour Department records that a Railway Asian Union was registered separately in 1948. The Africans continued to operate from headquarters in Nairobi. As late as 1956, the Railway African Staff Union was still considered to be the only effective union in Uganda.

The transition to the second stage of union development seems to have occurred between 1952 and 1955. It was assisted by the liberal regime of Sir Andrew Cohen, and then by a depression of agricultural prices.

A trades dispute ordinance had been enacted earlier to provide simple measures for conciliation and voluntary arbitration. The absence of unions or formal industrial relations machinery meant that it was not much used. Cohen sponsored the 1952 Trades Unions Ordinance discussed in Chapter 4. The primary purpose of the ordinance was to prevent unions from being used for purely political purposes. An attempt was made to ensure that the organisations were backed by a specific body of industrial workers. Consequently provisions required that all union members except the secretary should have been employees of the industry concerned for at least three years and that membership of more than one organisation was illegal. Registration was to be compulsory and



would be followed by annual inspections and the submission of financial returns.

A number of existing organisations protested against what seemed to be the onerous conditions for registration and the degree of governmental control. The extent of this control was to prove minimal in practice for some time, but non-industrial unions were effectively discouraged. The first union registered under the new ordinance was the Kampala Local Government Staff Association. This proudly proclaimed its multi-racial character, but was mainly composed of Europeans and higher paid Asians. The union was regarded as upper class and colonialist by African civil servants, who looked on the only African member as an "Uncle Tom" and a social climber.

After eight months of protesting against the new legislation, the Busoga African Motor Drivers Union finally registered. This union appears to have been the first encouraged by Musazi's organising activities before the 1949 riots. However, the Labour Department commented that:

"Its formation appears to be a spontaneous affair not inspired by the example of any European associations or by politics." (LDR, 1953, p. 24).

Its members were mainly middle-aged ex-servicemen employed as lorry drivers in the cotton ginneries, taxi-drivers and chauffeurs. A local labour officer who gave help to the union regarded its members as "moderates, not at all upstart nationalists". For a number of years, it was ineffective largely because it could find no organisation of employers with which it could negotiate in general terms.

By the end of the year, the Uganda registry of trade unions also included the Railway Asian Union and the Uganda Posts and Telegraph African Welfare Union. Both were the result of contact with the more developed Kenyan union movement through the East Africa High Commission. The Railway African Union continued to be registered in Kenya because of internal administrative problems associated with the setting up of an independent organisation as required by the new ordinance. This was finally accomplished at the beginning of 1955.

The Cohen administration allowed politicians to operate openly through party organisations, after having acted to keep them away from the trade unions. The irrepressible Musazi was once more on the scene, but now his energies were channelled into the strangely titled Federation of Partnerships, an embryonic farmers co-operative organisation, and later into the Uganda National Congress. Trade unions were no longer needed to serve as the vehicle

for political ambitions. In this sphere they had been made redundant by official tolerance of overtly political organisations. The 1954 Labour Department Report noted with approval that:

“Even though a state of emergency existed in Buganda for most of the year and the political situation was somewhat involved, labour remained calm”. (LDR, 1954, p.13).

From 1952 until 1955, agricultural prosperity continued and with it the labour shortage. At the same time, workers were deeply suspicious of unions because of their earlier association with politics, but the Labour Department was aware of the need to develop some form of industrial relations machinery to help maintain a contented work force.

In the absence of unions, the Labour Department turned to works committees as a stop gap. These committees consisted of members of management and representatives of all workers employed in a particular workplace. In British industry, works committees are concerned mainly with welfare, amenities and sometimes productivity and efficiency. It was initially intended in Uganda that they should fulfil much wider functions because of the lack of union development. Elkan has indicated the fundamental weakness of a system of joint consultation not backed by union organisation:

“There tends to be no machinery through which representatives are kept in touch with the views they represent . . . Unlike collective bargaining, consultation is initiated by the employers, and the employers have generally ignored the need to make formal provision for contact between representatives and their electors. They have assumed that this contact is automatically maintained.” (Elkan, 1960, p.12). This assumption was clearly in error, as “elections” usually took the form of appointment by management and the more educated tribal groups were able to claim a monopoly of seats on the works committee (Elkan, 1955, Chapter 6).

The transitional situation in 1955 can be best illustrated from a detailed account of the major industrial issue of that year. A recurrent feature of Ugandan labour relations was a rash of minor strikes at the beginning of each calendar year when increments were expected. In 1955, the usual rash turned into an epidemic because of the implementation of a Salaries Commission Report. This increased wages for established officers in the civil service and also back-dated the increases to January 1954. The payment of large lump sums of back pay in January 1955 aroused the jealousies of the unestablished workers. Strikes followed among dustmen, hedgecutters, sweepers, hospital assistants, laboratory technicians and



council employees. Initially the workers were resisted and told to submit their grievances through their works committees.

Then 2,300 employees of the Public Works Department went out on strike against the advice of their works committee. They claimed back pay on the grounds of long service, and also had minor grievances arising out of the changes in salary structure. Because the strikers had lost confidence in the members of the official works committee, a special strike committee was elected to negotiate with the Director of Public Works. Since they could not speak English and were ignorant of the legal aspects of the case, this committee asked an African lawyer, Mr. J. L. Zake, to represent them.

Zake recalls that the Government were at first reluctant to allow him to act for the strikers as they associated lawyers with politics. But in fact the strikers were particularly anxious "to keep the politicians out". Fruitless discussion followed. Mr. Nicklin, a former British trade unionist employed in the Labour Department, failed in his conciliation attempts. He apparently used the opportunity to try and persuade the men to form a union, but found them suspicious of the political implications of such a move.

Finally, the newly appointed Labour Commissioner took the novel step of appointing a conciliation committee. The committee was to consist of one representative from each side under an independent chairman agreeable to both sides. This seems to have been the first time the Labour Department itself had not undertaken this function. At the time, Zake believed that others in Government were suspicious of this move as they felt that there was no truly independent person in Uganda to act as chairman. The strikers were to submit a list from which Government would choose. It is interesting to note that no African candidate was acceptable to the strike committee because all capable Africans were either working for Government or involved in local politics. The church was also held to be part of "the establishment", so that the final list contained three members of Makerere University College.

The Director of Public Works reluctantly accepted Professor Ingham, but made it clear that he did not approve of this method of settlement and regarded Makerere people as pro-African. The Government's case rested on the fact that unestablished employees were employed on a monthly ticket basis and not on a fixed continuing salary, and that unestablished wages had been constantly adjusted to rises in the cost of living. This was shown not to accord with the facts in many cases. The final decision rejected the general principle of back pay, but provided compensation for various

groups shown to be underpaid in the past. Grievances arising out of salary regrading and the use of strike action were also settled.

This dispute shows the uncertainties current in the conduct of industrial relations in 1955. There was no fixed procedure for dealing with disputes where it was felt that the settlement would benefit from outside participation. The Labour Commissioner believed that Government employees would have more confidence in an independent tribunal but his view was not shared by others. On the workers' side there was suspicion of African politicians and the unions with which they were still associated in the public mind. At the same time, the works committee had not been called together during the four months preceding the strike, and it was by-passed when its opinion did not coincide with that of the majority of the workers. A vacuum was being created in industrial relations which trade unions only began to fill after 1955.

In Uganda the boom in coffee and cotton prices continued until the Korean War armistice in 1953. The Government's price stabilisation policy prevented an immediate collapse since growers continued to receive much the same price. But spending from reserves which had been built up in the years of prosperity was reduced. The Labour Department Report for 1955 records "a decline in the demand for labour but still little unemployment". (LDR, 1955, p. 3). The 1956 report pointed out that industrial expansion had absorbed what otherwise would have been a labour surplus, and that a 14 per cent drop in numbers employed in building and construction work indicated a general slackening in the economy as a result of falling world prices for agricultural products (LDR, 1956, p. 6). By 1957, significant unemployment existed in urban areas as the economy continued to slow down. For the first time, Ugandans could not depend upon agriculture as a sure source of cash income. Wage-earning became vital and, with a labour surplus, it was important to hold any job available. Trade union organisation now appealed to the workers as a means of self-protection — in particular, protection against competition from outside labour and the resulting opportunities for exploitation by the employer. The importance of wage-earning compared with agriculture in turn led to greater stabilisation of the labour force, which made the task of union organisers much easier than previously.

Economic decline in agriculture was not the only factor encouraging union growth after 1955. Discussing the general post-war growth of trade unions in under-developed areas, an International Labour Organisation (ILO) official made the following comment: "Three factors have made advances possible — (a) constant inflow

of outside or international influences; (b) the pressure of trade union rivalries often based on political or ideological influences; and (c) new policies concerning freedom of association as a result of political or constitutional changes." (Daya, 1955 pp. 358-369).

In Uganda all three of these factors have been present in varying degrees of importance. Freedom of association had long been guaranteed by the Colonial Office. Following the 1952 Trade Union Ordinance, the policy of assisting trade unions was more vigorously pursued in Uganda. Certainly all legal and administrative hindrances had been removed.

International influences first made their appearance as a result of more sensational events in the political sphere. Sir Andrew Cohen's deportation of the Kabaka of Buganda in late 1953 involved a number of British Labour Party politicians in the ensuing negotiations. Uganda became a focus for the Opposition's attack on colonial policy and the interest extended beyond the Kabakaship. This period marked the beginning of the British Trades Union Congress's (TUC) continuing interest in Uganda's labour relations. In addition, the international trade union movement was becoming more active in Africa and Uganda received visiting missions from a wide variety of organisations. Aid and advisers followed, and the process culminated in the establishment in 1958 of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) Kampala training college for union officials from all over English-speaking Africa.

Rivalries based on ideologies were not important in the early development of the unions, although Chapter 5 discusses in detail the later impact and present importance of international influences and their role in stimulating union growth (see also Legum, 1962, pp. 81-92).

The influence of Kenyan migration also speeded up union development. Elkan has pointed out that the Ganda dominated the works committees and the early Kampala unions because, staying regularly in employment, they were more interested in wages and conditions. Yet the bulk of the Ganda still relied on the land for subsistence and as an alternative source of income. It has been noted earlier that the Kenyans were much more urbanised. They stayed in employment for long periods and, using Lake Victoria's cheap transport facilities, could visit their homes in short periods of annual leave.

The first contact with Kenyan unionism was made in the railways. This led to the foundation of the only effective union existing in Uganda before 1955. Kenyan migration was noted, in passing,



by the 1947 Labour Report, but large scale migration seems to have started eight years later. This was due partly to political and economic pressures from within Kenya, where the 'Mau Mau' rebellion had disturbed the regular pattern of urban life, but it was largely the attraction of Ugandan industrialisation. Development funds built up in the years of prosperity were used on projects aimed at diversifying the economy. This industrialisation included exploitation of copper deposits in the western province, but was mainly centred on Jinja and the Owen Falls Hydro-Electricity Scheme. The projects included a textile mill, copper smelters, a brewery, a tobacco factory and, at Tororo, a cement works.

The 1957 Labour Department Report mentions that the influx of Kenyans coincided with unemployment and food shortages and that official action was taken to discourage this migration (LDR, 1957, p. 7). But employers in the new industries offered good employment prospects to Kenyans who often had previous factory experience and stayed long enough to be trainable. As in the railways, they also brought with them some knowledge and experience of union activity.

In 1955, Mr. Tom Mboya visited Uganda and assisted at the birth of the Uganda Trades Union Congress (UTUC), a weak organisation of four small unions. In his memoirs he recalls being told that:

"The Baganda were quite satisfied and do not look on themselves as workers, and so there would be no possibility of organising a trade union in Uganda. To some extent these warnings were correct for in many Uganda unions, the leadership had to come from Kenya workers resident in Uganda." (Mboya, 1963, p. 198).

This was particularly true of industrial unions located at Jinja, where a significant proportion of the labour force was Kenyan in origin. The Ganda were prominent in the relatively ineffective organisations catering for workers in 'white collar' occupations centred on Kampala.

Table II (p. 22) gives a clear indication of the rapid expansion in union activity between 1957 and 1962, both in the total number of union members and in the range of industries organised. More than most statistics on Africa, the accuracy of these figures is open to question as there was no effective machinery to check the estimates of the leaders themselves. The figures for 1963 in Table III (p. 23) show the divergence in many cases between fully paid up members and "book members" who often did no more than fill in a membership card. During 1963, there was a tightening up of supervision and the General-Secretary of the Vernacular, Primary



and Junior Secondary Teachers Union was prosecuted for claiming 10,000 members when subscriptions had been collected from less than 200.

Table I  
UNION GROWTH, UGANDA AND KENYA

	Uganda			Kenya		
	<i>Workers</i>	<i>Unionists</i>	<i>Unions</i>	<i>Workers</i>	<i>Unionists</i>	<i>Unions</i>
1952	200,000	259	2	468,000	20,688	13
1955	224,782	783	7	501,000	32,850	15
1958	257,400	4,784	13	596,800	18,357	23
1960	254,200	26,300	47	596,900	45,700	44

Source: Colonial Office: *Trade Unions in the British Colonial Territories. A periodic digest of labour statistics* (Colonial Office Library mimeographed).

A useful indication of the rate of growth is found in Table I comparing the situation with that in the Kenya trade unions. The main factors in this rapid growth seem to have been the impact of large numbers of Kenyan migrants with previous experience of union activities, the increasing interest taken in Uganda by international union organisations and the declining employment position which led to greater stabilisation of the labour force. A number of small unions began with a burst of activity and then remained dormant for a few years before being absorbed by more vigorous competitors. By the end of 1963, a period of rationalisation had begun, so that the total number of union members increased while the number of separate organisations declined.

A change in employer attitudes paralleled this sudden development of strong trade unions. Employers' associations such as the Tea Planters Association and the Cotton Association existed before the Second World War, but were concerned mainly with the fixing of prices and exerting informal pressure on the colonial administration. A Federation of Uganda Employers was registered in 1945 with the Registrar of Trade Unions. The Labour Department Report for 1946 praised the Federation's "keen interest and valuable constructive criticisms" and added that:

"It is to be hoped that it will in time become more fully representative of the employers of labour in Uganda, particularly in the direction of organised recruitment." (LDR, 1946, p. 6).

By 1948, the Federation was virtually defunct and "just as badly organised as the employees." (LDR, 1948, p. 16). Because voting was weighted according to numbers employed, the two large sugar estates were able to dominate the proceedings and to determine that the main business dealt with the most economic methods of recruiting migrant labour to cope with the current labour shortage.

It was not until 1957 that any interest was displayed in an employers' organisation concerned with industrial relations. Successive reports of the Labour Department urged that "employers must organise themselves on a comparable basis to that adopted by the organisations of employees." (LDR, 1957, p. 16). In 1958, the Secretary of the Overseas Employers Federations visited East Africa in connection with developments in Kenya and made efforts to revive the old Federation in a new form. A number of larger firms agreed to form a purely consultative "Society of Employers" and to explore the possibility of co-ordinating their personnel policies to take account of the recent expansion of trade union activities. Because it was feared that the appearance of an employers' association might further stimulate union growth, the Society at first met in secret and established only informal contact with the Labour Department. In 1959, when the Government raised the statutory minimum wage rates for urban areas without consulting the Society, the members realised that their objectives could only be fulfilled by emerging as a public body.

In April 1960, the Society was formally registered with the Registrar of Trade Unions. After its membership had increased to 35 firms, the retiring Deputy Labour Commissioner was appointed as a full-time Executive Officer. In July 1961, the name of the organisation was changed to the Federation of Uganda Employers, and its constitution was redrafted to allow the entry of smaller firms grouped together in subsidiary organisations. The press release announcing this change is significant as it outlines the basic motives behind the growth of the organisation:

"It is likely that there will be a considerable increase in the growth and strength of the trade union movement (in the future), maybe not from a spontaneous desire of the workers but from the increasing outside influence being brought to bear in this field . . . another factor that makes it imperative for employers to be united to safeguard their interests is the possibility of irresponsible promises of unreal wage levels which might come out of the present

background of Uganda with constitutional changes and government by political parties." (*Uganda Argus*, 5 July 1961).

From that time, the Federation increased its membership and strengthened its organisation by sponsoring the emergence of specialised Trade Associations. The Federation itself functioned as a representative of employers' interests on general issues of policy, and as an information centre. With two former members of the Labour Department as its executive officials, it was in a good position to offer technical assistance to members engaged in negotiations with unions. However, it was the sectional Trade Associations which were directly concerned with the negotiation of collective agreements and with their enforcement in collaboration with the unions concerned.

The chief weakness of the employers' organisations was the lack of discipline over their members with regard to the observation of collective agreements. To some extent this can be attributed to the weakness of union leadership in not facing up to the problem of organising the more "difficult" members of the trade. There was also a fundamental conflict between the idea of combination embodied in the Federation and the attitudes of many of the members. Apart from the larger joint companies, the great majority of employers in Uganda were Asians running businesses as family concerns. They were usually suspicious both of recognising a union and of collaborating with their competitors, and the exclusive role of the family placed special stresses upon the efficiency of personnel management (Desai, 1965). It is clear, however, that the existence of employers' associations contributed very considerably to the expansion and consolidation of the union movement in Uganda. Although few employers positively welcomed unions, the existence of the associations helped to reinforce the view that unions were at least a legitimate vehicle for the expression of the interests of their workers.

## Chapter Three

### PROBLEMS OF UNION ORGANISATION

Table II demonstrates the rapid growth in both the number of unions and union membership in the period between 1952 and 1961. The size and distribution of union membership at the end of 1963 is indicated in Table III. As might be expected in a country in which communications were generally poor and there was a low rate of literacy, the earliest and strongest unions were based upon workers grouped in industries at a particular location. Apart from the Railway African Union, the most important unions in terms of activity and paid-up membership have been located at the industrial centres: electricity, sugar plantations, textiles, tobacco, breweries and copper smelters near Jinja; petroleum, Central Government workshops and college junior employees in Kampala; copper mines and tea plantations in the Western Province and cement at Tororo. The public services also account for a large percentage of union membership but, with the exception of the railway workers, the unions concerned have been relatively passive. Craft unions have never made any progress whatsoever, and general unions dealing with a number of minor employers are a relatively late development.

In order to avoid repetition and to narrow the scope of investigation, an arbitrary selection of the most important unions was made. Choice was partly dictated by the available source material and the willingness of individual leaders to co-operate, but the main aim was to provide a sample which would represent the main problems. The Railway African Union was chosen because of its pioneering role and for the special problems faced by workers employed in organisations operating in all three East African territories. The National Union of Clerical, Commercial and Technical Employees had the longest history of the general unions and experienced a remarkable expansion in numbers during 1963. Of the major industrial unions, the Uganda Tobacco Workers Union is the oldest and one of the most efficiently organised, while the Uganda Textile Workers Union became involved in the longest and most bitter strike in the history of labour relations in the country. The National Union of Plantation Workers, potentially the largest union in Uganda, had a very chequered history which



Table II  
**UNION GROWTH, 1952-1961**  
 Number of Union Members

Union	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961
Railway Asian	97	91	97	98	60	60	60	114	114	103
Postal African	127	135	138	160	164	190	365	285	285	742
Kampala Local Govt.	35	68	78	40	60	50	50	150	150	102
Busoga Drivers		370	370	350	135	135	410	*	*	*
Clerical				150	43	82	49	110	110	162
Medical Assistants				157	68	290	291	201	201	148
Shoemakers				36	52	52	50	50	50	50
Railway African				951	1500	3000	3000	4000	5000	5000
Makerere Employees					440	470	470	380	380	600
Journalists					7	7	7	7	7	†
Printing						180	250	†	†	†
Tobacco						42	470	460	460	1090
Transport & Gen.						226	271	1200	3200	2600
Teachers Asian							227	227	†	†
Textiles							400	500	500	2300
Teachers African							1000	1100	3400	10200
Lango Transport								38	250	785
Co-operatives								180	180	180
Bugisu Local Govt.								320	320	226
Lango Teachers								220	*	*
Bukedi Local Govt.								220	220	318
Lango Local Govt.								1100	1100	800
Bank Employees									100	382
Building									500	500
Cement									82	380
Electricity									330	987
Hotel and Domestic									600	1020
Plantations									2206	7000
Breweries										620
Busoga Local Govt.										336
Petroleum										600
Road Construction										2141
Ginnery and Mills										35
Busoga Co-op.										198
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>664</b>	<b>683</b>	<b>1642</b>	<b>2529</b>	<b>4784</b>	<b>7370</b>	<b>10862</b>	<b>20965</b>	<b>39862</b>

\* Amalgamation into another union

† Figures not available

Source: Annual Reports of the Uganda Labour Department (1952-1959) and files of the Uganda Labour Commissioner.

Membership figures are based upon the union's own submissions and are therefore often highly inflated.

illustrated many of the problems facing union organisers confronted with a migratory rural work force. Finally, the history of the Uganda Public Employees Union shows how international assistance created an omnibus union from a number of minor civil service organisations and how the Government was able to bring the new organisation under direct political control.

As an introduction to the individual case studies, it is necessary to make a number of general observations on issues affecting

Table III  
TRADE UNION MEMBERSHIP, 1963

Union	Year of Registration.	Book Membership.	Paid-Up Membership.
Kampala Local Government ..	1952	198	198
*Railway African .. .. .	1955	3,505	3,505
*Clerical .. .. .	"	3,008	2,419
Medical Assistants .. .. .	"	286	20
Makerere Employees .. .. .	1956	758	720
Printing .. .. .	1957	406	406
*Tobacco .. .. .	"	640	640
Teachers African .. .. .	1958	11,128	167
Postal European .. .. .	"	27	27
Textiles .. .. .	"	1,686	1,686
Lango Transport .. .. .	1959	†985	†
Railway Asian .. .. .	"	122	122
*Transport and General .. .. .	"	†1,400	†
Co-operative .. .. .	"	144	94
*Plantation Workers .. .. .	1960	14,601	8,712
Cement .. .. .	"	837	837
Electricity .. .. .	"	1,157	606
Hotel and Domestic .. .. .	"	†1,020	†
Ginnery and Millworkers .. .. .	1961	35	25
Bunyoro Local Government .. .. .	"	307	210
Busoga Co-operatives .. .. .	"	198	198
Busoga Local Government .. .. .	"	1,207	46
*Breweries .. .. .	"	629	629
*Petroleum .. .. .	"	†600	†
*Public Employees .. .. .	1962	16,699	16,699
*Posts and Telecommunication .. .. .	"	894	886
*Building and Civil Engineering .. .. .	1963	2,537	2,537
Steel Corporation .. .. .	"	175	†
*Mine and Smelters .. .. .	"	2,159	1,214

† Not available; the 1962 figure has been cited if known.

\* Affiliated with relevant International Trade Secretariat

Source: Uganda Labour Department files (unpublished).

union development, particularly problems of finance, leadership and organisation. This will be followed by two chapters dealing with the main sources of union ideas, the first dealing with the labour policy of the British colonial administration and the second with other external influences such as the International Labour Organisation and the various international union organisations.

#### A. Union Structure

Because there is such a wide variety in the size and effectiveness of the union organisations in Uganda, it is difficult to make valid generalisations about common characteristics. The detailed case studies in the following chapters show how the powers and functions of the same official vary between unions. To take one

example, the General Secretary of the Uganda Tobacco Workers Union (640 members, mainly in Jinja and Kampala) was able to pay closer attention to individual grievances of members than the General Secretary of the National Union of Plantation Workers (8,712 members spread over a wide area of Toro and Buganda). Even in unions nominally of the same size, there was a great difference in effectiveness, so that a branch official of the weakly organised Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union often performed a different set of functions from a branch official of the more centralised Uganda Public Employees Union.

The presence of a full-time official has been a key factor in the survival and growth of most unions in Uganda. Unions with a membership of less than about 300 cannot support the financial burden of a full-time official's salary so that these unions have not prospered in Uganda. They have either faded away or been absorbed into larger organisations. This was true of the small civil service unions which preceded the emergence of the nationwide Uganda Public Employees Union and of the many ephemeral organisations which were eventually organised into a single general union covering woodworkers, civil engineering and road construction. In Jinja, attempts were made to organise a union of workers at the Kilembe Mines Copper Smelters which failed until an amalgamation was arranged with the much larger mine-workers organisation based 300 miles away in the Ruwenzori mountains.

All the unions discussed in the following case studies employed at least one full-time official, usually the General Secretary. The Railway African Union was unusual in its dependence upon a full-time executive President. As unions grew in size, it became common to employ a clerk to deal with routine correspondence and to look after the office in the absence of the full-time official. Unions with a number of branches outside the urban area often employed two or three full-time officials but it was uncommon for any of them to be based outside Kampala or Jinja. In theory, contact was maintained with the more remote areas by tours of inspection and by the convening of meetings of national councils on which up-country branches had members. In practice, communications between branches and the headquarters in Kampala or Jinja were generally very poor. Only the Railway African Union had an effective system of keeping in touch, based upon the obvious physical link of the railway itself.

This lack of effective communications had an important effect upon the conduct of union business. There was a strong tendency



for the central branch to determine national policy and to monopolise the services of the full-time official. Union rules were required to make provision for the adequate representation of sectional interests and the constitutions of most unions placed supervisory powers in the hands of a national conference and a national executive committee on which rural areas were represented. However, in practice, neither body exerted much authority over the full-time officials and those members of the executive committee who lived in the urban areas and were thus always close to the centre of operations. The initiative in the conduct of union affairs lay with this small group.

The up-country branches of the various unions reacted to this situation in various ways. In the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union, the main problem for the central leaders was to prevent the branches from acting on their own initiative without reference to national policy. In the Uganda Public Employees Union, there was a noticeable lack of enthusiasm among branch officials in the more remote areas so that the union functioned effectively only when stimulated by the visit of national officials. In the Tobacco Workers Union, difficulties arose because common problems faced by the rural branches in the north were passed to a national negotiating body which was dominated by leaders whose main concern was with Jinja and Kampala. The Railway African Union was the most strongly integrated of the Ugandan unions but, even so, some branch officials dissented from the decision to strike in 1959 and the national leadership had to defeat a splinter organisation started by one of them.

At the branch level, unions depended upon office-bearers who held full-time jobs in the industry concerned. On the whole, large scale employers were prepared to allow a limited amount of time off for the conduct of union business and even the use of company premises for union offices. Smaller firms, such as those dealing with general unions, were not prepared to make such concessions and it was necessary to conduct union affairs after office hours. Lack of any training in union management among these part-time officers placed a considerable strain upon the full-time General Secretary as he was often forced to do work which might otherwise have been left to members of the branch executive.

In one textiles factory, the system of shop stewards was deliberately encouraged and recognised as a useful means of dealing with grievances at the lowest level. In other large enterprises, unofficial leaders tended to emerge from the informal groups into which the work-force divided itself. Because tribes often specialise



in particular skills and prefer to work in exclusive units, the shop steward system had the effect of giving expression to divisive tribal interests which cut across the aim of union solidarity. Consequently, unions at the national level tended to be dominated by a small group in the urban centre associated with the full-time General Secretary and, at the local level, to be weakened by lack of forceful and united leadership.

### **B. Finance**

In a circular to members, the Secretary of the Overseas Employers Federation wrote in 1956 that:

“One of the major failures of colonial trade unions is attributable to their financial weakness and the consequence that they attract as officers men who are themselves unstable, either crooks or idealists and very few of the latter.” (Circular, 23 July 1956).

This uncharitable assessment does have the value of pointing to the key weakness of the union movement in Uganda, the lack of stable sources of income. Because workers had no experience of contributing to voluntary workplace associations and did not grasp the value of such associations, union leaders had great difficulty in collecting regular contributions. At the same time, workers would respond to *ad hoc* appeals for support over issues such as a strike for wage claims which were demonstrably in their immediate interests. Consequently, financial instability often led leaders to stir up strife at frequent intervals in order to swell union funds.

In later years, two factors led to an improvement in the general financial position of many unions. The first was the great expansion of aid received from overseas union organisations. The precise nature of this aid is discussed in Chapter 5, but often it took the form of direct financial assistance to pay for administrative expenses and the salaries of local officials. A common pattern was that an international adviser would arrive to investigate the situation, offices would be set up and local officials paid a salary for a short period until the new union was strong enough to be self-supporting. This was true of the Railway African Union, the National Union of Plantation Workers, the Uganda Public Employees Union and the Uganda Building Construction Civil Engineering and Allied Workers Union. It was intended that the Uganda Trades Union Congress should develop in the same way, but this organisation continued to depend heavily upon regular contributions from the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. The danger in this seems to be that unions will make little effort to build up their own finances for as long as they are

certain that funds will flow in from outside, unless such funds are rigidly supervised by the donor organisation.

The second source of financial strength for the unions was the extension of the check-off system of dues collection. Under this system, the employer deducts the union subscription from the pay packets of all employees who have signed a form of authorisation. The system has definite advantages for the union leaders as it assures them of a regular income and relieves them of their most onerous administrative duty. Instead of spending many hours every month chasing after subscriptions from each member, leaders have only to secure a signature on an authorisation form. From the point of view of the employers, the extra administrative burden is offset by the increase in the financial stability of the union, which means that higher quality officials will be attracted by the regular wages and there will be less deliberate provocation of industrial unrest. The employer can also use withdrawal of the check-off privilege as a powerful bargaining counter in times of stress. This type of consideration influenced most of the more important employers in Uganda to accept the idea of the check-off after 1960. All the unions discussed in the case studies negotiated check-off agreements with at least some of their employers, although there was a varied degree of success in putting the agreements into practice. The Central Government extended a check-off agreement to the Uganda Public Employees Union for its unestablished employees, but, in a debate in the National Assembly, the Minister of Labour refused to entertain the suggestion that the check-off be made compulsory wherever unions existed. He did accept, however, that the policy would be given official encouragement. Significantly, one of the most telling arguments put forward in favour of the check-off was that it would allow Uganda to get rid of foreign interests, a reference to the widespread dependence of unions upon international assistance. (Ug. 1963 (b), pp. 99-111).

The growth in union funds brought with it problems of efficient financial administration. Mr. W. Friedland, writing of Tanganyika, noted that members of unions were suspicious about the use to which officials put their financial resources, often with justification (Friedland, 1963). Previously, union funds in Uganda were hardly worth taking and there were few cases of financial mismanagement brought to public notice. With the extension of the check-off system and the availability of foreign aid funds, there was an increase in peculation. In March, 1963, the Administrator General felt constrained to report in the following terms:

“It is still a matter of concern that too high a proportion of Union Officials have little idea and even less concern about the requirements in the law that oblige them to maintain books of account reflecting the day-to-day position of the Union. To make matters worse, some Unions, which have hitherto shown themselves incapable of keeping proper accounts when their income has not risen above a few hundred shillings, now aspire to grandiose ‘check-off’ systems to collect subscriptions. All too often the Union Officials have made it clear that they regard such formalities as a bore.” (Ug., 1963, p. 4).

This sort of attitude to financial affairs was perhaps a reflection of the general inefficiency which plagued union leadership in Uganda. There were a few capable and dedicated individuals involved at different stages of union development, but they were usually disillusioned by the low calibre of their colleagues and the poor response of members.

### **C. Migrant Labour and Tribal Loyalties**

Much of this weakness can be attributed to the widespread use of migrant labour during the formative period of union development. In 1955, the problems associated with migrant labour seemed so insurmountable to the East Africa Royal Commission that their report concluded that:

“The attempt to encourage the growth of trade unions on the British model is likely, for some time to come, to represent an expenditure of effort which might be employed more effectively in other directions.”

In listing their reasons for this conclusion, the report noted that:

“The African still has a background of peasant agriculture and this background dominates his interests even when he is a wage-earner in the towns . . . a large part of urban development is obtained through labourers who are migrant. To be effective, a trade union must be a stable and continuous association of work-people, but stability and continuity are not readily found in urban employment where the stable labour force is so small.” (CO, 1955, p. 161).

The effect of migrant labour on the urban social structure had important implications for union development. Two studies of the Ugandan labour force in this period noted that the habits and aspirations of migrant workers were accepted as a premise of employment policies, and that little effort was made to encourage a stable work force. The absence of such voluntary associations



as trade unions tended to perpetuate the instability of labour by reducing the opportunities for assimilation into an urban way of life. In turn, unions received little support because migrant workers did not identify their future interest with their conditions of work.

As a result, the first unions in Uganda were based upon the two tribes outside the normal pattern of short-term migration, the Ganda and the Luo. In both cases, workers of these tribes stayed in urban employment long enough to realise that they would benefit from an institution safeguarding their terms and conditions of employment. Of the two tribes, the Luo tended to be the more active because they did not have a supplementary income from the land as did the Ganda, and were more prepared to tackle manual and heavy skilled labouring. The Ganda were on the scene earlier in Kampala but restricted their activity to the "white collar" occupations. With the increasing stabilisation of workers from other areas, the dominance of these two tribes in union leadership declined as new groups asserted themselves. In particular, the Luo tended to be pushed out on the grounds that they were outsiders from Kenya.

Associated with the problem of migrant labour was the problem of the continued attachment among workers to their families and tribal organisations. The habit of returning periodically to the family land tended to strengthen tribal links. Just as the links increased the desire to return. The traditional social structure based on the tribe and the extended family was not without advantages for the worker in urban society. The extended family protected him against unemployment and sickness by providing accommodation with relatives in town when he was not earning, and offered him social security on retirement. Many tribal associations existed in urban centres to assist him in becoming assimilated into the urban environment and to secure employment. They acted as sporting and social clubs as well as employment agencies and mutual aid societies for organising funerals and the care of dependents.

From the point of view of the trade unions, the traditional structure sometimes served to increase the ability of the union to remain out on strike. During the long railway workers' strike in 1959, a union circular advised that dependents should be sent home to ease the strain on the union's virtually non-existent strike fund. On the whole, however, the continuing importance of tribal loyalties worked against the growth of effective unions. A social survey of Jinja in 1955 revealed that urban life tended to sort the



immigrant population along tribal lines so that tribal clusters appeared both in the urban settlement pattern and in the types of jobs to which each tribe was assigned. A sharp division also developed between the local Soga and Ganda and the immigrant "foreigners" because the former owned nearby land and possessed full political rights under the local administration. These divisions were reinforced by the tendency for certain tribes to seek particular jobs because of education, physique or previous experience in industry elsewhere. The survey concluded that:

"The partial correspondence between tribe, occupational classification and earnings probably favours the maintenance of tribal distinctions . . . and hampers the developments of racial solidarity cutting across social groupings." (Sofer, 1955, p. 46).

This lack of racial solidarity meant, in the prevailing social structure dominated by Asian and European employers, a lack of working class solidarity. Because each tribe believed that it had special interests which it did not share with members of other tribes, there was little attraction in a trade union appealing to the common interests of all workers in the industry concerned. This also explains why tribal distinction provided the basic cleavage in the leadership structure of most of the unions discussed in the following case studies.

The question of tribal distinctions can be closely related to the dominance of particular occupations in union leadership. As mentioned in the quotation from the Jinja social survey, there tended to be a partial correspondence between tribe and occupation. In turn, certain occupations have tended to be more concerned with trade unions than others. Thus, in the case of Kilembe Copper Mines, the bulk of the labour force were short-term migrants drawn from the neighbouring districts of Kigezi and Ankole, mainly employed underground, yet the union was started by a small group of Kenyans working as mechanics and clerks. In Lugazi Sugar Estate, most workers were employed as unskilled cane cutters on the plantation or milling machine operators in the factory, but the union executive at one stage was controlled by hospital orderlies.

#### **D. Union Leadership and Membership Control**

This phenomenon is perfectly understandable and helps to explain the prominence of certain tribes among the union leadership. These mechanics, clerks and orderlies usually had better education, had served in the job longer and had more experience in dealing with members of other races in the course of their

work. Clerks, in particular, had more knowledge of the techniques of organisation needed to run a union, and often seemed to use union activity as a means of attracting the attention of management to assist their chances of promotion. The main drawback in the situation was that union leaders had little first-hand knowledge of the practical problems of most of their members and thus could not match the specialist knowledge of management when negotiating on technical issues. There was also the problem of the difference in status between leaders and their members. Many union leaders seemed to regard themselves as very superior beings compared with the mere unskilled labourers who had elected them to office. They had never shared the same humble background as their members and felt a class above them. This view of themselves tended to be reinforced by the attentions of international organisations which provided the leaders with such fruits of office as overseas trips and motor cars. This helped to widen the gap between leaders and members in terms of both sophistication and standards of living.

In one respect, however, the unions of Uganda were more fortunate than those in other areas. Reviewing union activity in South-East Asia, Daya noted that the leadership of trade unions "is largely in the hands of people not connected with the industry" (Daya, 1955, p. 371). In India, to take another example, a full-time union organiser may be in charge of a number of different unions without ever having worked in any of the industries concerned. The same is true of African countries where unions could be organised by outsiders as vehicles for personal power. In Uganda, the 1952 Trade Union Ordinance required all but the Secretary to have worked for a period of three years in the industry being organised. This was probably the result of a despatch from the Colonial Secretary which stated:

"Officials of trade unions should, with certain exceptions, be men whose livelihood depends upon their work in the industry concerned. I consider that the stability and value of the trade union movement depends to a large extent upon the degree to which leadership is developed from within its own ranks." (CO. 1951 (a)).

The intention to keep out "professional union organisers" was largely fulfilled in Uganda as there were remarkably few leaders who had not had experience as an employee in the fields organised by their unions. The only important exceptions were the officers of the short-lived and insignificant splinter group called the Uganda Federation of Labour (UFL) (see pp. 138-142).

A number of writers have pointed to aspects of traditional behaviour such as the lack of class tensions and the habit of settling disputes by the arbitration of elders which seem to lend themselves to the modern concept of trade unionism. Nevertheless, as the Report of the Uganda Labour Department stated in 1950:

"There is nothing in the background of the African worker which lends itself to an appreciation of the meaning of trade unionism — nothing approaches its intimate form of democracy." (LDR, 1950, p. 14).

It is inevitable that workers bring to the workplace relationship a set of attitudes based upon traditional conceptions of status and authority very different from those prevailing in modern industry. A detailed analysis of the decision-making process among Tanganyikan trade unions noted that members exercised only minimal control over the union officials, so that union government took on "a plebiscitarian rather than a representative form." (Friedland, 1961).

Observations at a number of meetings of different unions in Uganda revealed that much the same applied there, with meetings poorly attended and members very passive unless serious disagreement existed between the leaders themselves. If a single leader had the backing of his own executive, he was in a position of unassailable authority.

This passivity can largely be explained by the lack of union education and high rate of illiteracy among the mass of the members and the wide social gap which had been allowed to develop between leaders and the rank and file. There was a total absence of the informed membership upon which effective democratic control depends. The only check upon individual irresponsibility was exercised by other members of the union hierarchy who might or might not have a better grasp of the intentions and needs of the mass of the members. Unions did not appear to be the democratic force that they are sometimes expected to be. They did provide a training for future leaders in other fields but this was a training in the techniques of organisation rather than in the specific mechanics of democratic government. Inadequate participation by the members in the making of policy — an inescapable condition in countries where illiteracy was high and trade unionism new — meant that trade union policies were what the leaders made them.

## Chapter Four

### THE ADMINISTRATION OF COLONIAL LABOUR POLICY

To assess the impact of colonial labour policy on the development of trade unions in Uganda, it is necessary to say something about the general policies pursued by the Colonial Office policy makers (for a detailed study, see Roberts, 1964).

Unions had established themselves as legitimate organisations in a colonial setting as far back as 1930. A despatch from Lord Passfield accepted that trade unions were the most desirable method for protecting colonial workers from the abuses and exploitation which tended to accompany rapid industrialisation and also advocated some form of compulsory registration to protect the workers from the limitations of their own leaders.

Passfield's views were reinforced by the findings of the 1931 Royal Commission on Labour in India, on which Lord Citrine served as an influential member. However, once the Labour Party fell from power, the policy of encouraging trade unions was shelved. Economic depression led to a curtailment of the activities of the existing Labour Departments and the more conservative view that trade unions were too far in advance of the general level of economic development was allowed to prevail.

Interest in trade unions revived with the start of the Second World War. A growing labour shortage and the presence of Labour Party ministers in the Coalition Government caused pressure to be exerted upon the various colonial administrations. Under the terms of the Colonial Development and Welfare Acts from 1940 onwards, funds were made conditional upon satisfying the Colonial Office that adequate provision had been made for the development and protection of trade unions. Assistance was provided in the form of sending out former British trade unionists to act as special advisers attached to the Labour Departments of the more industrially advanced colonies.

However, results in the immediate post-war period were considered disappointing. A United Nations Report noted that:

"While the initial growth of trade unions has often been striking, as soon as the legal provisions permit them to operate effectively, when the novelty wears off or rapid results are not achieved,



some of the unions tend to disintegrate or lose membership; or trade unions' membership does not increase as rapidly as regular wage earning increases." (UN, 1956, p. 43).

As a result, attention was directed towards developing statutory machinery such as joint consultative committees and wages councils in order to protect the majority of workers who still lacked the protection of effective trade unions. The view that trade unions would be an automatic response to industrialisation and needed only legal protection in order to flourish gave way to the idea that the State needed to play a more positive role in the protection of colonial workers.

Before the Second World War, labour administration in Uganda had a precarious existence. The first appointment of an officer specifically concerned with labour was made in 1919, but his only concern was with the organisation of the supply of migrant labour. In 1925 a separate department was formed for the two purposes of recruiting labour (particularly for the building of the railways) and for supervising general employment conditions. The staff of six was assisted in a part-time capacity by officers in the district administrations in the course of their general duties.

In 1931, as a consequence of the world wide depression, the department was virtually disbanded. A single inspector of labour struggled on, settling local disputes and attempting to maintain transit facilities for migrant labour. A full department was not re-established until 1943, under pressure from Britain, and there continued to be a serious shortage of staff until 1948.

During this period, Colonial Office policy statements had been noted, but local administrators were dubious about their relevance to Uganda. The Protectorate Government complied largely as a matter of form:

"The Government has undertaken as soon as conditions permit to pass legislation on the lines of the Trade Union (Amendment) Ordinance of Jamaica (on picketing, intimidation and protection from damages actions) . . . To begin with, this legislation is not likely to be of appreciable effect or value; and it is open to doubt whether the formation of trade unions will be encouraged by providing these statutory rights. They have, however, been provided in Kenya and Tanganyika and in matters of this kind uniformity is regarded to be expedient." (LDR, 1939, pp.2-3).

In 1942, Colonial Office pressure was made more positive through the special provisions attached to the Colonial Development and Welfare Acts. To meet the requirements of the Act, the Uganda Trades Union and Trades Disputes Ordinance was passed

in 1943. This incorporated minimum legislative requirements laid down by the Colonial Office before a colony became eligible for Colonial Development and Welfare Funds. During the war, the Department was concerned mainly with the direction of scarce labour into essential services, especially agricultural production. With peace came "a growing realisation . . . of the need to keep pace with the times and to move forward with the rest of the world in improving labour conditions." (LDR, 1946, p. 2). Serious disturbances, including a general strike, had occurred in 1945. Although a Commission of Enquiry suggested political motives, Orde-Brown remarked that:

"The Labour Department is at present constituted on a very modest scale, and this undoubtedly formed a contributory cause in events leading up to the recent disturbances." (Orde-Brown, 1946, p. 93).

The 1947 Labour Department Report noted that "Uganda is about to embark on the initial stages of limited industrialisation in certain areas." (LDR, 1947, p. 3). It was noted also that the present weak labour administration would be unable to guide and supervise these changes and that "considerable ill-informed interest was being taken in the possibility of the formation of unions." In 1948 the Assistant Labour Adviser at the Colonial Office visited Uganda and, on his advice, the activities of the Labour Department were widened to include townships outside Kampala. In 1949 the first "Labour Officer (Trade Unions and Training)" took up his post, but the Department's report for that year noted that little use was made of his services.

In 1950, the first of the two basic trade union ordinances was passed: the Trades Disputes (Arbitration and Settlement) Ordinance. This was a relatively simple piece of legislation, based upon a model circulated by the Colonial Office. The machinery was set in motion by the notification of a trade dispute by either party. After the Labour Commissioner had been satisfied that genuine attempts had been made to settle the matter without outside intervention, he appointed a conciliator. The conciliator, invariably the local labour officer, then tried to reach an amicable solution by discussions with each side separately and then bringing both sides together at a meeting under his chairmanship. If the dispute remained unresolved after fourteen days of conciliation, the Labour Commissioner was empowered to offer arbitration. If the Labour Commissioner's offer was accepted by both sides, he could then ask the Minister of Labour to appoint either a single arbitrator or an arbitration tribunal including representatives of

both sides.

Special provisions were included to cover workers in services considered essential to the health and general welfare of the community. The Minister possessed the power to intervene where there was undue delay in reaching a settlement by negotiation or where the two parties would not both agree to accept arbitration. He could direct that the dispute be referred to an arbitration tribunal which was required, where practicable, to deliver its decision within twenty-eight days. Workers and employers covered by the Essential Services schedule could be forbidden to participate in strikes or lock-outs, and anyone counselling such action could also be liable to heavy penalties.

The second legislation of importance was the Trades Union Ordinance of 1952. This was also closely modelled on general colonial practice and followed, in particular, policies outlined in a circular despatch from the Colonial Secretary, James Griffiths (CO, 1051, (a)). The new ordinance provided for compulsory registration as had the 1943 Ordinance which it replaced. The Registrar of Trade Unions had the right to refuse registration if the union was used for unlawful purposes or if any other trade union already registered was considered sufficiently representative of the interests involved (Section 16). Unregistered trade unions were denied the right to operate and their officials could be prosecuted. The ordinance also introduced greater supervision over the finances of unions. The Griffiths' circular had emphasised the need for financial control:

"There is much evidence of laxness in financial matters on the part of officials and some degree of supervision and control would seem to be essential if the interests of union members are to be adequately safeguarded."

The objects to which trade union funds could be applied were specified and the union executive was required to render financial statements and an annual return detailing changes in membership. The Registrar of Trade Unions was given wide powers of inspection, including the enforcement of a schedule of rules to be included in the constitution of each union.

Chapter 2 explained how the earliest unions were used as instruments of political protest. The 1952 Ordinance tried to ensure that this did not continue. Section 29 laid down that all the officers of the union except the secretary should have been employed for not less than three years in the industry or occupation with which the union was directly concerned. It was forbidden to hold office in more than one union or for an official to have been

convicted of fraud or dishonesty. Changes of name and amalgamations were discouraged by requiring a high percentage of approval in a secret ballot and, in addition, the special sanction of the Governor in Council. Union Constitutions were required to provide representation for separate sectional interests of members, a provision often interpreted to discourage the growth of amorphous general unions.

Finally, the ordinance introduced an important amendment to existing legislation by making provision for probationary trade unions. This had been recommended by the Griffiths' circular despatch to allow a period of stabilisation in less advanced areas. Part two of the ordinance made provision for "employees' associations" and "employees' organisations" to be established as probationary trade unions. An association was defined as any combination of six or more employees in the same trade or industry and an organisation as any combination engaged in the same type of employment but who work for different employers. Although the principal object of both combinations was the regulation of industrial relations, they were not deemed to be full trade unions. Instead of regular subscriptions, only an annual contribution was permitted, and this was to be devoted only to office expenses and welfare purposes. Provision was made for associations and organisations to be registered as trade unions and the Registrar also possessed the power to require this change where he was satisfied that the combination concerned was "conducting its affairs in such a manner that it should be regarded as a trade union" (Section 6).

The official rationale behind this innovation was stated in the 1952 Labour Department Report. It was admitted that compulsory registration meant that "any combination of workers, however simple their aims, had to conform to the somewhat onerous conditions of Trade Union legislation or go out of existence." (LDR, 1952, p. 18). If the gap between no organisation and a fully fledged union was allowed to continue, it was feared that all spontaneous organisations would be suppressed. These new bodies were intended to be a simple introduction to industrial relations, a half way stage to allow workers to build up experience and a reasonable degree of organisation. Although these provisions would have allowed the Registrar to satisfy himself about the quality of union leadership prior to full registration, this system of probationary trade unions was never put into practice.

In 1958, Uganda received an ICFTU Visiting Mission which reviewed the Protectorate's trade union legislation. The general conclusion of the Mission was that:





"There is altogether too much legislated for; it tends to force trade unions into a mould based on the United Kingdom pattern . . . the administrative formalities required are generally beyond the capacity of small young unions with inexperienced officials with a minimum of education . . . Opinions differ greatly regarding the motives behind the over-elaborate labour legislation in East Africa. Some allege that it is deliberate government policy to interfere in union affairs all along the line. Others declare that it is aimed at protecting the unions from themselves in fact by preventing their own excesses . . . But even if we accept the most charitable interpretation of the government's intentions, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that they are mistaken. Unions cannot grow into strong independent organisations firmly rooted in the collective will of the workers if the government is perpetually cossetting them and holding them by the hand." (ICFTU, 1958, p. 28).

The Mission found that it was freely admitted that many provisions on inspection were never enforced, but still thought that the existence of unnecessary details hindered union efficiency. It also considered that provisions on voting rights and purposes for which funds might be used had no place in an ordinance but should be decided by the constitution makers of the union. The Mission objected to the wide powers entrusted to the Registrar, especially the resistance to general unions and the tendency to push any embryonic grouping into registering as an association when it might have progressed more quickly as a union. In general, however, the Mission accepted that the burdensome administrative provisions were protective rather than restrictive.

Predictably perhaps, the British Trades Union Congress took exception to the Mission's complaint that colonial unions were being forced into the British mould. The TUC General Council pointed out that British law allowed the formation of any kind of union provided its rules established the democratic rights of its members. The General Council preferred that colonial legislation should be brought even closer to the British structure which allowed this flexibility. In this way, African unions would be given freedom to develop according to the demands of their particular situation (TUC annual report, 1959, p. 228).

The other possible criticism of the Mission is that it made the same error as the early policy makers in the Colonial Office. Both groups refused to believe that unions would not develop spontaneously to meet the challenge of industrialisation. Earlier chapters point out the considerable difficulties which an African environment places in the way of rapid unionisation of the work

force. The Colonial Office accepted the lessons of experience when it changed its policies in 1951. Perhaps the ICFTU Visiting Mission did not stay in Africa long enough to appreciate the value of the essentially benevolent authoritarianism of colonial labour legislation. It certainly offered little in the way of constructive suggestions for amendments.

To complete the survey of Uganda's legislative framework, two other ordinances must be mentioned. Neither was of much significance in the development of trade unions. An Employment Ordinance, passed in 1946 and revised in 1955, specified conditions of service such as hours of work, leave entitlement and housing standards but, where unions existed, conditions were usually above the minimum requirements prescribed by the ordinance.

In 1949, a Minimum Wages Ordinance was passed which provided for statutory fixing of wage rates for any part of the Protectorate. It was first used in 1950 to set minimums for the urban areas of Kampala and Jinja. In addition, under a new Employment Ordinance, provision was made for a Central Labour Advisory Board and a series of provincial boards which were to act as its area sub-committees. These boards were given power "to fix the minimum wages to be paid to any class of workmen in the Protectorate as a whole, or in any part of it, subject to the approval of the Governor." But, before 1959, there seemed little justification to extend the use of these devices. The 1951 Labour Department Report explains why:

"So long as the demands for labour exceed the supply, the somewhat cumbersome system of the legal minimum wage could be avoided and wages kept at reasonable levels by adjustment to government wage rates. As the government is the principal employer in the country, any changes in its rates directly influence the wages paid by private employers." (LDR, 1951, p. 17).

In 1957, a Minimum Wages Advisory Board and Wages Council Ordinance was passed which brought the older ordinance up to date and specified the membership and powers of the boards and councils. A modest minimum wage was instituted by statutory order following the report of a special commission of enquiry in 1959. The change drew most opposition from other public employers — the local governments and municipalities. Most large scale private employers were already paying above the minimum, and the smaller concerns probably considered that it would not be too difficult for them to evade the legislation. The unions seem to have taken little interest, although the Uganda Trades Union Congress issued a press statement opposing the move because it

would lead to retrenchment in labour and so to further unemployment. The Railway African Union objected to the idea of area differentials and wanted a single minimum to discourage the flow of labour into Kampala and Jinja.

The idea of Wages Councils for separate industries was taken over from Kenya with the intention of building up negotiation machinery under official sponsorship to compensate for the lack of organisation on both sides. It also had the effect of overcoming the competitive disadvantages suffered by more liberal employers when they agreed to negotiate with their workers. The idea came to nothing at that time because of the lack of effective employers' organisations and the chronic shortage of Labour Department staff to set the new machinery in motion. Wages Councils Orders were made for the Road Transport Industry in 1959 and the Printing Industry and Cotton Ginning in 1962. In general, however, Uganda made little use of statutory wage fixing before independence, and the unions were not much affected by attempts to enforce a national minimum wage.

A discussion of the legislative framework within which unions have developed would not be complete without reference to the important role of works committees. In the statutes, there is no direct provision for contact between the two sides of industry, but such contact is clearly assumed. The 1951 Colonial Labour Advisory Council Memorandum emphasised the need for action on this assumption:

"A sound legislative basis for trade union activity is clearly essential but in our view it is equally important to promote the development of organised machinery, whether voluntary or statutory, through which workers and employers can co-operate." (CO, 1951 (b)).

Works committees or joint consultative councils were intended to provide such machinery in Uganda. The Labour Department intended that they should:

"Provide not only a safety valve for the airing of grievances, but also a valuable channel of communication whereby management can explain changes in conditions of employment." (LDR, 1950, p. 14).

In addition, in the absence of unions, the workers' representatives would gain experience in methods of negotiation and the conduct of meetings. With the passing of the 1952 Ordinance, the workers' side of the works committees were permitted to register as employees' associations:

"They have none of the usual trade union privileges, only the

legal right to exist and by such existence to acquire experience by which they can qualify for registration as trade unions." (LDR, 1953, p. 18).

Few works committees seemed to have reached this degree of formal organisation. The Labour Department first began advocating works committees in 1950. By 1952, 43 were in existence as representatives of 29,000 employees. Labour Department Reports claimed that, after an initial period of mutual suspicion, both sides realised that the committee could perform useful functions. A wide range of matters were discussed, covering not only welfare and production but also hours, leave, sick pay, wage differentials and other such subjects excluded from joint consultation in Britain because they are covered by other machinery. In 1951, it was noted that "in the early stages, the employees' side tends to concentrate on wages alone". (LDR, 1951, p. 16). The 1952 Report boldly asserted that:

"It would seem safe to say that joint consultation has come to stay and will be a permanent feature of industrial life in Uganda." (LDR, 1952, p. 19).

In 1955, works committees were made compulsory in all departments employing more than 50 people in one centre. Heads of Departments were required to inform their members that disagreement at committee level could be raised for conciliation under the Trades Disputes Ordinance.

In the same year, Uganda's works committees received powerful support from an East Africa Royal Commission on land and population problems. In their report, the Commissioners claimed that attempts by Government to promote a system of industrial relations based on trade unions had not met with much success and were a waste of effort (CO, 1955, p. 37).

They added:

"By way of contrast, we have been most impressed by some of the recent attempts to build up works councils and joint staff committees . . . It would be premature to pass final judgement on these experiments but they should be encouraged and their results carefully watched." (Para 139).

This view was challenged by all three East African governors in their commentaries on the findings of the Commission. All made much the same point. They agreed that it was wrong to stimulate union growth artificially where conditions were not suitable. But, to quote Sir Andrew Cohen:

"Whether they are encouraged or not, it is quite certain that trade unions will grow; the people themselves will come to consider



that they are essential and will be unlikely to accept any lesser form of organisation. What is important is that the trade unions as they develop should receive the right guidance from the Labour Department." (CO, 1956, p. 132).

By 1955, the Labour Department was also coming round to the same view of the works committee system. Perhaps the change in policy was affected by the appointment of a new Labour Commissioner with more specialised knowledge and long experience with the copper mines of Northern Rhodesia. The Report for that year recanted the earlier assertion that the works committee had come to stay:

"While works committees continue to perform a useful function, the fact has not been lost sight of that they will never replace properly constituted trade unions and that probably as more advanced joint consultative machinery is established they will gradually disappear." (LDR, 1955, p. 17).

As union activity increased, less emphasis was placed on works committees and a more appropriate balance of functions developed. They were no longer relied upon to prevent major disputes:

"Experience shows that, while the committees continue to function satisfactorily when things are quiet, they tend to be by-passed and to have no authority over workers at times of stress when events lead suddenly to a strike." (LDR, 1958, p. 16).

Some works committees still existed in 1963, mainly in government departments. In many places, they had been restricted to domestic or welfare functions by the competitive growth of unions. Where a young union was trying to build up support from workers, it was Labour Department policy to allow the works committee to run down and allow the union to claim the credit for the successes of joint consultation. Once established, a young union often seemed to resent the existence of a competitive organisation and attempted to conduct all business on the basis of collective bargaining with the union executive. Only in isolated cases did the union co-operate by having local union officials stand for election to the committee and then using it as a consultative arm of the union.

It is difficult to evaluate the importance of works committees in relation to the general development of trade unions. Elkan's detailed investigation of the operation of two works committees showed that the members of the workers' side tended to be representative of only a small group so that the mass of workers made little use of the device to bring forward grievances or discuss improvements in their conditions. This experience seems to have been common to most committees in Uganda. Few private emplo-

yers claimed that their efforts at joint consultation had been successful apart from isolated cases where the union co-operated.

Perhaps this weakness is inherent in the system of entrusting works committees with wider activities left elsewhere to unions. Fawzi points out that, in this hybrid institution fulfilling the dual functions of joint consultation and collective bargaining:

"The qualities required for the first set of functions are not necessarily those required for making a success of the second, and works committees would have disintegrated because of their own internal contradictions." (Fawzi, 1954, p. 46).

In Uganda, as in the Sudan, the works committees did not disintegrate. They shed the contradictory function of collective bargaining when unions developed.

The difficulties involved in the policy of sponsoring works committees were voiced at a conference of the heads of colonial labour departments:

"Experience has shown that it is easier to create these local committees than to keep them running effectively and it might be thought useful in commending their formation to emphasise that there are certain preconditions for success — (a) a genuine desire on the part of the employer to make the procedure work; and (b) recognition by the workers that the committee is not merely a body for airing grievances." (CO, 1951 (c) ).

In Uganda, the supporters of works committees seem initially to have lost sight of these prescriptions. The Labour Department went on record in favour of works committees as a permanent feature of industrial relations; employers tended to regard them as a permanent substitute for unions rather than a training ground; and workers certainly regarded them mainly as a body for airing grievances. In the absence of trade unions in most industries, this was probably inevitable. However, experience in many parts of the world has shown that works committees established by employers do not win the same confidence of workers as unions, and will never receive their support if they are designed to forestall unionism. With the start of union activity in Uganda, the entrenched support for works committees proved a force which hampered rapid growth of voluntary collective bargaining. New unions had the difficult task of proving to the workers that it was in their interests to give them financial support instead of receiving free the apparently similar services of the works committees.

This is not to deny the value of works committees in educating workers and employers in techniques of negotiation. Because the works committee could exercise no sanction against the employer,

an aura of paternalism was always present. Yet it was still a unique experience for an African employee to sit down at a table for negotiations with his European or Asian boss. The worker could learn much about the conduct of meetings, the presentation of argument and the techniques of bargaining in the western style. A number of union leaders admit that they gained valuable experience as members of the works committees they now despise.

In retrospect, it seems that the sponsorship of works committees was a necessary and valuable Labour Department contribution to the early development of trade unions. The most pertinent criticism might seem to be that the policy was allowed to entrench itself and to hamper the growth of true collective bargaining when unions finally matured.

In his classic study of colonial policy, J. S. Furnivall notes that:

"In British colonies numerous regulations bear witness to the benevolent aspirations of government; many of them have a common characteristic — they avoid laying down definite standards ... and leave a considerable discretion to inspecting officers so that their effect depends upon the machinery for supervision." (Furnivall, 1948, p. 350).

This is fair comment on Uganda's labour legislation, so it is necessary now to consider the personnel side and the execution of policy.

The duties of members of the Labour Department related mainly to the enforcement of the various ordinances. At the lowest level of responsibility were the labour inspectors who were concerned mainly with the enforcement of the Employment Ordinance and not with industrial relations. They had only limited discretion in dealing with labour disputes but, because they visited outlying areas, they were useful in bringing such disputes to the notice of district labour officers. The labour officers were responsible for the first attempts at conciliation once a dispute was reported and for keeping the Labour Commissioner informed on subsequent developments. They were in close contact with both sides of industry and often solved problems informally before a dispute was reported officially. For example, they were often asked to certify the extent to which a union was representative of the total work force as a preliminary to discussion on recognition. The unions feared that management would victimise union members if it had access to their names and the management was often unwilling to accept the union's estimate of its own strength. Finally, the Labour Department officials were responsible for enforcement of official

policy. This once meant sponsorship of works committees by recommending them to employers and then attending as an observer to give advice. Later it involved assisting the development of voluntary collective bargaining and recommending, where appropriate, recognition of the union.

The Registrar of Trade Unions was also involved in labour administration. He was concerned with the enforcement of provisions of the Trade Unions Ordinance mentioned earlier relating to financial and administrative supervision. The Ordinance itself imposed certain obligations on unions such as the submission of annual returns and the conduct of elections by secret ballot. In addition, the rules of each union had to be submitted for the approval of the Registrar to see that they conformed with provisions of the Ordinance. A schedule of the Ordinance details: "matters for which provision must be made in the rules of every trade union". Provision 13, for example, requires that:

"In the case of a trade union consisting of persons engaged or working in more than one trade or calling suitable provision (be made) for the protection and promotion of each trade or calling's respective industrial interests."

Throughout the period of colonial labour administration, the powers of the office of Registrar were rarely used. The ICFTU Visiting Mission in 1958 reported that:

"We have been assured that in practice no inspection has taken place except at the request of the union itself. Though the keeping of books has not been as adequate as could be wished, or as is prescribed by the Ordinance, the cause seems to have been rather bad administration than bad faith." (ICFTU, 1958 (b), p. 4).

This ineffectiveness was caused by grossly inadequate staffing. The office of Registrar came under the direction of the Administrator General who was also responsible for a diverse range of other functions. For many years, there was no officer who was able to specialise solely in trade union affairs. This meant that many of the safeguards written into the Ordinance had no practical effect. Unions were able to register freely without investigation or subsequent supervision. Demarcation disputes went unchecked and there was plenty of opportunity for unreal membership claims and financial maladministration. Employers complained that their workers were not being protected from irresponsible union officials and that there was no supervisory check to counterbalance the Labour Department's effort to accelerate the growth of trade unions.

After a formal protest from the Federation of Uganda Emplo-



yers, the situation improved during 1962. The Administrator General's Report for that year records that:

"The section of the Department dealing with Trade Unions was considerably strengthened by the return of an officer from a study course on Trade Unionism in the United Kingdom who has since been appointed an Assistant Registrar of Trade Unions, together with the appointment of two full time staff in this Registry. Investigations can now be undertaken in the field, primarily with a view to assisting officials to observe the law and the provisions of their constitutions." (UG, 1963 (a), p. 3).

This led to increased activity on the part of the Registrar, particularly in the supervision of union accounts and the conduct of elections. A number of prosecutions were instituted and there was a general tightening of control under statutory powers which had long existed but rarely been used.

Finally, it is necessary to consider the "stormy petrel" in the history of Uganda's labour administration — the specially appointed Industrial Relations Officer. In 1942, the Colonial Office began the experiment of appointing experienced British trade union officials as labour officers in the various colonial labour departments. They were given the task of fostering union growth and advising the administration on trade union affairs. In the early years, the system was judged to be highly successful, particularly in West Africa and the West Indies (TUC annual report, 1945, p. 144).

As the plan was adopted in less developed areas, tensions in the system became apparent. The main difficulty lay in adjusting union loyalties to official responsibilities. Leading figures in the international trade union organisations were suspicious of the arrangement and an adviser to Kenya was attacked by the labour press and the TUC in Britain for appearing to identify himself too closely with official attitudes (TUC annual report, 1952, p. 351). By contrast, in Uganda a similar official had his contract terminated because his close identification with the local union leaders led him into trouble with the administration.

The heart of the problem was the lack of definition in the terms of appointment. The extent to which the Industrial Relations Officer was allowed "to take sides" was never made clear enough. The main function of the Labour Department was to play the role of an impartial broker in disputes between labour and management and the Industrial Relations Officer was normally attached to this department. At the same time, the Industrial Relations Officer had a task which specifically concerned him with

problems of labour organisation and brought him into close contact with union leaders. Roberts points out that diplomatic skill was needed much more than mere union experience if the adviser was to retain the confidence of employers, union officials and his own senior officers (Roberts, 1957, p. 392).

The experience of Uganda seems to bear out these criticisms. The first former trade unionist to be sent to the Uganda Labour Department, L. Nicklin, arrived in 1949. A tour of the country on his arrival revealed little scope for his activities so he concerned himself with workers' education and the sponsorship of works committees as the basis for future union growth. He later turned his attention to technical and apprenticeship training.

In 1958, James Brandie was appointed Industrial Relations Officer when his predecessor was transferred. As a former senior official in the mammoth Transport and General Workers Union, he brought with him a wealth of union experience. However, when he accepted the appointment, he seems to have envisaged considerable freedom of action rather than being subjected to the authority of the Labour Commissioner.

Much of the subsequent trouble developed from this attitude. In opposition to the Labour Commissioner, Brandie held that, to do his job, his first loyalty must continue to be to the trade union movement rather than to the local colonial administration. This inevitably led to a series of clashes with his superiors whenever he attempted to undertake independent action which conflicted with established policy. Brandie did much valuable work in setting up and strengthening the machinery of collective bargaining in a number of industries. Yet his presence rapidly became intolerable to those in authority. His close identification with union interests at the expense of his official role finally led to the termination of his probationary contract. This touched off vigorous protests from local union leaders and politicians, but Brandie failed in his appeals for support from the British Labour Party and the British TUC.

A high ranking Ugandan civil servant termed the Brandie episode a major disaster for the trade union movement in Uganda because it confirmed the conservatives' instinctive fear that all trade unionists were dangerous and unreliable. This seriously complicated the task of later advisers, financed from non-government sources, who carried on work which Brandie had begun. The use of non-official advisers was clearly much more satisfactory as there was a clear cut separation of functions.

Walter Bowen, perhaps unconsciously, points to the basic weakness of the system when he claims that "these trade union

advisers *within the limits of their official position* have done a good job." (Bowen, 1954, p. 8). Their official position was the very fact which tended to reduce their effectiveness. For as long as a trade union adviser remained a member of the administration, he would continue to be torn by two sets of loyalties. The Industrial Relations Officers drawn from the British union movement undoubtedly gave considerable assistance to the developing trade unions, but Ugandan experience seems to indicate that they might have done a better job if they had not been directly associated with the Labour Department.

A survey of labour administration in Uganda during the colonial era shows that policy tended to respond both to Colonial Office pressures and to the *empirical* demands of the moment. The Colonial Office provided the models for the legislative framework, but lack of local staff meant that many provisions were not enforced for some time. The Colonial Office warned that works committees could only serve as a temporary substitute for unions, yet some employers were allowed to try to make them the permanent basis for industrial relations. The Colonial Office advised the use of British trade unionists as specialist advisers, but in Uganda one of these officers was removed when he threatened the harmony of the administration. Out of this, two salient features emerge. The first is that, for better or for worse, Uganda's trade unions have been guided along the same lines as those in Britain and in other British territories. The second is that British colonial policy constantly aimed at encouraging the growth of unions. This aim may not always have been enthusiastically accepted by local administrators, but it is ridiculous to blame any weakness in Ugandan trade unions upon the repressive activities of the colonial regime. If unions in Uganda were weak at the time of independence, political suppression was not to blame.

## Chapter Five

### INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCES

One of the striking features of trade union development in Africa has been the extent to which attitudes and structures have been shaped by external influences. The effect of more than half a century of colonial administration was the most important demonstration of this in Uganda and led to the adoption of a basically British pattern of union organisation.

However, a number of other international and national agencies have also exerted considerable influence over developments. The earliest of these was the International Labour Organisation (ILO), founded in 1919 with a set of objectives which included the establishment of internationally accepted conventions or standards of employment. Before the end of the Second World War, the ILO exerted little influence outside Europe. A report in 1944 on the so-called "dependent territories" concluded that this was due to the absence of any machinery for co-ordination between the ILO and the colonial administrators (ILO, 1944, p. 56). Each colonial power was left free to decide whether international conventions had any relevance to the various areas under its control.

The process of decolonisation and the emergence of new nations changed this after the end of the War. Thus the Philadelphia Declaration of 1946 specifically related the principles of the ILO to the dependent territories and a series of conventions were drawn up to cover minimum social standards for "non-metropolitan dependent territories". These covered topics such as migrant labour, forced labour, the employment of women and juveniles, workers compensation and national tripartite collaboration. For the future development of trade unions, the three most important were Convention No. 84 concerning the Right of Association and the Settlement of Labour Disputes in Non-Metropolitan Territories, 1947; Convention No. 87 concerning Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise, 1948, and Convention No. 98 concerning the Application of the Principles of the Right to Organise and to Bargain Collectively, 1949.

There is disagreement over the extent to which British colonial policy was in fact influenced by these standard-setting activities of the ILO. At one extreme is the view of the Secretary of the



Overseas Employers' Federation:

"The acceptance of these conventions for application to the British colonial territories . . . produced a flood of legislation designed to bring the colonial laws into line . . . it is true to say that today the bulk of the labour law enacted in the British colonies owes its origin to the ILO." (Hyde-Clark, 1958 (a), p. 9).

Roper, however, believed that:

"The conventions were too minimal and general concerning whatever principle was being asserted; they were rarely in advance of Colonial Office thinking on the subject." (Interview with author, March 1962).

This does not mean that the conventions were considered irrelevant by the Colonial Office. The clear basic standards which they embodied were probably useful source material on which to base new ordinances and, as a major colonial power concerned to justify her administration, Britain was sensitive to the moral authority exercised by the ILO. Thus, in a review of the influence of the ILO on Nigerian legislation, the conclusion was reached that:

"In a number of important fields, national law and practice, while corresponding wholly or substantially to ILO standards, have developed independently of the latter . . . However, in guiding colonial governments, the British Colonial Office repeatedly stressed the importance which it attached to the implementation of ILO standards." (ILO, 1960, p. 43).

As in other matters, a Colonial Office directive did not mean practical implementation. Many administrators believed certain conventions were unrealistic in view of the low level of economic and social maturity or because of the difficulty of enforcement. As a result, conventions were often noted to exist then shelved as "aims of policy for the future". Even this could be valuable in some circumstances, as argued by the reviewer of Nigerian legislation:

"Though certain measures may not, at the time of their enactment, have affected many people, their very acceptance meant that (the Government) will have tackled some of the major problems of an industrial society while they are still in embryo." (ILO, 1960, p. 26).

In Uganda before independence, Colonial Office pressure was not able to persuade local administrators to ratify all the conventions relating to industrial relations. In 1958, a Colonial Office Report to the ILO noted the extent to which the Ugandan legislation infringed the convention on Freedom of Association (No. 87),

mainly because of the wide powers of supervision given to the Registrar of Trade Unions. This failure to accept Convention 87 in its entirety had important after-effects as, after independence, the new government was able drastically to curtail the influence of the Uganda Public Employees' Union without provoking international protests. In any case, the ILO had by then changed in character and was showing little desire to criticise the newly independent countries on the same basis as the colonial powers. The new states of Asia and Africa held a majority in the Annual Conference and the business of the conference tended to be dominated by anti-colonialism and a competition for influence between the United States and the Communist bloc.

A more potent influence on union development than international standards has been the provision of financial assistance. This has been appreciated by the ILO itself, which has led to the inauguration of a wide-ranging technical assistance programme.

In East Africa, this programme has been started by the establishment of an ILO Field Office in Dar es Salaam and the sending of local union officials and others to training courses in Geneva. Among other benefits received, Uganda also had assistance from the visit of an ILO training mission for union leaders and another for government labour officers.

However, the ILO was a new and relatively small donor of foreign aid when compared to other national and international organisations. This reflected the extent to which aid was motivated by a desire to exert political influence, especially to win support for one side or the other in the ideological struggle between the West and the Communist bloc. In addition,

"Underlying this ideological commitment is often a narrower search for national prestige and influence. Within both major blocs, it seems that individual national centres compete with each other and disagree over fundamental questions concerning the nature and direction of aid. Further research may show this to be as true of China and Russia as it is of the United States and Britain." (Scott, 1964 (d), p. 12).

Predictably perhaps, the British Trades Union Congress was the first organisation to exert influence over developments in Uganda. Because the unions in colonial territories were based upon what can loosely be described as a "British model", the TUC claimed to enjoy a special relationship with them. Professor Fischer points out that, unlike the French, the British TUC never sought to assimilate the colonial unions into a single comprehensive organisation but "in practice, the TUC's influence over

colonial union federations is perhaps greater than would at first appear." (Fischer, 1961, p. 149). This influence was mainly exerted at the centre by contact with the policy makers at the Colonial Office on such bodies as the Colonial Labour Advisory Council. In addition, prominent unionists served on important commissions of enquiry and were also sent to East Africa and other places to serve as Labour Officers. The TUC also sponsored its own aid programme and did much to assist the early unions in Uganda through material gifts and by bringing leaders to Britain for training on TUC courses.

During these early days, the American Federation of Labour also had an adviser present in East Africa. In keeping with American policy on aid, he seems mainly to have tried to win over key leaders with a political future and to have spent little time in the relative backwater of Uganda. However, this presence of two competing advisers was a reflection of the general disagreement between the British and American leaders over the question of the direction of aid. A compromise was finally reached by which both Britain and America agreed to channel the bulk of their future aid through the ICFTU and its associated organisations.

As a result, the ICFTU has been the most obvious external influence on union development in Uganda. It was quickly realised that the most effective assistance was that given in the form of on-the-spot advice and education, and full-time advisers were posted to Nairobi with responsibility for East and Central Africa. Uganda received less attention than the more highly industrialised areas but Mboya pays tribute to one of the advisers for his work in Uganda, selecting officials for overseas training and giving training lectures himself. (Mboya, 1963, p. 198). In 1961, an internal split in the Uganda TUC led to the emergence of an anti-ICFTU national centre at Jinja and ICFTU interest was increased. An American negro was posted to Uganda and was successful in defeating the threat of a permanent split in the movement. In other fields he was less successful.

When he went home on leave, he was not permitted to return by the Uganda government and his place was taken by an able and more diplomatic African, who subsequently entered the Ministry of Labour in Malawi.

A more significant influence on union growth was the presence of the ICFTU's African Labour College in Kampala. As far back as 1951, the Colonial Office had accepted that localised education was the most efficient method of union training, but the idea was

adopted by the ICFTU only in 1957. In May 1958, it was decided that the site should be Kampala, because "Uganda is indisputably African", "is well served by rail and air communication", and "is close to the multi-racial University of East Africa." (Hammerston, 1961, p. 9). In fact, no close links have been developed with the university despite the obvious value of collaboration to both sides and Uganda is not especially well placed for communications. An important motive not cited for diplomatic reasons, was that the movement in Uganda was one of the weakest in English-speaking Africa and would thus derive most benefit from the presence of the College in terms of prestige and access to advisers.

The College begun operation in November, 1958, and conducted a constant series of training courses varying in length from a week-end to six months. The curriculum aimed at a basic technical education for lower-range union officials such as branch secretaries, rather than concerning itself with full-time national leaders. A Research Section of the ICFTU African Regional Organisation was attached to the College and helped in the preparation of claims and the production of relevant statistics.

Initially the College staff were drawn on short-term secondment from larger European and North American unions. The diversity of their experience at first gave rise to a considerable problem of co-ordination as each country had its own solution to offer to African problems, and lecturers often did not stay long enough to find out whether or not their own theories had any relevance to an African situation. This problem eased as the staff came to be drawn mainly from Africans. In its place, another appeared. Under the terms of the agreement with Government on the setting up of the College, the staff were forbidden to use the local unions as a testing ground for their theories and were required to steer clear of involvement in local affairs. The first Principal realised that the College would not survive if it lost its reputation for impartiality and refused to involve himself in such issues as the Brandie case. In practice, it proved difficult to restrain the staff from involving themselves in domestic issues, especially the non-Europeans. Since independence the more radical members of the governing party have expressed hostility towards the College and the belief in free collective bargaining for which it stands. As pressure continued to be exerted to cause the Ugandan movement to disaffiliate from the ICFTU, the position of the College and its staff became more difficult and there were even doubts about its continued existence (Scott, 1964 (b) and 1965 (b)).



The influence of the ICFTU, and the College in particular, was readily apparent to the most superficial observer. All unions of any significance boasted at least one member of the executive who had been on a College course and this experience was often shared with the African ex-unionists on the other side of the bargaining table. In addition, union leaders were coached for key negotiations by the ICFTU adviser and used information provided by the Research Department. The College allowed African leaders to draw upon experience in more developed societies without the wasteful process of actually sending the leaders to the countries involved. The effect of this training is seen in the increasing use of comprehensive collective agreements modelled on those in use in Sweden and North America and a greater willingness to accept a system supported by legal sanctions. The training at the College was sometimes criticised for being concerned too much with the mechanics of organisation and direct action without paying enough attention to the union's wider responsibility to the employer and to the State. This criticism is probably valid but, on balance, training is preferable to ignorance and training in Africa had been shown to be preferable to training elsewhere. Because the ICFTU was quick to realise this they were able to develop an institution which proved an important influence on union development in Uganda.

Associated with the ICFTU, but significantly different from it, were a group of organisations known collectively as the International Trade Secretariats (ITS). An ITS is an international federation of unions concerned with a specific field of activity. Of the seventeen associated with the ICFTU, nine have been active in Uganda: Building, Petroleum, Plantations, Transport, Posts and Telegraphs, Civil Service, Teachers and Clerical Workers. The structure of these organisations is basically similar to that of a large national union. Policy is determined at a Congress, usually tri-ennially, and administration left to a General Council meeting annually and to an Executive Committee which controls a small full-time secretariat. In addition to overseas organisational activities, an ITS acts as a clearing-house for the exchange of new information among its affiliates and represents their views on other international organisations such as the ILO. The established organisations such as the International Transportworkers Federation and the Public Services International have a history going back to the turn of the century, while the newest is the International Federation of Plantation, Agricultural and Allied Workers, founded in 1960.

In Uganda, the earliest ITS in the field was that of the transport workers. From 1957 onwards, the President of the Railway African Union was receiving both financial and material aid and was also able to call upon the services of a permanent adviser in Nairobi. In Chapter 6, it will be seen that the intervention of a mission from the International Transportworkers Federation and the promise of strike funds exercised a key influence over the settlement of the major strikes of 1960.

One of the two most active ITS's in Uganda was the Public Services International (PSI). Following a Visiting Mission to East Africa, advisers were dispatched to all three territories. In Uganda, Charles Franken from Holland set about the task of creating a single national public employees union from a few weak staff associations and a handful of enthusiastic leaders scattered in different organisations all over the country. The account of his efforts is given in Chapter 10.

A similar task faced the advisers sent by the International Federation of Plantation, Agricultural and Allied Workers. This international was an outgrowth of the ICFTU Plantation Committee dealing with the ILO and, because most of its potential affiliates were in under-developed areas, the finance for the venture was found by the ICFTU itself. Ugandan plantation unions were beginning to emerge separately in the tea estates of Fort Portal and the sugar estates near Jinja when the first adviser arrived. An amalgamation was arranged and the union was set upon its feet by the ministrations of a number of advisers and the discreet use of financial assistance and overseas scholarships.

The other ITS's have been less active in Uganda, sometimes because their affiliates elsewhere cannot afford to finance long-term assistance or because African countries do not give much scope for the recruitment of new affiliates. A most striking example of what can be achieved with the right people was given in 1963 when an adviser from the building and woodworkers international appeared in Uganda and created a viable union out of the shell of two defunct organisations, thus reshaping the whole employment structure of the building industry.

The most pressing problem facing aid organisations was the need for co-ordination to prevent wastage. At the top level, relations between the ICFTU and the ITS's were often strained. The ITS's have a long tradition of vigorously defended autonomy and this sometimes interfered with plans to co-ordinate and rationalise plans for overseas aid. This was particularly so when it was felt that the ICFTU was exercising absolute control over a special

aid fund to which all organisations had contributed. On the spot in Africa, relations between the various organisations were generally better. Advisers were interchanged between organisations or shared responsibilities, although strife occasionally developed where there was a clash of personalities which could be translated into organisational rivalry.

Nevertheless, the main problem actually 'in the field' was not between the various internationals aligned with the ICFTU but the meddlings of other outside organisations, mainly the national centres of non-African countries trying to make their mark in the field of international goodwill. In practice, these "outsiders" often mis-directed their aid or disrupted the comprehensive programmes of the more experienced organisations. For example, the adviser sent out by the Woodworkers and Builders International complained that the Uganda TUC had allocated a Bulgarian scholarship to the key official of the newly-formed union, just when that official was going to be most needed. Other chapters indicate how a rapid decline can occur once the leading figures have departed on an overseas jaunt and much of the blame for providing these trips lay with the smaller organisations and national centres. Perhaps they felt that it was some return for an investment in foreign aid if the African leader could be brought back home as a show-piece and, at the same time, made to see how superior was the particular system of union methods used in the donor country, whether Israel or Austria, or anywhere else. The allocation of these "scholarships" was frequently left to the local national centre in the mistaken belief that this would lead to fair distribution. In fact, the local TUC leaders tended to regard overseas trips as a form of patronage to be distributed for personal advantage even though the unions concerned might suffer as a result. Because both donor and recipient were motivated by these attitudes, it was not possible to dissuade organisations from continuing this uneconomic and inefficient type of aid activity.

A problem, second only to co-ordination, was the difficulty of finding the right men to act as advisers. Most union officials in Europe and America could not easily take time off for a period in Africa which might exceed a year, and the prospect of working long hours under primitive conditions was usually unattractive. The result was that advisers were often nearing retirement when they visited Africa and lacked the necessary vigour and adaptability. In addition, they faced problems of basic organisation on a mammoth scale never encountered in their home countries and complicated by factors such as tribalism quite outside their experi-



ence. Tact was also a quality sometimes found lacking among the advisers. Some organisations suffered because their advisers could not come to terms with the social environment within which the unions functioned. Attitudes shaped by the doctrine of class warfare were not calculated to ease the delicate task of promoting the growth of a new union. However, in general, the advisers sent by overseas organisations realised that the most effective way of making progress was to try to win the confidence of both sides and to convince the employers that concessions to strengthen unionism were in their own interests and not a sign of weakness.

Nothing has so far been written about aid from non-Western sources. Because no statistics are available, the extent and nature of aid from the Communist bloc can only be guessed at on the basis of visual evidence. In Uganda, the impression was that aid tended to be concentrated in the hands of individual leaders who had little backing from any industrial organisations. Thus leaders of the unsupported "splinter organisation", the Uganda Federation of Labour, went on frequent visits to China and Eastern Europe and returned with control over funds and transport with which to challenge the monopoly of the ICFTU and the Uganda TUC. Would-be union leaders from the Youth Wing of the Uganda Peoples Congress also went on similar courses.

Pan-Africanism is a much stronger counter to ICFTU influence, and this fact has been noted by leaders of the pro-Communist World Federation of Trade Unions. Because this latter organisation had few affiliates in Africa, it realised that the objective of defeating the ICFTU could best be served by backing a neutralist Pan-African organisation. This organisation, the All-African Trade Union Federation, was founded in Ghana because many African leaders resented the extent to which the ICFTU retained financial control over its regional organisation. At a conference in Casablanca in 1961, it was laid down that all members of the All-African Federation must sever their links with all other internationals, a move clearly directed against the ICFTU and its affiliated secretariats. This led to protests from the East African leaders and the Nigerians that this was an infringement of the right of each national centre to decide upon its own affiliations.

Because East African leaders resisted pressures to break their connections with the ICFTU, the All-African organisation made little progress in this area. In Uganda, the 1961 split in the UTUC was related to the attendance of two leaders at the inaugural conference of the All-African Trade Union Federation, but as



Chapter 11 shows, the foundation of the breakaway organisation, the Uganda Federation of Labour, was related to personal and regional jealousies rather than genuine ideological differences over the role of the ICFTU. Nevertheless, the split was fostered by the All-African Trade Union Federation and attempts were made to recruit discontented and ambitious leaders looking for an alternative outlet for their energies.

After independence, the situation changed as the ruling party began to take an active interest in the relations between the Ugandan union movement and international organisations. A new national centre emerged which challenged the monopoly position of the UTUC and affiliated itself with the Ghana-based AATUF.

The extent of financial aid from AATUF to the new body remained secret but was clearly not of the same magnitude as aid received from the ICFTU and its associated organisations. This accorded with the aims of the political leaders in Uganda who resented the degree of outside interference in the union movement made possible by this financial assistance. International aid had played a key role in union growth before independence but it seemed likely that the future trend would be towards greater government intervention to force the unions to rely upon their own limited resources.

## Chapter Six

### THE RAILWAY AFRICAN UNION

The first of the case studies of particular unions is concerned with the Railway African Union (RAU). This was not only the oldest but also the most consistently active union in Uganda. The history of the union demonstrates a number of features common in Uganda unions — particularly the divisive effect of tribal loyalties, the value of international assistance and the problem of irresponsible leadership.

There were also two special problems associated with the growth of the RAU. The first arose from the inter-territorial character of the railways administration. The East African Railways and Harbours Administration was under the direction of first the East Africa High Commission and later the East African Common Services Organisation (EACSO). As all trade unions were required to comply with territorial ordinances regarding registration, there was no provision for inter-territorial organisations. Thus, in the railways, three African unions dealt with the same employer but could not legally amalgamate into a single body.

This anomalous situation would have been more tolerable for the unions had all three territories been governed by similar labour legislation, but this was not the case. Wide variations existed between the labour ordinances, particularly concerning the area of government activity classified as essential services. The 1949 Ordinance in Uganda had a relatively short list of essential services, but both Kenya and Tanganyika had a much more comprehensive list including dock and railway services. In 1958, the International Transportworkers Federation adopted two resolutions at their Annual Congress which deplored this legislation which restricted strike activity among the unions of their affiliated workers by making all disputes subject to compulsory arbitration. Before the legislation was changed in 1959, the ludicrous situation existed in which one of the three unions dealing with the same employer could back its demands by threats of direct action while the two other unions representing precisely the same grades of employee could not.

The continuing absence of inter-territorial registration was a

constant source of irritation and criticism. As far back on 1956, all three unions were pressing for some form of joint recognition and common negotiation machinery. In January, 1957, it was reported that the Colonial Secretary was investigating the possibility of introducing legislative reform to facilitate inter-territorial industrial relations. In July, 1957, Sir Arthur Kirby, on vacating the post of railways general manager, publicly criticised legislation requiring separate registration and claimed that employers would prefer to negotiate with a single inter-territorial union. However, nothing was done, and there seems to have been a general reluctance on the part of management to concede full negotiating rights to the unions. In January, 1957, an All-line Joint Staff Advisory Council was set up but received little support from the African unions because its functions were purely advisory.

A Commission of Enquiry in 1960 strongly supported the unions' case for an inter-territorial labour department and joint negotiation machinery with the management of the common services. The Commissioner agreed that:

"In the circumstances surrounding an inter-territorial service, it is essential that provision be made for the speedy settlement of industrial disputes. I find it difficult to understand why, having set up inter-territorial services such as the railways, the three Governments cannot provide them with the essential inter-territorial machinery required for the settlement of disputes". (EAHC, 1960, p. 28).

The second problem hampering the development of the common services' unions was the existence of three racially exclusive associations in each territory. Because trained local personnel were not available, the railways were originally constructed and operated by expatriate Asians and Europeans. This in turn led to the growth of a salary scale structured according to race and to non-African associations pledged to retain the differentials in the interests of their members. This meant that management dealt with not one, but with nine organisations representing the labour force. Where specifically African interests were involved, any African representatives could be defeated by a combination between management and the other races.

In Uganda, the European Association was never very powerful as its relatively few members were widely dispersed. Most Europeans were employed in management and maintained informal contact on personnel matters through a liaison officer based in Kampala. Because the association no longer elected formal office

bearers, it was later excluded from joint negotiation procedures.

The Railway Asian Union, like its African counterpart, first existed in Uganda as a branch of the Kenyan organisation. It registered separately as an autonomous union in 1948, and reached a peak membership of more than 250 in 1958. During the 1959 strikes, the Asians made themselves unpopular in Uganda by staying at work and siding with the Europeans instead of following the example of their counterparts in Tanganyika and refusing to carry out duties normally assigned to Africans. Since independence a few Asians transferred to the African union, but the bulk were discouraged by the militant racialism of the African leaders. This contrasted with the amalgamation undertaken voluntarily between the two racial unions in the Ugandan postal services and the general non-racial structure enforced under labour legislation in Tanganyika. The Uganda Government, despite pressure from the Railway African Union, refused to copy Tanganyika with regard to the continued racial separation in the railways. The Government argued that amalgamation would eventually occur without being forced and that the African leaders could speed it up, if they wished to, by adopting less racist policies.

Earlier, it was noted that the railwaymen in Uganda continued to be members of a union based in Kenya until 1955. This meant that Kampala, the only centre of organised activity, was a branch of the Kenya and Uganda Railway African Staff Union. It also meant that the Uganda branch was covered by the Kenyan labour legislation which became increasingly restrictive during the period of the 'Mau Mau' emergency. In 1952, Humphries Luande rose to the leadership of the organisation in Uganda, which he has directed ever since. He later sought the advice of the new Government Industrial Relations Officer, Nicklin, and with his help set about establishing a separate organisation. In May, 1955, the "Railway African Union (Uganda)" was registered. The choice of name reflects three intentions: dropping "staff" from the title emphasised that this was not merely an advisory association for higher groups; "African" reflected a conscious racial exclusiveness to match the Asian union; and the structure of the wording was intended to facilitate any change to a Railway African Union (East Africa).

At first the union developed slowly under the moderating guidance of Nicklin and a full-time industrial relations officer appointed by the railway management. It seems to have confined itself mainly to conducting individual grievances as management declined to engage in wage negotiations. Because of the nature



of railway employment, the workers are relatively easy to organise because they are concentrated on housing estates and easily reached in outlying areas by the railway itself. At the time of first registration, the union claimed 951 members and this had increased to 1,500 by the end of the following year. Very few members paid any subscriptions because a collection system had not been organised, and no branch organisations existed outside Kampala.

Yet the RAU seems to have compared favourably with other union organisations. The 1956 Labour Department Report noted that the RAU continued to be the biggest and most active union in Uganda (LDR, 1956, p. 16) and a unionist from Kenya noted in 1957 that "none of the workers' organisations deserve credit, with the exception of the Railway African Union." (*Uganda Argus*, 27 February, 1957). In the same year, the union first became aware of the possibility of taking advantage of international funds. Following a visit from executives of the International Transportworkers Federation, the RAU announced its affiliation and was rewarded with a grant of £100. This allowed the establishment of an office in a disused garage provided by management and the first moves towards forming branches in workshops outside Kampala.

During 1958 and 1959, the union made considerable progress with the help of overseas aid. A memorandum submitted to Walter Hood of the British TUC detailed the obstacles the union faced. These included the illiteracy of most workers, their ignorance of trade unionism because of the lack of information, the lack of social security to encourage stability in the work force, and the obstruction by management in transferring able leaders and refusing time off for training.

Financial and material aid came to the union from the international and also from the British TUC which provided salaries for two full-time officials — Luande as President, and an organising secretary. This aid continued spasmodically until December, 1960 when the British TUC announced the termination of its grant and congratulated the Ugandan union on its financial self-sufficiency.

In 1958, on the advice of the Labour Department, a system of dues collection by a band of travelling officials was introduced but was not immediately successful. At the end of 1959, the union claimed over 4,000 members, but the accounts submitted to the Registrar reveal that only 540 were fully paid-up. By 1960, the system was working with a reasonable degree of efficiency. Month-

ly newsletters were duplicated and circulated which showed collections from each branch. A maximum of 15 branches collected monthly amounts varying between Shs. 1,800 and Shs. 2,400.

At the end of 1960, the union secured a valuable concession when management permitted collectors to travel with the pay train to rural areas. This allowed the union to collect dues when workers received their wages. In 1962, the management finally agreed to a check-off method of subscription collection after long negotiations in which safeguards against victimisation of non-members were demanded. This greatly relieved the administrative burden of the union and full-time collectors could be replaced by clerical staff at headquarters.

An important influence on the development of the union from 1958 onwards was James Brandie, the trade union adviser attached to the Labour Department. Brandie quickly summed up the potential in Uganda and saw that the RAU and Luande offered the most hope for effective union activity. He admits to giving intensive unofficial coaching to Luande — against the wishes of the Labour Commissioner — and certainly many of the RAU's press statements bear witness to the influence of Brandie's sophisticated prose. In a press statement answering objections by management about his relationship with the union, Brandie stated that he:

"Attended RAU meetings by invitation as an observer and was available to give advice ... The union was supported financially by the British TUC ... As a British TUC officer working in Uganda, the TUC normally relied on (him) to see that the money was properly spent." (*Uganda Argus*, 6 August, 1959).

The bulk of union members, and a high percentage of the railway work force, came from the Western tribes of Kenya and ethnically related groups in the east and north of Uganda. As all workers were subject to transfer among all three territories, when the railway extended to Uganda the skilled and experienced workers were all drawn from Kenya. Because they had had more experience with union activity, Kenyans provided all the early leaders in the RAU and only recently have any Ugandans reached high executive posts. In common with other unions, most branch leaders come from clerical rather than mechanical occupations because of their better command of English and general organisation techniques.

More than any other union in Uganda, the history of the RAU was dominated by one man — Humphries Luande. Although a Samia, born just over the border in Kenya, Luande is revered as

the father of the union movement in Uganda. His experience in the railways as a clerk and telegraphist stretched from 1941 until 1958, when he resigned to accept a full-time post in the union. This move virtually assured his security in office as, unlike his competitors and opponents, he was no longer subject to sudden transfers to other areas. It will be seen that, where management wished to avoid a leadership split, the use of a transfer proved a valuable device.

Continuing resistance to Luande's leadership came from members of the Luo tribe. In the railways, the Luo were the largest single group of employees but, perhaps in reaction to Luo solidarity, the other Kenyan tribes, especially the Samia and the Luhya, combined to keep the Luo group from taking control of the RAU.

On three occasions, the Luo tried to assert themselves without success. On each occasion, a basically tribal rivalry could be concealed beneath more legitimate complaints about the union leadership. The first split (1959) developed initially out of one of the many disputes between the RAU and the Uganda TUC, and a personal quarrel between Luande and Peter Okatch, the RAU Vice-President and TUC General-Secretary. Okatch was finally pushed out of the union because he refused to back the RAU withdrawal from the Uganda TUC.

In the meantime, Omolo, another Luo, had resigned as Treasurer on the grounds of Luande's financial mismanagement and general inefficiency. As Treasurer, Omolo tried to suspend payment of the President's salary and allowances (from the British TUC) pending an enquiry into alleged financial irregularities. He was not backed by the executive and resigned with the threat of founding an alternative union. Okatch backed these allegations but refused to support the projected new union, the Uganda Railway Workers Congress. Although management announced its refusal to recognise any split from the RAU, Omolo claimed widespread support for his organisation and other Luo branch leaders in the RAU pledged their support. After an incident in which rival groups fought to control a union meeting, management seem to have decided to act to prevent large scale tribal disturbance. A month after the foundation of his new organisation, Omolo was transferred to Kisumu and the union lost its impetus.

The second split occurred later in 1959 during the major strike of that year which is discussed in detail later. Another Luo, Aguttu-Dullo, had disagreed with Luande's decision to strike because there had been no consultation. He caused his suppor-

ters at Namasagali Branch to continue working until Luande himself appeared and won them over. Dullo had resigned and sought an opportunity to challenge Luande again. This chance came in January 1960, when a management circular suggested the reformation of the existing employees' associations on the basis of four non-racial unions based on salary gradings. Luande objected to the management's interference which aimed at weakening the solidarity of the single union for Africans. However, Dullo took up the idea with a proposal for a non-racial National Union of Railwaymen to cover the middle salary range of supervisory staff, leaving only the lower grades to the RAU. Luande objected violently to the proposal but the management seem to have favoured what was in essence their own suggestion and the proposed registration of the new union was gazetted. The Registrar must have disagreed with the management, however, because two months later the request for registration was refused because it was held by the Registrar that, in the terms of the 1952 ordinance:

"Another trade union already registered was sufficiently representative of the whole or a substantial proportion of the interests in respect of which applicants sought registration." (Section 16).

The RAU applauded, the management refused to comment, and Dullo applied without success for readmission to the union he had previously opposed.

The final tribal disagreement never reached the proportions of the earlier disputes. At the Jinja annual delegates conference in December, 1960, the Kampala executive were expelled for threatening to secede if Luande was not removed from office. They subsequently refused to recognise Luande's election because of his previous unconstitutional behaviour and sought intervention from the Uganda TUC and the International Transportworkers Federation. A circular was sent from Kampala to all branches, again charging misuse of union funds by the President. Luande's response was to threaten to ask the much maligned management to dismiss them from employment as troublemakers. Subsequently Luande called a branch meeting at Kampala himself and effectively restored his authority.

Since 1961, tension has continued to exist between the Luo and other Kenyan tribes. Where a Luo succeeded in getting elected to a branch executive post, this trouble sometimes came out into the open and allegations were made publicly about anti-Luo discrimination in the union's activities. It was this fact, more than any other, which explains the apparently extremist position adopted by Luande in his later dealings with manage-

ment. After the 1959 strike and the resulting change in negotiation machinery and management attitudes, the threat to the union leaders came not from management but from tribal pressures within the union.

The 1959 strike in Uganda, and the associated disputes in Kenya and Tanganyika, was the turning point in the history of the railway unions in East Africa.

Union co-ordination had increased after the 1958 reform of the essential services legislation in Tanganyika and Kenya. During August, 1959, all three African unions withdrew from the Joint Staff Advisory Committee to exert pressure for improvement in the machinery. In a letter to the Uganda Regional Representative of the railways management, Luande gave three reasons for the union's dissatisfaction: the lack of recognition of full bargaining rights; the delays arising from the over-centralisation of decision-making in Nairobi; and the refusal of management to follow the lead of the Uganda Government by producing a clear policy statement in favour of Africanisation.

A month later, the leaders of the three East African unions attended a conference at Mwanza which christened itself the National Congress of Railwaymen. The leaders pressed for a reform in the railways' industrial relations machinery which would allow regional disputes to be settled without reference to the General Manager and inter-territorial disputes to be settled by a joint negotiating committee under an independent chairman. Resolutions of the Congress also criticised the weakness of the non-African staff leaders and expressed a lack of confidence in the General Manager. In retrospect, it seems likely that the leaders also decided on a policy of co-ordinated strike action through deliberate provocation.

After the Mwanza conference, all the unions took a much stronger line in their dealings with management. When management withdrew recognition of the branch secretary at Namasagali, for an abusive and insulting letter, the union declared a dispute on the grounds of "this unwarranted interference into the domestic affairs of the union". (*Uganda Argus*, 29 September, 1959). Amid strike threats, the dispute dragged on for a month with the union refusing to compromise by withdrawing the offensive letter and guaranteeing the official's future behaviour in return for re-instatement of recognition.

At the October General Meeting, the union began collections for a strike fund and threatened direct action if its wage claim was not immediately met. When the Regional Representative



pointed out that no claim had been submitted, one was hastily prepared. The union also declared a dispute when management began circulating questionnaires to stationmasters for a study of variations in work intensities between central and remote stations with the intention of adjusting the length of spells of duty. The management held that this idea had been approved some time ago by the union delegates at the advisory council and, in any case, the issue fell within the management's own prerogative until conclusions were reached. Nevertheless, the union declared a dispute because it had not been consulted before management communicated directly with union members. In a fiery press statement at the end of October, Luande could thus threaten strike action over three issues — refusal to negotiate on a wage claim, victimisation of a union official and interference in the internal communications of the union.

Similar tactics were being adopted in Kenya, and the gathering storm broke there first. The union had called for an independent enquiry into the activities of an over-conscientious European supervisor. When this was refused, the union went on strike and 23,000 men stayed home. In Uganda, Luande had pressed the Uganda TUC to back his own demands with the threat of a general strike. This failed when three major unions threatened to withdraw rather than support such a move. When the Kenya RAU went on strike, Luande agreed to bring out the Ugandan union in support, but again failed to carry others with him. Branch leaders refused to co-operate because the issue was insignificant and local and did not involve questions of policy affecting other areas.

On November 19th, 1959, the Uganda railwaymen finally came out on strike in pursuit of their own demands for a pay increase. Management refused to begin negotiations until the workers returned and appealed for support against the misleading activities of the union officials. However, on the first day of the strike, the Labour Department estimated that 5,500 men were absent, in a total labour force of 6,000. With the strike so well supported, Luande felt strong enough to reject the compromise offer arranged by Brandie, his mentor in the Labour Department. As the union had proved its solidarity behind the leaders, Brandie suggested that an offer be made to return to work if pay negotiations began immediately. Luande rejected this because of the continuing success of the strike and his hopes for wider support from other unions.

Brandie showed himself a better judge of events than Luande,

as two days later newspaper reports told of the beginning of the collapse of the strike. Two stations had re-opened with African workers and support was growing for the splinter organisation started by Dullo with the backing of management. Events in Kenya also played a part. When the Uganda union came out to back a wage claim, the Kenyans also added pay demands onto their original list of grievances without making any pretence of negotiation beforehand. This lost the union the sympathy of government and the strike finally collapsed completely just as the strain was beginning to tell in Uganda.

By December 1st, the majority of workers were back in Uganda also, and Luande offered the compromise suggested a week earlier by Brandie. On December 4th, work was resumed and management began the long delayed negotiations on the wage claim submitted two months earlier. Editorial comment in the local newspaper pointed to the general public apathy regarding the strike and the way in which the strike had weakened the union's case by demonstrating the low productivity of the African workers. A skeleton staff had managed by hard work to keep the majority of services functioning efficiently. The commentary concluded that "The strike was considered by many people to be misguided both in its conception and in its execution." (*Uganda Argus*, 28 November, 1959). This ignored the fact that attention had been focused on the shortcomings of the industrial relations machinery in the railways and that the bulk of the workers were ready to support the complaints of the union leaders. It was nearly a year before the benefits of the strike became apparent.

In the meantime, the discussions on wage claims broke down after the union refused to accept an offer of a Shs. 6/- per month increase in the minimum rate. This increase was later passed on unilaterally by the railways management at the same time as a joint union meeting in Nairobi submitted a demand for a uniform increase over all three territories. It was left to Tanganyika to back up this claim by direct action as the leaders in Uganda and Kenya realised that their members could not participate in a second strike so soon after the first. At this point, representatives of the ICFTU and the International Transport-workers Federation intervened and offered to act as conciliators in the Tanganyika dispute.

In Uganda, the deadlock in negotiations was broken by this move and both sides agreed to go to conciliation also. Sensibly, it was later agreed that all three disputes be referred to the same conciliator, Professor Walker of Makerere College. At a meeting

held in Nairobi, the union leaders were persuaded to accept a Shs. 10/- rise in return for a small cut in leave. This was later repudiated by Luande who encouraged the RAU executive to override his own decision. Apparently this was instigated by the Tanganyikan union and the international advisers who wished to press for a totally independent enquiry into the railways' negotiation machinery. They finally had their way at a further conference in Dar es Salaam in April. The Shs. 10/- increase was accepted together with the management's agreement to an enquiry commission appointed by the Colonial Secretary.

On August 16th, 1960, the Colonial Secretary announced the appointment of Mr. H. A. Whitson as Commissioner of Enquiry. Whitson had acted as secretary to the Guillebaud Enquiry in Britain and was also a senior conciliation officer in the British Ministry of Labour. His terms of reference were:

"To carry out an enquiry into the state of industrial relations in the East African Railways and Harbours Administration, with particular reference to the nature and suitability of the machinery needed for sound industrial relations."

Each union submitted evidence in the form of long memoranda in addition to a joint submission which dealt with general problems, especially the need for some form of inter-territorial union co-ordination and negotiation machinery. The Uganda submission was a long and detailed document. It made six general points which repeated complaints made during the strike — the weakness of advisory machinery dominated by a non-African majority, the demand for full negotiation rights, the abolition of a racial wage structure, a clear policy statement on Africanisation, the recognition of the union's right to present individual grievances to management, and a more equitable distribution of profits through increased wages for African employees. These complaints were backed up by a long recitation of specific abuses, covering promotion policy, housing, pensions and productivity. A call was made for regional Joint Industrial Councils to supersede the advisory structure in existence and the management was criticised for allegedly sponsoring a splinter organisation to weaken the union. In contrast to the original wage claim lodged a year earlier, this submission was carefully thought out, skilfully drafted and backed by a wealth of verifiable evidence.

The Whitson Report seems to have been much influenced by these memoranda, but placed the issues they raised into a more rational perspective. On the whole, the Report favoured increased

union activity and laid the basis for a new industrial relations structure based upon genuine collective bargaining.

Discussing the existing situation, the Report noted that irresponsible union behaviour had discouraged management from accepting the full implications of the growth of a strong organisation. This was deplored and management was urged to work with rather than positively against the union, showing tolerance for the inevitable lack of experience and training. Whitson also urged that the unions themselves should help pay for expenses involved in the operation of new industrial machinery instead of expecting management's assistance on costs as an automatic right. Regarding this machinery, the Report complained of over-centralisation of management responsibilities, the lack of a specialist personnel department and the gap between the inter-territorial advisory council and the departmental works committees. The unions' claim for territorial councils and negotiation rather than merely advisory functions was also supported.

The issue of African advancement was discussed in relation to the earlier recommendations of the Lidbury Commission (CO, 1954, Para 609) in favour of a non-racial salary structure. The management were criticised for not maintaining adequate communications with the union which would have eased criticism about specific grievances. The Report called for a modification of the attitude of the management and a formal structure for the investigation of specific complaints regarding salary gradings and promotion.

The second section of the Report recommended the complete renovation of the existing industrial relations machinery. An inter-territorial Central Joint Council was suggested as the peak of the pyramid, with full negotiation powers subject only to authority of the inter-territorial political body. Beneath this, Territorial Councils were to deal with disputes of a more local nature, and, beneath these, Local Staff Committees were to possess consultative functions and act as a channel for specific grievances up to the territorial level. Two union objections were overruled — the Central and Territorial Councils remained multi-racial, and the Local Staff Committees were to be elected by all workers rather than nominated by the union. Detailed disputes procedures were laid down and the union was urged to accept responsibility for avoiding unofficial strikes before the procedure had been exhausted. Arguments for compulsory arbitration were rejected and the introduction of some form of inter-territorial Labour Department was urged. In the absence of an East African Industrial

Court the High Commissioner was urged to appoint an arbitration tribunal to help such a Labour Department in the settlement of inter-territorial disputes. Finally, the Report recommended a recasting of the single salary structure into four sections specialised by occupation to remove the appearance of racial discrimination.

Whitson concluded his report with an appeal for co-operation and mutual goodwill. Even within the staff side, considerable effort would be necessary to reach a common approach to problems after a long tradition of viewing issues in racial terms:

"New machinery will not, in itself, produce 'sound industrial relations' . . . It will be the leaders of the employees' organisations and the representatives of management who will, in the last resort, determine the state of industrial relations." (EAHC, 1960, p. 34).

In March, 1962, representatives of management and employees' associations signed a collective agreement which introduced most of the machinery recommended by the Whitson Report. The Central Joint Council and Staff Tribunal were set up, and procedures laid down for the settlement of trade disputes and individual grievances. Models were agreed upon for the territorial and local bodies which have since been set up in Uganda. Local Staff Committees met monthly, and passed on disputes, where necessary, to the Territorial Council which met at three monthly intervals. Thus the machinery was introduced and it remained for the individuals concerned to find the goodwill to make it work.

After the acceptance of the Whitson Report in October, 1960, there was no major dispute in the railways. The changes which followed the Report placed the railway workers in a much stronger position. An International Bank Report (*The Economic Development of Uganda*, 1962), stated that:

"In the mission's view, the general level of wages and the standard of housing prevailing in 1961 and the minimum wages paid by the railways administration were already well above the levels being paid in other industries in East Africa or in other countries with the same magnitude of per capita income." (p. 308).

Predictably perhaps, this was not accepted by the union leaders who continued to press for more wages and better conditions. However, the extremism and intensity in this opposition to management must be explained not in economic terms but in relation to tribal and sectional pressures within the union.

Because Luande most needed the backing of the higher paid and best educated groups to secure his leadership role, Africanisation was the most pressing demand. The union case was sum-



marised in their memorandum to the Whitson Commission: "The present organisation puts too much emphasis upon profit and not enough on the advancement of the African Community." (RAU, 1960, p. 2). Against this, management argued that, while accepting the ultimate aim of Africanisation,

"No sudden and spectacular change could be expected since there could be no drop in standards. Employees must come up to existing standards; the standards should not be dropped to them." (*Uganda Argus*, 3 February, 1962).

Commercial efficiency was in conflict with a desirable political and social aim.

Although Whitson noted with approval the fact that the African unions had not asked for members of other races to be prematurely discharged to make way for Africanisation (EAHC, 1960, p. 12), this often occurred later when the unions still felt that Africanisation was progressing too slowly. Luande could immediately follow up a statesmanlike speech to the workers in Kilembe Mines — warning workers that they should not expect to take over non-Africans jobs immediately and urging hard work to demonstrate their abilities — with a fierce attack on his own employers and a threat of vigorous action if total Africanisation was not achieved within four months. When the Ghanaian head of the Common Services Organisation seemed to be delaying publication of reports on salaries and Africanisation, his dismissal was demanded, as was that of the Labour Commissioner for refusing to accept Africanisation as grounds for an industrial dispute.

Amid all this intemperate shouting, nothing in fact was done. However, the constant complaints seemed to indicate that management had not followed the advice of the Whitson Report and reached an understanding with the union on Africanisation policy. Whitson was aware that "to do so may well require a considerable modification in management's approach to the problem. It may even require, for a time, some reduction in the high standards they have thought necessary to qualify for certain non-technical posts."

Whitson predicted, accurately it seems, that:

"The alternative is a continual state of unrest which may reach very serious proportions." (EAHC, 1960, p. 12).

Luande was also casting around for other issues to attract general support for his leadership, which he showed to be highly active if not always responsible. At the beginning of 1962, he submitted a minimum wage claim of Shs. 250/- per month and refused to accept management's argument that this would bankrupt the railways. He also complained about the management's

policy of employing educated "school leavers" in higher grades instead of promoting from within the service. Finally, he appealed to Ugandan parochialism by complaining that the majority of promotions and training courses were being offered to Kenyans and Tanganyikans. He even called for separate territorial management and refused to attend talks with the other two unions in Nairobi.

Backing all these disputes, Luande issued dire threats of starting "industrial war", even talking in a press statement of touring the future strong points in the approaching campaign. (*Uganda Argus*, 14 July, 1962). These threats of violence served to establish the impression among union members that their leaders were taking the strongest possible line against management and were uncompromising in the defence of their interests, an impression which was required to gloss over tribal and sectional dissensions within the union. However, because nothing in fact happened despite the threats, there was a danger that the leadership would cease to be taken seriously by outsiders. As one observer noted:

"Luande has threatened so often to paralyse the Railways and to wage industrial war that his threats are in danger of losing their potency. The risk is that one day when he really means to do what he says no-one will believe him and a costly strike will result which might have been avoided." (*Reporter*, 24 August, 1962).

At the end of 1963, the RAU was still the powerful union in Uganda, with sound finances and firmly established machinery for collective bargaining. Events in 1959 and 1960 had shown that it was capable of winning concessions from management by effective direct action, a feat not often successfully performed in Uganda. Later events showed that the most pressing problem for the leaders then became the preservation of their own power. Bluster and abuse were used to outflank their competitors in the struggle for the loyalty of the union membership.

## Chapter Seven

### GENERAL UNIONS

The second case study deals with the history of general unions in Uganda. In most African countries, general unions serving a number of employers and a wide variety of workers have been important because of their association with nationalist politics. In Uganda, party political activity was a minor influence on the development of trade unionism and consequently general unions were of relatively little importance. Unions associated with the transport industry were of political rather than industrial importance before 1955 but the only important general union was concerned with the clerical and non-manual groups in the commercial and distributive trades.

As the Ganda was the dominant African tribe involved in non-manual work in Kampala, it was natural that the first union leader should come from this tribe. Charles Makayu, like many other Ganda unionists, was both a Roman Catholic and politically conscious. The fact of his Roman Catholicism may have placed him, and others like him, outside the formal structure of leadership in Buganda which is dominated by a "Protestant hierarchy" controlling opportunities for promotion within the government system. Also characteristically, Makayu was prevented from completing his education by financial difficulties, but he held responsible positions first as a college librarian and then in a bank.

In 1953 he called a meeting to discuss the formation of a bank workers' union. He claimed to have stirred up considerable enthusiasm initially, but the employers acted swiftly to discourage the idea and the most "troublesome" employees, including Makayu, were dismissed.

Two years later, Makayu tried again, and the General Clerical Union was registered in February, 1955. At the end of the year, union membership was officially stated to be 150, although no more than a handful of subscriptions were regularly paid. The union's main functions were stated to be finding jobs for unemployed clerks and settling individual grievances. Africanisation of posts at the same pay as the non-African predecessor was a firm principle of policy, but the union was too weak to take

positive action on this or on wage demands. The union lacked any office facilities and probably had no active membership outside the holders of executive office.

By 1956, Makayu had brought himself to the notice of the ICFTU as one of the few local union leaders. He became Uganda TUC President when that body was founded by Mboya, and was invited to represent Uganda at an international conference in Accra and then to attend a three-month training course in Belgium. In his absence, he was removed from office and subsequently lost interest in union affairs. The leadership of the Clerical Union passed to Mr. Francis Pulle, an able and moderately prosperous insurance clerk, who identified himself with the Ganda despite his part-Asian background. Pulle, like Makayu, found it impossible to make much progress with the expansion of the clerical union and concentrated his interest on the Uganda TUC. The union itself, a paper organisation, remained dormant until 1960.

In addition to the general problems of organisation already mentioned, two factors combined to prevent the Clerical Union making headway. The first was the separatist attitudes of the Asian community who provided the bulk of the clerical employees in Kampala at this time. Rapid Africanisation did not start in earnest until the idea of political self-government became a concrete reality. In general, the Asians held the more senior clerical posts beneath European administrators, and were the most immediate barrier to the advancement of educated Africans. The Asians still clung to the concept of their separate interests being more important than the interests of clerical workers as a whole. In other fields this led to racially exclusive unions among the railways and postal staff. In commerce, the Asians ignored the Clerical Union and later the bank workers set up their own union which tended to be exclusively Asian in membership.

The second hampering factor was the policy of the Labour Department. Under the Trade Union Ordinance, the Registrar had wide powers over the scope of any union's activities and the title of General Clerical Union was interpreted as narrowly as possible. The Department seem to have feared that a mammoth general union would be unwieldy and give rise to jurisdiction disputes as well as develop into a dangerous political vehicle. They preferred to sponsor a neat pattern of industrial unions, with each group of leaders confined to their own specified area of activity. This restricted the General Clerical Union to the interstices between the large blocks of industrial workers and, within

this small field, to strictly clerical workers. Commenting on this situation, the ICFTU Visiting Mission of 1958 stated that:

"A little more elasticity is called for, especially when it is obvious that the workers in question have no union of their own and trade union organisation in general is still at an elementary stage."

The Mission's Report then advised:

"The unions should see to it that they have from the beginning a sufficiently wide field of registration for them to be able to build an adequate organisation." (ICFTU, 1958 (b), p. 3).

It was three years before this sound advice was applied by the General Clerical Union and, even then, it was only accepted by the Registrar after a considerable constitutional wrangle. On 16 September, 1961, the National Union of Clerical, Commercial and Technical Employees (NUCCTE) was inaugurated. The new name was a conscious imitation of the title of the international trade secretariat to which the new union looked hopefully for assistance.

To a large extent this hope was not fulfilled. The International Federation of Clerical, Commercial and Technical Employees (IFCCTE) was not in a financial position to match the aid of the ICFTU and the more prosperous organisations, although this was not appreciated in Uganda. The IFCCTE derived a comparatively small income from affiliates restricted to Western Europe and had considerable commitments in South America. When the Swedish Distributive and Commercial Workers Union offered the services of an adviser in East Africa for a short time, the international could not afford his salary, only the costs of his transport. The Ugandan unionists also resented the fact that the General Secretary of the international failed to visit them during his mission to Africa in 1961.

Ghana also made overtures regarding the setting up of a Federation of African Commercial and Industrial Workers Unions, presumably as a trade secretariat to be associated with the All-African Trade Union Federation. L. Senkezi, the NUCCTE General Secretary, attended an inaugural meeting of this body and expressed support in principle for Pan-African institutions. However, he rejected the condition for membership that all organisations wishing to become members of the Federation should show proof of non-affiliation to any foreign trade union grouping. Following Mboya's logic in rejecting the same AATUF membership provision, Senkezi argued that each national centre should retain the absolute right of determining the extent of its own international affiliations.

The change of name marked the revival of activity in the union



under the stimulus of younger leaders who were less concerned with merely using the union as a basis for Uganda TUC manoeuvrings. The new name meant that the union could legitimately recruit more widely and it built a solid foundation among the employees of garages and motor traders as well as in shops and insurance offices. At the same time, attitudes among employers were changing as a result of the growth of a strong employers' association, increased union activity in other fields, and the approach of political independence.

Throughout 1962, the expansion of the union continued, so that its membership claims came to be measured in thousands. In September of that year, a great fillip was received when the Bank Workers Union agreed to dissolve itself and transfer its members to the NUCCTE. The Asians at last realised that their interests under an independent African government would best be guarded by identification with African institutions rather than by continuing to exist separately. The NUCCTE thus became one of the few genuinely multi-racial unions and the first African-dominated union to elect an Asian office-bearer. The up-country branches of the banks also served as a useful base from which to extend the activities of the union to urban centres outside Kampala.

The new national leadership came from the Ganda Catholic group as before, but they were younger and better qualified than the original leaders. Pulle, by then Treasurer of the Uganda TUC, remained as President but played a relatively minor role as an elder statesman. The General Secretary, Senkezi, had turned to union affairs after a few unfruitful years as a political organiser in the now defunct Uganda National Congress. When the Congress experienced one of its periodic splits, he was left out of a job and returned to employment in commerce. Encouraged by Pulle, he attended a Labour College course and was employed afterwards in the office at the College when he was unable to regain his previous job. After his course (1961) Senkezi also took over the part-time post as union organiser. He succeeded Paul Kanyago, one of the most able of the young unionists in Uganda. Forced by financial difficulties to accept a clerical rather than an academic education, Kanyago had become a highly qualified shorthand-typist. Again through contact with Pulle, he had joined the Clerical Union and had risen quickly to executive office. After a course at the Labour College, he was selected for a two-year scholarship to Ruskin College, Oxford. On his return in 1963, he accepted an appointment to the Labour College's Research Department and continued to take an active part in the affairs of the union. The

third key figure in the National Executive, Nkuuti, joined the union only in 1959 but rose quickly to high office because of his skill as an accountant. After College training, he became the union's second full-time official and also held the post of Education Secretary with the Uganda TUC.

The main weakness of the union was that its sectional leaders could not keep up with the relatively high standards set by the national executive. The NUCCTE claimed to represent many different technical and commercial occupations, but branch leaders continued to be drawn mainly from the clerks. Employers explained this in terms of their superior command of English and the formalities of written communication rather than any inherent capacity for leadership. There was also the problem of tribal rivalries. In mechanical and technical sections, the dominant and most active group were often Kenyans because few Ganda were found in these occupations. At first, the new NUCCTE accepted a number of Kenyan leaders into the national executive but after independence the Kenyans were again pushed into the background. These two facts led to complaints that the union leadership was unrepresentative because it was dominated by clerical and Ganda groups and did not give expression to the interests of the non-clerical and non-Ganda groups. The workers themselves, and the employers, argued that the union was not capable of representing the interests of many of the workers. This was emphasised when the union proved unable to match management's grasp of technical questions in negotiations on issues such as job classification in the motor trade. The national leadership had no specialist knowledge and was not helped by shop stewards who were also clerical workers.

From its inception, the NUCCTE did not give rise to the rash of jurisdiction disputes ominously predicted by the Labour Department. The only other general union, the Amalgamated Transport and General, had lost most of its impetus in Kampala by the time the NUCCTE appeared and was content to deal solely with workers associated with the transport industry. An amicable transfer took place in some industries where individual shops had been organised by the Transport and General before the NUCCTE appeared. At the end of 1963, the NUCCTE also "acquired" the remnants of the Ginnery and Millworkers Union. This union had operated spasmodically in Buganda and Busoga among cotton and coffee ginnery workers until its leaders lost interest. In a factory near Masaka, the local NUCCTE organiser took up a dispute on behalf of members of the former union and applied for recognition by the National Coffee Growers Association. After a delay while the

Labour Department was consulted, this recognition was granted. This set a precedent for allowing unions to fill in gaps created by defunct organisations and could conceivably lead to the emergence of omnibus unions as in West Africa and other parts of the world.

The NUCCTE began by concerning itself mainly with the settlement of individual grievances, as had the Clerical Union before it. It was not until employers' associations began to emerge that it could make much progress in the negotiation of general wage demands. Attacked in isolation, even the largest firms resisted moves by the union to secure recognition. With the revival of the Federation of Uganda Employers, attitudes began to change. The larger companies had joined the Federation as individual members and were encouraged by the Secretary of the Federation to form specialised "trade associations" to deal with unions on an industrial basis. By the end of 1963, five such associations had emerged, covering motor traders, banks, plantations, merchants and distributive employers, and building and civil engineering contractors. Only the banks had a full-time official, based in Nairobi and responsible for all of East Africa. Other Trade Associations were run on a part-time basis by the personnel managers with the help of the Federation's own secretariat.

The formation of these associations boosted the growth of the NUCCTE. In the motor trade, for example, a recognition and procedural agreement was signed in February 1963 which set up a three-tier negotiation structure. This was followed by detailed industry-wide agreements on terms of service, job classification and general principles governing contracts and redundancy. The introduction of formal machinery allowed the union to pursue individual grievances more vigorously and this led in turn to most firms introducing a tightly documented system of disciplinary procedure. Although the union did not officially recognise the system, it found that its work was made much easier by having documentary evidence upon which to judge whether a particular case was worthy of action. In the same way, the signing of industry-wide collective agreements reduced the need for union leaders to spend time and effort negotiating with each employer separately.

The weakness of the system was the same that affected the operation of collective agreements in other industries. The union was content to exploit those employers who made the initial concession of joining the Trade Association and did not exert itself to organise the employers who stayed outside the association. This was particularly a problem where the Association consisted of a few large-scale employers and a number of smaller businesses, as

in the motor trade. If the small operators outside the association could escape paying the collectively established rates, those in the association were likely to leave rather than accept membership which placed them in an uneconomic position vis-a-vis their competitors. By refusing to act against the groups outside the trade associations, the union was taking the path of least effort and it was also in danger of defeating its long-term interest in preserving the existence of the associations. Their main hope for the future lay in the Government's plans to extend a system of wages councils to these industries under which collective agreements signed by a representative majority would be binding on the whole industry.

Finally, it is necessary to note a significant development which occurred during 1963 and cast a shadow over the future of the union. A number of unofficial strikes were called against members of the motor traders' association, led not by NUCCTE but by the Uganda Peoples Congress (UPC) Youth Wing. The workers, although covered by a collective agreement signed on their behalf by the union, chose to follow the Youth Wing rather than the union leaders and refused to accept union instructions to return to work. In one case, the employer went so far as to recognise the right of the Youth Wing to represent the workers involved and to negotiate with the aid of a UPC politician. These incidents gave rise to speculation on wider questions of the Government's attitude to disputes called by political organisations. They also underlined the deceptively weak control that the nominally powerful union could exert over its members and the ease with which outsiders could disrupt its conduct of industrial relations.

Two other general unions can be discussed briefly by way of contrast. The first is the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union. The origins of this union can be traced back to the first Ugandan-inspired union of all, the Busoga Motor Drivers' Union. In 1954, the activities of this union were extended by changing its name to the Eastern Province Transport and Allied Workers Union. In 1959, the union amalgamated with other minor organisations to form the existing union which claimed to cover all areas of Uganda. Its main centre of activity remained the Eastern Province, where it organised the Kilembe Smelters. With the formation of the Uganda Federation of Labour in Jinja, the unity of the organisation was shattered, with the Kampala branch electing separate office bearers and continuing to support the Uganda TUC against the Jinja branch leadership.

A semblance of national unity was restored after the collapse of the Uganda Federation of Labour in 1961, but the union never

functioned as a single coherent organisation because of the instability and weakness of its national leadership. An agreement between the Labour Department and the Uganda TUC permitted the union to operate in areas where no other union had taken an interest, so weakly organised branches grew up in outlying urban centres such as Fort Portal, Mbarara, Gulu and Masaka. Their effectiveness depended upon the varying energy of the constantly changing local leaders, so the branches functioned spasmodically and without any central direction. The Fort Portal branch, confined originally to bus workers, contented itself with following the lead of the Kampala union by negotiating its own increases every time an increase was secured in Kampala. In Lira, with a tradition of independent political and union activity, the Lango Transport and General Workers Union maintained a separate and active existence and refused to be associated with the inefficiencies of the central body.

The strength of the union was found in the Kampala and Jinja transport workers, mainly bus drivers. Well supported strikes over trade disputes had been conducted in both towns in July, 1962. In the Eastern Province dispute, the Government upheld the union's claim that certain dismissals were unreasonable and issued licences for rival companies to serve strike-bound routes as a means of forcing concessions from the company. In Kampala, the union's demand for a 60% wage increase and the dismissal of the General Manager provoked an opposite reaction. Onama, the Minister of Labour, intervened to warn the workers that they would be replaced if they did not return to work and to instruct the union to continue negotiations. At the same time, the Minister had also to threaten the employers before they would agree to withdraw offensive remarks and to pay a small interim increase until the wage claim was submitted to arbitration.

Early in 1963, the ATGWU revived and its activities took on a different character. Trouble of a new sort occurred in two outlying regions. In Soroti, an area not previously organised, the publication of the recommendations of the National Minimum Wages Advisory Board in January 1963 gave rise to a wages dispute in a cotton ginnery. A local UPC organiser took up the strikers' case and the strike spread rapidly to other ginneries and to commercial employees in the township. On the strength of the testimony of the strikers, the ginnery owner was deported for abusive and insulting remarks about the Prime Minister. F. Onama, Minister of Labour, tried to clarify the situation by pointing out that the wages suggested by the Board were only recommendations and would not come into effect for four months, but the general strike



continued and took on the character of an anti-Asian demonstration. Although no union organisation existed, the party official claimed to be regional representative of the ATGWU. At first, the headquarters in Kampala denied this because they did not wish to be associated with an irresponsible general strike in which the union had taken no part, but later changed their minds.

In Fort Portal a similar situation developed in March 1963, with a general strike taking on an anti-Asian character after workers had been misled to expect immediately the wage increases recommended by the Minimum Wages Board. The same intimidatory tactic of trying to secure the deportation of the leading Asian businessman was not successful, but violence was only averted in both cases by the Labour Department persuading the employers to agree to a large interim increase until the new minimum wages were introduced.

In contrast, the recently developed Uganda Building Construction Civil Engineering and Allied Workers Union is both industrially effective and outside party politics. The credit for this must go to John Thalmayer, an international adviser from North America, financed by the International Federation of Building and Woodworkers. The international had sent a mission touring all African countries which, in 1962, recommended that Uganda held sufficient potential to benefit from the services of an adviser. The choice of Thalmayer was fortunate, as a period of service in Turkey had acquainted him with many of the problems facing union organisations in under-developed areas.

On arrival, Thalmayer found few effective unions in existence. Only one collective agreement existed — between Budongo Sawmills and the Bunyoro Building, Construction and Woodworkers Union. The Budongo Sawmills were situated deep in the Budongo Forest near Masindi, and were operated by European employers who realised that liberal working conditions must exist to compensate for the extreme isolation of the work force. This same isolation, perhaps, explains the remarkably enthusiastic response to the idea of a union. During 1962, one of the leaders of the Uganda Federation of Labour visited Budongo on a fund-raising expedition. The management agreed to an access agreement but refused to recognise the UFL man as a valid union representative as he had just been dismissed from the National Union of Road Construction Workers and the Uganda Federation was not considered a legitimate union organisation. Subsequently, the legitimately registered Secretary of a virtually defunct woodworkers union enrolled 75% of the Budongo employees and, after the collection of union dues,

prepared to stage a strike in support of a wage claim. At this point, a director of the company appeared from Nairobi and a hasty recognition agreement was concluded. From the beginning, the Federation of Uganda Employers advised caution in dealing with unionists of such dubious reputation. Their warnings were justified when the original organisers failed to put in another appearance at Budongo, apparently well satisfied with the initial finance collected.

The other union in existence, the National Union of Road Construction Workers, had even less stability. It enjoyed a hand to mouth existence since its foundation in Jinja. Lacking any recognition agreements whatever, it existed on the basis of spasmodic collections made after attempts to settle disputes in which it was able to involve itself. Quarry and clay workers were also nominally covered by union organisations. The Quarry and Mine-workers Union had been inaugurated by Luande when he visited Kilembe Mines in 1962. When it became clear that no quarry workers were in fact members, first the order of the two names was changed and then the quarry section dropped altogether from the title of the Kilembe union. The clay workers' union had been registered but had made no progress with organisation beyond collecting subscriptions before its General Secretary lost interest and disappeared.

From this meagre stock of resources, Thalmayer set himself the formidable task of building up and having accepted a nationwide amalgamation. First he drew the existing unions together under a complex constitution and set up a single national headquarters. Discussions with the Federation of Uganda Employers led to the formation of the Uganda Association of Building and Civil Engineering Contractors. Thalmayer then concluded recognition agreements with the 54 members of this cumbersome association and also with nine other employers who refused to join it. On occasions, the demand for recognition led to strike activity but generally progress was peaceful. On January 27, 1964, the major step forward was taken when a comprehensive agreement was signed by the union and association. This sophisticated document covered normal topics such as redundancy, overtime, hours and leave; it also covered unusual items such as the distinction between permanent and site staff, job classification down to 45 different grades, and tied regional wages to the minimum wages differentials laid down in the Government Minimum Wages Ordinance.

At the end of 1963, the executive was new and inexperienced. One member had taken over the Budongo union on behalf of his

work mates when it was abandoned by the UFL. Others had been selected by Thalmayer or recruited from the ATGWU when that union had been taken over by more politically minded leaders. While Thalmayer stayed, confidence in the union remained high on all sides, but many wondered what would happen when he left. It remained to be seen whether this impressive new union structure would hold together by itself or whether it would be allowed to lapse into the apathy which had prevailed before.

This brief survey of the history of general unions in Uganda points out some of the worst features associated with trade unionism. The NUCCTE seemed the most effective union, but it still had a long period when it functioned in name only, and later events revealed that it had a very tenuous control over its members. The other general unions were cursed at times with leadership which was not only ineffective but often financially and politically irresponsible. All the general unions laid claims to a large membership by the end of 1963, but it was clear that this was often a "paper membership" and that many organisations were not continuously effective in their management of industrial relations.

## Chapter Eight

### COMPANY UNIONS—Textiles and Tobacco

The history of two company unions is in sharp contrast to that of the general unions of Uganda. Since employees working for a single large company were easier to organise than those scattered in different areas under different employers, it was logical that trade unionism should make most progress in this field. Jinja, as the centre of most of Uganda's industries, naturally became the centre of union activity. The two unions discussed in this study were both based in Jinja but, while the first enjoyed a relatively peaceful evolution, the story of the second is marked by constant tension and a period of vigorous direct action.

#### The Uganda Tobacco Workers Union

The Uganda Tobacco Workers Union was recognised in 1958 as the legitimate representative of the interests of the workers in the East African Tobacco Company. In addition to the main factory at Jinja, there was a subsidiary drying plant in Kampala and collection centres at Gulu and Arua in the main growing areas. However, the first moves towards the establishment of a union were made in Jinja and the other areas were organised much later. The character of the Jinja labour force is important in explaining the success of union activity in the tobacco factory. Because most of the jobs require specific skills not valuable in other industries, there were limited opportunities open to migrant labourers. The great majority of workers were locals (Ganda or Soga) or long-term migrants from Kenya. At the end of 1963, over 80% of the employees had been working in the factory for more than five years. In later years, as the rate of turnover slowed down, this stability of the labour force even caused redundancy problems when new machinery was introduced.

As a result of the company's wide experience overseas, the management of East African Tobacco realised very early that there was a need for some form of industrial relations machinery in their Ugandan factories. In January, 1952, the first experiment was made with Works Committees when a factory-wide committee was set up consisting of 16 workers' representatives, the Manager and the Assistant Manager. This failed to achieve any results of note



and, in his detailed study of this experiment, Walter Elkan points to three reasons why the committees never operated effectively: the exclusion of most members of management, the use of the committee as a lecture platform by the Manager, and the selection of workers' representatives by management (Elkan, 1955, Chapter 6).

In 1953, the factory at Jinja had its first strike. Significantly, the middle group of semi-skilled were the main activists and the lower, unskilled groups only joined in with great reluctance. This reflected the fact that this first group saw their future in terms of continuing employment in the same industry and would thus derive most benefit from an increase in wage rates. The skilled craftsmen and clerks above this group gave little support to the strike because their future interests were less related to wage rates in a single factory and more to the removal of the general wide gap between their wages and the wages of other races who appeared to be doing the same job.

As a result of the strike, a new system of joint consultation was introduced. The single factory-wide committee was replaced by a hierarchy of committees, based upon face-to-face meetings between workers and managers at all levels in the personnel structure. As in the first phase, the committees tended to be dominated by the semi-skilled groups, in particular the Ganda and Soga workers who lived close by and saw their future in terms of a long spell of wage-earning.

At first great difficulty was experienced in putting across the idea of joint consultation and workers tended to use the committee solely as a vehicle for submitting major wage demands. However, by 1956 the results were reported as much more rewarding, although the question of effective communications between the representatives and the mass of workers still had not been solved. For example, in 1956 a concerted attempt was made to use works committees to get across the idea that management had no hidden motive behind the introduction of free meals beyond providing a better diet to increase performances. The employees remained unconvinced and boycotted the first attempt to introduce the system.

Management's readiness to welcome the growth of unions meant that there was no trouble over recognition. The appearance of the union in mid-1957 was followed by a recognition agreement in March, 1958, which accepted the fact that the works committees were no longer adequate. Before the union was recognised, it had successfully boycotted the committees which were seen as a



challenge to the right of the union to claim to represent the workers in their dealings with management. After recognition, the union agreed to work within the committee structure on non-negotiable matters but pushed constantly to increase its own area of responsibility. The committees' power declined where the union was most militant because the leaders preferred to bargain with the implied threat of direct action rather than merely advise, even on issues not normally settled by collective bargaining. In the less militant areas, such as the northern region, the committees continued to do useful work on non-controversial issues such as health, safety and canteen facilities.

The Uganda Tobacco Workers Union was first registered at the beginning of 1958 with Angelino Banyanga as its General Secretary. Banyanga was a senior clerk at the factory in Jinja who had failed at the university and then gone into the public service for a short period. From an initial gathering of about 30 people, Banyanga organised the election of an executive committee and had his new union registered. This failed to attract the attention of management but did make available the advice of both the Uganda TUC President and the Labour Department's Industrial Relations Officer. With their aid, the union expanded until it could back a demand for recognition with a claim of 300 members. When this demand was turned down, a strike was held which was solidly supported by all but the Asian employees of the factory and led to a visit from the Company's directors. As a result of this visit, the union was recognised in accordance with general Company policy and the first recognition and procedural agreement was signed.

After 1958, union membership tended to fluctuate according to the successes of the union in its dealings with management. A short, unsuccessful strike in 1959 over an issue of victimisation led to a fall in membership to only 30% of the factory force. Later it revived, with the aid of a check-off agreement in May, 1962, and an expansion of union activity to Kampala and the rural centres in the northern regions. At the end of 1963, the Factory Personnel Officer estimated that the union had a paid-up membership of 475, of which 402 were covered by the check-off arrangements at the Jinja factory.

Over the whole period, the leadership was always dominated by the clerical group. This was in marked contrast to the group most interested in the early works committees who tended to be the semi-skilled operatives. The interest shown by the clerical workers in the union reflected the extent to which the union could involve

itself in matters of general concern to them, not dealt with in a consultative committee. Thus the union actively advocated policies of more rapid "Africanisation" which particularly appealed to this group. These clerical leaders brought considerable organising skills to the union and were less worried by the prospect of victimisation because they could find jobs elsewhere more easily. Like most unions in Uganda, the Tobacco Workers faced the recurrent problem of losing their most effective leaders through promotion. Some, like Banyanga and another pioneer unionist, Kasoro, went to other employers, but many were raised to the level of management within the factory. This led the union members to believe that the Company had a conscious policy of weakening the union by removing its best men, whereas the Factory Manager maintained that it would be unfair to hamper the progress of an individual in the interests of retaining good union leadership. The problem remained that new leaders constantly had to be found and trained to replace those who left.

In 1959, the Labour Department Report noted that:

"There are refreshing signs of a start in the negotiation of wages by a process of collective bargaining. In one industry in particular which is blessed with an enlightened management and responsible union leadership, proper negotiation machinery has been established to deal with all matters concerning wages and conditions of service."

The report then praised the "sympathetic but firm attitudes of the Company representatives", and the "sensible outlook of the Tobacco Workers Union leaders." (LDR, 1959, p. 16).

It is interesting to note that the dispute referred to was concerned not with wages but with establishing the union's right to consultation by management on issues of concern to the workers. The list of union grievances included the implementation of new working rules without consultation, the refusal to publish the salary scales of all employees as demanded by the union, the intention to introduce aptitude testing despite union opposition and the general Company policy of non-consultation before taking decisions affecting union members. Higher wages were not an issue because the level of wages in the Tobacco industry was always ahead of the general rate prevailing in Jinja and the union was concerned mainly with establishing a wider area of authority in order to increase its appeal.

Between 1959 and 1963, there were no major disputes in the Company and the new Factory Manager at Jinja publicly praised the union leadership for its co-operative attitude in negotiations

which introduced a national collective agreement. This quiescence was probably a reflection of the superior working conditions prevailing at the factory as much as it was a product of responsible leadership, but the situation changed rapidly in 1963.

The character of the negotiation structure within the Company had an important influence on this growing unrest. At the shop-floor level, minor disputes were settled by discussions between the union shop stewards and their immediate supervisor. Disagreements were referred to the Branch Secretary and the Production Manager and then to a formal Branch Negotiation Committee. The Personnel Department acted only as consultants to both sides to allow freedom of action as conciliators. If a Branch Committee remained deadlocked for two weeks, the issue was referred to the National Negotiation Committee which included the full-time officials of the union and senior personnel management. In addition, all matters concerning more than one branch were also passed immediately to the national level. Disagreement at this level meant that the dispute was formally passed over to the Labour Department for outside conciliation and, with the agreement of both parties to the dispute, submission to independent arbitration.

The system revealed two weaknesses in practice. The first concerned the extent to which the interests of the rural areas were safeguarded. The two stations at Gulu and Arua were affected by similar problems as they performed the same functions and depended upon the same sort of local labour. Yet the nature of the negotiation machinery required that all common problems should be settled by a meeting of the National Negotiation Committee, at which full-time officials represented the union, rather than the local officials who were more in touch with the practical aspects of any question concerning these areas. It has already been noted that the Jinja factory was the most active centre of union activity, and inevitably most of the national leaders were drawn from this centre. The small membership in the rural branches felt that there was a tendency on the part of the national leadership to ignore their special needs and to refuse to back their demands with the same vigour as demands from Jinja. This charge seems to have been borne out in the last national wage negotiations, when the rises gained for the rural areas were less than half those gained for the Jinja and Kampala factories. While the negotiation machinery persisted unamended, and the central leaders failed to instil confidence, there seemed a real danger that the union would lose its following among the workers in the rural areas. With the growing experience and sophistication of this



group would come the realisation that the best way to safeguard their interests was to deal directly with the local management rather than through the half-hearted efforts of the central leaders.

The second weakness was perhaps less a fault of the machinery itself than a result of its faulty functioning on one key occasion. This weakness was the tendency for the union to force disputes up to the highest possible authority before being willing to make any compromise. In general, this was due to a desire on the part of the national full-time leadership to appear active and efficient and, on the part of the lower ranks, to appear unyielding in their defence of the workers' interests.

In the Tobacco Workers Union, this tendency was reinforced by the ludicrously successful result of going to arbitration over a particular wage demand. Because the Tobacco Company was already the most liberal employer in Jinja, both management and the Provincial Labour Officer predicted that no award would be made. However, to their surprise a significant wage increase was granted. The union based its case on the level of wages being paid in the Company's Nairobi factory although this ignored the very considerable difference between the costs of living in Nairobi and Jinja. The result of the arbitration puzzled and surprised many people. Some grades received a rate of increase half way between the Nairobi level and the existing level in Uganda; others received even more than the union had actually requested.

It had been hoped by the Labour Department that an adverse arbitration might stem the general post-independence inflationary pressures and stop the widening wage gap between the liberal employers' rates and the rates paid elsewhere. Instead, the union was given the dangerously misleading impression that arbitration was the surest way of gaining in a dispute.

Heartened by this unexpected success, the union leaders continued their policy of forcing disputes to the highest possible level with renewed vigour. Because the union refused to compromise on even the most minor issue, the Labour Department was snowed under with disputes reported for outside settlement. This "hard line" was partly related to the struggle for power within the union hierarchy at Jinja. A large but non-vocal group of moderates within the factory executive wished to return to a more co-operative attitude, while the radicals wished to justify their own position by providing concrete gains for the union members by forcing concessions from management.

Towards the end of 1963, the situation began to return to normal as a result of the Government's willingness to explode the

myth that arbitration was a sure way to win concessions. When the union pressed a new claim on leave and hours, and held out in the hope of forcing arbitration, the Government acted behind the scenes to discourage them. Understandably, the Company were reluctant to go to arbitration again and believed that it could easily resist any threat of direct action because the members of the union were not wholeheartedly in support of their leaders on this issue. Management changed its opinion when the Labour Commissioner made known that an arbitration tribunal would be appointed instead of a single arbitrator, that a non-political figure would lead it, and that the terms of reference would be submitted to both sides for verification and rigidly adhered to. The Company also took note of the precedent set by a decision covering the Tanganyikan employees of the Company which accepted the 45 hour week, 21 working days' leave and a rate of severance pay below the current Ugandan level.

Government's lack of sympathy with the union seemed reasonable. The unions were asking for a 40 hour week, an increase in leave from 21 to 36 working days, and a more generous severance allowance. The previous wage rise had set up dangerous inequalities at the time, but these would eventually have been removed as the general level of wages in the community rose. An increase in leave and a reduction in hours would have set an awkward precedent for Government and other employers as it would have led almost inevitably to a permanent decline in overall productivity.

As they became aware of the attitude of the Government, the unions began to lose interest in forcing the dispute to a conclusion because the leaders felt it was better not to go to arbitration at all than to go and get nothing. They also realised that arbitration could no longer be regarded as the surest way to get what they asked for.

Finally, the most radical of the union leaders, the General Secretary, led an unofficial strike in an attempt to secure the dismissal of three supervisors. A short stoppage followed but the great majority of the workers soon returned to work in defiance of the union. Aware that he was rapidly losing support, the General Secretary resigned and joined a number of other former union officials in the personnel department of one of the large sugar manufacturers. The more moderate members of the union executive who had opposed the strike and many of the policies of the former leader then took control and, by the end of 1963, amicable relations had been re-established between management and the union.



### The Uganda Textile Workers Union

The second union, the Uganda Textile Workers Union, had a shorter but more eventful history. Nyanza Textile Industries Limited began recruiting labour in 1955. The only firm of its kind in East Africa before 1964, it was managed by the Calico Printers' Association of Manchester and controlled by the Uganda Government through the Uganda Development Corporation.

Much of the strife which developed at Nyanza Textiles can be attributed to the unwillingness of the management to adjust its ideas to the special circumstances of East Africa. In the beginning, the European supervisory grades were of necessity craftsmen with the high technical skill needed to operate complex machinery. They were adjusted to the high tempo of English production and, unlike local Europeans, did not have the experience which led to a realistic assessment of the capabilities and limitations of the African employees. Tension between the two groups was particularly high during the initial building, with the presence of a highly specialised construction team which was motivated by rigid target dates and lacked any permanent interest in the country or the workers. Elkan has also pointed out that the source of ideas in the personnel department, the Johannesburg National Institute of Personnel Research, was also likely to contribute to unrest as it was badly out of touch with conditions prevailing in East Africa (correspondence with author, 10 September, 1964). The use of aptitude tests, advanced job evaluation techniques and complex incentive bonus schemes all conflicted with traditional, highly simplified practices to which the African workers had become accustomed. The failure to establish adequate channels of communication with the workers often led to discontent when these systems were misunderstood and misinterpreted.

Nyanza Textiles, like the tobacco factory, had little use for short-term migrant labour. The need for a period of training in specialised skills meant that an employee only reached his maximum efficiency after the first year of employment. A deliberate policy of encouraging stability was meeting with considerable success by the end of 1963, with almost 90% of the workers beyond their first year of service. A tribal analysis of the work force (Table IV) revealed three significant groups — the local tribes from near Jinja (34%), the tribes from just over the Kenya border (18%) and the tribes from the north of Uganda (18%). The Samia, a sub-tribe of the Luhya, were of particular significance as they played a major role in the development of the Textile Workers Union. They constituted 11% of the African work force,

most of them coming from just over the Kenya border, despite their claims to the contrary in official records. No Asians were employed because, by 1955 when the factory started, it was clear that this would only cause future problems of "Africanisation". Thus there was not the normal buffer between European supervisors and African unskilled labour which existed elsewhere, a fact which may have contributed to the early period of racial discontent.

**Table IV**  
**TRIBAL ANALYSIS, 1963**  
**Nyanza Textiles Work Force**

<i>Locals</i>			<i>Others</i>		
Soga	..	..	19.2%	Nyankole, Nyoro	.. 4.7%
Ganda	..	..	15.0%	Teso	.. 3.7%
				Gishu	.. 2.5%
<i>Kenya Border</i>				Kigesi	.. 1.7%
Samia, Uganda	..	..	9.4%	others less than	.. 1.0%
Samia, Kenya	..	..	1.5%		
Luo, Kenya	..	..	7.1%		
<i>North</i>					
Acholi	..	..	7.4%		
West Nile	..	..	7.1%		
Madi	..	..	2.5%		
Lango	..	..	1.5%		

Source: J. Cockburn, Personnel Adviser, Nyanza Textiles Limited.

Until 1961, the pattern of industrial relations was very much the brain child of management. At the time the factory opened, the Labour Department was strongly advocating the use of advisory works committees as a stop-gap until unions developed. This was rejected by the management, although local personnel officers later regretted this decision as it meant lost opportunities for contact with the workers.

The Uganda Textile Workers Union was formed in 1958, as soon as legally possible under the terms of the Trade Union Ordinance. (See *The Trades Union Ordinance, 1952, Part IV, Section 29; and Chapter 4, p. 60*). This appears to be the only case in Uganda where union development might have been hampered by the restriction requiring three years' service in the industry before holding union office. Nyanza Textiles was in a special situation with an entirely new work force and a management determined to sponsor the growth of unions as quickly as possible. Management stated that "the union was formed under the guidance of senior African employees who had previously been selected for training for promotion to management." (*Uganda Argus, 25 November, 1961*). The main outside assistance for the union came from the

Labour Department's specialist Industrial Relations Officer, James Brandie. In 1959, the union executive was deemed by management to be "a responsible body". A simple recognition and procedural agreement was signed, based upon a model supplied by the Labour Department.

In as much as there were no serious strikes, the union made sound progress until 1961. The most active group, initially, were the clerical workers. Because they were literate and possessed knowledge of the whole industrial process, they tended to become union shop stewards even in non-clerical sections. Apart from this group, there was greater attachment to sectional loyalties. The workers, new to a factory community, preferred to work in small gangs, often composed on a tribal basis. Each cell displayed little interest in any other cell, and there was no co-ordination by the union central executive. Weakness in communication and union discipline meant that each cell could conduct its own minor stoppages. This meant not involving the rest of the union's executive super-structure, and also not seriously challenging the absolute authority of management.

It is against this background that the events of 1961 must be viewed. All the ingredients for conflict and misunderstanding were present. Uncompromising non-African supervisors were in charge of inexperienced and tribally divided Africans. Modern personnel techniques were at odds with traditional ideas. Senior union leaders were as responsible to the management as to their own members. Beneath them existed a large number of irresponsible and independent work cells.

The strain began to tell towards the end of a second unsettling period of factory expansion. A carefully balanced Africanisation plan came unstuck, through no fault of the management, and disrupted union leadership. The intention was to promote only half of the management trainee unionists so that the remainder could continue to direct the union. When they had built up a responsible body of successors they, too, would be promoted and the process continued. The balance was destroyed by the international trade union movement. Three of the remaining six management trainees were removed for union training overseas and at the Kampala Labour College. This meant that the 1961 union executive was immature and untutored, easy prey for ambitious "outsiders". The management "hoped that the few long-service union members would be able to guide the new executive along responsible lines . . . the reverse proved to be the case." (*Uganda Argus*, 25 November 1961).

The combined effect of promotions and scholarships had drained



the union of both talent and moderation. Management complained of "an intensifying campaign against normal factory discipline, against expatriate staff and, more particularly, against their own African colleagues recently promoted." (*Uganda Argus*, 25 November, 1961). This seems to have been fomented mainly at shop-floor level by the shop stewards. The new executive was too weak to exert its authority on behalf of greater moderation. Up to September there was a marked decline in discipline, constant time-wasting and infringements of common-sense regulations. In defiance of negotiated disputes procedure, there were no less than eighty-eight unofficial stoppages.

The prime mover in this rebellion was A. H. W. Mugala. Mugala had reached a high level in secondary school before his education was curtailed by financial difficulties. Then he worked first as an auditor's clerk, later as an assistant in the medical department and finally taught in a small school in Bukedi owned by his uncle. He was active in Bukedi politics as the secretary of the Uganda National Congress and a local councillor. In 1960 his school was closed down and he was forced to leave the district, perhaps because of his role in the Bukedi tax riots.

In Jinja he became a self-appointed adviser to a number of the local unions. In November 1960, he applied to Nyanza Textiles for a position as a laboratory assistant and was later engaged. On arrival he decided that union activity was too much dominated by management, and, after one month's compulsory probation, became a shop steward.

In June, elections were held to replace departing members of the executive. This touched off a serious internal dispute which relieved the pressure on management. A three-way split developed in the union between Wandera, the current General Secretary, Okumu, who had replaced Wandera when he accepted a scholarship to Israel, and Mugala. Violence occurred at the June meeting when executive members refused to step down after a decision of dissolution had been taken. This was followed by a series of meetings and press statements in which each leader claimed to have secured the dismissal of the other two. The Registrar had refused to recognise the elections because of unconstitutional procedures, and the General Secretary of the Uganda TUC failed in his attempt to heal the split. All three leaders may have had their eye on a scholarship to the United States which was to be offered to the General Secretary elected in August. Ironically, the strike prevented anyone from taking it up. In the meantime, management had successfully backed an informal organisation at shop

steward level, devised by the Uganda TUC General Secretary when the top leadership had virtually ceased to function. Communications improved, productivity and bonus earning rose and breaches of discipline were halved — but this was only the calm before the storm.

At the August Annual General Meeting, Mugala succeeded in establishing himself in complete control. Management seem to have had grounds for their assertion that the election was engineered. Only 300 attended, of whom over half were Samia like Mugala, and the remainder Kenyan Luos. Procedures seemed closer to mob rule than democracy. Of Mugala's opponents, Wandera became an industrial relations officer with the Uganda Company together with other disillusioned trade unionists; and Okumu, a Luo, later moved into Nyanza Textiles management as a supervisor.

After August, the campaign of disruption resumed. Shop stewards were countermanding the orders of foremen. Unofficial stoppages continued, with union officials refusing to try and get men back to work even where no dispute had been notified. A wages claim was presented demanding increases ranging between 60%—85% as part of a reaction to an altered bonus system which management had introduced without explanation. A strike was called in support, then called off when management agreed to talks on a smaller increase. The threat was renewed on October 30, after management failed to see any justification for the union's claim.

In the meantime, Mugala had been dismissed by Nyanza Textiles for threatening to strike an African supervisor. The Labour Department advised reinstatement in the belief that Mugala would be more responsible if he remained an employee of the company. This advice was rejected by management, but they could not prevent him continuing to hold union office as General Secretary. Mugala's policy was not lacking in opponents within the union. On October 16, Kasumba (President of the union) publicly disowned the more extreme claims and later resigned, together with four other members of the executive. But this merely removed a restraining influence, and Mugala continued undaunted.

The management had lost patience by the end of October. A formal letter had been sent to emphasise earlier warnings that the union's disruptive tactics were a constant breach of the 1959 Recognition and Procedural Agreement. This went unheeded and management concluded that "it was faced with an organisation determined to undermine the authority of management and prevent it carrying on its proper function within the industry." (*Uganda*



*Argus*, 25 November, 1961). The point had been reached where management considered the union to be a threat to its existence, and felt that for its own survival it must humble the union.

On Saturday, October 31st, the storm broke. A month later, *The Reporter* commented that:

"This strike will be quoted to future leaders of labour and industry as a classic example of how labour-management relations should not be conducted." (25 November, 1961).

Without knowing the long history of unrest, the immediate point of issue seems ludicrously insignificant. The financial stake involved was only two fines of 90 cents. The dispute was touched off by an African supervisor finding two machine operators asleep in the lavatories. In accordance with established discipline procedure he imposed the normal punishment of cancelling their daily bonus. The men complained to their shop steward who called a stoppage, despite contrary advice from a more senior union official. Management promptly dismissed the shop steward, and the whole shift went out on strike.

At this point, Ed Welsh, ICFTU adviser for East Africa, intervened. He had participated earlier in wage negotiations, securing a moderation in the union's 85% claim, but failing in his attempt to introduce a comprehensive agreement based upon his North American experience. Welsh encouraged the union to participate in talks with management, and a conditional form of agreement was reached. If the union President could guarantee the ending of the unofficial stoppages, management would agree to reinstate the shop steward pending an independent enquiry.

Once again, union communication and discipline failed. The workers regarded the reinstatement as a great victory over management. The hedging conditions were either not known about, or ignored. The morning shift jubilantly returned to work, but the afternoon shift worked for only ten minutes before they, too, went on strike.

Conflicting accounts have been given of the reasons for this second dispute. The union version, as confirmed in press reports, is that the men struck as a result of another dismissal. After serving a two week prison sentence, a worker had reported with the shift and was told he had been dismissed. The management version claims that the strike began at 4.10 p.m., that the man did not report for work till 4.30 and that only management were aware of his dismissal before he reported.

But work had certainly stopped again. Management invited a member of the union executive to address the men to urge them

to return to work. He failed, and other leaders did no better. Finally the whole shift was dismissed under factory regulation 16 (g) "for refusing to obey a reasonable order".

In the Sunday breathing space, the Management Executive Committee met. After long discussion, it was decided to withdraw support for the 1959 Recognition and Procedural Agreement. They undoubtedly had strong legal and moral grounds for their decision. The union had long since ceased to feel bound by the procedures accepted in this agreement, and the agreement itself was so simply worded that it gave unlimited breadth in interpretation, and so constructed that it was not possible to abrogate one section without withdrawing recognition at the same time. It had been drawn up at a time when it seemed impossible that the current situation could develop. Nevertheless, the decision to withdraw union recognition complicated the ensuing negotiations, and hampered a final agreement.

On Monday, November 2nd, management maintained its strong line. It was feared that the dismissed shift would attempt to create disorder by reporting for work at the same time as the Monday morning shift and that non-dismissed workers would be victimised. Police aid was enlisted to restrict the activities of Mugala and other union officials by placing them on bonds of good behaviour. When large numbers of workers were absent, notices were posted requiring men to report within 24 hours or be dismissed. Later they were paid off.

On Tuesday, the first of innumerable negotiations began. Francis Pulle, the Ganda President of the Uganda TUC, was invited by both sides to assist in reaching a settlement. A joint press release records that amicable discussions took place. Of all the negotiators who became involved, only Pulle seems to have appreciated the management's intransigence concerning its present union executive. He advised the workers to accept the dismissal of eight key figures, demanded by management as a condition for settlement. He failed to convince management to restore union recognition under the 1959 Agreement, but did receive a promise of a new agreement when work was resumed.

But the advice of the honest broker from Kampala was rejected by the union. This was partly because he was from Kampala, and a Ganda, while the Nyanza Textiles leaders were Samia. The Uganda TUC had long been guilty of ignoring Jinja interests and exerted little authority over Jinja unions. The Nyanza Textiles unionists felt little loyalty or responsibility to the TUC as such, and it seemed that Pulle was acting treacherously in dealing with

a management which refused to recognise its own union. The vital first chance for a quick settlement was therefore lost. As in any dispute, conciliation became more difficult as attitudes were allowed to harden.

On the same day, the *Uganda Argus* carried a damaging editorial. It called on the Minister of Labour to use his power to intervene personally. "As an elected Minister he is credited with the confidence of all the people and should by his authority be able to call both sides together." (*Uganda Argus*, 2 November, 1961.) That statement would have been true of the later UPC government. But it was decidedly not true of the Democratic Party government at the end of 1961. Benedicto Kiwanuka's administration was based on a majority of seats won at the March elections with a minority of votes, and the aid of an electoral boycott. It could only hope to be returned at the April elections by attracting support away from the more radical Uganda Peoples Congress. Ministers in this government certainly did not enjoy "the confidence of all the people", but they were ready to seize any opportunity to create that impression.

Yet it was the UPC and not Kiwanuka's Democratic Party which came onto the scene first. According to his own press release, Humphries Luande "answered an SOS from the textile workers and flew back from London." (*Uganda Argus*, 6 November, 1961). In fact he was already on his way back when the strike began. As well as being the most prominent unionist in the UPC, Luande was also full-time organising secretary of the Uganda TUC. He and Pulle were involved in a struggle for influence in the TUC. Pulle's intervention in the Nyanza Textiles dispute was interpreted as an attempt to widen his TUC support. Luande was in a stronger position in Jinja because of his fiery personality, his long experience in the Uganda-wide Railway Union and his close tribal links with the Samia union leaders. When the Democratic Party government later intervened to try to boost their popularity, Luande's UPC interests also became involved. While posing as conciliator, he realised that political advantages would attach to the role of an uncompromising champion of the workers.

Luande was accepted by both sides as a liaison officer. This was needed to overcome negotiation difficulties arising from management's non-recognition of the union. The critical issue from management's viewpoint was the assertion of its prerogative of deciding whom to employ. It refused to re-engage all its former workers automatically, but wished to act as if recruiting new



labour. In this way it would assert clearly its dominance over the union.

Management and independent observers claim that Luande twice signed agreements permitting restaffing on management terms, in return for concessions on recognition which would have ended the dispute. On both occasions, Luande publicly repudiated the agreements by encouraging the strikers to stay out. His liaison activities during negotiations also seem to have led to misunderstandings on both sides. At the end of a week, management were fed up. Pulle was recalled "to help them solve difficulties they were experiencing in dealing with Mr. Luande." (*Uganda Argus*, 25 November, 1961). At this meeting with Pulle and management, Luande demanded unconditional reinstatement of all workers and later included the dismissal of members of the personnel department in his terms of settlement.

By November 13, it was clear that no progress was being made. The Chief Minister, Kiwanuka, now intervened. This was soundly applauded by the *Uganda Argus*, pointing out that "a powerful *outside* mediator had become essential." (*Uganda Argus*, 13 November, 1961). Kiwanuka acted as a go-between with more success than Luande, even persuading management to sit down at the same table as the union leaders they no longer recognised. This eased the communication problem. A marathon 13-hour meeting followed. At midnight, the mentally exhausted negotiators believed that some sort of agreement had been reached. But, at the signing of the formal draft next day, it was repudiated by management because new clauses had been introduced which challenged prerogatives they were determined to preserve.

This decision led to attacks on management by both Kiwanuka and by Luande. After a fortnight without pay, however, the bulk of the workers were fed up with negotiations. The strike began to collapse. Recruitment figures began to climb, and by November 16, over half the workers were back. Luande attempted to reopen negotiations with more moderate demands, but management stood firm on non-recognition and no re-engagement. The next day, Luande advised returning to work although most workers had already done so. The union had capitulated.

The failure of the strike left a curious situation in the factory. The management used its established prerogative not to re-employ 68 of the leading unionists. A number were later allowed to filter back, but the hard core of troublemakers were removed permanently.

Mugala was already outside the factory when the strike began.

He remained a most active General Secretary, and continued to exert influence through the personal following he had built up within the factory. Union membership naturally dropped after the strike, and the remaining members continued to be fiercely loyal to Mugala at two successive elections. The management continued its policy of non-recognition while Mugala remained in office. The elections which confirmed his position were once again considered suspect because of the actions of tribally-based pressure groups. However, the fact of his election and his stated desire to sign and abide by any recognition agreement won Mugala influential supporters. In August 1962 he could still claim the backing of both the Uganda TUC and many Labour Department officials. It was considered high handed of management to refuse to recognise a duly elected and apparently co-operative union official.

Management refused to be swayed by hostile public opinion. Unsuccessful attempts were made to insulate the provisional union leadership from Mugala's influence. Later the management succeeded in building up and strengthening the lower ranks of the union structure by regular consultations with former shop stewards. A period of industrial peace followed, in which management gave informal recognition to all the union officials except Mugala. The policy had clearly begun to pay off when Kasumba, at the head of a caretaker executive, claimed to be the only effective General Secretary. Then the Kasumba group of moderates, tacitly backed by management, almost won the August elections. They were defeated by the intervention of Mugala, backed by another Samia, the TUC organiser in Jinja. Three weeks later, Kasumba claimed that the union could make no progress while Mugala stayed. He attacked the TUC's interference in union affairs and threatened that the union would leave the TUC and even join the Uganda Federation of Labour.

The threats were unnecessary. After August, Mugala's stocks began to decline. The success of management's isolationist policy weakened his control over the still provisional executive. He had been able to contact union members after work, but he was unable to visit the factory itself and influence the day-to-day conduct of business. His salary as absentee full-time General Secretary was considered an unnecessary luxury. Mugala himself began to take up other interests. He associated himself with the Uganda Federation of Labour and this further divided him from the rest of the executive and also lost him the backing of the TUC and the Labour Department. At yet another election, in February 1963, he was decisively defeated and allowed to concentrate on these new activities.



The union leadership which succeeded him was headed by one of those originally not re-employed because of his union activities during the strike. Over half the executive had previously supported Mugala but later responded to appeals for greater responsibility. The number of disputes declined, perhaps aided by the rapid replacement of many of the skilled but tactless European supervisors. Expatriate technicians by then were concentrated in non-supervisory positions such as maintenance and quality control. The union had negotiated a more flexible comprehensive agreement on recognition, disputes procedure and terms of service. A check-off arrangement for subscriptions gave greater financial stability and the executive's period of tenure was extended to avoid the lack of continuity arising from frequent elections. This boom period of productivity and industrial peace would seem to indicate a return to the original pattern of a "company union", with the executive under the influence of management. However, it seems impossible that some lessons had not been learnt from the experience of the previous year.

Nyanza Textiles has been treated in detail because it demonstrates so many features present, usually in a lesser degree, in the general structure of industrial relations in Uganda.

The first relates to the actual structure of the negotiating machinery and the agreements which give it constitutional expression. Refusal to experiment with works committees merely because they had not proved useful in other overseas areas seems a short-sighted failure to appreciate the different environment of Africa. The 1959 Agreement was drawn up to fit a particularly docile situation, but the comprehensive agreement advocated by the union during the strike was based on an equally unreal premise. A finely detailed and legalistic document of the North American type has no relevance to a single-factory union in Africa. There are no lawyers and highly trained officials to put such an agreement into effect there — only an overworked personnel department and an amateur, often semi-illiterate, union executive. A solution was finally found in a simple yet flexible structure, adapted to what experience had shown to be the requirements of the particular situation.

The second lesson is that tribal loyalty remained a potent factor in a Jinja work force. It is clear that Mugala exerted influence over the union through his tribal affiliation with its most active group of members. The Samia and, to a lesser extent, the Luo gained control of the union. The management explained this partly in terms of outright intimidation but also because these

Kenya-based groups had more experience in industry elsewhere and fewer outlets for their energies than the local Soga and Ganda. At a lower level, work cells also tended to form on a tribal basis. These two aspects of tribalism taken together introduced tensions which supplemented the inevitable instability of an inexperienced and rapidly expanding work force. Other tribes felt that they were not being represented in the top ranks of the union and also were in a position to act independently of it. The personnel reshuffle after the strike destroyed much of the solidarity of these tribal cells, but the potency of tribal loyalties remained a constant factor in dealing with employees.

The strike also emphasised the difficulty of managing a tightly controlled company union. The idea of basing a union upon management trainees will secure a responsible leadership for the moment, but it may pose as many problems as it solves. There is a danger that the leaders will cease to represent the rank and file in their desire to impress management and confirm their promotion chances. What management regard as responsibility may be regarded by the workers as subservience. Radical leaders, perhaps more in tune with the masses, will be frustrated by their inability to reach controlling positions in the union.

In the case of Nyanza Textiles, the radicals did manage to break in. This was caused by a lack of co-operation between senior management and the numerous international union organisations canvassing support in 1961. Those union leaders left by management to maintain continuity were snapped up for union training away from the factory. This defeated management's purpose and wasted the funds of the internationals. The outburst which followed eventually re-established unionism on a sounder footing, but it proved costly to both sides. Perhaps it could have been avoided if management had been aware of the possible limitations of their promotion policy and had established closer contact with outside union organisations.

Finally, the strike indicated the dangers of introducing political considerations into the settlement of an industrial dispute. It is clear that all the outside parties who involved themselves in the attenuated negotiations did not act with disinterest. At first only the leadership of the Uganda TUC was at stake. Then national party politics intruded with the advent of the Chief Minister.

In an editorial which applauded this decision, the *Uganda Argus* unwittingly pointed out the attendant danger:

"Any harshness on the part of the employers will inevitably make the workers feel that the government sided with management

to rob them of a victory which they might otherwise have won by a continued strike." (13 November, 1961).

This comment was directed towards the employers, but it was no concern of theirs if the ruling party lost popularity. But the logic of the situation was not lost on others. One of Luande's later press statements worked its way round to accusing the (Democratic Party) government of "backing the 'lock-out' as part of their policy of obstructing the aims of the working people." (*Uganda Argus*, 15 November, 1961). One of the few unbiased commentaries on the strike concluded that "it began to look as though some people might be interested in prolonging the dispute in order to make political capital from it." (*Reporter*, 25 November, 1961).

This could almost be regarded as a legitimate opposition tactic once the ruling party has given the lead, but it is no way to conduct industrial relations. The Labour Department existed to provide impartial assistance in the settlement of industrial disputes. It may have been inexperienced and under-staffed. It may have made a number of serious errors of judgement in this dispute. Yet the Labour Department was the only truly disinterested party.

It was inviting trouble to have politicians intervening over the heads of their civil servants. The invitation was accepted.

## Chapter Nine

### THE NATIONAL UNION OF PLANTATION WORKERS

The National Union of Plantation Workers (NUPW) was potentially the largest union in Uganda, as plantation workers constituted over one-third of the enumerated work force in private employment. Yet, despite a period of strenuous effort by the International Federation of Plantation and Allied Workers (IFPAAW), the NUPW remained one of the least efficient organisations among the Ugandan unions, and never fulfilled its early promise.

There are several reasons why this union should have proved so difficult to organise. The vast majority of plantation workers were migrants from Rwanda, Sudan and the outlying Ugandan regions of Kigezi and West Nile. They were unskilled, illiterate and still deeply attached to their tribal environment. Many of the larger concerns encouraged them to stay longer than the usual twelve months to develop skill and efficiency, but met with little success. The rapid turnover of labour was the main difficulty in the way of organising these workers into an effective union organisation. Without any experience in such sophisticated transactions as regular subscriptions to a protective organisation, the workers saw little value in short-term union membership.

The task of union organisers was also complicated by the communication problem. Cotton and coffee were grown by peasant cultivators or by small African plantations employing only a handful of labourers. Tea and sugar were the main plantation crops and estates were widely separated. The tea estates were in a wide area around Fort Portal in the Western Province and scattered through Buganda. Sugar estates were confined to Buganda and Busoga, the two largest being at Lugazi and Kakira, 35 miles apart. The creation of a single plantation union involved co-ordinating union activities among the workers in these widely separated areas.

Finally, a plantation workers' union was confronted by a much wider range of responsibilities than most unions. The sugar estates and the larger tea estates provided housing, food, education and medical and welfare services for their workers. They were self-contained and self-sufficient communities, complete with shops, schools and hospitals. This meant that a union found itself



involved in disputes on services which elsewhere would be the concern of public authorities. It also posed problems for organisation activities and strengthened the power of employers. Because the employees were housed on private property, the employer could regulate the passage of outsiders into the plantation. It will be seen that this necessitated the negotiation of access agreements to allow union organisers to approach the workers, even outside working hours.

Mention must be made of the situation on the smaller tea estates in the Western Province. The larger company-owned estates employed full-time plantation labour on the same basis as the sugar estates. The smaller growers, sometimes called out-growers because they usually do not process their own tea but send it to a central factory, have a different labour structure. To economise on production overheads, they employed locally recruited Toro labour on a part-time basis, usually a three-hour daily task. These Toro labourers did not consider themselves workers in the usual sense as their wages acted only as a supplement to their subsistence and cash-crop agriculture. For this reason they were much more difficult to organise, although their wage-rates were very considerably lower than that of the full-time plantation employees.

After independence, the African government sponsored a third group of employers in the tea industry — the small-scale African outgrower. Being dependent on government loans and working a small virgin acreage which would not reach maturity for five more years, this group was unable to pay the same level of wages as the established growers. This was appreciated by officials in the Labour Department as well as the other employers, and the union was encouraged to concentrate on the non-African employers and the large companies.

As recently as 1950, the International Labour Organisation's Plantations Committee noted that:

"The trade union movement among plantation workers, where it exists, is still at a very early stage and receives little if any encouragement from employers or from public authorities." (ILO, 1950, p. 152).

Reasons suggested for the slow development were widespread illiteracy, inexperience of migrant labour, tribal and racial differences and lack of support from industrial unions. Employers also preferred direct relations with their employees, but the International Labour Organisation Report believed that relations conducted through representative unions would be more durable and



efficient.

Even by these world standards, Uganda development was remarkably slow. No effective union activity existed before 1960 and even then the union would have made little progress without the assistance of the IFPAAW, a newly formed international union organisation backed by the ICFTU. Perhaps the slowness in Uganda can be explained in general terms by reference to the immaturity and late development of the union movement as a whole. It will also be seen that some plantation employers were difficult to deal with.

The larger and newer tea-growing concerns, such as the Uganda Company, were quick to adopt a modern approach once unions established themselves in 1960. This led to a system of industrial relations based upon the recognition of full union rights. Opposing this were, on the one side, the two Asian "sugar barons" and, on the other, the established smaller scale European growers whose ideas had scarcely changed since their arrival forty years ago.

This compares closely with the situation in Grenada as described by S. Rottenberg:

"Within the planter community a division has developed between an intransigent bloc and a compromising bloc. The former approaches the problem of planter-worker relations with great and absolute principles; the latter approaches it pragmatically and is motivated by the maximising objectives of the western entrepreneur. Planter policy in labour relations is being forged out of the clash of these positions." (S. Rottenberg, 1952, p. 257).

Before December, 1960, separate developments occurred in the sugar and tea plantations without any co-ordination. Prior to amalgamation the two areas will be discussed separately. The earliest centre of activity was at Lugazi, the larger but less centralised of the two sugar plantations. Following serious rioting in 1956, the Labour Department had urged the introduction of a system of works committees to prevent further unrest. These seem to have operated to the satisfaction of management for a few years, but were regarded by the workers as one-way means of communication of little benefit to them.

In 1958, a local Labour Department official, Tom Sebuyira, encouraged his brother-in-law, a clerk in the factory, to draw up plans for a Senior African Workers Union. He was aided by officials of the Uganda TUC, but when the President of the TUC presented the union's constitution to management, the clerk was fired. Labour Department pressure caused him to be reinstated, but he was effectively discouraged from continuing his plans for a union.

Instead he received management encouragement in the formation of a staff association for African senior employees. Membership was limited to those earning more than a monthly wage of 125 shillings and the association possessed no sanctions against management actions. Nevertheless the association was paraded to the ICFTU Visiting Mission the following year as a demonstration that unions were not needed in the plantations.

The Mission was apparently not convinced, as it encouraged a group of hospital orderlies to try and alter the structure of the association. Early in 1960, a mass meeting attacked the weakness of the association in its dealings with management and decided to set up the Uganda Sugar Factory Workers Union. Application was made for registration on probation and the leaders were advised, first by Luande and then by Sebuyira, to amalgamate with another union growing up in the Fort Portal tea estates. Luande gave no clue how this might be achieved but Sebuyira, who later became Industrial Relations Officer after the departure of Brandie, actually wrote letters on behalf of the union to the various parties concerned.

In May, 1960, a serious 'wildcat' strike occurred at Lugazi which threatened to destroy the union before it had begun. Subjected to police interrogation, the union leaders denied that they were responsible for the disturbance and blamed political agitators. At this time, Buganda was unsettled by the anti-Asian commercial boycott and hostility was inevitably directed towards the largest Asian landowners and employers of labour. The strike was accompanied by wildly unrealistic wage demands. A personnel officer at Lugazi recalled that the new union leaders took a moderate line and advised a return to work after management offered a small general increase in wages. As a result of this strike, the leaders were forced to act cautiously and secretively to avoid giving cause for management action. That none were dismissed was a measure of their tact and careful approach in dealing with union business in their leisure time.

The ICFTU Visiting Mission also gave encouragement to developments in the Fort Portal area. The ICFTU East African Representative, Albert Hammerton, had made an attempt to introduce unions to the tea estates in 1958 but a constitution he drew up was shown to contravene the Trade Union Ordinance. Little interest was displayed by the Africans until a group of clerks became aware of the limitations of the works committee when wages questions came up for discussion. The secretary of the works committee at the Uganda Company's Kijura estate, Romano

Imanyoha, applied for Labour Department assistance in founding a union. The personnel department objected on the grounds that effective works committees made unions unnecessary, and threatened to withdraw all fringe benefits if wages in future were to be made subject to negotiation rather than unilaterally determined by management. Nevertheless, the clerical group went ahead. They were aided by a visit from Uganda TUC officials who supervised the election of officers and the drafting of a constitution in late 1959. On February 15, 1960, the National Union of Plantation Workers (NUPW) was registered, with its head office in Fort Portal.

At the beginning of March, both plantations of the Uganda Company (Kijura and Kiamara) went on strike and serious rioting followed. At the end of February the union had held a mass meeting which led to the circulation of two conflicting rumours among the unsophisticated mass of migrant workers. One stated that the union had promised to secure an immediate pay increase, the other that management would be giving a wage increase to all those who had refused to join the union to show that unions were not a good thing. The monthly wage payments of normal rates showed that both rumours were false, but considerable unrest prevailed as a result. When 2,000 field workers went on strike, the situation rapidly got out of hand and police opened fire. One man was killed, and a number wounded. The strike lasted a week and considerable attention was focused on the dangerously poor state of industrial relations in the plantations. In the parliamentary debate which followed, the use of police against strikers was criticised, although the Chief Secretary claimed that they were facing "a riotous mob and not a group of employees seeking the redress of industrial grievances". (*Uganda Argus*, 13 March, 1960). This was borne out by the press statements of George Ruguma, who had been elected as first General Secretary of the NUPW. He described the strike as unofficial, and made strenuous efforts to prevent violence (*Uganda Argus*, 3 March, 1960).

After the strike, management denied that an industrial dispute had ever existed because no notice of grievances had been given and no attempt made to arrange for negotiations. The President of the union was transferred to the Kampala office of the company and Ruguma was dismissed. He was subsequently appointed full-time General Secretary of the Lugazi branch of the NUPW. The union continued not to be recognised by the company and its supporters dwindled.

Nevertheless, the strike seems eventually to have had consi-



derable impact upon the higher levels of management. The General Manager was transferred, and the personnel department was put under the control of a former Labour Commissioner in Fiji who openly accepted the value of trade unionism. This change coincided with a visit from Walter Hood of the British TUC. en route to Kenya, who led a top level delegation which persuaded the Uganda Company to recognise the union. From this point the Company began to take an often unpopular lead among the tea estates in fostering union growth and also indirectly putting pressure on the two sugar employers.

In September, 1960, David Barratt arrived in East Africa as the first of a number of advisers sponsored by IFPAAW. This marked the beginning of a year of intense efforts made by outsiders to get the NUPW firmly established. Barratt had already gained wide experience in Malaya and West Africa and was able to establish closer contact with officials and employers than the original African leaders of the two embryonic unions. He also brought the leaders of both groups together into a single national organisation under James Ojambo from the Lugazi Sugar Factory as General Secretary. The communication problem was underlined by the fact that the headquarters of the new organisation had to be placed in Kampala as the only convenient point of common interest to both groups. Until the union could make itself financially self-sufficient, IFPAAW agreed to provide rent for office accommodation and the salaries of a full-time organiser and other officials.

Unfortunately, Barratt was able to spend only a few weeks in Uganda and, when he left, his work was taken over by M Mpangala from Tanganyika. As an African, and lacking Barratt's experience, Mpangala found it difficult to make much headway with the Asian and European employers. He also proved unreliable in his dealings with the new union executive. The 1961 IFPAAW Report (p. 4) noted that Mpangala, after a number of earlier accidents, finally wrecked the union's vehicle beyond repair. The use of this vehicle was the subject of much criticism from the union leaders at the Lugazi sugar estate who asserted that it was used for Mpangala's personal use and not available for recruiting expeditions around the scattered housing camps. After a second dispute, the Lugazi executive passed a resolution dispensing with Mpangala's services in that area. He subsequently lost all interest in the union and returned to Tanganyika.

He was succeeded by Dr. V. L. Allen, a lecturer at Leeds University engaged on academic research into Labour problems.

Allen retained the loyalty of the union but made himself exceedingly unpopular with both employers and Labour Department officials. Because he did not wish to appear before the workers in the company of management officials, he refused to call on employers or request permission to visit their plantations. He was also highly critical of the Labour Department, which he asserted was inefficient in safeguarding the conditions of workers and unduly influenced by the opinions of the employers (*Uganda Argus*, 22 September, 1961). His visit to Uganda helped the NUPW because of his role in key negotiations and for the new ideas he introduced, such as the use of the political type of rally to demonstrate popular support. He also perfected the technique of appealing to public opinion through the press, judging that non-African employers are more concerned about their public image than about the danger of a strike. Yet his outspoken criticisms aroused considerable resentment among the two groups whose assistance was most needed if the union was to consolidate its hold on the workers.

When Allen arrived, the stage seemed set for negotiations which would give some concrete gain to the union members. First, however, the NUPW had to face a serious challenge in the sugar estates. Its only branch was in Lugazi and from Kakira came news of a competing union, the Uganda Sugar and Allied Workers Union. This was organised by John Reich, the leader of the Jinja-based Uganda Federation of Labour. This other union had the backing of both employers as it was designed to cater only for sugar workers and not for all plantations. It seems that Reich was trading on this desire of the employers to exclude themselves from a national union in order to build up the local following for the Uganda Federation of Labour (UFL).

He was vigorously opposed by the NUPW and their advisers. Pressure was put on the Labour Department which, after much hesitation, decided not to accept Reich's application for registration. Reich's attempt to extend the union to Lugazi also met with limited success. The NUPW retained its hold there despite the employers' unconcealed preference for the smaller union. When the NUPW Annual Conference called for discussions with the sugar owners on wages increases, Reich's union lost face with most workers when it opposed such demands. The NUPW succeeded in showing that the Uganda Sugar and Allied Workers Union was a tool of management. By April, the UFL had collapsed as an effective organisation and Reich agreed to disband his sugar workers' union (*Uganda Argus*, 8 April, 1961).

Once the possibility of a serious split had been averted, nego-



tiations started with both sugar and tea estate managements. A recognition agreement had been negotiated with the Uganda Company before Barratt's departure and it was left to Allen to follow it up with a wage claim. In July, this claim was submitted, asking for a 40% wage increase for tea pickers, a reorganisation of the wage structure and an acceptance of the principle of the check-off method of subscription collection. Although no wage increase had been granted in the last three years, the Company objected to such a stiff demand so soon after they had conceded recognition to the union. Management feared that a large immediate increase would make both the company and the union unpopular with the other estate owners. They offered instead the introduction of a task system to increase productivity, although Allen was able to show that this would lead in practice to a reduced income for the less productive pickers.

The union adjourned the meeting and reported to their members that the company offered only a reduction and not an increase in reply to their claim. This caused considerable unrest and the union leaders realised that their following would lose confidence unless some sort of increase could be secured. A strike was not feasible in view of the small following behind the union at that stage, and the earlier incident had shown that an undisciplined demonstration could easily degenerate into a violent riot. Instead, to impress the employers of their determination, a poster parade was organised in Kampala to publicise the union's claim.

At the resumed meeting, according to the union delegates, management's attitude changed at the appearance of the parade because they wished to avoid the bad publicity. A mediator was appointed from the Labour Department and, after considerable debate and the publication of conflicting press statements, a compromise was accepted with management agreeing to an overall 10% increase. Although much less than demanded, the union was able to represent this as a considerable victory as it was the first negotiated wage increase in the plantation industries.

At much the same time, a Recognition Agreement was being concluded with the sugar estate owners as a prelude to a similar wage claim. Initially the owners had refused to recognise the NUPW because of their preference for Reich's union, but finally they registered the Uganda Sugar Manufacturers Association and agreed to start negotiations. An Access Agreement was drawn up by the personnel department at Lugazi in consultation with the NUPW General Secretary, Ojambo. Under protest it was accepted by Allen and the union executive, although neither had been con-

sulted and they considered it unduly restrictive. Under the terms of the Agreement, a four month pause would follow before the union would be given full recognition. The management also prescribed that the union should be backed by a majority of the work force as fully paid-up members. As this involved the recruitment of 11,000 illiterate migrant workers, this was considered an insuperable obstacle to immediate recognition.

Allen advised that the union should disregard the formal conditions of management and demonstrate that the union had a mass following irrespective of the number of paid-up members. Kakira remained weakly organised as a result of Reich's abortive efforts and so the union organisers concentrated on Lugazi. The techniques of a political campaign were adopted, with union leaders visiting camps to give rousing addresses and stir up enthusiasm with mass rallies. On the spot donations were called for rather than fixed monthly subscriptions and union interest rapidly increased. From representatives sent to supervise these activities, management learnt of the following being built up by the union and were ready to recognise the union much earlier than formally agreed.

Allen had succeeded in putting the union into a strong bargaining position against the employers. Unfortunately, at the same time, he encouraged the union leaders to adopt uncompromising tactics which they could not sustain without his assistance. Adopting the hard-hitting tactics of western trade unions brought immediate gains but had the long-term effect of encouraging already difficult employers to resist any further strengthening of union activity in the future. When Allen left in September, 1961, the second phase of union growth came to an end. An IFPAAW adviser from Nairobi paid occasional visits, but he was not in a position to take the same continuous interest in the situation in Uganda. On the whole, the local leadership was left to its own devices, to build upon or to destroy the foundation laid in the previous year.

At first, things went well. Following the recognition agreement with the sugar manufacturers' association, a general wage increase was negotiated and the check-off system of dues collection was accepted in principle. The Lugazi branch of the union also won a rare word of praise for its handling of a dispute concerning a dismissal after a shop steward refused to continue working under conditions that he judged to be dangerous. A short strike was followed by the union agreeing to accept mediation which subsequently recommended reinstatement. A local weekly magazine contrasted the reasonable behaviour of the union leaders with the

past strikes which had been "blind, headless and disorganised." (*Reporter*, 19 October, 1963).

However, the union went into marked decline during 1962 and into 1963. Of the two sugar estates, Kakira remained weakly organised with leadership in the hands of a small clique who were out of touch with the views of the bulk of the workers. This led to ludicrous situations in which the union leaders negotiated changes in the prevailing situation only to have their actions repudiated by the mass of the workers once they realised what was happening. The personnel manager also complained that the union leaders consistently failed to follow through with detailed negotiations after they had lodged and publicised their original claims. In themselves, the claims were sufficient to ensure the popularity of the leaders among the bulk of the union members and management were blamed when nothing further occurred. This led to increasing discontent and a rash of unofficial strikes which the union leaders were powerless to control. On one occasion, a group of workers of a different tribe from that of the union leaders refused to go back to work until the President of the Uganda TUC offered to take up their case.

At Lugazi, the original union executive was more experienced and had benefited more from the services of the international advisers. Tribal distinctions were of less importance and a number of leaders had been trained either overseas or at the Kampala Labour College. But ambitious individuals outside the union leadership seem to have coveted the prestige enjoyed by the established leaders, who came to be attacked as management stooges. At the annual branch elections, a major dispute over the leadership developed and, on appeal from one of the interested parties, the union headquarters refused to accept the validity of the election results. The personnel management did likewise, and the explosive situation occurred in which two groups competed for the support of the bulk of the union members by out-bidding each other in claims upon management. Anarchy and wildcat strikes prevailed until the Registrar of Trade Unions intervened. The elections were declared invalid on the grounds that proper regard had not been paid to provisions in the union's constitution requiring balanced representation of the various sectional interests. New elections confirmed in power the less experienced of the two groups but the estate continued to be plagued by unofficial stoppages which demonstrated the weakness of the union's control over its members. This eventually led to the appointment of a Government Commission of Enquiry into the state of industrial relations in the sugar



industry.

In the tea estates, the union also failed to fulfil its early promise. At the end of 1962, an employers' association was formed by a number of the larger and more progressive companies with the backing of the Federation of Uganda Employers. A comprehensive agreement was negotiated with the union and unilaterally the Uganda Company also agreed to grant a check-off arrangement to facilitate the collection of union finances. However, the leading members of the association complained that the agreement was enforced in a most haphazard manner and particularly resented the fact that smaller companies nominally covered by the collective agreement were permitted by the union to continue paying much less without protest.

The European outgrowers remained the most difficult to deal with. The Report of the 1962 Minimum Wages Advisory Board recommended that:

"Legislative provision should be made to enable agreements relating to minimum wages made between the National Union of Plantation Workers and Employers in the tea and sugar industries to be applied by law to all employees in these industries." (UG, 1962, p. 19).

It was appreciated that special provision would need to be made for African outgrowers who were just beginning to establish themselves on a small scale but the main aim was to place the large companies on a competitive footing with the European growers. Nothing came of this recommendation, probably because the union showed no interest whatever in organising this section of the industry in the face of opposition. The outgrowers had indirectly taken account of the union's existence by unilaterally granting a 20% increase in wages, but their rates continued to be well below those paid on the larger estates.

This third phase of development clearly showed a basic weakness in union leadership which had been concealed previously by the presence of international advisers. In common with many unions in Uganda, the NUPW was plagued by internal dissensions and defections to management among the top leadership. The coalition of the tea and sugar employees into a single national union brought together two very different groups of leaders. On the Fort Portal tea estates, the early leaders were local Toro people engaged in clerical work rather than the short term migrants from Kigezi and Rwanda. On the sugar estates near Jinja, the clerical workers were mainly Ganda who at first considered union membership as an activity beneath their status. Unions were started by

Kenyans employed as hospital orderlies and factory mechanics. In neither case was much interest shown in union activity by the bulk of the workers in the fields and, even at the end of 1963, it remained true that the majority of the union membership was drawn from the factory and administrative groups. At the Kakira sugar estate, the union had 553 fully paid up members in the factory labour force of 2,253 and only 230 among the remaining 7,802 employed elsewhere.

The division of offices between the two areas when the national union was formed in 1960 led to a rather uneasy alliance. The two sections had little in common beyond the basic fact of concern with plantation agriculture. Each section dealt with employers of a different race and with very different ideas on the conduct of industrial relations, so that there were few bonds of common interest. It was left to the national leadership to hold the new organisation together by forging personal links between the two groups. Ojambo and Zarabweji failed to do this. The Lugazi executive threatened to secede and Ojambo was forced out of office. He subsequently joined Reich in the personnel department of the Kakira sugar estate.

The removal of Ojambo left a gap in the national leadership which was filled most effectively for a time by Eribankya, a former school-teacher and accounts clerk in Fort Portal. The IFPAAW adviser in Nairobi reported that Eribankya was the backbone of the union during his period in office but that he was receiving little support from branch officials who resented central control over their policies. Unfortunately for the union, Eribankya was seriously incapacitated as a result of a car smash at the end of 1962. On his return, he finally conceded that the task of rejuvenating the union was beyond him and also crossed over to personnel management.

This left the national leadership to two Fort Portal men, Zarabweji and Imanyohwa, a fact which might help to explain the lack of control that was exercised over events in the sugar estates. At the end of 1963, there was a general lack of confidence in the leadership of the union although nobody seemed prepared to do anything about it. Unofficial appeals had gone from the employers association to IFPAAW for renewed assistance, but the dynamism seemed to have departed from the union itself and the leaders did not agree that any assistance was needed.

The history of the NUPW demonstrates the extent to which international assistance could stabilise and strengthen local unions, even in such a difficult area of organisation as the plantations. It



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also demonstrates the way in which a decline can set in once the international stimulus is removed. Perhaps the basic mistake was that the international advisers attempted to create a single giant union covering all agricultural workers. This could only operate while the advisers themselves were present to help overcome the inevitable administrative difficulties involved in such an undertaking. When the advisers left, the local leaders were not sufficiently experienced or dedicated to carry on their work. The subsequent re-emergence of a separate sugar workers' union seemed to bear out this pessimistic prognosis.

## Chapter Ten

### THE UGANDA PUBLIC EMPLOYEES UNION

In Uganda, as in most developing countries, Government was the largest single employer of labour in colonial times. The railways and the postal service were under the control of the East African Common Services Organisation and had separate unions. The same applied to workers in public corporations such as the Uganda Electricity Board. The remainder, from central government to municipalities, were grouped together into the Uganda Public Employees Union (UPEU). The story of the creation of the UPEU is largely the story of the efforts of one man, a volatile young Dutchman named Charles Franken.

Franken came to Uganda on behalf of the Public Services International (PSI), an international trade secretariat. The official history of the PSI noted that:

"In Africa the PSI has more affiliates than in other less developed areas. This accomplishment was originally achieved without any special representative, conference or mission. However, it may be assumed that some of the leaders of these unions had contact with the PSI while studying at universities in England." (US Department of Labour, 1962, p. 67).

No record exists of Ugandan leaders making any such contact. In 1958 a Visiting Mission was finally sent to survey the needs of public employees organisations in Africa. In general, the Mission found that:

"African trade unionists wanted assistance and guidance from western unions, but under the condition that African unions retain the right to make their own decisions, whether these decisions are wise or unwise. The Mission also concluded that African unions have the same general problems as public employee unions elsewhere, with the additional burden of being subject to government registration and control." (*supra cit.* p. 68).

With regard to Uganda, the Mission concluded that the situation was so backward that no immediate action was felt to be warranted. In December, 1960, a second Mission was much more optimistic after a longer stay in Uganda. As a result of this visit, Franken was appointed.

Before discussing the Ugandan situation on Franken's arrival,

something must be said of the general ideas behind the operation of the PSI. One idea in particular has special relevance to later developments in Uganda. Policy statements from the PSI executive were very guarded when referring to the rights of free collective bargaining and the use of direct action. This was inevitable in view of the wide variety of national practices in solving the problem of reconciling the rights of employees with the concept of parliamentary sovereignty. Emphasis was laid mainly on the ILO Conventions guaranteeing freedom of association and on the need for government to recognise the reasonable grievances of its employees.

But, from interviews with the PSI Executive and from written sources, it was made clear that the PSI favoured the growth of a single comprehensive union to cover all levels of public employees. One large union would have a strong bargaining position, would simplify negotiation machinery and would allow most economic use to be made of financial and leadership resources. In a speech in British Guiana, the PSI General Secretary made this point when he showed how European workers had benefited from consolidation which pooled union resources:

"The single union can not only do more than the numerous unions did before, it can do it better, and with less money from each member . . . because the single organisation can 'deliver the goods', the public authorities do business with it and seek its co-operation". (*PSI Bulletin*, August, 1962).

Franken's experience in Holland would have confirmed this opinion. During the German occupation, union activity was completely dislocated. After the war, an effort was made to unite the various union factions and was initially very successful. But in 1954 a joint letter from the Dutch Roman Catholic bishops resulted in the prohibition of Catholics from joining trade unions with non-Catholic members. Old schisms re-opened and, by 1960, no less than 117 civil service associations existed, with each category of civil servant being catered for by five competing union organisations. Both Franken and the General Secretary of the PSI allowed their experience in Europe to dominate their thinking on problems in Uganda. The value of a single all-embracing union in their own countries led them to assume that the same would apply in Uganda.

When Franken arrived in Uganda in 1961, he faced a mammoth task. Because of a decentralised structure of government, there were a large number of different public authorities responsible for the setting of wages for public servants. This situation became

worse after independence when the powers and responsibilities of the districts and native kingdoms were increased. No co-ordinating body existed to deal with staffing on a national scale although it will be seen later that the Central Government could effectively dictate minimum wage rates by direct legislation.

On Franken's arrival, only three inactive staff associations existed in Kampala catering for Africans. Of these, Franken found that the oldest, the Kampala Local Government Staff Association, was only a paper construction. Attempts by its few African members to dissolve the association in favour of a new union were resisted by its Asian and European members.

In the Central Government there were staff associations divided on racial lines. The African body, the Uganda African Civil Servants Association, had been founded in 1955 to participate in joint consultative machinery modelled on the British practice of Whitley Councils. It was restricted to established employees and had a nominal membership in excess of 2,000. Franken admitted that it had a very low percentage of paid-up members, but described it as the most important body of all. Its leaders were mainly in the highest ("super-scale") grade and the lower ranks lacked enthusiasm.

Another African association was that of the Medical Assistants, also founded in 1955. This was a rare craft organisation with branches in each of Uganda's eleven hospitals. The founder of the association had approached the 1958 Mission but was absent in 1960 on an extended training course in Britain. The current leadership was drawn solely from Mulago Hospital in Kampala.

Outside Kampala, Franken found two genuine trade unions operating in Jinja, both founded in 1960. The first was called the Uganda Public Servants Union, a rather grandiloquent title as it catered for unestablished employees in the Ministry of Works and other allied manual workers. Its founder was Wangatia, an elderly Kenyan who had been in Jinja for seven years. Although he spoke no English he was obviously a dynamic and influential character. He told of being elected to the local works committee as representative of his section of mechanics, finding it to be ineffective and then asking why the workers could not have a union instead. The local official told him that it was not justified but Wangatia then had a friend draft a letter to the Chief Secretary which established his legal rights. He then began his union by organising the mechanical section of the Ministry of Works. By the middle of 1961, he could claim 600 members, drawn from the mechanical and stores sections, housing estate workers and un-



skilled workers in the Health Department. Only 20 were paid up, but the union was formally recognised. On first encounter, Franken commented that "it seemed to be an honest union led by simple men grateful of any help." (Interview, Haarlem, April, 1963).

The second Jinja union was the Municipal and Township Employees Union, also led by a Kenyan, Absolom Mbwanga. Mbwanga had received a sound commercial education in Nairobi and held a number of responsible jobs before being forced to leave his job as assistant farm manager because of the Mau Mau Emergency. He ended up as an accounts clerk in the Jinja Municipality Offices and, aided by officials of the Uganda TUC, began to organise a union. He found that members feared victimisation and made little headway in his demand for recognition because a 60% representation of the work force was demanded. Even so by 1960 he claimed 600 members on his books, with 50 fully paid up.

Outside Jinja, four recently founded unions catered for workers in district administrations — Bugisu (230 members); Bukedi (270); Kigezi (100) and Lango (1,100). The last, centred in Lira, was by far the most important. In 1961, the union had eight branches throughout the district and its part-time officials went 'out into the field' every weekend.

A factor which increased African enthusiasm for trade unions was the publication of the Fleming Report on salaries in the East African civil services (CO, 1960). This Report recommended various salary increases for the different grades and emphasised the value of uniformity among the different levels of government. It also introduced the system of an 'overseas addition' to the basic local rate to allow Africanisation of posts without the need to continue paying salaries at the expatriate level. A number of District Councils in Uganda were unable or unwilling to pay the increases recommended after the Report was accepted by the Central Government. Employees in these administrations thus felt the need to increase their bargaining power by organising themselves into trade unions. By contrast, in Central Government, objections were made to the recommendations of the Commission, not the failure to enforce them. The principle of an 'overseas addition' was attacked as racially discriminatory because aspirants to the posts held by Europeans wanted to receive the same high pay when they were promoted. This concern for the top jobs perhaps explains why many of the early leaders in the move towards unionism were super-scale employees. Africanisation was a surer way of enlarging their income than pressing for general wage

increases. Shortly after the publication of the Report of the Commission the African Civil Servants Association announced its intention to transform itself into a union to be able to fight this case more effectively.

Franken began his long task of welding together these unions by visiting Jinja to enlist the aid of the two unions there in a general recruiting drive. He was using the Kampala Labour College and his own house as the base for operations, but initially favoured the idea of a headquarters office in Jinja.

His first concern was for the local government workers and the 2,000 members already in separate unions. But there was no simple method of co-ordination. Unlike Kenya and Tanganyika, Uganda did not have an association of local authorities with which to negotiate. Franken preferred a single union to the dual structure separating local administrations from central government as in Britain, and worked towards this end.

In August 1961, a conference of executives from nine unions was held in Kampala. This set up a series of committees to study the administrative and constitutional problems which hampered amalgamation. At this point, Franken went on a short leave. On his return, he was deeply disillusioned to find his work had gone to pieces during his absence. The paper organisation had dissolved. Without his driving personality, the union leaders had lost interest. He laboriously rebuilt his scheme and, after a second conference, personally supervised the drafting of a new constitution.

The new constitution was circulated among all interested parties including government officials in Uganda and at the Colonial Office. In the absence of adverse criticism, the provisional executive went ahead and held its Inaugural Conference on December 9, 1961. The Uganda Public Employees Union was at last a reality. Although the Uganda TUC did not attend, the Deputy Labour Commissioner came and was impressed by the showing. Franken had reservations — 200 delegates attended but several unions did not appear, perhaps because the Conference unexpectedly clashed with Tanganyikan independence celebrations.

After the inauguration, problems increased and Franken received an extension of his visit to cope with them. The decision to amalgamate, formally approved at the conference, proved difficult to put into practice. The provisions of the Trade Union Ordinance required an awkwardly high percentage of approval from the members and also involved the complicated process of dissolution of the constituent unions. Dissolution also called into

question collective agreements concluded between each union and its employing authority. Finally, there was the problem of reconciling leaders of the small unions to subordination in a wider organisation.

Dealings with the Busoga Local Government Employees Union illustrate many of the problems. This union had been founded at the beginning of 1961 by a group of senior clerks to replace the defunct staff association. The failure to implement the Fleming Report was one of the incentives to form a union. In addition, there was a special motive limited to Busoga. Posts in the local administration were being turned into family patronage for the local chiefs. Friends and relatives were being hired in excess of the number for which finance was available and then retrenchment was taking the form of dismissal of other employees of long standing.

The Busoga union approached the UPEU in September 1961, ostensibly to investigate the possibility of joining. It was given access to documents such as model recognition agreements which were confidential drafts for use in negotiations with the Labour Commissioner. Then, instead of joining the UPEU, it used its newly acquired expertise to apply for recognition by the Local Government as a separate organisation. It also joined the Uganda TUC separately and the leaders were suitably rewarded. The General Secretary was allocated a place by the TUC on an overseas training course. Understandably this episode disgusted Franken, but he was powerless to prevent it. Relations between the TUC and the UPEU were very tense at the time for a number of reasons which are discussed in more detail in Chapter 11.

In an interview, an official of the Busoga union explained his reasons for staying out of the UPEU. Having investigated the structure of the UPEU he claimed not to be satisfied that local interests were sufficiently protected. He pointed to the experience of the central government's African Civil Servants Association, where the dominance of super-scale employees had meant that the interests of lower paid groups were ignored. This had led to dissatisfaction and a threat to secede. If the Busoga union dissolved itself, there could be no effective safeguard against maltreatment or inefficiency by the central executive.

Throughout the first half of 1962, Franken toiled with these administrative problems. He was able to open an office in Kampala, which was the true hub of official activity, and had recruited two full-time officials. These expenditures were financed out of a loan made from the PSI until the Ugandan union made itself



financially self-sufficient. Finance remained a problem because of the unwillingness of branches to send on money to headquarters, especially where the dissolution procedure was bound up in red tape. But by May, the end of Franken's mission was in sight. Finances were improved by the two strongest unions handing over their assets and by the successful negotiation of a check-off agreement for Central Government unestablished employees. Similar arrangements were pending with other employing authorities and membership was expanding rapidly. When Franken left in July he was well pleased with the internal organisation of the UPEU.

As well as building up a strong internal organisation, Franken also had to contend with the changing attitudes of Government as an employer.

From the beginning, he received firm support from the Colonial Office who recognised the PSI as a responsible organisation and advised the Protectorate Government to co-operate with its adviser. When local opposition was proving a barrier to progress, a formal memorandum was transmitted from the Colonial Secretary to the Governor reaffirming official support. Later, the Labour Adviser to the Colonial Office paid a visit in person, a gesture much appreciated by Franken:

"A wonderful experience was the visit of Mr. Foggon. Quite a lot of people feared too many complaints from my side and so there was a hurried clearing of desks." (Interview, Haarlem, April, 1963).

As that quotation indicates, many local officials were sceptical about the value of a strong trade union movement in the civil service. At about the same time, the Labour Department was experiencing considerable difficulty with an adviser acting for the plantation workers' international and there had been an unfortunate strike in the Nairobi Municipality union where the PSI adviser seems to have lost control. In 1960, attempts to form a local government workers' union in Kigezi had led to serious rioting. Visiting unionists were decidedly not welcome as a result.

For more than three months, no progress was made by Franken. Although the administration was committed in general terms to the support of trade unions, there seems to have been considerable mistrust of the idea of a union operating within the public service. Franken even had difficulties with the local immigration authorities. Despite credentials supported by the Colonial Office, he was refused a permanent visa and given instead a Visitor's Pass of limited duration. A senior official confided that this was done to allow his visit to be terminated at short notice, without



any fuss, if his activities became troublesome.

The change in attitude so badly needed came when Franken returned to Europe on leave and recounted his frustrations to the Colonial Office. Foggon's visit followed and a trained labour officer was installed in the Establishments Section of the Prime Minister's Office to deal exclusively with the UPEU. With the start of union activity, the Labour Commissioner transferred his responsibility for the unestablished employees to this department to avoid the embarrassment of being required to act as both employer and conciliator. The new official, Antony Mousley, was the key local figure in changing official attitudes. In view of the general growth of union activity, he realised the value to government of dealing with a single union on behalf of the unestablished workers instead of allowing non-recognised general unions to recruit different sections. With the backing of Foggon, he was able to impose this idea on the rest of the Establishments Section.

By January 1962, Franken was able to report that Government were now as co-operative as he could ever expect. A dispute with the Lango District Council had done much to build up his prestige with the Labour Department. The strong Lango union had called a dispute over dismissals arising out of the implementation of the Fleming Commission. An anomaly in the law allowed the Council to refuse conciliation and a strike was threatened. Franken persuaded the union to refer the matter to the Ministry of Local Government and the Labour Commissioner. After much negotiation the Council was advised to reconvene and change the law. Franken believed that this experience has been useful in that the union found a serious gap in the law and thereby increased its prestige. Shortly afterwards the UPEU was offered a separate seat on a Labour Advisory Board appointed to consider general labour legislation.

The long process of negotiating a check-off agreement for the unestablished employees clearly shows the change in official policy. At first there was an outright refusal because it was feared that the union, once recognised and financially sound, would become too powerful. Once Franken left, the situation might get out of hand, as there were few effective leaders. A high percentage of workers enrolled in the union was demanded to resist arguments in favour of the check-off arrangement.

During his visit, Foggon urged that the usual order of recognition followed by the check-off should be reversed. Recognition involved a wide range of rights under the Trade Union Ordinance and was resisted on that account. The UPEU could register as

a probationary trade union and be recognised after the supervision of the Registrar's Department had been tightened up. In the meantime, the check-off would give financial stability and replace the deplorable dependence on loans from the PSI.

Opposition seems to have continued for a while, although couched in more guarded terms to avoid contradicting higher policy. But a change came about with the appointment of Sir Walter Coutts as Governor and his brother, P. G. Coutts, as Establishments Secretary. A Committee was appointed with representatives of the Treasury, the Ministry of Works and the Prime Minister's Department. The main opposition seems to have come from the lower ranks of the Treasury who objected to the increased administrative burden of operating the accountancy side for the union. From its strong bargaining position, the Government was able to exclude the established employees from either check-off or recognition. Nevertheless, the UPEU had scored a significant victory which stabilised its finances and gave it official standing.

The union's press statement proudly announcing this success asserted that:

"Recognition would also have been given by now but for constitutional and political changes which have occupied government ministers and officials." (*Uganda Argus*, 25 April, 1962).

The effect of these changes almost wrecked the union. From February 1962, Uganda was in a political turmoil. Buganda's separatism was forcing a constitutional change to a federal structure. The Democratic Party's dependence on a minority of votes meant that it was unlikely to hold power at the next election without radical changes in the outlook of the voters. This had three separate effects on the progress of the UPEU.

The first was that negotiations with the local administrations almost halted for six months. The councils and the kingdom administrations were uncertain of their future powers and unwilling to commit themselves to recognition or check-off agreements. They wanted to wait until they could be certain of their future sources of income under the new federal structure.

The second effect was that the civil servants were unwilling to commit the future central government by giving a definite undertaking on the check-off. It was feared that a UPC cabinet might repudiate an agreement signed by the Democratic Party. Franken protested that he could not wait around for the elections to be held. He wanted a start made while he could be present to supervise the implementation of the check-off from the union side. Appreciating the value of his tuition to the union, the civil ser-

vants found a unique solution. An agreement was signed for three months, which would allow the Democratic Party to claim prestige for its initiation and still give the UPC the option of renewal if it came into office.

Finally, the action of Prime Minister Kiwanuka himself did most to put the future of the union into jeopardy. A committee of enquiry into the wages of government unestablished employees had revealed some startling anomalies in wage rates and had recommended the implementation of a set of uniform rates. (UP, 1962). The general intention of the civil service seems to have been to wait for constitutional stabilisation and the next year's budget before taking action. But Kiwanuka was aware of the possible short-term benefits of deciding upon an immediate general rise which in some cases suddenly doubled the minimum rates. Within a limited budget, this immediately caused a 40% drop in employment by public authorities. The union objected because it was made to appear powerless either to protect jobs or to raise wages.

Then the Prime Minister began to make unrealistic claims on Africanisation which threatened the security of expatriates without offering any incentive to remain on contract. In Franken's words:

"The whole civil service was paralysed and the ambition of the expatriates to stay disappeared entirely". (Interview, *op. cit.*).

The UPEU was also embarrassed in its dealings with expatriates by a clause in its constitution which called for effective Africanisation. The Union seemed to be backing up the politicians so that the previous co-operation was replaced by stiffer resistance.

The April elections brought this difficult phase to an end. The election of a government led by A. M. Obote was acclaimed as a step towards greater tolerance for unions. The cabinet took steps to exert pressure for recognition of the UPEU by local authorities. The check-off and recognition agreements for central government unestablished employees was renewed permanently and expatriates were reassured of their future within a definite programme of Africanisation.

The key debate during the formation of the UPEU had been about the structure of the union, especially the extent to which it would cover established staff. The PSI and Franken were committed to a single union for all public employees from the permanent secretary to the street sweeper. At first, the PSI hoped that national agreements might be signed which would impose some degree of uniformity in conditions for employees. This soon proved impractical in view of the different resources available to

the various levels of government in the complex federal structure.

Franken persisted with his single union scheme and devised an ingenious constitution which concentrated responsibility in the centre but allowed wide discretion to the various sections in negotiation matters. The constitution adopted at the Inaugural Conference in December, 1961 was a masterly attempt to reconcile autonomy with responsibility.

Autonomy was guaranteed under Rule 10, which enumerated the departmental sections of the union, starting with a division of established and unestablished staff of central government into separate sections.

"Each such section shall have its own executive officers and shall be responsible for all strictly departmental interests of the group, including the making of representations to the Executive Council, but excluding the conclusion of collective agreements or a strike." (*UPEU Constitution*, Rule 10 (f), p. 5).

The titular head of the union was the National Conference to be held every two years, with delegates elected directly from branches. The effective head was the Executive Council elected at the National Conference and also containing representatives of the Departmental Sections. Executive Officers, including the full-time officials, were elected at the National Conference and were subject to direction from the Executive Council.

Responsibility for collective bargaining and direct action was firmly placed in the hands of the Executive Council. Under Rule 21(b), a branch official desiring strike action had first to obtain a high percentage of votes in support from his branch members. Even then he had also to apply to the General Secretary for the sanction of the Executive Council which had the power of absolute veto. In practice this meant that the UPEU never conducted an official strike. On occasions when a branch official had called out his members, the General Secretary intervened to force a settlement by negotiation.

Finally, in the interest of local co-ordination, Rule 18 of the constitution makes provision for Regional Councils. Resembling a miniature British Trades Council, these were designed "for the purpose of locally administering the general business of the union" and were "responsible for the establishment of branches, their proper administration and conduct." Branches at each place of employment were required to have at least 50 members, with the Regional Council allowed to amalgamate branches which fell below strength in any region. In practice, regional councils scarcely functioned and the only active branches outside the urban centres were



the employees of the Central Government Ministry of Works.

The aim behind the whole structure was first to prevent hasty and irresponsible action of branches or sections from bringing the union into conflict and disrepute. Franken was aware that if the potential power of the country-wide union ever became a threat, government would soon impose restrictions. At the same time, he wanted to prevent a repetition of the Kenyan experience where a comprehensive union fell to pieces because its structure allowed dominance by a single section of the established workers.

From the beginning the Colonial Office and the Protectorate Government opposed the idea of a single union. In a letter to the Establishments Secretary (19 February, 1962), Foggon set out his objections. A monolithic structure would tend to be dominated by the most educated established group; it would not take account of the very different conditions of service between the various levels of government and between the established and unestablished; it would be a political and economic liability to government because of the concentration of power in the hands of a single leader. In emphasising the bargaining power and economics of scale to be derived from one large union, Foggon felt that Franken was disregarding these long range considerations. He urged Franken to consider a small number of unions each catering to the different financial resources of the various employing authorities, perhaps linked in a loose federation. Franken compromised to the extent of providing autonomous sections and this was eventually accepted by local administrators as a workable arrangement for dealing with the different authorities.

But the Government refused to compromise on the other question — the participation of established staff as full members of the union. From the outset, it was maintained that established staff should be covered by consultative machinery only, modelled on the British Whitley Council system. This was based on the wholly reasonable fear that senior civil servants should not become involved in the direction of an organisation which could halt the entire machinery of the State.

Whitleyism had not proved very successful in the colonies. It seems first to have been advocated in a memorandum from the Colonial Secretary in 1949 (CO, 1949) but a Colonial Labour Advisory Council Memorandum in 1953 pointed to faults in the constitution of the councils and to:

“An inherent weakness peculiar to colonial conditions that the overriding authority of the Executive is very real and tends to limit the Official side's freedom to bargain.” (CO, 1953).

There was no provision for binding independent arbitration and many matters negotiated were still subject to the authority of the Colonial Office or local finance committees. In 1957, a Colonial Office report admitted that:

“It cannot be ignored that Whitleyism has not been uniformly successful and in certain territories the machinery has broken down altogether.” (CO, 1957).

This was probably fair comment on Uganda at that time, although the Whitley Council did revive to some extent when James Brandie, the ex-Trade Unionist Industrial Relations Officer, took over as secretary of the Staff Side. The Staff Side in Uganda consisted of an equal number of representatives of each of the three racial associations and tended to be dominated by the Europeans. The African association had the largest number of nominal members but by far the smallest number of financial subscribers. As in other territories, the Council could act only in an advisory capacity as the Official Side could not bind itself to accept the results of any bargaining or arbitration.

By the end of 1962, the changes in the racial balance of the civil service made reform of the structure imperative. Government emphasised that this reform was to take precedence over any scheme to include established officers in the UPEU. A strong bargaining position in the check-off negotiations allowed Government to exclude the established section from its provisions and the general policy was to encourage the UPEU to concentrate on the unestablished before allowing it to exert pressure on behalf of established groups. It was felt, with some justification, that the interests of the two groups were so divergent as to be almost conflicting. An individual highly placed in the civil service might well find his duties as an officer of the union in direct conflict with his duties as an official. It will be seen that, after independence, conflict did in fact occur, when the interests of senior civil servants were in direct opposition to the interests of the unestablished. Franken never accepted the principle that the two sections should have different organisations, but was forced to accept exclusion from the established section as a *quid pro quo* for co-operation on the strengthening of the unestablished section.

Finally, something must be said of the quality and character of leadership in the UPEU. This factor had an important bearing on the developments after independence.

There were two very different groups involved in the founding of the union — established officers of sound education and considerable ability, and the unestablished group typified by Wangatia

who had considerable initiative and toughness but little finesse or education. Inevitably the leaders tended to be chosen from the first group.

At first the senior officers behind the Central Government Civil Servants Association were dominant. The first President of the union was an extremely able young graduate who quickly rose to the rank of permanent secretary. Other super-scale officers who had been active in the staff association also held senior posts in the new union and did much to provide a sound core for the amorphous organisation.

But this situation could not last, nor was it particularly healthy. From the Government side considerable pressure was exerted on these officers to resign from the union. Promotions were made dependent upon willingness to concentrate solely on civil service affairs and avoid any possible conflict of loyalties. This was accepted by Franken as valuable to the union also. He was aware that the interests of the unestablished bulk of the union would be best served by officers closer to their own level.

Finding adequate replacements was not easy. Franken found real drive among the unestablished and lower clerical staff, particularly in Jinja, but few leaders educated enough to earn the respect of a large union. After much sorting out, he finally settled on an executive in which most of the administration was left to an effective group of full-time officials based in Kampala. This full-time group were drawn mainly from officers at the bottom of the established section with sound clerical training and a background of local government union organising. The General Secretary, Eliab Kibuka, for example, had been a clerk/typist and then a junior Fisheries Officer in the Ankole Kingdom government. The Kampala Regional Secretary had been an interpreter/clerk and then a trainee Housing Estate Manager in Jinja.

There were still many disappointments. The promising young secretary of the Bukedi union was made secretary of the Executive Council but proved to be lacking in the necessary qualities and was removed from office. Instead of learning from his mistakes, he immediately wrote off to every conceivable source of funds and appealed for assistance in fighting the dictatorship of the PSI over local unionists. This was turned to useful anti-western propaganda by the Ghana-based All African Trade Union Federation. A letter from the Ghana TUC in reply found its way to the Uganda TUC because it had been addressed incorrectly. After much delay, because the UPEU had not yet affiliated with the TUC, it was passed on to Franken. The matter first came to the notice

of Franken because an American organisation had also been approached by the same official, and had forwarded the letter to the PSI.

The general complaint made of the leaders was that nobody was prepared to do the uninteresting work needed to make any large organisation function. An organisation as new and large as the UPEU required administrative skill which were just not available among the members of the union. Franken found himself bogged down with office routine and typing because nobody else was ready to do such jobs.

Here was the fundamental weakness of the union. It is an overworked cliché to state that African union leaders did not have to struggle to assert themselves like their British counterparts. Often such a statement is not true, but in the case of the leaders of the UPEU all the struggling was done for them by the PSI representative. Unlike the other unions in Uganda such as the Railways, the UPEU was spoon-fed and did not develop strong roots in the sentiments of members or even leaders. The local authorities had to be bullied into accepting the idea of a union, but the bullying was done by the PSI and the Colonial Office. To some extent Franken himself was guilty of the same paternalism of which he accused officials of the Labour Department. Without his assistance the UPEU would never have made much progress, but his assistance could not continue indefinitely.

His departure from Uganda coincided with the replacement of many of the expatriate civil servants who supported the Colonial Office in sponsoring the union. On the eve of his departure from Uganda, one of those who had collaborated closely with Franken summed up the situation:

“Uganda will achieve its independence a week from today with Government having accorded recognition to a union sponsored by the Public Services International in respect of its own unestablished labour force. The check-off has been granted and a Joint Central Negotiation Body set up. So far so good, but frankly I am apprehensive about the future. I hope that my fears are unjustified. In any event, I do feel that in the last twelve months the Colonial Power has granted Uganda a real opportunity in the public sector to benefit from its own experience.”

The extent to which these fears were justified, and the changes which occurred after independence, are discussed in Chapter 13 on relations between unions and the independent government.



## Chapter Eleven

### THE UGANDA TRADES UNION CONGRESS

In order to understand the complex relationship which existed in Uganda between the trade unions and the nationalist movement leading to political independence, it is necessary to review the history of the Uganda Trades Union Congress (UTUC). In many other African countries, the central union body represented the views of the leaders of the union movement and often served as a focus for political activity against the colonial regime. This never occurred in Uganda because the union leaders tended to be drawn from groups not concerned with nationalist politics, and because the leaders could rarely agree among themselves upon a common course of action. The history of the UTUC is so dominated by conflicts of personalities and factions that the organisation exerted very little control over the policies of the constituent unions.

Late in 1955, Mr. Tom Mboya and the ICFTU representative for East Africa visited Uganda to discuss the possibility of forming a national union centre to parallel the Kenyan and Tanganyikan organisations. Mboya appreciated that the Ugandan unions were weak, but believed that a national centre would be an effective way of strengthening them:

"The British concept, that a trade union should develop from the bottom and that experience should be gained by a man as he moves up the ladder, is impossible to adopt in Africa. The whole emphasis has to be given to the top . . . The national federation had the task of helping to develop trade unions rather than the unions coming together to develop the national centre. (It) had the task of getting assistance to help weak unions, finding the leaders to spread into them and often of negotiating on their behalf." (Mboya, 1963, p. 199).

This philosophy was put to the test in Uganda, and failed because of fundamental divisions within the movement.

These divisions were very soon apparent. At the inaugural meeting of the Uganda Trades Union Congress, the Clerical Union leader was elected UTUC President, the Postal Workers' representative became Secretary and the Railways' representative Treasurer. This touched off a vigorous protest from Luande, President of the Railway African Union, who claimed that the railway union, as the largest and best organised, should hold most of the key posts.

New elections were held and Luande was duly elected President. Two other Railway African Union officials were included on the enlarged executive and the former President was 'demoted' to General Secretary. The railway workers were not prepared to be ordered about by leaders who had no real organisation behind them. This was to become a recurrent theme and a cause of constant trouble.

Although the Busoga African Motor Drivers Union had attended the inaugural conference, their delegate was excluded from the executive. This was a significant omission as the Jinja unionists and the UTUC proceeded to show little interest in each other for several years. At the first Annual General Meeting in March 1956, only three unions attended — the Clerical Union, the Railway African Union and the virtually defunct Shoemakers Union. For all practical purposes, the UTUC was a Kampala organisation.

Charles Makayu, the Ganda President of the Clerical Union, became the leading figure in the UTUC after its inauguration. The leaders of the postal and railway unions were preoccupied with their own developing organisations whereas the Clerical Union had plenty of leaders but few members. Thus many of the clerical leaders had time and enthusiasm to devote to the UTUC with all its prestige of being a national union centre. Makayu apparently had hopes of associating the UTUC with nationalist politics but was successfully opposed in this by officials of the Railway African Union.

Makayu seems to have been the only person interested in the UTUC in this early period because no other leader could see the value of wasting time on an organisation with no influence or power. This changed when Makayu successfully requested assistance from the ICFTU. He was sent to a conference in Tunisia and a training course in Brussels and, in August 1957, it was announced that the ICFTU had agreed to pay him a salary as a full-time official. This provoked Luande into an attack on the work of Makayu on the grounds that he had not been consulted over these new developments (*Uganda Argus*, 2 September 1957). He withdrew from the UTUC and called for its reorganisation on a more representative basis, that is, with greater influence being accorded the leaders of the Railway African Union as the most powerful single union.

The 1957 Labour Department Report noted that:

"When the Railway African Union withdrew from membership, the need for reorganisation became apparent and all the trade unions, including those who had in the past refused to join the

Congress, got together and by the end of the year were in a fair way to building up a new UTUC with a revised constitution which would be representative of the movement." (LDR, 1957, p. 14). This revised constitution was the work of James Brandie, whose career has already been discussed. It was largely through his efforts that the UTUC became a reality. The constitution is notable for its emphasis upon democratic rights and the wide range of objects to be pursued by the organisation, especially the protection of the unemployed and unorganised. Membership of the policy making body was to be determined by representation proportional to the number of paid-up members, clearly an attempt to satisfy the Railway African Union that small unions would not dominate the new UTUC. An attempt was made to ensure that the organisation would be financially self-sufficient by allowing suspensions where affiliation fees were not paid.

In addition to writing the constitution, Brandie sought out and coached the most promising leader available. Makayu had dropped out of consideration after the defection of the Railway African Union but the Ganda clerical workers continued to be important in the movement. Luande was not considered the leader most likely to inspire general confidence, especially as he was relatively uneducated and not a convincing negotiator. The choice fell to Oswald Bernard Kopoka, an intellectual giant compared to many of his union contemporaries. Brandie was aware that this man would not stay long in the union movement but determined to use him as a foundation for a solid organisation.

Kopoka had been a primary school teacher in Tanganyika before joining the Army Education Corps as a Swahili instructor. After the war, he worked at Makerere College as a librarian and then as a research assistant on the East African Swahili Committee. Because he had no formal tertiary education, he was classified as a junior employee. When the local Labour Officer called a meeting to discuss the formation of a Makerere Junior Employees Union, Kopoka did not bother to go along as he was not much interested. Later he was persuaded to help out because of his superior ability to deal with Europeans, and was appointed President. Helped by tuition, he built up the union as a model for the rest of Uganda, and, when the UTUC split, he agreed to join the new organisation and act as President.

In many respects, this period was the high point in the development of the UTUC. As a Tanganyikan who had married into Ganda society, Kopoka was able to reconcile the tribal factions led by Luande and Francis Pulle (who had replaced Makayu

in the Clerical Union). In particular, Kopoka was able to blend his own quick intelligence with the practical cunning and organising ability of Luande. For the first time, an effort was made to attract the growing unions in Jinja, and the Eastern Province Transport Workers and the Tobacco Workers began to play an active role in the UTUC.

Under Kopoka, the UTUC also began to make an impact on the international scene. The 1958 ICFTU Visiting Mission expressed its appreciation of the speed of development and urged the UTUC to concentrate on organising workers in fields still untouched by the existing unions, such as the plantation workers. Kopoka also set out to resist the influence of Mboya's use of the national union centre for political purposes. Kopoka denied that unions should have party political links because this would lead to a weakening of the unions' influence on the present government and compromise their future role after independence. This view seems to have fitted in with that of other Ugandan leaders and the UTUC's early interest in political nationalism was not sustained.

Inevitably, Kopoka did not continue as a unionist. A man of his calibre had a long way to travel up the promotion ladder once Africanisation became established as official policy. When his appointment with the Swahili Committee terminated, an attempt was made to recruit him to the staff of the Labour College, but a more attractive offer was made by an oil company. Despite criticism from other unionists, he "crossed the floor" and became a personnel officer and was later sent to Britain for training as a General Manager. His year as UTUC President had been valuable to the movement, and his absence was felt immediately.

When Kopoka left, the UTUC was a going concern. Three problems remained to be solved. The first was that it was wholly dependent on financial assistance from the ICFTU because no affiliation fees were being paid. The constitution devised by Brandie provided for suspension of defaulters, but this was never applied because it would have killed the organisation. The second problem was the continuing differences of opinion between the Ganda leaders from the weak Clerical Union and the Kenyan leaders of the Railway African Union. This led to threats once more from the RAU that it would withdraw from the UTUC unless its demands were satisfied, in this case the removal of two officials from office.

When this demand was backed by the three Jinja unions, it became clear that the UTUC was in danger of being reduced to an important body representing only a handful of clerical workers.

"To prevent complete disintegration, a special congress was



held under the chairmanship of the regional secretary of the ICFTU. All the previous officials were voted out of office and replaced by more active trade unionists who were themselves leaders of the major unions." (LDR, 1959, p. 16).

The ICFTU pledged additional funds to help build up the unity of the movement and the leaders who had threatened to secede were given the top jobs.

Failure to extend the influence of the UTUC beyond Kampala was the third and most significant weakness in the organisation at this stage of its development. By 1959, industrial unions in Jinja had made great progress but there had been no previous attempt to interest them in the UTUC. When a Labour Advisory Board was set up in that year, the Labour Commissioner noted that the sphere of influence of the UTUC was so small that it was only proper that the Labour Department should nominate four out of the six workers' representatives (*Uganda Argus*, 22 August, 1959). In the following year, there were also moves among union leaders in the Northern Province to set up their own TUC because of the lack of interest being shown from Kampala.

It was this lack of concern for the interest of Jinja unions that finally brought about a major split in the UTUC and led to the establishment of a splinter organisation. The removal of Okatch and Pulle had brought the Jinja unionists into the inner circle of leaders for the first time, but general discontent with the working of the UTUC continued. The leader of the Municipal and Township Workers Union in Jinja complained that the UTUC tended to dictate to its Jinja affiliates without consulting them and gave no assistance to small unions trying to establish themselves. The Railway African Union threat to secede and move its headquarters to Jinja confirmed that the centre of union activity was shifting away from Kampala. It needed only a strong personality and a suitable incident to touch off a revolt against domination from Kampala.

The personality was John Reich, the principal figure in the early development of trade unions in Jinja. Like Francis Pulle, Reich was of mixed racial origins and had closely identified himself with African aspirations. After working as a labour recruiting agent for the sugar plantations, Reich became a bus driver in Jinja. He took over and expanded the union he found operating there, and the Busoga Motor Drivers Union became the Eastern Province (and later the Amalgamated) Transport and General Workers Union. He also sponsored and helped organise a number of other minor unions in Jinja and built up his own private empire. Communica-

tions from the UTUC were all channelled through Reich's office for distribution to the various unions. This meant that Reich was able to exercise an unofficial censorship, a fact noted by an international adviser when he tried to get in touch with the local public service unions (Franken Interview, *op. cit.*). When the Kampala unions in the UTUC split, Reich was able to come into the organisation on his own terms.

The incident which touched off the split with the Kampala unions gives an insight into the general emphasis on patronage in the Ugandan movement. In 1958, the All-African People's Conference, a political gathering in Ghana, recommended the establishment of the All-African Trade Union Federation. A preparatory meeting was scheduled for December 1960 and invitations were sent to all national centres. An invitation to send two Ugandan delegates was received by Banyanga as General Secretary; travel warrants were enclosed. Banyanga and Reich made arrangements for the trip and did not notify the UTUC until immediately before their departure.

The General Council was summoned on December 10, 1960, while the Ghana Conference was still in progress. A telegram was sent to Ghana denying that Reich and Banyanga were official representatives because the UTUC had not met to discuss the implications of recognising the All-African Trade Union Federation. It was finally decided to suspend them pending their appearance before a UTUC committee of enquiry. On their return, Reich and Banyanga refused to submit to such an enquiry. They held that they had been removed by an unconstitutional meeting to which the Jinja unions had not been invited. Luande replied that invitations had been sent through the usual channel but, on this occasion, had not passed beyond the waste-paper basket in Reich's office.

A month later another meeting was called and was attended by Reich and his supporters. An attempt was made by the Jinja group to re-open the question of suspension but was defeated in a close vote. At this point, Reich walked out. Conflicting press statements later cast doubt on the validity of the critical vote. In any case, the damage was done. Luande tried to make it clear that he did not regard the issue as a dispute between the Kampala UTUC and the Jinja unions, but as "an attempt to oppose the personal aggrandisement of men like Reich." (*Uganda Argus*, 12 January, 1961). He emphasised the danger of outside influences splitting up the movement and attacked press sensationalism which had blown up "the significance of the misdeeds and waywardness of a small group in our ranks." (*Uganda Argus*, 30 January 1961). But his whistling in

the dark was of no avail and the Jinja group went ahead with plans for an alternative national centre. Reich could claim that he would have the backing of the majority of UTUC affiliates and a large proportion of Uganda's industrial workers. Even the Jinja branch of Luande's own union deplored the weakness and bias of the UTUC leadership and threatened to seek the intervention of the transport workers' international to curb Luande's dictatorial activity.

At the end of January, the UTUC was once more reconstituted. The Ganda "white collar" leaders came back again. Pule was made President to act as a compromise candidate in the event of a return of the Jinja group. Two other Clerical Union members became General Secretary and Assistant General Secretary. Luande accepted a part-time salary for the post of Organising Secretary.

The new UTUC continued its efforts to seek the return of the Jinja unions. Luande issued a circular criticising Ghana's interference in internal affairs and opposing the idea of a second union centre. Nakabinge, the new General Secretary, tried the softer line. In a letter to the Jinja unions, he asked them to state the case against the UTUC so that it could be placed before a third party, acting as mediator, to decide which should be the recognised national centre. The third party suggested was to be a representative of the ICFTU, either one of the Labour College staff or an official from Brussels. Not surprisingly, the offer was turned down.

At the beginning of March 1961, the Uganda Federation of Labour (UFL) was inaugurated in Jinja. Reich was President, H. Kasolo of the Tobacco Workers was General Secretary and the remainder of the executive were from other Jinja unions. Banyanga had dissociated himself from any splinter group as soon as he had returned from Ghana. He left the Tobacco Union and became an industrial relations officer with the Mehta sugar factory at Lugazi. The UFL applied for recognition by the government, individual employers, and, rather surprisingly, the ICFTU. The organisation claimed that "it was in no way opposed to ICFTU policies and it would not seek association with the Ghana sponsored All-African Trades Union Federation." (*Uganda Argus* 6 March, 1961). Its press statement continued by pointing out that a dispute had existed between the Jinja and Kampala unions because of "the dictatorial and undemocratic policies of the UTUC in Kampala." The dispute with the UTUC was considered over — "the two union organisations were now two equal partners each on an equal footing." Clearly the aim was to co-exist peacefully with the UTUC, tap the same source of financial aid and eventually



replace it as the accepted representative of the union movement.

This was more than a faint hope. The Railways and the Postal Employees were the only strong unions firmly committed to the UTUC; against them could be set three strong industrial unions (Electricity Board, Tobacco and Nyanza Textiles), two civil service unions, and Reich's amorphous Transport and General Workers Union. Both sides had appendices with imposing titles but few active members and there were a few uncommitted organisations.

The Labour Department refused to be committed to direct support of the UTUC. In his inaugural address, the new General Secretary of the UTUC "welcomed the Labour Commissioner's statement that a body such as the UFL would not be allowed to form". (*Uganda Argus*, 31 January 1961). The next day, the Labour Commissioner clarified his position:

"I believe that this development would harm the labour movement in Uganda — there is only room for one central representative organisation. But the government has no power to disallow another central organisation of workers just because there is already a Uganda TUC." (*Uganda Argus*, 1 February 1961).

Federations of unions were not required to register under the Trade Union Ordinance, so the Registrar had no chance to intervene in jurisdictional disputes as he did with regard to individual unions. The Labour Department preferred to deal with a single centre but it was not prepared to express a preference.

The key to the struggle which followed was ICFTU support. Reich fell between two stools when he renounced his support for Ghana and the All-African Trades Union Federation. The ICFTU refused to accept the integrity of this sudden change and continued to support the UTUC. At the same time, Ghana unionists were probably furious. Certainly the initial funds given to Reich were not supplemented and the UFL began to falter once money ran short.

Instead of backing Reich, the ICFTU intensified its support of the UTUC in an attempt to win back the Jinja unions. Three weeks after the UFL formed, the UTUC opened its first regional office in Jinja. The Assistant General Secretary of the UTUC resigned to accept a scholarship to Britain and he was replaced by James Ojambo. Ojambo had been on a training course himself and, in his absence, was removed from the executive of the Plantation Workers' union. As he was a Kenyan and acquainted with the Jinja situation, he was made full-time regional organiser in Jinja. A few months later, the ICFTU also sent in an American trade unionist to act as full time organiser in Uganda until the situation improved.



Under this pressure, support for the UFL began to waver immediately. The new National Union of Plantation Workers refused to become involved, and then the Nyanza Textiles leader was persuaded to return to the UTUC. A number of other unions followed. Reich even found the leadership of his own union disputed when Kampala members attacked his decision to form the UFL. Within two months the whole organisation had withered away.

The name lingered on, but the organisation changed its character. Reich continued to act like the leader of a major organisation for several months. He was invited to lead a two man delegation to a second All-African Trade Union Federation Conference in Casablanca. The UTUC sent along observers but did not succeed in displacing the Reich delegation as the accredited representatives of Uganda.

At the end of August, an emergency meeting of the UFL General Council was summoned to consider questions of administrative reorganisation. As with Banyanga, Reich announced his retirement and accepted the post of industrial relations officer with a sugar company. To set the seal on his respectability he also became a town councillor and later Deputy Mayor of Jinja. Although now on the employers' side of the bargaining table, Reich continued to display considerable interest in union activity. During 1963 he again began appearing in public and issuing press statements as UFL General Secretary. Subsequently he left Uganda to take up a post within the secretariat of AATUF in Ghana.

The UFL did not disappear completely. It continued to function as an unofficial union centre for complaints from all types of workers. At any point after the middle of 1961 the UTUC could have forced its collapse but, after the initial burst of enthusiasm, the UTUC once more tended to neglect Jinja. As the individual unions became stronger this did not worry them too much but it did allow the UFL officials to claim some importance among the unorganised work-force. Workers, ignorant of the nature of the organisation, would be attracted by its imposing name and bring in complaints, and equally ignorant employers could be bluffed by correspondence on impressively headed notepaper. Early in 1963, Reich's successor returned from one of his periodic trips to Eastern Europe and began a vigorous press campaign against the UTUC and the ICFTU. This was not important as an attack on the solidarity of the UTUC but it represented an important ideological challenge. The new UFL propaganda line associated its leaders with the views held by an influential section of the ruling party regarding Pan-African non-alignment and the need for state

intervention in the conduct of industrial relations. The nature of this challenge and its implications were critical for the future of the UTUC and are discussed in the next chapter.

With the defeat of the UFL as an immediate challenge by the middle of 1961, the UTUC might have looked forward to a period of greater progress and harmony. This did not come about because of the continuing struggle between the two groups of leaders — the Ganda clerical workers on the one side and the Kenyan industrial workers, led by Luande, on the other.

A major squabble developed during the 1962 General Election campaign. Pulle and Luande decided to contest the same constituency on behalf of their respective parties. This was a regrettable decision as it brought the internal dissensions of the UTUC into the arena of public debate. Tempers became frayed when a controversy developed over the use of a van donated to the UTUC by the Austrian Federation of Labour. Pulle had control of the vehicle and used it for electioneering until Luande and his supporters threatened to leave the UTUC yet again if Pulle was not brought to order (*Uganda Argus*, 20 April, 1962). Pulle's reply is worth quoting for the light it sheds on attitudes towards overseas aid: he asserted that:

"It was through my efforts that the Austrian Federation of Labour has given the equipment in the UTUC offices and the van was also given through me. We (Pulle and Luande) are both claiming to represent the workers in this constituency so I am taking around the van to prove to the workers what I have done for them. Mr. Luande has been out several times; what has he brought back for them?" (*Uganda Argus*, 20 April, 1962).

Nakibinge, the new TUC General Secretary sided with Luande by agreeing that Pulle's use of the van was contrary to the UTUC's declared policy of non-alignment because it might be interpreted as indicating union support for the Democratic Party. The van was retrieved from Pulle and notice was given of a censure motion calling for Pulle's resignation. The motion was dropped when Pulle left to represent Uganda at a conference of Commonwealth union leaders in Canada.

On the second occasion, it was Luande who brought the organisation into disrepute, particularly with members of his own ruling party. In June 1962 the Tanganyikan government passed legislation which severely restricted the use of direct action by trade unions. In July, Luande issued a circular urging leaders to attend the forthcoming meeting of the UTUC General Council which would discuss the plans of the Uganda Government to copy the

Tanganyikan legislation of which Luande claimed to have confidential knowledge. This touched off strong statements from the new Minister of Labour, denying that such plans existed and castigating the irresponsible leadership of the UTUC. Nakibinge followed this by dissociating himself from Luande's circular and the dispute then began to follow a familiar pattern of squabbles between the two groups of leaders.

With this constant series of internal disputes and backbiting, the UTUC was still failing to perform any useful function. Not unreasonably many of the more stable union organisations were doubtful about the value of being counted as members and took no interest. At the time of the election fiasco, the leader of the Petroleum and Oil Workers Union complained of the "disgusting situation in which UTUC leaders were spending most of their time in politics and using trade unions as a stepping stone to further their own interests." (*Uganda Argus*, 20 April, 1962). Behind the scenes moves seem to have been made to explore the possibility of establishing a new centre but nothing came of it at that time. Instead, the Uganda Public Employees Union decided to grasp the nettle which it had previously avoided. In the hope of bringing about reform from the inside, the UPEU decided to join the UTUC.

This was the most important development in the months immediately before independence in October 1962. While the largest and financially strongest union remained outside, the UTUC could have no real basis for claiming to be representative of the whole labour movement. Once inside, the UPEU would provide a counter-balance to the radical Railway Union.

The decision was not taken lightly. The UPEU had been in existence almost twelve months and had steadfastly refused to commit itself throughout that period. Nor had the erratic behaviour of the UTUC encouraged those in the UPEU who were urging affiliation. Franken, the PSI adviser with the UPEU, particularly resented the UTUC's control over the nomination of students to the African Labour College.

Well before the UPEU came into existence, the UTUC had attracted the interest of Wangatia's small unestablished employees' union in Jinja. After Mboya had organised the UTUC mainly from Kampala unions, a representative was sent across to arrange affiliation of the two Jinja unions. But the UTUC showed little interest and the Jinja unions felt that decisions were being taken without proper consultation. Wangatia claimed that the UTUC would not even provide transport to meetings and wasted time and affiliation fees on organising overseas delegations and study tours. When John



Reich set up the Uganda Federation of Labour the two civil service unions welcomed it as an organisation specifically concerned with Jinja.

As the PSI was an affiliated trade secretariat of the ICFTU, Franken felt under an obligation to try and assist the general development of trade unionism by supporting the UTUC. Faced with a situation in which the Jinja unions were operating out of the UFL office, he organised separate office accommodation as the first step towards winning them back to the UTUC. He was never completely successful. The Jinja branches of the UPEU continued to be very suspicious of the UTUC and any hint of high-handed action from their own Kampala headquarters.

From the PSI headquarters, Franken was warned that he should not become involved in the internal politics of the union movement in his support for the UTUC. On the basis of this advice, UTUC affiliation was left to be decided by the new UPEU executive.

Not surprisingly, the executive refused to affiliate. It was of the opinion that the union must consolidate its own position before taking on wider responsibilities. The union's attempt to build up a reputation for responsibility and reasonableness might well be prejudiced by associating itself with such an unstable and irresponsible organisation. The actions of the UTUC did nothing to change this opinion. When the UPEU protested against Luande's irresponsibility in publicising false rumours, he replied that "We (the UTUC) know that the UPEU is a government union and as such must defend their boss." (*Uganda Argus*, unpublished press statement, 11 July 1962). Nobody from the UTUC executive bothered to attend the UPEU inauguration. When the Busoga Local Government Employees made use of UPEU facilities then decided not to join, the UTUC recognised their application for affiliation and allocated a place on an overseas training course to their leader. When the Transport and General Workers Union began recruiting in fields clearly the preserve of the UPEU, Franken was told that this move had been deliberately encouraged by the UTUC.

Franken had written the following clause into the UPEU constitution:

"The union proposes . . . (k) to co-operate with other organisations dedicated to the interests of labour, trade unionism and trade unionists and to affiliate with such organisations whether they be national, federational, continental or international in character." (Rule 3, p. 2).

The UPEU executive decided that the UTUC did not qualify



as a dedicated organisation. It was not until August 19, 1962, that the UPEU finally agreed to affiliate with the UTUC.

Meanwhile, the UPEU had established a sound reputation in its year outside the UTUC. When Luande had stirred up discontent with his allegations that the Government were planning to take over the union movement, the UPEU had come out against him. A press statement from the Jinja Regional Council of the UPEU backed its application for recognition in the municipality by emphasising the need to trust the judgement of democratically elected representatives and opposed the UTUC's recent attempt to dictate terms (*Uganda Argus*, 11 July 1962). The Government recognised this independent and co-operative influence of the UPEU by providing the union with a separate seat on the Labour Consultative Council in addition to representatives from the UTUC. However, it was becoming clear that this moderating influence would be dissipated if the UPEU stayed out of the UTUC indefinitely. Franken and his successor had both argued that the way to improve the UTUC was to join it and reform the leadership from inside. In the first year, the executive of the UPEU felt that its leaders did not have the time or confidence to cope with the additional problems of the UTUC. Later they came round to the view that trade unionism as a whole, and the UPEU in particular, would benefit from a strong UTUC.

Kibuka, UPEU General Secretary, detailed the reasons for his own support for the move in an interview (August 20, 1962). First there was the fact of affiliation with the PSI which was itself closely linked with ICFTU organisations. Second, the union wished to regularise its relationship with the ICFTU African Labour College. Training courses were normally restricted to affiliates of each country's national centre and the UPEU had been able to send students only through the courtesy of the staff in responding to an appeal from the PSI. Finally, only the UTUC could provide the opportunity for the UPEU to exert influence commensurate with its size and strength. The Government was expected to consult the UTUC as the general representative of the unions and not to approach separate unions.

So, at the crucial moment when unions were facing the prospect of an independent Government, the UTUC received a most important recruit. It was not long before it was given an opportunity to assert itself. Nakibinge was given the choice between continuing work as full-time clerk at the Labour College and becoming full-time UTUC General Secretary. It was becoming clear to his employers that he could not effectively do both. He resigned

in November 1962 and Kibuka took over as acting General Secretary.

Kibuka's period of tenure was short because the UTUC Biennial Congress was scheduled for February 1963, when a new set of office bearers were to be elected. It was generally expected that Kibuka would be re-elected and that this would be the only major executive change. Things did not happen this way. Kibuka had accepted UTUC responsibilities in addition to a heavy administrative load as UPEU General Secretary. The ICFTU adviser reported that he was doing an excellent job, in contrast to the rest of the UTUC executive. Because he received no assistance whatever in organising the Congress, Kibuka was unable to prepare and circulate a written report. He was unfairly criticised for this while Nakibinge received praise for his fulsome account of his own period of office. This report was significant mainly for its omissions — no reference was made to the internal dissension which had split the UTUC or to the unfortunate and unnecessary clash with the Government — but it was taken as proof of Nakibinge's greater efficiency and enthusiasm. Other unionists, jealous of Kibuka's rapid rise, backed Nakabinge and he was re-elected General Secretary and resigned his Labour College post. Kibuka became Vice-President.

In retrospect, it is now clear that this decision of the Congress led directly to its downfall. Spurned by the 'old guard' in control of the UTUC, Kibuka lost interest in the organisation except for a short period when he virtually ran it in the absence of both Luande and Nakibinge. In 1964, he resigned and became head of a new union centre, The Federation of Uganda Trade Unions (FUTU). FUTU began by attracting the former leaders of the Uganda Federation of Labour, such as Reich and Mugala, and also members of the UPC Youth Wing, neither of which raised the reputation of the organisation. However, unlike the UFL, FUTU had a solid union base with the support of the UPEU, Petroleum and Oil Workers and Kilembe Mineworkers. It was helped immeasurably by support from UPC leaders who resented the UTUC's continuing affiliation with and financial dependence upon the ICFTU. By this stage, Luande had left the UPC and was sitting in the National Assembly as an independent member. Kibuka appeared on political platforms introduced as the leader of Uganda's workers in the company of cabinet ministers, and a FUTU delegation was sent as the official workers' representatives to the 1964 International Labour Organisation Conference in Addis

Ababa. By the end of 1964, it was clear that FUTU had come to stay and that the days of the UTUC might be numbered.

Potentially, the national union centre in a developing country has a much greater role to play in union development than in a highly industrialised country. New unions can be helped to expand their activities by the organising of recruiting drives, the use of training courses for executives and the provision of free secretarial and office facilities. In a highly fluid situation, the centre can also settle jurisdictional disputes among its affiliates and give a lead in establishing amicable relations between the union movement and the independent government. This never happened in Uganda because the UTUC never established itself as the sole spokesman for the trade unions. Throughout its whole history, the UTUC was divided by personal rivalries which consumed most of the energies of the organisation. The affiliated unions were left to look after themselves.

Three reasons can perhaps be put forward for this lack of cohesion. The first was that the unions were never under political pressure to present a united front. The Kenya Federation of Labour was welded into a strongly disciplined organisation by threats of its proscription by the colonial government during the Mau Mau Emergency (Mboya, 1963, p. 196). The UTUC was often ridiculed, but it was never threatened during the colonial period and, after independence, its leaders failed to come to terms quickly enough with the new rulers. The second reason was that the UTUC was almost wholly financed from outside and seemed to continue in existence solely as a funnel to attract further funds. This meant that individual unions had little concern about the operation of the UTUC because they had contributed nothing towards it, unless their interest took the form of 'wanting a slice of the cake'. Finally, there was a fundamental lack of agreement between the groups concerned with the leadership of the UTUC. They were from different social origins, different tribes and had different conceptions of the role of a national union centre. This absence of strong leadership and a common purpose meant that, at no stage in its chequered history, did the UTUC fulfil the purposes for which it was designed



## Chapter Twelve

### UNIONS AND NATIONALISM

It is generally taken for granted that trade unions in Africa will inevitably become involved in politics. In his analysis of industrial relations in West Africa, Davison has pointed to two reasons for this involvement: the role played by the small industrial communities as "the flashpoints of social and political upheaval" (Davison, 1953, p. 7) and the fact that the wage structure was so completely dominated by the Government that political activities proved more immediately effective than collective bargaining. This second factor led Sekou Toure, an influential French African trade unionist and political leader, to take the view that:

"The necessarily political nature of the union struggle is borne out by the fact that the betterment of the workers economic plight can be achieved only by political action and victories." (Fischer, 1961, p. 145).

Many writers go further and assert that, not only must unions in Africa always be politically active, but this activity must take the form of integration within the nationalist political party. For example, Allen asserts that:

"For better or worse, trade unions throughout Africa are regarded by Africans as an integral part of the Pan-African movement. Unions must therefore maintain close ties with the nationalist parties. Any attempt to sever them will . . . produce unnecessary strife and frustration for the African workers." (Allen in *Central African Examiner*, Oct.—Nov., 1962). Leaders of African political parties share this opinion, with Nyerere of Tanganyika regarding the union centre and the party as "two legs of the same nationalist movement," and Chisiza of Malawi believing that "it is an undisputed fact that every son of Africa should first be a nationalist and secondly a trade unionist."

Fischer points out that:

"In theory, inevitably participation in the nationalist movement could assume varied forms and not necessarily lead to the identification or quasi-identification of the party with the trade unions. In practice, as experience shows, this is almost always the case." (Fischer, 1961, p. 168).

A recent controversial study by Berg and Butler sets out to



prove that observers have frequently been misled by local political leaders concerning the political involvement of the trade unions:

“What is most striking about the political role of trade unions in the countries of Middle Africa is the extent to which they were *not* politically involved during the colonial period and their limited political impact when they did become involved. . . . In the period before independence, African trade unions were rarely the instruments of political parties. To the extent that they entered the political arena, their role was usually negligible. After independence they were quickly subdued by the governing parties and, at least in the near future, seem destined to play a subordinate role.” (Berg and Butler, 1964, pp. 340-41).

As an all-embracing analysis, this thesis has a number of limitations, especially with regard to areas of extensive European settlement. However, the quotation above does apply exactly to the situation in Uganda, as will be seen from a review of the history of relations between the unions and the political parties.

The earliest connection between trade unions and political nationalism has already been discussed. It was noted that these first “trade unions” were in fact organisations primarily concerned with political manoeuvring inside the Kingdom of Buganda. The passing of the 1952 Trade Union Ordinance and the emergence of the Uganda National Congress caused most aspiring politicians to discard the cloak of trade unionism. Only one leader remained who seems to have cherished an ambition to organise Uganda’s workers as an industrial wing of one of the more radical parties. This was Makayu, the first General Secretary of the Uganda Trades Union Congress.

After the UTUC had been formed, following the visit from Mboya and ICFTU officials in 1956, Makayu was at first the dominant figure in an organisation which existed mainly on paper. Until the Railway African Union threatened to withdraw in November, 1957, Makayu was in sole control of UTUC policy because he was the only trained official and probably the only interested one. He associated himself with a small and ineffective group known as the Progressive Party and later joined the Democratic Party as an executive officer. In August, 1957, he gave up his Party office to become full-time General Secretary of the UTUC and issued a press statement to mark the occasion which clearly reveals his political hopes for the union movement. He attacked any form of government opposition which limited political activity by unions, objected to the East Africa Royal Commission’s support for works committees and pledged union support for direct elections to the Legislative

Council (*Uganda Argus*, 2 August 1957).

When Makayu was ousted by leaders of the more active trade unions, the union movement placed itself firmly outside politics. Because both the UTUC and the Clerical Union functioned within a small circle, the Labour Department was satisfied that the unions had never been concerned seriously with politics:

"The trade unions, though they may be weak as yet, are strong on one point. They have refused steadfastly to allow their organisations to be used for political purposes by outsiders and the union leaders have lost no opportunity to make this clear to the public and to their own members." (LDR, 1955, p. 18).

This view was borne out by the statements of Railway African Union leaders who had asserted from the beginning that the unions should avoid entanglement with politicians.

By the end of 1958, the unions were being drawn into politics by the pressure of events. Political independence was in sight and the union movement was finally beginning to emerge as a force of some significance in the community. The two developments were not related to each other in any direct way: the growth of the unions was due mainly to non-political factors and there was no common leadership or programme of action. Nevertheless, union leaders turned political developments to their advantage. For example, during the prolonged railway strike, Luande successfully requested the support of the Uganda National Congress and afterwards threatened Asian blacklegs that "the UTUC and the elected Government will remember your actions and act accordingly" (after independence). (*Uganda Argus*, 15 January 1960). At the end of 1960, the Annual Conference of the Railway African Union agreed "that complete industrial freedom could only be achieved when the country attained political freedom". Consequently, it urged its members "to support the African politicians who were working for political freedom". (*Uganda Argus*, 31 December 1960). In return, the leaders of the three main factions supported the union leaders in their attack on the Labour Administration's handling of the removal of James Brandie. Going further than either Obote or Benedicto Kiwanuka, the radical Joseph Kiwanuka even threatened that "the reins of government would soon be in African hands and, if Brandie were sent away now, the Government would bring him back." (*Uganda Argus*, 18 February 1961). This came to nothing, as did a token one-day stoppage called jointly by the political leaders and the UTUC.

The clearest statement of policy by Uganda union leaders towards nationalism was given by the UTUC General Secretary in

1960, Angelino Banyanga :

“The UTUC intends to keep aloof from politics and does not identify itself with any particular party . . . Were the UTUC to affiliate to a particular party, it would cease to be a free labour movement. UTUC members can join parties, but those who do so join in their individual capacities and not as UTUC officials.” (*Uganda Argus*, 25 June, 1960).

Until one party was firmly established in control of the independent government, this seemed the most reasonable policy as the unions could not risk “backing the wrong horse” by being committed to an opposition party which might never achieve power. However, problems developed when individual leaders tried to use their union positions to advance themselves in politics. These incidents might have seemed to indicate a fierce political consciousness among the union leadership but it is clear from all that had gone before that this was not the case. Unions in Uganda were never deeply involved in party politics or the “struggle” for independence.

Two reasons might be put forward to explain this separation of the trade unions from nationalist politics. The first is the fact that, for different reasons, most union leaders were not eligible to participate in party politics. Elkan has pointed out that :

“Many union leaders come from outside Uganda and are therefore not interested in local politics, whilst others have sought in trade unions an outlet for their desire to play a part in public life which for some reason they are denied in politics.” (Elkan, 1960, p. 66).

The first point relates to the large number of Kenyan union leaders, particularly in the Jinja area. The second is more complex. Almost all the Ganda union leaders were Roman Catholics and were opponents of the traditionalist regime in Buganda with its Protestant “Establishment”. Before 1955, they had shown interest in radical political organisations but the triumphant return from exile of the Kabaka of Buganda effectively entrenched the authority of the old regime. It was at this point that most of the Ganda leaders turned to union activity. In addition, two of the most active leaders, Pulle and Reich, may have been excluded from party politics because of their mixed parentage.

The second reason relates to the whole character of political development in Uganda. Millen (1963) has attempted to show that the strength and general influence of the trade union movements in new countries is directly related to the extent to which they became involved in the nationalist struggle and that the degree of unity among the political groupings will be reflected in the organ-



sation of the trade unions. Since independence in Uganda was achieved by a coalition of diverse political groups rather than by a single mass party, Millen's analysis perhaps explains why unions in Uganda never involved themselves in the nationalist movement and why the national union leadership remained disunited. Political life in pre-independence Uganda was characterised by disunity bred from personal, religious and regional rivalries. No party offered a coherent programme which could attract the unified support of union leaders. Consequently, union leaders were left to disagree among themselves and, in general, to avoid total commitment to any of the competing nationalist parties.

This situation compares with that in many parts of French West Africa:

"The labour movement in French West Africa might have gone the way of labour movements in many other countries and become an arm of a political party or nationalist movement. That it has not done so can be explained by the absence of coherent political programmes to which the unions could dedicate themselves and, in particular, by the inchoate state of nationalist sentiment. . . . In short, the labour movement has not thrown itself directly into political struggles or become part of a nationalist movement, mainly because there have been few opportunities to do so." (Berg, 1959, p. 222).

During 1962, the situation began to change rapidly as the Uganda People's Congress established itself as the dominant political party. One commentator noted that:

"During the last year (1962), due mainly to some quick-fire nationalist politics and the coming to power of a radical populist party, the unions have greatly increased in strength." (Sanger, *Central African Examiner*, Oct.—Nov., 1962).

This was not strictly true as the unions had been increasing in strength since 1958 for reasons not related to politics. What did happen during 1962 and 1963 was that the unions began to take in active interest in politics instead of carefully steering clear of them as they had done in the pre-independence period. A confused situation had given way to a much clearer position and it was now necessary for the union leaders to reconcile their interests with those of the ruling group of the politicians who could ultimately make or break the union movement.

Luande was the first to appreciate the needs of the new situation: As far back as September 1961, he stated that:

"The unions cannot insulate themselves from politics entirely . . . free unions in this country are committed not only to the de-



fence of the workers but also to fight along with the politicians who are struggling to achieve this country's independence." (*Uganda Argus*, 18 September 1961).

This completely contradicted statements he had made in 1956 when opposing Makayu's political ambitions. In February, 1962, foreshadowing his own candidature in the impending national elections, he accused "selfish politicians of forgetting that the workers had played a great part in the struggle for *political* and industrial freedom and for thinking that workers should not stand as candidates — yet organised labour could make or break any government." (*Uganda Argus*, 3 February 1962).

It is doubtful whether the leaders in the Uganda People's Congress were impressed by this fiction, but Luande was nevertheless endorsed by the party and later elected to represent an urban constituency.

Other union leaders subsequently held high offices at the municipal level though Luande was the first and only active unionist to hold national office. This situation reflects both the extent to which the nationalist movement developed separately from the unions and also the dearth of charismatic leaders within the union movement. When he was excluded from the cabinet, Luande interpreted his role as the guardian of the interests of the workers and proved a virulent and often irresponsible critic of Government policy. At times, this led him into conflict with the leaders of his party, and eventually to his resignation.

Within the Uganda People's Congress, a radical school of thought existed which refused to accept the contention that the union movement should not become an integrated part of the structure of the ruling party. This view was first put forward by John Kakonge in 1961 when he stated that:

"The UPC does not accept the theory that trade unionism can be entirely isolated from politics . . . A UTUC statement said that trade unionism in Uganda did not need the interference of politicians in their disputes. Such a view smacks of imperialism and colonialism." (*Uganda Argus*, 16 August 1961).

The theme was expanded in 1962 by one of Kakonge's supporters:

"The independence of the UTUC is a reactionary myth. The unions are a force in the machinery for the building and reconstruction of the country and, in this capacity, it is inconceivable that they should exist independent of Government direction . . . For a trade union to consider itself a mere social organisation is to obstruct the development of the country. The Government is the

agent of the people and must control the instruments of the State.” (*Uganda Argus*, 6 April 1962).

The same press release also stated that the UPC had lost confidence in the UTUC and was considering launching its own national trade union movement.

The first moves in this direction were to bring the party closer to the Uganda Federation of Labour. In the period between 1962 and 1964, the UFL became closely identified with the Pan-African ideology of the Ghana-inspired AATUF. This made it attractive to a section of the UPC leadership who favoured a similar approach to existing problems instead of dependence on support from the “neo-colonialist powers in the Western bloc”. At the Mbale Conference of the UPC in 1962, the party attacked the union movement’s foreign affiliations and implicitly supported the ideas of the UFL. In turn, many of the UFL leaders became active members of the UPC Youth Wing and a prominent party official and university economics lecturer became President of the UFL.

During March, 1963, the Youth Wing and the UFL reached the height of their influence. Threats from their leaders that the union movement would be turned into an organ of the State went uncontradicted by Government and set off a spate of rumours that such action might soon take place. No less a person than the Administrative Secretary of the UPC came out in support of the proposals although Cabinet Ministers were careful not to express an opinion. In retrospect, it seems that the Prime Minister was acting shrewdly. At this time, the established union organisations were resisting his entreaties to co-operate voluntarily with Government in aiding economic development. Pressure was exerted on these leaders by allowing a radical body of opinion to grow in importance which advocated the abolition of free trade unionism. High level support for the Youth Wing declined once the UTUC leaders began to adopt a more co-operative attitude.

However, the Youth Wing remained a source of embarrassment for the Government during the remainder of 1963. The importance of the Youth Wing and the increasingly synonymous UFL should not be over-rated. For the most part, the members of both organisations were semi-educated unemployed who cherished political ambitions but had failed to make any progress towards them. Despite its name, the Youth Wing was not a mass organisation. Yet events showed that it was an organisation capable of stirring up considerable trouble. In November, 1963, it began to make a more direct challenge in the field of union activity by organising unofficial strikes despite the opposition of the established union

leaders. Little progress was made among the better organised unions such as the Tobacco Workers, but they did succeed in disrupting the conduct of industrial relations wherever unions were not solidly established.

The National Union of Clerical, Commercial and Technical Employees was the union most affected. The Youth Wing applied to Kampala techniques of intimidation against small-scale Asian employers which had been developed in up-country areas with much success. Grievances were discovered when workers, lacking knowledge of the role of their union, complained to the local party office. In Kampala, the Youth Wing followed up two disputes to the point of calling the employees of two motor traders out on strike. The union quickly disowned the action and called on the men to return to work so that legitimate negotiations could begin. One employer co-operated, but the other ignored his commitment to a collective agreement and accepted the conciliation of a politician in settling the dispute, thus recognising the legitimacy of the Youth Wing. This led to a joint submission to the Minister of Labour from the UTUC and the Uganda Federation of Employers, requesting clarification of official policy in view of the Government's earlier support for free collective bargaining. The Minister for Internal Affairs (and former Minister of Labour), Felix Onama, gave his backing to the unions by imprisoning four of the strike leaders on charges of trespass, intimidation and assault. In turn, this led to a major upheaval among the party officials and an angry argument followed concerning the role and freedom of the Youth Wing. Onama was subjected to intimidation himself and party offices closed in protest against the detention of the four men involved, all of whom held office in both the Youth Wing and in the UFL (*Uganda Argus*, 15-19 November, 1963).

The strength of the "radicals" in the cabinet was revealed when the prison terms of the four men was suddenly commuted by executive order. However, within a week of their release, most were back in custody again on a similar charge of intimidation of non-Africans. The Youth Wing could not be disbanded because of the trouble it would cause amongst the unemployed, but efforts were made to divert its energies into more constructive channels not connected with politics. In December, 1963, following prompting from the Prime Minister, a scheme to employ the Youth Wing on tasks of national service was announced and Government departments were urged to find work for its members. The Youth Wing also announced the official dissolution of the Uganda Federation of Labour, although it was hinted that it might



new organisation.

This organisation (Federation of Uganda Trade Unions) ended attempts on the part of the UPC to exercise control over the policies of the UTUC. The main issue of disagreement was the continuing affiliation of the UTUC to the ICFTU. This was regarded by the political leaders as an infringement of the sacred principle of non-alignment which could only be preserved by the unions joining the All-African Trade Union Federation sponsored by Ghana. The main complaint was that international advisers and outside financial assistance prevented the UTUC from falling under the influence of the ruling party. In April 1963, Kakonge stated that:

"It is an affront to the dignity of the African trade union leaders that they still feel that they need the continuing help of so-called foreign advisers in the labour movement. The UPC considers that there is no need for these advisers which the party consider to be instigators and saboteurs." (*Uganda Argus*, 17 April 1963).

At the same time, the Prime Minister announced that the present labour legislation might soon be amended "to curtail the foreign hands behind the trade union movement." (*Uganda Argus*, 12 April 1963).

At a conference of East African unionists in August, 1963, the Ugandan leaders bent before the official pressure and supported a recommendation that upheld the policy of non-alignment and called for a review of existing affiliations with international organisations with a view to disaffiliating from the ICFTU. This decision was welcomed by the Uganda political leaders but was later repudiated by the union leaders. A visit by senior ICFTU officials from Belgium underlined the fact that the UTUC would be bankrupt without ICFTU financial aid and the Ugandan leaders apparently decided to sacrifice political popularity for solvency.

The past activities of the ICFTU in Africa give few grounds to doubt the assertion that the organisation had been in the forefront of the struggle against colonialism. From the beginning, leaders in the ICFTU asserted their support for the various nationalist movements in Africa and often came into conflict with political leaders in their own country on the subject. However, this was not the image of the ICFTU projected into Africa and the suspicion remained that ICFTU advisers and funds were somehow intended to restore the superiority of the Europeans over the local leaders. In his 1964 May Day address, the Prime Minister of Uganda asserted that:

"There is no single cent that you receive from abroad without strings. Whoever pays you will control you. You cannot get money



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from abroad and then talk of the independence of the labour movement". (*East African Standard*, 4 May 1964).

Dr. Obote clearly did not apply this reasoning to all forms of foreign aid, but here he was asserting the determination of the Government to oppose the union's continuing dependence on outside assistance.

When the UTUC failed to reform itself and pointedly rejected the leader most closely associated with the ruling party, its fate seemed to be sealed. The emergence of the Federation of Uganda Trade Unions with its open support from political leaders marked the start of the final phase of subjecting the unions in Uganda to direct political control.

## Chapter Thirteen

### UNIONS AND THE INDEPENDENT GOVERNMENT

The achievement of political independence has an immediate and dramatic effect upon the relations between the union movement and the new Government. The workers in under-developed countries have often been led to expect an increase in living standards and real wages as a result of being under the rule of their own people instead of being exploited by outsiders. At the same time, these expectations are in direct conflict with the policies of the new political leaders. Most under-developed countries, including Uganda, rely upon the agricultural sector as the basis for national prosperity and wish to resist any tendency for labour to drift away from the rural areas into the towns. The standard of living of urban workers is not high, but it is nevertheless considerably higher than in many rural areas so that the workers appear as a relatively privileged minority. Pressure from the unions for advanced social services for their members are resisted because these would tend to widen this gap and lead to rural discontent.

A second factor which encourages independent governments to exercise greater control over the union movement is the new nation's drive towards economic self-sufficiency. This drive usually takes the form of trying to attract overseas capital investment and also lifting the level of local savings and industrial productivity. It is realised that unregulated collective bargaining between unions and management may produce decisions which ignore the wider interests of the community. There is also the danger that widespread strike activity may lead to heavy losses in productivity and also discourage prospective overseas investors.

Finally, there is the fear that unions will serve as a focus for opposition to the regime. Millen has pointed out that:

"Despite the voting preponderance of the rural elements, it is the industrial elements of the city that dominate the political picture at certain crucial moments". (Millen, 1963, p. 90).

Union leaders free from party control could thus exercise a key role in any organised opposition and attempts are made by the political leaders either to recruit or to subdue them.

Political leaders in all the new states in Africa have pointed to the new role which they expect the trade unions to play. Perhaps

the clearest explanation of their position has been given by President Sekou Toure of Guinea, himself a unionist and a keen student of history:

“Trade union activity must constantly take note, in its fight for the aspirations of the working population, of the character and forms of the measures being undertaken by the nation to satisfy these aspirations . . . The trend towards ‘claim making trade unionism’ contracted in the course of union practice in the fully-developed capitalist countries has no significance in countries where the future of the worker is closely tied to the nation’s powers of development. (In these countries) trade union action has direct repercussions upon the quality of national independence and the character of the fight for social and economic freedom which, in order to be carried out in accordance with the higher interests of the people, demands an absolute national political unity.” (Sekou Toure, 1962).

This concept of political unity is interpreted in practical terms as a willingness to accept the need for restraint in the use of direct action wherever such action is seen by the government to endanger economic progress. There are various methods used by the ruling parties in Africa to achieve this sense of responsibility among union leaders. The more authoritarian regimes have used direct force to remove the threat of any challenge to their authority from the union movement. A more common pattern is for the union leadership to be “co-opted” by the Government so that, in return for certain concessions, the union movement is guided along the lines desired by the Government. A rarer arrangement is the establishment of a system of voluntary co-operation between union leaders and the economic planners in the Government.

A characteristic common to all newly-independent countries is the greater intervention by the Government into the conduct of industrial relations, both formally through expanded labour legislation and informally through the personal intervention of officials. Although arbitration was not made universally compulsory in Uganda, it was accepted as a common feature in the settlement of industrial disputes. There was a marked increase in the number of disputes settled informally through the intervention of labour officers as conciliators. This reflects the willingness of both politicians and civil servants to take the initiative in the settlement of disputes before they get out of hand. They have been able to make use of a range of unofficial sanctions not available to administrators under the colonial regime. A recalcitrant employer can be coerced into a more reasonable attitude by threats that his behaviour will affect

his dealings with other departments, especially regarding the issue of Temporary Employment Passes for his expatriate staff. Similarly, union leaders are made to realise that the Government will not tolerate constant breaches of established negotiation procedure.

Both these aspects were illustrated in an incident between the Transport and General Workers Union and a Kampala bus company. A dispute arose over the dismissal of a driver and the Minister of Labour, F. Onama, directed that the worker should be reinstated pending an enquiry. The bus company management put the driver back on the pay-roll but refused to allow him to work. When the union again protested and went on strike, the Minister threatened to revoke the company's licence to operate and to give it to another contractor unless the management complied with the original direction. Then the union, believing that they had won a victory, tried to press their advantage by refusing to return to work unless several other unrelated demands were also met. The Minister then met the strikers and warned them that they were in danger of being misled by the union because the Government would back the management in dismissing all strikers and would protect their replacements. By bringing pressure on both sides, the Minister settled a dispute in which the established procedures had been ignored in favour of a trial of strength which inconvenienced the rest of the community.

In the absence of new formal machinery, this trend towards more positive official action and to greater use of arbitration had a number of drawbacks. The first was that it placed considerable stress upon the officers of the Labour Department, particularly those in more senior positions. It was generally accepted by employers and union officials that the calibre of the junior members of the Labour Department declined after independence. This was partly caused by the departure of a number of experienced expatriates and partly the effect of a drain of trained Africans into the personnel departments of the large enterprises. Because of the inexperience at lower levels, disputes tended to be forced higher up the administrative structure than previously. This meant that senior officials such as the Labour Commissioner and the Permanent Secretary to the Minister often found themselves involved in the settlement of relatively minor disputes instead of merely supervising the work of their subordinates.

A second drawback arose from the functioning of the arbitration machinery. Arbitrators were appointed on an *ad hoc* basis for each dispute and, almost inevitably, this led to a number of inconsistencies and even irregularities in their decisions. This was



clearly illustrated in the case of two arbitrations between the East African Tobacco Company and the Tobacco Workers Union. In circumstances such as these, there seemed a strong case for the creation of a permanent arbitration tribunal or industrial court to which all cases could be referred for judgement. Provision was finally made for this when the Trades Disputes Ordinance was reformed at the end of 1964. This provided the basis upon which a coherent and consistent policy could be developed to replace the existing confusion. It also overcame the difficulty of finding qualified independent arbitrators each time that a new dispute came up for settlement.

As with most developing countries, the independent Government went beyond merely intensifying its role in the industrial relations machinery created during the colonial period. It changed the basic character of the machinery, and, in particular, extended the levers of official control over the trade unions.

Uganda was much influenced by the experience of both Tanganyika and Kenya in this respect. In Tanganyika, the Tanganyikan African National Union (TANU), the major nationalist party and the Tanganyika Federation of Labour (TFL) had been closely associated during the colonial period. After independence, relations between the two organisations deteriorated as the unions pressed for increased wages and other concessions which were not acceptable to the newly installed Government. Attempts at a voluntary solution failed and the Government eventually passed restrictive legislation modelled upon that of Ghana.

In June 1962, the Tanganyikan Minister of Labour was given wide power under a new ordinance to control and discipline union officials. All registered unions were required to belong to the single national centre and, through this centre, union finances were to be subject to rigid supervision. A new Trades Disputes Act also made all strikes and lock-outs illegal unless the existing voluntary machinery had been exhausted and the Minister had decided not to refer the dispute to a special tribunal. With regard to the civil service, the Minister was given the ultimate power to settle any issue personally. The legislation was extended in 1964 by replacing the national centre and its affiliates with a single nation-wide union organisation. The Minister of Labour was named the first General Secretary of the new body and given the power to appoint all other officials in order to ensure their sense of responsibility to the Government and to the ruling party. As compensation for this "take-over", all but the most recalcitrant union leaders received posts in the new organisation and provision was made for the compulsory

introduction of the check-off method of subscription collection, the use of the "closed shop" wherever more than 50% of the workers were organised and the establishment of workers' councils with power to question management decisions relating to personnel matters.

Nevertheless, the trend of events in Tanganyika during 1962 provoked a hostile reaction among union leaders in Uganda which finally touched off a critical struggle between the union movement and the political leaders. The first statement in the prolonged battle of words came from Nakibinge, UTUC General Secretary, in his press statement commenting on the Tanganyikan legislation. He warned that "any move to deny Ugandan workers the right to strike will be strongly resisted" and that the Government should not follow the example of Tanganyika. (*Uganda Argus*, 29 June 1962). The idea that the Government might be tempted to do so was played upon by Luande to increase the militancy of his own following.

A number of union leaders opposed Luande's "scare campaign" on the grounds that it was likely to provoke the repressive action from the Government that he claimed to foresee. Thus Nakibinge and a spokesman of the Public Employees Union both reaffirmed their trust in the elected representatives of the people and pointed out that "at present there is no sign that the Government seeks to dominate the trade unions". (*Uganda Argus*, 11 July 1962) The whole issue became involved in the complex struggle for influence within the UTUC with Luande's supporters opposed by more moderate elements. The Government, through the Acting Minister of Labour, A. A. Nekyon, tried to discredit Luande by announcing that it had no intention of limiting strike activity and charging that the workers were being misled by a union movement organised on a tribal basis by union leaders abusing the trust placed in them by the community. Nekyon had cause to return to this theme on a number of occasions as the situation deteriorated further.

By September 1962, industrial unrest had reached a peak and waves of unofficial strikes swept the country. The Labour Department recorded that there were 29 strikes in August and 35 in September; on one day in the middle of September there were ten unions on strike simultaneously and some were still out a fortnight later. A local commentator noted that:

"One gets the impression that the unions have a list of firms which they are steadily working through, keeping six or seven strikes going at the one time". (*Reporter*, 29 September 1962).

The reasons for this sudden outburst were probably a combination of the fear, stimulated by Luande, that unions would face a bleak future under an independent Government and the general air of uncertainty surrounding this transfer of power, scheduled for the following month. The view was also put forward that there was a deliberate conspiracy behind it:

"It began to appear to Ugandans that the whole thing was being fomented deliberately. Kenya men, it seemed, were either using every weapon to increase their structure in the unions and their grip on the movement as a whole or they were bent on embarrassing the national government". (*Reporter*, 27 October 1962).

This accusation of undue foreign influence was taken up once again by Nekyon. Claiming that Kenyans controlled most of Uganda's unions, he accused them of trying to sabotage the new nation. When the October independence celebrations were endangered by a strike among hotel workers, he went further and threatened to deport "those leaders bent on sabotaging the national effort". (*Uganda Argus*, 6 October 1962). In defence of the unions, attempts were made to deny that Kenyans were behind the strikes by showing that only four unions had Kenyan General Secretaries and all 22 affiliates of the UTUC had a Ugandan majority on their executives. Nevertheless, it could not be denied that the most militant spokesmen in the union movement had a close affiliation with Kenya and that Kenyan migrants formed the hard core of union supporters in almost every industry. Further, the reaction of some of these militants tended to reinforce the validity of Nekyon's attack. A Kenyan official of the Hotel and Domestic Workers Union attacked Nekyon and the whole Uganda Government as "enemies of the workers" and threatened to ask Kenyan dockworkers to refuse to handle Uganda cargoes and so cut Uganda's economic lifeline. This seemed to prove Nekyon's point that all loyal Ugandans, including trade unionists, should resist this challenge to the new nation's national integrity.

The policy of the Government through this trying period was to resist the temptation to intervene. The prevailing unemployment situation and the absence of any strike funds meant that most strikes collapsed after a few days and that workers then tended to lose confidence in the more militant leaders. In a press statement after independence, the Minister of Labour, Felix Onama, reaffirmed his opposition to any form of repressive legislation but warned that a repetition of the events of the September strike wave would cause him to change his mind. In future the Government would also refrain from intervening too quickly in unofficial dis-



putes since this gave *de facto* recognition to irresponsible leaders (*Uganda Argus*, 10 November 1962).

In taking this line, the Government was opposing the view of many people within the ruling party who believed that the union movement should be more directly responsible to the rest of the community for its actions. Agitation for greater official control came mainly from the same group who favoured the establishment of the Youth Wing or the Uganda Federation of Labour as an appendage of the nationalist party. Thus the President of the Uganda Federation of Labour, in a memorandum to the UPC Research Bureau, stated that:

“Union leadership does not appear to concentrate on the basic requirements of trade unions. This may be due to the influence of certain United States dominated affiliations that the unions have been led to abide by. For this reason, I do not consider it a bad thing to introduce new legislation to restrict the powers of unions as in the case of Tanganyika”. (*Uganda Argus*, 5 February, 1963).

This was backed up by accusations from John Kakonge and others that the UTUC was “setting itself up in arms against the Government” and that “union leaders had set themselves up as chief spokesmen for religious and social organisations in the fight against the Government. As is so evident, it is the intention of the UTUC leaders to function as a rival of political parties”. (*Uganda Argus*, 17 April 1963).

However, the key figures in the Government remained unmoved and pressure for more repressive legislation acted as a stimulus to greater voluntary collaboration from the established union leaders. After October 1962, the debate between the Government and the UTUC ceased to be fought out in the columns of the local press. In the course of informal discussions in the following months, it seems that pressure was brought to bear on some of the top union officials as there was a marked moderation in their attitudes and strike activity declined. The turning point seems to have come after the UTUC Annual Congress in February 1963.

At this conference, the Prime Minister, Dr. Obote, made a forthright but generally conciliatory speech in which he pointed to the need for the union movement to redefine its relationship with the independent Government. The idea of complete separation was not acceptable in view of the important role to be played by the union movement in national economic development and such separation did not exist in practice. Although this speech provoked dissatisfaction among union officials because of its criticism of union indiscipline and the continuing influence of outside organi-



sations, it seems clear that some union leaders had at last been persuaded that the alternative to repressive legislation could never be complete separation and that they should settle voluntarily for some other form of co-operation. At this late date, the unions began to work for the establishment of a voluntary tripartite structure to replace the system of bilateral collective bargaining inherited from the colonial era.

The idea of a voluntary agreement was derived from Kenya. The Industrial Relations Charter had been signed by the Kenya Government, the Kenya Federation of Employers and the Kenya Federation of Labour in October 1962. It was an outgrowth from the National Joint Consultative Council which had been set up by the Kenya Federation of Labour and the Kenya Federation of Employers in October 1961, to provide machinery for the maintenance of amicable relations between the two bodies and to provide voluntary and informal conciliation machinery to supplement the work of the Labour Department. The Charter was a much more ambitious undertaking, made possible only by the presence of far-sighted leaders on all sides. It began by laying down a set of agreed responsibilities for employers and unions, emphasising in particular the need to utilise existing machinery and the need for both sides to recognise each other's right of freedom of association. Principles of union recognition and a model recognition agreement were agreed upon and a joint Disputes Commission was set up as a voluntary body to speed up the solution of disputes. Agreement was also reached on redundancy procedures, the removal of discrimination in employment policy, the discouragement of direct action or intimidation and the extension of joint consultation.

The idea of imitating the Kenyan Charter had been put forward first by the Executive Officer of the Federation of Uganda Employers in 1962 at a meeting of the Labour Consultative Council, an advisory body set up by the Government with representatives of both sides of industry. At the time, the idea received little support from the unions because they believed that they could continue to operate without any formal machinery for contact with the Government. Ideas began to change after the February conference, perhaps the effect of some strong talking from Government officials and from the unions' international advisers. Consequently a report on the conference proceedings noted that:

"Trade union leaders are beginning to come out in favour of adopting an Industrial Charter, possibly along lines already adopted in Kenya, as an alternative to restrictive labour legislation." (*Reporter*, 1 March 1963).

Formal talks began in April 1963, between the UTUC and the Employers' Federation, after it had been agreed in the Labour Consultative Council that the Government would only enter negotiations after the initial difference between unions and employers had been settled. These talks progressed smoothly and a draft agreement was ready by July. The only awkward moment occurred when one of the union officials concerned repudiated the secrecy of the talks "behind the back of the Government" in the mistaken belief that the Government itself had been excluded from the first stages of discussion. The draft agreement was submitted first to the Ministry of Labour and then to the Ministry of Justice and the Crown Law Department for a review of the legal aspects of the agreement.

At what was hoped to be a final meeting of the three parties, negotiations were unexpectedly brought to a halt when the Minister of State, G. Magezi, announced that the Government were not in a position to commit themselves totally to the principles enunciated in the Charter. This caused the members of the UTUC to break off the talks and they were not resumed until May 1964. By then, it had been accepted by all parties that the Government would sign only as a witness, a move which would at least increase the moral authority of the Charter as an agreement between the two sides of private industry. The Charter was finally signed on June 1st, 1964. The full text of the document is included as Appendix A. In most respects, it resembles the Kenya Charter described earlier, with an acceptance of the need to maintain industrial harmony by preventing disputes from leading to direct industrial action and a statement of general policies governing redundancy, employment policy, intimidation and joint consultation. An interesting addition was Clause II, in which the Federation of Uganda Employers and the UTUC "agree to dissuade their affiliates from issuing to the Press and to Radio Uganda during negotiations statements which might prejudice matters under negotiation". This was an attempt to avoid use of the provocative publicity tactics which had in the past often disrupted private negotiations.

The reason put forward by the Government for its refusal to sign the Charter as a full signatory, as occurred in Kenya, related to the special constitutional position of the Public Service Commission. Entrenched in the Uganda Constitution were certain provisions which gave this Commission unrestricted control over matters which were regarded as subject to negotiation within the terms of the Industrial Charter. For the Government to commit itself to the provisions of the Charter would have thus been a breach of the Consti-

tution.

However, later events showed that this legal loophole merely concealed the Government's intention to refuse to be bound by the spirit as well as by the letter of the Charter. Shortly after negotiations were broken off in 1963, new legislation was introduced which radically altered the Government's relationship with the Uganda Public Employees Union and effectively removed that union's ability to indulge in collective bargaining.

Before independence, the UPC had pledged its support for the idea of a union in the public service. John Kakonge, Secretary-General of the party, publicly stated: "When we are in power, we will certainly do everything we can to encourage the development of your union." (*Uganda Argus*, 2 April 1962). In relation to the unestablished section, this proved to be true. One of the main problems of the union had been the way in which the urban authorities, especially Jinja Municipality, held out against recognition by setting an unrealistically high percentage of union membership as a prerequisite. Encouraged by the Cabinet, the Minister of Local Government called a meeting of the Urban Authorities Association and pushed through a joint recognition agreement with the UPEU on the same terms as that of the central government. In addition, the Joint Central Industrial Council (covering unestablished only) began to function and the Minister of State responsible for civil service matters also committed himself to support of the union.

At the same time, however, efforts were being made to split most of the established section from the union. In August 1962, a bargain was announced — the Government would recognise the union as representative of the E scale established group (up to £597 per annum) of the union agreed not to try and attract members from above this grade. Government announced that:

"Any attempt on the part of the union to recruit members from staff graded in other scales would be regarded as a breach of the agreement and result in the withdrawal of recognition of the union as a negotiation machinery for *all* central government employees." (*Uganda Argus*, 14 August 1962).

This was followed up by a move which was designed to reinforce this split. Following an official Commission on Africanisation, a 20% salary cut for all recently appointed super-scale employees was announced. This was based on the sound reasoning that posts previously held by expatriates need no longer be paid at a level comparable to European salaries. But the cut was represented as a means of financing a wage increase in the unestab-



lished groups. Consequently the UPEU made only perfunctory protests on behalf of the established section, while it warmly welcomed the increase on behalf of the unestablished. As a result, the established group bitterly attacked the UPEU executive and threatened to break away of their own accord and reconstruct their staff association. It was becoming obvious that the UPEU could not serve two masters and that the established group were being deprived of effective union representation.

From independence until the end of 1963, the UPEU maintained its satisfactory record of never calling an official strike. It became involved in two important issues. The first was a "wild cat" stoppage called by Kampala municipal employees without reference to any official. The union called upon them to return to work before it would consider taking up their grievances. Among those involved were the refuse collectors, and it was pointed out that this group was liable for prosecution under the essential services clauses of the Trade Union Ordinance. However, the strikers did not return until the Minister of Labour intervened with promises to investigate their case personally. After conciliation failed, the Labour Commissioner tried to persuade the union to withdraw the dispute until the decision of the Minimum Wages Board had been announced. However, the union continued to press for arbitration as prescribed under the Ordinance because it feared the consequences of withdrawal. The Minister had already given in to the strikers over the heads of the union officials, and the union did not wish to be blamed for the failure of their case. When arbitration awarded no increase, the strikers could blame the Minister and not the union.

The second dispute involved the UPEU only marginally, but it is important for the statement of policy which resulted. The dispute arose out of the refusal of nurses in the largest Kampala hospital to wear numbers as a means of easy identification. As nurses are classified on the E scale, the UPEU took up their case. No strike action could be contemplated, but persistent disobedience of the order to wear numbers finally led to mass dismissals. In addition to the UPEU, the UTUC protested vigorously and called a well-publicised meeting which criticised the action of Government as an irresponsible waste of trained resources.

This called forth a response from the Minister of State, Magezi, which clearly indicated the trend of official thinking. He denied that the UTUC could concern itself with the dispute:

"The nurses, as members of the civil service of Uganda, do not belong to trade unions of this kind. Only the UPEU is authorised



to handle the affairs of government employees in the E scale and downwards, and this is embodied in their agreement. The agreement does not refer to the UTUC . . . Civil Service matters are entirely the responsibility of the Uganda Public Service Commission, the Prime Minister, and in some cases, the Governor-General. Whatever agitation the trade unions may make concerning civil service matters, they will not deter the government from pursuing the provisions of the constitution and the various legislations". (*Uganda Argus*, 22 April 1963).

The UPEU was being regarded as different in kind from the rest of Uganda's unions and would not be allowed to deflect Government from the exercise of its constitutional sovereignty over its own employees.

The culmination of this philosophy was the Public Service (Negotiation Machinery) Bill, first published in the Uganda Gazette on December 6, 1963. Three weeks later it was hurriedly pushed through the National Assembly while the attention of most politicians was concentrated on a more controversial education debate.

The Bill begins by distinguishing between junior and senior public officers — juniors being all unestablished employees and those in the S and E scale of the established, seniors being all above. Under Section 25 (1) "no senior public officer shall be or become a member of any trade union or any body or association affiliated to a trade union". The earlier bargain was thus made legally binding.

A Joint Staff Council was set up. The Council consisted of a chairman and up to ten members nominated by the permanent secretary, and a vice-chairman and the same number of members nominated by the trade union. The Minister would make appointments from these nominations. The UPEU was not mentioned by name — the Minister also had "the right to designate which trade union shall be represented". The objects of the Council were:

"To secure the greatest measure of co-operation between the Government, in its capacity as an employer, and junior public officers, to provide machinery for dealing with the grievances of public officers and to enable consultation to take place in matters affecting the well-being of the service". (Section 4).

Section 5 specifically excluded the Council from "any matter concerning the appointment or non-appointment, disciplinary control or removal from office of any individual public officer".

When agreements were reached in Council, they became binding for twelve months if approved by the Minister. In the case of a dispute, a report was made to the Minister who might then refer

it on to a specially appointed board and, after considering its report, might decide to make an award. The Minister determined the constitution of the board and controlled its operation:

“The Minister may give directions relating to the scope, method and conduct of any specific proceedings before the board” (Section 27 (2)).

Section 17 laid down the only conditions under which junior public officers were permitted to strike. Strikes were permitted if, after a dispute had been reported, 21 days elapsed before action was taken or before the Minister acted on the report of a board. But, as the Minister was unilaterally allowed to extend this 21-day period indefinitely by a qualifying clause in each case, the possibility of legal strike action was virtually non-existent.

“Any public officer contravening the provisions of this section shall be deemed to be guilty of misconduct justifying his summary dismissal”.

To tidy up any contradictions, the second schedule of the Bill excluded “public officers or persons otherwise employed by the Government”, as well as the army and the police, from the provisions of the Trades Disputes (Arbitration and Settlement) Ordinance, and from the Minimum Wages Advisory Boards and Wages Council Ordinance. It was later necessary to exclude them as well from the 1952 Trade Union Ordinance which guaranteed the right of free association in accordance with the Conventions of the International Labour Organisation.

In the National Assembly debate, Magezi based his arguments on the concept of parliamentary sovereignty.

“The Government will not agree to any limitation of its sovereignty in this matter, which allows an arbitrator to commit public funds to which this Assembly could do no more than act as a rubber stamp . . . Parliament is the guardian of the public officer” (UG, 1963 (b), p. 705).

This guardianship was in future to be exercised when the Minister laid his award before the House, a rather dubious protection for a minor civil servant.

The opposition to the Bill came mainly from two members on the Government side — Luande, the President of the UTUC, and Daudi Ocheng, a prominent businessman who acted as spokesman for the Federation of Uganda Employers. Luande pointed out that any division of opinion in the Staff Council virtually gave the Minister power to dictate his own terms of settlement. He claimed that freedom of association was guaranteed by both the Uganda Constitution and by the Trade Union Ordi-

nance but was being overridden by this Bill. He denied that strict legislation was the best way to improve industrial relations. Finally, he complained that the Government, having gone to the trouble of setting up a Labour Consultative Council, had not called it together to discuss this most important piece of labour legislation.

Daudi Ocheng concentrated on the constitutional aspects, and also the impact of the Bill on general industrial relations. He pointed out that the limitation of the right to strike contradicted the conventions of the International Labour Organisation of which Uganda was a member, the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, and even Uganda's Constitution. He also claimed that the practice in private enterprise of appointing an independent arbitrator inspired confidence and might improve relations if included in the Government set-up. Finally, he expressed the fear among private employers that this Bill was the thin end of the wedge and the beginning of a process of government restriction on the freedom of collective bargaining.

In reply to these criticisms it was stated that the Uganda Government, although a member of the International Labour Organisation, had not ratified those conventions on freedom of association which were not thought to be applicable to under-developed areas. In any case, International Labour Organisation conventions could not be regarded as superior to the Uganda Constitution which, in Section 27(2), permitted the exclusion of the employees of Government from the provisions of freedom of association cited by critics of the Bill.

One opposition member touched on the basic weakness of the Bill when he pointed out that "the Bill affected such employees as grass cutters, whose real protection was trade unionism. The Bill now would deny them that protection". (UG 1963 (b), p. 713). Parliament may be termed the guardian of the public officer, but the politicians had few contacts with the lowest grade of unestablished employee. He believed that a strong union was the best means of protecting this group's interests from exploitation by the employing authority and it was feared that this Bill would greatly weaken the union.

Before the final passage of the Bill, a delegation from the UTUC and the Employers' Association discussed the matter with the two ministers concerned, at a meeting of the Labour Consultative Council. The union memorandum repeated points already touched on in Parliament regarding fundamental rights embodied in constitutional documents and international conventions. It also suggested that existing machinery had not been found wanting in



relation to public servants and that the proposed legislation emphasised an unnecessary difference.

"It would have been far better had Government concentrated on finalising the Industrial Relations Charter. Through this Charter both Government and the union would feel bound by honour to respect 'industrial ethics' in matters concerning any difference between us". (para. 3).

Detailed clauses were criticised, including the failure to provide grievance machinery for issues specifically excluded from the Council and the right of Ministers to postpone awards without consultation with the affected party. The key assertion of the memorandum was that:

"The power to make an award should be vested in the Board and not in the Minister as, in the final analysis, he is an interested party". (para. 13).

However, the memorandum was not publicised and little was done to make the Bill a popular issue. The General Secretary of the union seems to have accepted the inevitable after quietly voicing his disagreement. He accepted that the Minister of State had replaced the Labour Department as far as his union was concerned and claimed, somewhat optimistically, that the union's right to strike had not been removed completely. He asserted that if the union disagreed with the final decision after all the procedures had been completed, it could still go on strike. This was wishful thinking as well as a misinterpretation of the practical possibilities of a legal strike. The leaders of the unions realised that there was no hope of resisting Government and saw that co-operation would help them more than open criticism.

To some extent, this acquiescence was in line with the policy of the Public Services International (PSI). When Tanganyika had passed similar legislation relating to the Tanganyika Union of Public Employees, the General Secretary had written for advice. The PSI's reply reaffirmed their policy resolution of demanding full negotiating rights and free arbitration as well as freedom for all civil servants to join the union of their choice. However, the advice to the Tanganyika Union of Public Employees was that it should collaborate with the Government to build up mutual trust and confidence despite the restrictions imposed by the legislation. In this way, the union might show that Government could restore full rights without any danger that these rights would be misused.

The same line seems to have been taken on Uganda, with a minimum of protest being made against the new legislation. The local leaders seemed to have accepted the change quite amicably. The



UPEU was led by able administrators rather than devoted unionists because of the nature of its growth. These leaders were not willing to sacrifice the security of their jobs, either in Government or as full-time unionists, by opposing the legislation too vehemently. A union genuinely devoted to western principles of free collective bargaining might have stirred itself to effective protests. But the only people in the UPEU devoted to such principles were the expatriate advisers, and they had gone home. The African leaders and the rank and file had never exerted themselves in pursuit of these principles and so were less concerned about their removal. Kibuka, the main leader, was also becoming aware that he might have a bright future as a national union leader if he was co-operative with Government. Events were to prove that he was right.

By the end of 1964, the lines of Government policy towards the trade union were clearly drawn, although all the details had not been fully worked out. As in many other countries, the public service was treated as a special category because of its key role in the execution of the business of the State. Union membership was restricted to unskilled employees and the lowest grade of clerks, and even this union was subject to the absolute power of the Minister if a major dispute threatened.

When dealing with employees in private enterprise, the Government was more equivocal. In August 1962, Onama, Minister of Labour had stated categorically that:

"The Government does not intend to introduce legislation to restrict the rights of employees in any way. I remain convinced that machinery for collective bargaining and the settlement of disputes on an industrial basis, and the co-operation of both parties in a spirit of goodwill and determination to make the machinery work, is the only way to achieve industrial peace". (Speech to Federation of Uganda Employers, August 1962).

By 1964, another Minister of Labour felt it necessary to go back on this principle to some extent. A new Trades Disputes (Arbitration and Settlement) Act made it an offence to strike without first exhausting the existing disputes procedure. Heavy fines or prison sentences could be imposed on leaders counselling a strike under these conditions, and on workers for committing a breach of their contract by participating in such a strike. In addition, the schedule of essential services to which more stringent legislation applied was made variable at the discretion of the Minister.

Finally, the Government had given its support to the establishment of an Industrial Charter which recognised the value of voluntary co-operation between the Federation of Uganda

Employers and the UTUC as the representative national union centre. At the same time, the Government negotiators had been careful to exclude the provision of the Kenya model which would have recognised the monopoly position of the UTUC. Instead, during 1964, it began to support the emergence of an alternative centre which would be more amenable to official direction.

Although this centre fell far short of majority support in terms of affiliated union members, the trend towards exclusive government recognition as the representative national centre made it an important force to be reckoned with. The eventual outcome is likely to be some compromise organisation created out of an amalgamation of FUTU and UTUC, made under official pressure, which will allow a rationalisation of the overall union structure and greater official influence over national aspects of union policy.

So, in its relations with the trade unions, the Government pursued a number of different lines of policy. Behind all of them was the clear intention that, one way or another, unions should be made to conform to the broad policy intentions of the Government and not left to pursue their own narrow interests at the expense of wider national objectives.

## Chapter Fourteen

### A WIDER PERSPECTIVE

The development of trade unions reflects to some extent the existence of social and political conditions peculiar to Uganda. Generally, however, observations made in the course of this survey seem to be relevant to many other parts of Africa and this is borne out by a review of some of the comparative literature available. One fundamental feature common to many African countries is that there are few "workers" in the western sense of a landless proletariat dependent solely upon their wages. During the formative period of trade union growth in Uganda, the mass of the workers were migrants who intended to resume their tenure of an area of tribal land after a short spell of wage employment. The only groups who were in a position to stay longer in employment, the Luo and the Ganda, were also the only groups to be interested in trade union activity in its early stages.

Because the mass of the workers did not identify their long-term interests with wage employment, unions were slow to develop in Uganda and never claimed wholehearted support from all the workers. Characteristically, union leadership came from clerical and semi-skilled workers who intended to stay longer in employment than most of the manual workers. It was also noted that many of the top union leaders were individuals who, for one reason or another, were excluded from advancement in other fields. Roper has pointed out that trade unions in many areas came to be regarded as legitimate instruments in the struggle for nationalist political goals (Roper, 1958, p. 101) This did not occur in Uganda, partly because of the character of Ugandan politics and partly because of the exclusion of most union leaders from the dominant political forces.

As elsewhere in Africa, trade unions have been one of the most important associational interest groups concerned with the urbanisation process. And, again characteristically, this process has represented a compromise between modern values and the tenacity of traditional loyalties. Although unions acted as supra-tribal units concerned with work groups, ethnic and tribal loyalties continued to be of supreme importance in the internal politics of the trade union movement. It was this ethnic identification between leaders

and ordinary members which helps to explain the passive toleration of the wide cultural gap between the mass of workers and the national leadership.

The Ugandan unions suffered from the same weaknesses in negotiation which have been noted elsewhere in Africa. Writing of French West Africa, Berg noted three reasons for the special vulnerability of African unions: their inability to force employers to shut down during a dispute because of the key role played by non-Africans in most enterprises, their lack of solidarity as a result of ethnic differences between the members which caused constant splits within the union leadership, and the lack of financial resources to sustain a long strike (Berg, 1957, p. 225). In Uganda, examples can be cited in support of all three of these factors: the maintenance of rail services during the 1960 strike by Asian and European employees, the series of disturbances in the National Union of Plantation Workers arising out of tribal disputes, and the collapse of the Nyanza Textiles strike because of the absence of any form of strike fund. This dependence on outside financial support in order to sustain a strike indicates a more fundamental weakness in African unions. Many unions in western countries have shown that it is possible to maintain a strike action for many months at a time if the union members believe in the cause enough to suffer hardship by "living off the land". In Africa, living off the land is a much more comfortable operation because of the links between urban workers and traditional agriculture. The fact that strikes cannot be sustained points to the absence of a firm commitment on the part of the workers to the ideals of trade unionism.

In his analysis of industrial relations in Egypt, Harbison developed what he called "a typology of employer-union relationships" (Harbison, 1959, pp. 168-176). His four types were: (1) the paternalistic relationship; (ii) the unstable truce; (iii) the stable truce; and (iv) permanent mutual accommodation.

Each of the four types can be related to the case studies of Ugandan unions. The paternalistic relationship is characterised as a situation in which "the union is recognised as a junior partner which should reflect management wishes and policies". (Harbison, 1959, p. 169). Fear of unrestricted protest by workers leads to an attempt to impose a loyal and conservative union leadership which will gain the support of the workers through concessions made by management. In this way the management retain their absolute authority and actively work against any attempt by "bad elements" to invade the union leadership. This was obviously the situation in Nyanza Textiles, where the policy finally led to persistent unrest



caused by frustration among those aspiring union leaders who rejected the idea of "junior partnership".

The unstable truce describes the situation in which the company management is intent on preventing union organisation or breaking it up when it can no longer be resisted. There is no acceptance of the fact that there is a need for an organised system for the ventilation of grievances. This was true of employers in the sugar industry in their dealings with the National Union of Plantation Workers, particularly in the early period. Having resisted the formation of a union for as long as possible, the employers then made it as hard as possible for the NUPW to become established, and even tried to sponsor an alternative organisation.

The stable truce relationship depends upon recognition by management that the union cannot be dislodged from its position as representative of their employees, and an acceptance by the union that it will make most progress by peaceful negotiation rather than direct action. This more sophisticated approach is common among large foreign-owned enterprises, and is perhaps the product of wider experiences with organised labour in other areas. Of the unions studied in detail, only the Tobacco Workers Union had achieved this degree of stability but much the same situation prevailed among other Ugandan unions dealing with the oil companies and the largest commercial firms.

Finally, there is the permanent mutual accommodation, in which the union is more powerful than in any other type of relationship. As Harbison points out, it is often transport workers who achieve this position in which the union has genuine strength and can effectively bargain for concessions. In Uganda, it was the Railway African Union rather than the motor transport workers who made most progress. Because many officials had had experience with the more advanced union movement in Kenya, the RAU was the first to be established in Uganda. It remained the strongest and most militant organisation in Uganda despite frequent internal leadership disputes.

In noting the general weakness of trade unions in Africa, Hunter has stated that:

"Perhaps the main difficulty has not been so much the alien character of the Trade Union in the traditional context but the fact that the movement came from above and was never lived and suffered by the bulk of the membership". (Hunter, 1962, p. 218).

This has yet to be established on the basis of empirical evidence regarding the role of the trade union in a traditional context. However, the imposition was the work of the policy makers in the

British Colonial Office, and later the representatives of the international trade union movement, particularly the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and its associated organisations. It has been seen that this second group had a particular impact in Uganda because of the late development of unions there and because Kampala became a focus for ICFTU activities in Africa through the presence of the African Labour College.

Protagonists of this transfer to Africa of the union experience of Europe and North America believe that the problems of industrialisation are universal and respond to similar solutions. While admitting that institutions will naturally be influenced by the environment in which they operate, Roberts asserts that:

“It does not follow that different fundamental principles ought to be applied to overseas territories simply because they are at an earlier stage in their economic and social development . . . Whatever the shortcomings of British Colonial policy might have been, there can be no possible doubt that the governments of both parties have been absolutely right to foster free trade unionism and a pattern of industrial relations based in principle on ideas pioneered and tested in Britain and the western world”. (Roberts, 1957, p. 402).

Against this view, writers such as Davison have questioned the continuing applicability of these British and American ideas because of fundamental differences in the political and economic structure of African countries. The absence of a free market economy, the dominant role of the State in wage setting and, latterly the trend towards totalitarian political control all point to the need to recognise that trade unionism in Africa will necessarily take on a different form from trade unionism in the more developed countries of Western Europe and America.

In Uganda, the most undesirable effect of these international influences was the extent to which the union leaders were encouraged to stand up for their conception of “free trade unionism”, a conception which was becoming dangerously irrelevant under the African government. Political leaders were suspicious of the unions as a possible future source of opposition and as a hindrance to their plans for rapid economic development. In particular, they wished to exert a measure of control over the unions in order to prevent any acceleration of wage demands or use of strike action which might jeopardise the country’s economic stability.

Millen has analysed what is narrowly defined in the United States as free trade unionism:

“In general it seems to imply a model of unionism that (i) is

primarily, if not exclusively, concerned with the economic function of collective bargaining to win benefits for the workers, (ii) is not linked with and/or controlled by a government or political party, (iii) has no Communist connections. The only labour movement in the world whose operation accords with all three specifications is that of the United States. Least of all does the model relate to the trade unions of Asia and Africa." (Millen, 1962, p. 5).

It is difficult to evaluate the effect of external influences on the development of trade unionism with any certainty. It is clear, however, that the combination of Colonial Office encouragement and international trade union finance and training assistance caused unions to increase their strength much more quickly than would have been the case had the African workers been left to their own devices. In addition, the structure of trade unions and the patterns of industrial relations were initially closely modelled upon western practices. What is not clear is the extent to which external influences actually changed the direction of union development from a wholly indigenous response to local economic and political conditions. Perhaps, it might be closer to reality to view external influences as acting as a brake on the now well-established trend towards rigid and direct government control over the political and economic activities of African trade unions.

It has been seen that the pattern of relationships in Uganda between the trade unions, the nationalist political parties and the independent government fits in with the controversial Berg-Butler thesis regarding the political impotence of trade unions in Africa. This can be explained in terms of the role of non-Ugandans in the union leadership, the absence of a comprehensive nationalist mass movement and the relative insignificance of the urban wage-earning population in the national economy. Perhaps it is possible to draw a comparison with Nigeria where the trade union movement is also outside the mainstream of political activity. Similar conditions include the existence of a system of indirect rule which strengthened particularist loyalties at the expense of nationalism, the competitive party system which led from this and the disunity and weakness of bodies claiming to act as national spokesmen for the union movement. Events in Nigeria during 1964 which culminated in an effective General Strike indicate that there is a limit to the extent to which political leaders can ignore the aspirations of organised labour. However it seems clear that Uganda still has some distance to travel before this limit is reached.

In his introduction to a comparative study of labour in developing countries, Galenson has summed up the choice facing the

new national leaders :

“There are, in the final analysis, two great conceptions of labour market organisation confronting one another in the world today. One of them regards the interests of labor, as well as other social groups as subordinate to the interests of the state, which is conceived of as the only legitimate representative of parochial interests.

The second conception starts with the basic assumption that sectional interests may on occasion diverge from the national interest, and permits the establishment of organisational means by which parochial interests may be furthered.

Every country which is now in the process of determining its ultimate institutional arrangements will have to opt for one or the other of these systems”. (Galenson, 1962, p. 9).

This study of Uganda has shown how the second, permissive approach was adopted by those concerned with the formulation of colonial labour policy and by the representatives of the western-oriented international trade union movement. And the study has also shown how the authoritarian approach has begun to assert itself since independence, in keeping with the general trend towards the centralisation of political authority in the hands of national political leaders.



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AATUF	All-African Trade Union Federation.
ATGWU	Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union.
CLAC	Colonial Labour Advisory Council.
CO	Colonial Office.
EACSO	East African Common Services Organisation.
EAHC	East African High Commission.
EAISR	East African Institute of Social Research.
EARHA	East African Railways and Harbour Administration.
FUE	Federation of Uganda Employers.
FUTU	Federation of Uganda Trade Unions.
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions.
IFCCTE	International Federation of Clerical, Commercial and Technical Employees.
IFPAAW	International Federation of Plantation, Agricultural and Allied Workers.
ILO	International Labour Organisation.
ITS	International Trade Secretariat.
KFE	Kenya Federation of Employers.
KFL	Kenya Federation of Labour.
LDR	Annual Reports of the Uganda Labour Department.
NUCCTE	National Union of Clerical, Commercial and Technical Employees.
NUPW	National Union of Plantation Workers.
OEF	Overseas Employers' Federation.
PSI	Public Services International.
RAU	Railway African Union.
TANU	Tanganyika African National Union.
TFL	Tanganyika Federation of Labour.
TUC	Trades Union Congress, Britain.
UFL	Uganda Federation of Labour.
UG	Uganda Government.
UNC	Uganda National Congress.
UP	Uganda Protectorate.
UPC	Uganda People's Congress.
UPEU	Uganda Public Employees' Union.
UTUC	Uganda Trades Union Congress.
WFTU	World Federation of Trade Unions.

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## Appendix A

## INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS CHARTER

The Government of Uganda, the Federation of Uganda Employers and the Uganda Trades Union Congress:

(1) realising that it is in the national interest for the Government, Management and Workers to recognise that consultation and co-operation on a basis of mutual understanding render an essential contribution to the efficiency and productivity of an undertaking and that progress can only be made on a foundation of good terms and conditions of employment which include security of service and income also the improvement of workers' conditions of service;

(2) desiring to make the greatest possible contribution to the success and prosperity of Uganda.

Hereby agree together as follows:

1. AGREED RESPONSIBILITIES OF MANAGEMENT AND UNIONS.

- (i) that the statutory machinery for settlement of disputes should be utilised as quickly as possible;
- (ii) that both sides undertake to settle any or all industrial disputes at the appropriate level and according to the procedure laid down hereafter;
- (iii) that affirming their faith in democratic principles, they agree to settle all future differences, disputes and grievances by mutual negotiation and according to principles laid down in the Trades Disputes (Arbitration and Settlement) Ordinance;
- (iv) that neither party will have recourse to intimidation or victimisation or conduct contrary to the spirit of this Charter;
- (v) that they undertake to promote maximum co-operation in the interests of good industrial relations between their representatives at all levels and abide by the spirit of agreements mutually entered into;
- (vi) that they undertake to observe strictly the agreed grievance procedure which will ensure a speedy and full investigation leading to settlement;
- (vii) that they will educate the Management Personnel and Employees regarding their obligations to each other for the purpose of good industrial relations.
- (viii) that they respect each other's right to freedom of association;



- (ix) that they will deal promptly with all correspondence that arises between them.

## 2. MANAGEMENT AGREE:

- (i) to recognise the Union appropriate to its particular undertaking or industry provided that the Union is acceptable to workers in that undertaking or industry and to accord reasonable facilities for the normal functioning of the Union in the undertaking;
- (ii) to discourage such practices as (a) interference with the rights of employees to enrol or continue as Union members; (b) discrimination, restraint or coercion against any employee because of recognised activity of trade unions; (c) victimisation of any employee and abuse of authority in any form; (d) abusive or intemperate language; and (e) generally to respect the provision of the ILO Convention No. 98.
- (iii) to take action for (a) settlement of grievances and (b) implementation of settlements, awards, decisions and orders, as speedily as possible;
- (iv) to investigate all cases of misconduct strictly in accordance with the grievance procedure laid down in the recognition agreement;
- (v) to impress upon their staffs the contents of this Charter and to take appropriate action where Management inquiries reveal that the spirit or contents of this Charter have been contravened and to give full publicity on their Notice Boards to this Charter;
- (vi) to discourage any breach of the peace or civil commotion by Employers or their Agents;
- (vii) to encourage (a) diligence at work;  
(b) punctuality;  
(c) strict observance of provisions for safe working.

## 3. UNION(S) AGREE:

- (i) that Management has the exclusive right and power to manage its undertaking and to engage, promote, transfer, demote or lay off employees and to discipline, suspend or discharge employees for just cause provided that this does not preclude the Union's right to raise any grievance through the accepted grievance procedure
- (ii) not to engage in any activities which are contrary to the spirit of the Charter;

- (iii) to discourage any breach of the peace or civil commotion by Union members;
- (iv) to discourage such practices as:
  - (a) negligence of duty;
  - (b) careless operation;
  - (c) damage to property;
  - (d) interference with or disturbance to normal work;
  - (e) insubordination;
  - (f) abusive or intemperate language;
  - (g) "go-slow"
  - (h) intemperance;and to encourage:
  - (a) diligence at work;
  - (b) punctuality;
  - (c) strict observance of provisions for safe working.
- (v) to take action to implement awards, agreements, settlements and decisions as speedily as possible;
- (vi) in the event of a stoppage for any reason to ensure the maintenance of essential services and such security services as shall be provided for in any recognition agreement but the employees concerned shall not be called upon to perform any other duties than the maintenance of the service concerned;
- (vii) to display in conspicuous places in the Union offices the provisions of this Code and to impress upon their officers and members the contents of this Charter and to take appropriate action where Union inquiries reveal that the spirit or contents of this Charter have been contravened.

4. GOVERNMENT AGREES:

to maintain or introduce legislation providing for machinery of conciliation, arbitration and inquiry suitable for dealing with different kinds of industrial disputes. Representatives of the employers and workers concerned including representatives of the Federation of Uganda Employers and Uganda Trades Union Congress shall be associated where practicable in the operation of the machinery, in such manner and to such extent, but in any case in equal numbers and on equal terms, as may be determined by the Government. Such determination will take into consideration the views expressed by the parties to the dispute. The Gov-

ernment further agrees to ensure that bodies that already exist such as the Labour Consultative Council meet regularly at least twice a year at definitely stated intervals.

#### 5. SETTLEMENT OF DISPUTES:

In the event of failure to achieve settlement by negotiation the Uganda Trades Union Congress and the Federation of Uganda Employers agree that:

- (a) where it is appropriate for Management and Unions to use mutually-established conciliation and arbitration machinery such machinery shall be used;
- (b) where such mutually-established machinery cannot be quickly set up or used, or where it appears to either side to be inappropriate for the matter under dispute, the Management and the Union concerned will refer the dispute to the Government-established machinery;
- (c) in referring a dispute to Government each party to the dispute will describe the issues and the points of difference between them, and will express its views as to the kind of body or bodies which it considers will most efficiently deal with the matter under dispute.

#### 6. TRIPARTITE CO-OPERATION:

The Uganda Trades Union Congress and the Federation of Uganda Employers agree to participate constructively in tripartite bodies which may be formed by Government in order to achieve liaison between them for the purposes of examining labour policy and legislation, fostering industrial co-operation, and raising industrial efficiency and productivity so as to build up the economic prosperity of Uganda and its peoples.

#### 7. REDUNDANCY:

In the event of redundancy, the following principles will apply:

- (a) the Union concerned shall be informed as far in advance as possible of the reasons for and the extent of intended redundancy;
- (b) the principle should be adopted of "Last in, First out" in the particular category of employees affected subject to all other factors such as ability to do the job and a satisfactory work record being equal;
- (c) the redundant employee will be entitled to the appropriate period of notice or pay in lieu which shall be not less than one month.

**8. EMPLOYMENT POLICY:**

The provisions of the ILO Convention adopted June, 1962, Article 14, shall apply as follows:

- (i) It shall be an aim of policy to abolish all discrimination among workers on grounds of race, colour, sex, belief, tribal association or trade union affiliation in respect of:
  - (a) labour legislation and agreements which shall afford equitable economic treatment to all those lawfully resident or working in the country;
  - (b) admission to public or private employment;
  - (c) conditions of engagement and promotion;
  - (d) opportunities for vocational training;
  - (e) conditions of work;
  - (f) health, safety and welfare measures;
  - (g) discipline;
  - (h) participation in the negotiation of collective agreements;
  - (i) wages rates, which shall be fixed according to the principles of equal pay for work of equal value in the same operation and undertaking.
- (ii) All practicable measures shall be taken to abolish, by raising the rates applicable to the lower-paid workers, any existing differences in wage rates due to discrimination by reason of race, colour, sex, belief, tribal association or trade union affiliation.
- (iii) Workers engaged outside Uganda for employment in Uganda may be granted, in addition to their wages, benefits in cash or in kind to meet any reasonable personal or family expenses resulting from employment away from their homes. This is to apply in cases of special skills not available in Uganda.
- (iv) The foregoing provisions of this Article shall be without prejudice to such measures as the competent authority may think it necessary or desirable to take for the safeguarding of motherhood and for ensuring the health, safety and welfare of women workers.

**9. INTIMIDATION:**

It is hereby agreed that employees and management shall enjoy adequate protection against any acts of interference by each other or each other's agents or members. Such protection shall apply more particularly in respect of such acts as:



- (a) will make the employment of an individual employee subject to the condition that he shall or shall not join a union;
- (b) the dismissal of an employee by reason of union membership or acts of participation in union activities outside working hours or with the consent of the employer within working hours;
- (c) the drawing up, issuing or publication of discriminatory lists or any action which will prevent a supervisor or shop steward from carrying out his normal functions.

#### 10. JOINT CONSULTATION:

Management and employees recognise that consultation and co-operation on the basis of mutual confidence render an essential contribution to the efficiency and productivity of an undertaking and also contribute to the social and economic well-being of all. It is therefore agreed that:—

- (i) encouragement shall be given to voluntary agreements between parties;
- (ii) management shall take appropriate measures to facilitate the proper functioning of joint machinery by making available facilities for meetings;
- (iii) it is clearly understood, however, that the employees' representatives, not being full-time paid officials of the union, are first and foremost employees of industry and as such their first and prime responsibility is to carry out the duties assigned to them as employees of their employer Company during working hours. It is agreed that this does not prejudice the managements undertaking under Clause 2 (i) above.
- (iv) (a) that the recognised procedure covering negotiations and discussions between both parties should be so far as is practicable fully known and understood by the employees and by all members of Management;  
(b) that an essential factor in successful negotiations and discussions is the clear statement or report of the issues involved and of the resulting decision after mutual agreement between the parties;
- (v) the Federation of Uganda Employers and Uganda Trades Union Congress agree to set up a joint body to meet at regular intervals to consider common problems and to decide any changes or amendments which may prove necessary to this Charter in the light of experience

gained after it has come into operation.

#### 11. PRESS STATEMENTS:

The Federation of Uganda Employers and Uganda Trades Union Congress agree to dissuade their affiliates from issuing to the Press and to Radio Uganda during negotiations statements which might prejudice matters under negotiation.

#### 12. RECOGNITION:

It is agreed that the items set out in Appendix 'A' should normally be included in any recognition agreements.

- (i) No employer will negotiate with a Union until the Union has been registered and gazetted in the normal manner;
- (ii) If either the Employer or the Union considers that an agreement has been breached it should give notice in writing to the appropriate side calling for a discussion before making a complete break in the agreement;
- (iii) That these principles be brought to the notice of parties who are not affiliated to Federation of Uganda Employers or Uganda Trades Union Congress.

#### 13. THE PUBLIC SERVICE:

For the avoidance of doubt it is hereby declared by the Government of Uganda and recognised by the Federation of Uganda Employers and the Uganda Trades Union Congress that this Charter is not intended to apply and does not apply to the public service of Uganda or matters relating thereto.

Dated this first day of June 1964.

SIGNED

F. W. Reynolds  
For and on behalf of the  
Federation of Uganda Employers.

H. M. Luande  
For and on behalf of the  
Uganda Trades Union Congress.

WITNESS

G. B. K. Magezi  
Minister of Housing and Labour.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS CHARTER — Appendix 'A'  
Items normally included in a recognition agreement:

1. Subjects for negotiation :
  - (a) Rates of pay
  - (b) Hours of work
  - (c) Rates of overtime
  - (d) Public and religious holidays
  - (e) Leave terms
  - (f) Sick leave, sick pay and medical facilities
  - (g) Maternity leave
  - (h) Severance pay or Provident Fund
  - (i) Collection of Union dues and Check Off
2. Grievance procedure.

#### Appendix B

#### BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

This is not intended to be a comprehensive list of all those names mentioned in the thesis but rather an indication of the positions held by those people at the time that their actions had a significant influence on trade union development. Tribe or nationality is given in brackets.

##### (A) UGANDAN TRADE UNIONISTS:

- Banyanga, A:** General Secretary, Tobacco Workers Union, 1957-1961; General Secretary, UTUC, 1959-1960; Personnel Officer, Uganda Sugar Factory since 1961. (Ankole).
- Dullo, A:** Branch Secretary Namasagali, RAU until 1959; leader of abortive National Union of Railwaymen, 1960 (Luo).
- Eribankya, J:** President, NUPW, 1960; General Secretary, NUPW, 1962; Personnel Officer, Uganda Company, 1963. (Toro).
- Imanyoha, R:** Regional Secretary, Fort Portal, NUPW, 1960; General Secretary, NUPW since 1963. (Toro).

- Kanyago, P:** Executive member, Clerical Union, 1958; executive member, NUCCTE, 1961; Research Officer, ICFTU African Regional Organisation, African Labour College, since 1963. (Ganda).
- Kibuka, E:** General Secretary, Ankole Local Government Employees Union, 1960; General Secretary, UPEU, since 1961; General Secretary, FUTU since 1964. (Ankole).
- Kopoka, O. B:** President, Makerere College Junior Employees Union, 1956; President, UTUC, 1957-8; Personnel Officer, Shell Oil Company, since 1959. (Tanzanian).
- Luande, H. M:** Vice-President, Kenya and Uganda Railway African Staff Union, 1950; President, RAU, 1952; full-time executive President since 1958; President, UTUC, 1956, 1959 and since 1962; Organising Secretary, UTUC, 1961; UPC member for Kampala East in National Assembly, 1962; resigned from party to sit as an independent member, 1964. (Samia).
- Makayu, C:** General Secretary, Clerical Union, 1952-1957; General Secretary, UTUC, 1956-1957. (Ganda).
- Mbwanga, A:** Secretary, Municipal and Township Employees Union, Jinja, 1960; committee member, Jinja Regional Executive, UPEU, since 1961. (Luo).
- Mugala, A. H:** General Secretary, Uganda Textiles Workers Union, 1961; Organising Secretary, UFL, 1962; executive member, FUTU, 1964. (Samia)
- Musazi, I. K:** President, African Motor Drivers Union, 1938-1945; President, Transport and General Workers Union, 1949; President, Uganda National Congress, 1952. (Ganda).
- Nakibinge, E. W:** Clerk, ICFTU African Labour College, 1958-1963; Executive member, NUCCTE, 1958-1961; General Secretary, UTUC, since 1961. (Ganda).
- Nkuuti, H:** Treasurer, NUCCTE, 1959; Education Secretary, UTUC, 1962; Treasurer, UTUC, since 1963. (Ganda).
- Ojambo, J:** General Secretary, NUPW, 1960; Regional Organising Secretary, Jinja, UTUC, 1961-1962; Personnel Officer, Madhvani Sugar Factory, 1963-1964; Executive official, FUTU, since



1964. (Samia).
- Ojepa, D. L.:** Regional Organiser, UPC Youth Wing, Soroti, 1962; Regional representative, ATGWU, Soroti, 1962; National Treasurer, UPC Youth Wing and executive member, UFL, 1963. (Teso).
- Okatch, P.:** General Secretary, RAU, 1956; Vice-President, UTUC, 1957-1958; Ministry of Works employee since 1959. (Luo).
- Pulle, F.:** President, Clerical Workers Union, 1957-1961; President, NUCCTE since 1961; President, UTUC, 1957 and 1961; Treasurer, UTUC, 1962-1963. (Goan-Ganda).
- Reich, J.:** General Secretary, Eastern Province Transport Workers Union, 1954-1957; General Secretary, ATGWU, 1958; Vice-President, UTUC, 1960; General Secretary, UFL, 1961; Personnel Officer, Madhvani Sugar Factory, 1961-1964; President, FUTU since 1964. (Soga-European).
- Ruguma, G.:** General Secretary, Fort Portal section of National Union of Plantation Workers, 1960; Branch Secretary, NUPW, Lugazi, 1961; Branch Secretary, Uganda Sugar and Allied Workers Union, 1962. (Toro).
- Senkezi, L.:** General Secretary, Clerical Union, 1959; General Secretary of NUCCTE since 1961. (Ganda).
- Wangatia:** President, Uganda Civil Servants Union (Jinja), 1960; Executive member, Jinja Region, UPEU, 1961. (Samia).
- Zarabweji, P. C.:** Treasurer, UTUC, 1962; Treasurer, NUPW since 1962. (Ankole).
- (B) OTHERS:
- Allen, V. L.:** Lecturer in Industrial Relations, Leeds University; IFPAAW adviser in Uganda, December 1960 — September 1961. (British).
- Barratt, D.:** IFPAAW adviser in Uganda, September, 1960. (British).
- Brandie, J.:** Regional Official, Transport and General Workers Union, London until 1958; Industrial Relations Officer in the Uganda Labour Department, 1958-1961; Senior Industrial Relations Officer, BOAC, London Airport, since 1962. (British).

- Cohen, Sir A. B:** Assistant Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1947-1951; Governor of Uganda, 1952-1957; Permanent British Representative on the United Nations Trusteeship Council, 1957-1961; Director-General of the Department of Technical Co-operation, London, 1961. (British).
- Coutts, Sir W:** Chief Secretary, Kenya, 1958-1961; Governor of Uganda, 1961-1962; Governor-General, Uganda, 1962-1963. (British).
- Crawford, Sir F:** Deputy-Governor Kenya, 1953-1956; Governor, Uganda, 1956-1961; Resident Director, British South Africa Company, Salisbury, Rhodesia, since 1961. (British).
- Franken, G:** PSI adviser in Uganda to UPEU, 1961-1962. (Dutch).
- Foggon, G:** Labour Commissioner, Nigeria, 1954-58; labour adviser to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1958-1961; labour adviser to the Secretary for Technical Co-operation, 1962 (British).
- The Kabaka, Sir F. Mutesa:** Traditional ruler of Buganda, 1939-1953; reinstated in 1955 under new Buganda Agreement; appointed first President of Uganda, 1963. (Ganda).
- Kakonge, J:** Secretary-General, UPC, 1960-1963; Director of Planning in Prime Minister's Office, 1963. (Nyoro).
- Kiwanuka, B:** President-General, Democratic Party since 1958; Chief Minister in the Democratic Party administration 1961-1962. (Ganda).
- Kiwanuka, J:** sometime Secretary-General, Uganda National Congress; at present UPC member of Uganda National Assembly. (Ganda).
- Magezi, G:** Secretary-General, UPC, 1961; specially-elected member, Uganda National Assembly, 1962; Minister of State, 1963; Minister of Housing and Labour since 1963. (Nyoro).
- Mboya, T:** National General Secretary, Kenya Local Government Workers Union, 1953-1957; Secretary-General, KFL, 1953-1963; Secretary-General, KANU in 1960; Minister of Labour,

- Kenya Coalition Government, 1962; Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, 1963; Minister of Development and Planning, December 1964. (Luo).
- Nekyon, A :** UPC member for Lango South East since 1961; Minister of Information, Broadcasting and Tourism, 1962-1964; Acting Minister of Labour, 1962; Minister for Planning and Community Development, since 1964. (Lango).
- Nicklin, L :** Industrial Relations Officer, Uganda Labour Department, 1949-1958; transferred to apprenticeship and in-service training, Establishments Branch, 1959; 1961, Labour Adviser and then Labour Commissioner, Fiji. (British).
- Obote, A. M :** President, UPC, since 1960; member, UNC. 1952-1960; Leader of the Opposition, 1961-1962; Prime Minister since 1962. (Lango).
- Ocheng, D :** Deputy Manager, Agricultural Enterprises Ltd., since 1962; Kabaka Yekka member of the Uganda National Assembly since November 1963; Opposition Whip, 1965. (Acholi).
- Odero-Jowi, J :** Lecturer in economics, African Labour College, Kampala, 1961; UN Economic Commission for Africa, Ethiopia and USA, 1962; Head of the African Labour College, 1962-1963; KANU member of Kenya House of Representatives for Lambwe, 1963; Parliamentary Secretary for Kenya Ministry of Labour and Social Services since 1963. (Luo).
- Onama, F :** General Manager, West Nile Co-operative Union since 1960; Minister of Works and Labour, 1962-1963; Minister of State for Internal Affairs since 1963. (Madi).
- Ojera, A :** Member of National Assembly, 1962; Minister of Community Development and Labour, 1963; Minister of Information, Broadcasting and Tourism, since 1964. (Lango).
- Thalmayer, J :** International Federation of Building and Woodworkers, adviser in Uganda, 1962-1963. (American).
- Welsh, E :** ICFTU Regional Representative for East Africa, 1960-1962. (American).
- Zake, J. L :** Lawyer in Kampala; Member of National

Assembly, 1961; Minister of Education since 1962. (Ganda).

**SOURCES:** Information obtained in interviews was supplemented by reference to *Who's Who, 1964* (116th Annual Edition, published by A & C. Black, London), and *Who's Who in East Africa, 1963-1964* (Marco Surveys Limited, Nairobi).



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