

# **Civil Society's Role in Democratisation**

**An Assessment of the Central Bolivian Labour Confederation's Role in  
the Political Economy of post-Neoliberal Bolivia**

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## **Abstract**

At the time of writing Bolivia has experienced political democracy for nearly 30 uninterrupted years. During this period candidates have been voted into various levels of government through free, fair and regular elections. With each successful election it would seem that political democracy has become increasingly established in Bolivia. However, unlike in more traditional democracies the establishment of political democracy has not led to comprehensive social rights. One possible reason for the stalled democratisation currently facing Bolivia is the nearly quarter of a century of comprehensive neoliberalism, which began in 1986. During this period policy formation was largely decided by small, organised groups of powerful individuals. Furthermore, institutions such as organised labour movements that have been shown to help make political democracies more dynamic – through giving voice to wider interest groups in decision-making processes – were severely repressed during neoliberalism.

Evo Morales' ascension to the presidency in 2006 seems to have marked the end of the type of stringent neoliberal economic policies and narrow decision-making that defined the previous 20 years in Bolivia. More importantly, Morales' election has coincided with the reassertion of certain political rights that had been limited during neoliberalism. Thus, the political rights that have been argued to be vital in democratisation processes by authors such as O'Donnell, Lipset, Przeworski, Rueschemeyer, Stephens, Sen and Valenzuela seem more available now than in the previous two decades. Based in the literature we argue that the opportunities provided by political democracy will not lead to more substantial social democracy on their own but rather need to be positively grabbed by capable actors. Thus, in this thesis we seek to understand if and how the Central Bolivian Labour Confederation is able to use political democracy as a springboard for obtaining greater social rights?

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## List of Acronyms

<u>ADN</u>	Nationalist Democratic Action, <i>Acción Democrática y Nacionalista</i>
<u>ALBA</u>	Bolivian Alternative for the Americas, <i>Alternativa Bolivariana por las Américas</i>
<u>ANPOS</u>	Permanent National Assembly of Union Organisations, <i>Nacional Permanente de Organizaciones Sindicales</i>
<u>CEDLA</u>	Centre for the Studies of Labour and Agrarian Development, <i>Centro de Estudios para el Desarrollo y Agrario</i>
<u>CEFB</u>	Bolivian Private Business Confederation, <i>Confederación de Empresarios Privados de Bolivia</i>
<u>COB</u>	Central Bolivian Labour Confederation, <i>Central Obrera Boliviana</i>
<u>COD</u>	Labour Confederation of the Province, <i>Confederación Obrera Departamental</i>
<u>COMIBOL</u>	Mining Corporation of Bolivia, <i>Corporación Minera de Bolivia</i>
<u>CSO</u>	Civil Society Organisation
<u>CSTSB</u>	Confederation of Bolivian Health Sector Workers, <i>Confederación Sindical de Trabajadores de Salud de Bolivia</i>
<u>CSUTB</u>	Confederation of Rural Workers', <i>Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia</i>
<u>DD</u>	Delegative Democracy
<u>FOT</u>	Workers' Federation of Labour, <i>Federación Obrera de Trabajo</i>
<u>FSTMB</u>	Formal Miners' Federation, <i>Federación Sindical de Trabajadores Mineros de Bolivia</i>
<u>FTAA</u>	Free Trade Agreement of the Americas
<u>IFI</u>	International Financial Institution
<u>IMF</u>	International Monetary Fund
<u>MAS</u>	Movement Towards Socialism, <i>Movimiento Al Socialismo</i>
<u>MIR</u>	Leftist Revolutionary Movement, <i>Movimiento Izquierda Revolucionario</i>

<u>MNR</u>	Revolutionary Nationalist Movement, <i>Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario</i>
<u>MNRI</u>	Revolutionary Nationalist Movement of the Left, <i>Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario Izquierda</i>
<u>MST</u>	Workers Without Land – <i>Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra</i>
<u>NEP</u>	New Economic Policy, <i>Nueva Política Económica</i>
<u>NGO</u>	Non Governmental Organisation
<u>PCB</u>	Communist Party, <i>Partida Comunista Boliviana</i>
<u>PIR</u>	Revolutionary Party of the Left, <i>Partida de la Izquierda Revolucionaria</i>
<u>PODEMOS</u>	Social and Democratic Power, <i>Poder Democrático y Social</i>
<u>POR</u>	Revolutionary Workers’ Party, <i>Partido Obrero Revolucionario</i>
<u>RD</u>	Representative Democracy
<u>SAP</u>	Structural Adjustment Policy
<u>UDP</u>	Democratic Popular Union, <i>Unidad Democrática y Popular</i>

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## **Author's declaration**

I declare that this thesis is the original work of the author and that none of the material contained in this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree in this, or any other, awarding institution. The research contained in this thesis has been undertaken under the supervision of the Thesis Advisory Panel, as directed by the University of York.

Timothy Craig Wirt 2010

# Chapter 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Defining the Problem

Bolivia was one of the first countries in all of Latin America to declare independence from Spain doing so in 1809. However, it was one of the last in the region to achieve this goal (1825). This type of paradox has become somewhat regular in the socio-political development of Bolivia. South America as a region has had one of the most successful and comprehensive transitions to political democracy in the history of the world (Whitehead, 2006:197). However, its evolution from authoritarian rule – transpiring in Bolivia in the late 1970s – has not resulted in greater socio-economic security for much of the region's population; some of the poorest in the world. In 1990, several years removed from respective transitions to democracy, nearly 50 percent of South Americans lived in poverty and close to half of those lacked the resources necessary to meet very basic human needs (O'Donnell, 1999:195). Bolivia is no exception to this trend. Although political democracy has been uninterrupted in Bolivia for nearly 30 years much of this period has been marked by significant and widespread poverty, even by South American standards. In fact, Bolivia is one of the poorest countries in the entire region.

Alongside alarming rates of poverty is the level of disparity between rich and poor. Perennially the region ranks as one of the poorest and unequal in the world. While poverty is experienced in other continents such as Africa and Asia, the combination of poverty and economic inequality in Latin America is unrivalled. The per capita product received by the richest five percent in Latin America is more than 18 times that of the poorest five percent. This is in comparison to a world average of seven to one and an average in developing countries of eight to one (Whitehead, 2006:197). Such poverty and inequality is inimical to stable democratic regimes, the main problem with which we are concerned in this thesis. As populations face greater socio-economic crises they become increasingly desperate. These situations lend themselves to anti-democratic leaders rising to power by appealing to electorates through the claim that they require total control of the government and wider decision-making processes in order to address socio-economic difficulties and to correct 'non-functioning' democracies; not entirely dissimilar to the occurrences that led to military rule in Bolivia in the 1960s.

In contemporary South America, electorates' growing dissatisfaction with the results of these relatively new, democratic governments has been evident in the fact that neoliberal presidents – i.e. ones that favoured market-led development while reducing the role of the state in providing social services – in Ecuador (1997, 2000, 2005), Peru (2000) and Bolivia (2003) were forced out of office before their respective terms had expired (Mainwaring, 2006:1). Furthermore, the elections of several prominent, overtly left-leaning presidents to power within the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Venezuela, Ecuador, Brazil and Bolivia further suggest a general malaise of respective electorates with the previous status quo of political democracy. Yet there is nothing that assures that the elevation to power of left-leaning presidents will imminently lead to the alleviation of such profound poverty and inequality found in Latin America. Although the rise to power of leftist presidents – in stark contrast to their predominately neoliberal predecessors – through democratic elections does suggest increasingly established political democracy, anti-democratic practices have been evidenced in the actions of leaders such as Hugo Chavez of Venezuela. Chavez has restricted certain political rights in the name of pursuing greater social democracy. Leaders like Chavez are a threat to the stability of both political democracy and sustainable social democracy.

While the causal relationship between political democracy and economic equality has been significantly debated throughout the literature (see Lipset, 1960; Bollen and Jackman, 1985; Rueschemeyer *et al.*, 1992), the importance of establishing democratic regimes has widely been agreed upon as a desirable objective. As authors such as O'Donnell point out, political democracy is the only type of regime that allows for rights guaranteed under such a system to be used to obtain other social rights (O'Donnell, 2001a:605). The process of using political freedoms guaranteed under political democracy to strive for greater social democracy – defined as society-wide participation in socio-economic securities such as education, healthcare, pensions and a basic level of material wellbeing – is beneficial in that it can help to both institutionalise political democracy – its foundation – while attempting to widen and substantiate social democracy – its objective. Therefore, democratisation – understood here as the idea of using political rights to strive for greater social rights – seems to be a credible remedy to both the threat of returning to authoritarian rule and the reality of limited social democracy in South America and more specifically Bolivia. It is important to note from the outset that our definition of democratisation

highlights the link between political and social democracy, whereas other authors (see Schmitter, 1986; Valenzuela, 1988; O'Donnell, 1992), particularly those whose work examines the transition to political democracy in Latin America in the early 1980s, understand the term as establishing and stabilising political democracy.

Throughout this thesis we argue that democratisation requires at least two elements. The first is based on the significant amount of literature dedicated to examining the establishment of political democracy and all it entails, as discussed below. Much research – specifically that which was conducted during the initial transition to political democracy in Latin America in the early 1980s – leaves the discussion there, stating that establishing political democracy is a vital step in creating more equal societies. This thesis investigates the next step in such a process, namely how can political democracy – continuously established in Bolivia for the past 25 years – be used to create a more socially equal society? Based in the literature, we argue that using political rights to strive for greater social rights requires an actor – the second element required for democratisation. The question then becomes what actor is best situated to use political freedoms in struggling for greater social rights?

One actor that has received attention regarding its role in processes of democratisation has been organised labour. However, most literature examining labour in this capacity has viewed its role in initiating a move to political democracy from authoritarian rule. Few sources have examined the role of organised labour in utilising political freedoms to struggle for greater social rights, such as more equitable access to markets through agrarian reform, education and/or pensions; fewer still have discussed such processes in the current setting of what we view as the political re-democratisation in much of Latin America following the apparent ebb of neoliberalism. In general, much of the literature surrounding political democratisation in Latin America – of which we discuss below – focuses on transitions to political democracy, empirical transitions to political democracy coupled with theoretical discussions of pressing for social democracy and/or discussions of empirical instances where political rights were used to press for social rights in a post-transitional, neoliberal context. Our study is innovative in that it is based in the theoretical and empirical works mentioned above while exploring evidence of democratisation theory in practice in a post-neoliberal setting.

## 1.2 Scope of Study and Central Research Questions

We have chosen to focus our investigation on Bolivia and the Central Bolivian Labour Confederation, *Central Obrera Boliviana* (COB). This thesis explores the role of the COB in the democratisation process, borrowing from democratisation, industrial relations and wider political economy theories. More specifically we examine the ability of the COB to utilise political rights such as the freedoms of association and expression to draw attention to and generate greater critical assessment of important social issues in pursuit of more democratic outcomes. We do not intend to understand or explain all forms of democratisation in Bolivia but rather what the role of the COB in processes of democratisation might be and what might affect this role.

The COB is an interesting actor to study because of the formative role it has historically played in Bolivian democratisation. Moreover, the contemporary period in Bolivia is a compelling era to investigate for several reasons. First, there has been an ideological shift in the executive branch of the government under President Evo Morales, changing from one of comprehensive market liberalism to a government supposedly committed to state-led development. The Morales government, at first assessment, appears more lawful, more independent from international monetary influences and less labour-hostile than previous governments and thus presents an interesting period in which to re-evaluate the role of the COB in democratisation. Most importantly, political rights such as the freedoms of association and expression appear more available and protected under Morales. However, as our thesis unfolds we will be better able to confirm or deny this claim. Second, at the time of writing the Bolivian economy is in the strongest position it has been in since the implementation of stringent austerity measures in 1986, which were aimed at correcting severe hyperinflation. This is significant not least of all because it has coincided with – and in part afforded – the Bolivian state greater autonomy from international lenders, who wielded great influence in Bolivian policy-making throughout neoliberalism.

As we are interested in assessing the extent to which, and under what conditions, the COB is able to link the freedoms guaranteed under political democracy to social rights, the Morales tenure with its apparent shift in the political and economic environment would seem to provide an interesting context in which to examine such a research topic. One might argue that precisely because there appears to be a government committed to state-led

development in office and the economy is no longer struggling that social rights would be extended and thus make it difficult to accurately assess the role of the COB in processes of democratisation. However, we are not interested in the expansion of social rights through presidential decrees or even government-led policy formation. What we are most interested in is how political rights can be used to press for greater social rights.

The central research question we seek to address in this thesis is as follows:

*What is the role of the COB in processes of democratisation in post-neoliberal Bolivia and what affects the degree and outcome of this role?*

### **1.3 Aims and Objectives of Research**

The aim of this research is to expand on established democratisation theory through examining the influence specific collective actors can have in processes of democratisation. The main objectives we seek to address in this thesis are at least four-fold. First, we aim to better understand and find potential gaps in the literature through a comprehensive literature review – undertaken in Chapters 2 and 3. Second, we seek to construct a strength index – founded in industrial relations literature and democratisation and political economy theory – that will aid us in more appropriately assessing the ability of the COB to influence democratisation. Third, we aim to create a methodology that will enable a better understanding of the wider theoretical issues as they pertain both to our case study as well as other contexts. In creating this methodology we hope that the results obtained through its application will help us accurately assess our chosen research topic. Fourth, through the application of our methodology and the data obtained through its use, we test each of our strength indicators. Once the level of strength is gathered for each indicator we seek to empirically investigate the influence each had on the COB regarding its role in democratisation.

### **1.4 Research Methodology**

The results presented in this thesis were partially achieved through fieldwork conducted from April to August, 2008. This fieldwork was comprised of three components. The first was 30 elite interviews held with members of the COB, government officials, independent researchers and members of the press and general public. The second component of our research was a quantitatively-based questionnaire that was disseminated to union members

of five local level unions across three sectors within the COB. This component yielded 186 completed questionnaires. The final aspect of our fieldwork was daily analysis of media sources including print newspapers and television news broadcasts. Alongside of providing us with greater insight into varying views on contemporary political processes in Bolivia, this research led to the collection of around 200 newspaper articles related to the role of the COB in processes of democratisation. Thus, our data collection and subsequent data analysis techniques represent a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods, as influenced by our ontological and epistemological positions, described below.

## **1.5 Thesis Structure**

The structure of this thesis is organised to best address the abovementioned questions and objectives. In Chapter 2 we discuss the key concepts and how we understand these throughout our thesis. Most centrally, we define our understanding of political and social democracy, democratisation, conceptualisation and civil society. Following on from these discussions we explore existing theoretical frameworks that direct our study. These include – but are not limited to – authors such as Valenzuela (1988), Rueschemeyer *et al.* (1992), Sen (1999), O’Donnell (1999, 2001a, 2001b) and Collier and Collier (2002). The key points laid out in Chapter 2 are that political democracy – and all it entails; universal adult suffrage accompanied by free, fair and regular elections buttressed by the political rights of freedom of association, expression, the press and voice in collectively binding decisions – is a prerequisite for democratisation. Additionally, the specific type of democratisation that we are interested in within this thesis is conceptualisation, an idea borrowed from Sen (1999) and understood as using political freedoms to critically debate and publicly scrutinise important social issues with the objective of obtaining more politically and socially democratic outcomes. However, the presence of political democracy is not enough in its own right to ensure for democratisation, as authors such as Haagh (2002a) have made explicit. We argue that an actor is needed to positively grab the opportunities presented under political democracy in order to increase the likelihood of greater democratisation. We further hold that civil society, and more specifically the COB, is the best-placed actor to exploit such opportunities for reasons we explore below.

In Chapter 3 we introduce the indicators we use to assess the ability of the COB to influence democratisation. Based on the literature, we construct a strength index in order

to analyse the role of organised labour in processes of democratisation in a post-neoliberal setting. The chapter begins by arguing how and why traditional strength indicators found in industrial relations literature and previous democratisation theory are insufficient to appropriately assess our research topic. This is largely because of how we understand democratisation as well as the period in which our thesis is based. The rationale behind choosing our specific strength indicators is spawned from such a discussion. Chapter 3 also outlines the way in which the COB is better equipped to shape democratisation than other collective actors. A final point that we make in Chapter 3 is how we believe our strength index can be exported to wider studies involving the role of organised labour in processes of democratisation in other post-neoliberal settings. Framed in such a discussion the strength indicators that we have chosen to investigate include the historical identity of the labour confederation, its relationship with the government, the degree of solidarity, and member commitment.

Chapter 4 examines the historical identity of the COB, our first strength indicator. Various authors have discussed the importance certain historical processes have played in shaping contemporary labour movements. These authors argue that events such as labour incorporation can aid in understanding the current strength of organised labour. As such, in Chapter 4 we examine Bolivian labour incorporation, paying particular attention to the prevalent ideology of this period, the actors responsible for this event, the relationship between organised labour and the government during the years surrounding incorporation and the inception of the organised Bolivian labour movement as an agent of democratisation. Throughout the rest of the chapter we examine how such processes have manifested themselves and affected the strength of the COB across three delineated time periods – the 1952 Revolution, re-democratisation in the early 1980s and neoliberalism from roughly 1986 until 2003. The objective of this chapter is to better understand how certain processes began during labour incorporation have developed over time and continue to manifest themselves and influence the COB at the time of writing.

In Chapter 5, we construct a methodology that – among other things – will help guide our research throughout the rest of this thesis. The chapter begins by examining our ontological and epistemological beliefs. These views help setup the proceeding methodological discussions including the reasoning behind our chosen research methods.

These methods involve a combination of qualitative elite interviews and more quantitatively-based questionnaire dissemination and analysis. Furthermore, we discuss how and why we chose to investigate specific individuals and sectors to represent the wider COB. For our elite interviews we sought representative individuals from all levels within the COB, the government, the private sector and the press. Our questionnaire dissemination focused on three representative sectors – mining, manufacturing and health sector workers. All of our questionnaire dissemination was conducted at the local level. The objective of Chapter 5 is to build a methodological framework in order to best position our research so that the methods we use produce sound results.

The proceeding chapter, Chapter 6, is the first chapter that applies the analytical framework laid out in Chapter 3 to our methodological techniques discussed in Chapter 5 in order to test one of our strength indicators – the relationship between organised labour and the government. We argue that independence from the government is the most important strength indicator and precludes all of our other indicators. We take this position based on the fact that conceptualisation centres on the idea that civil society is more likely to critically evaluate and publicly scrutinise government-proposed social policies if it is independent. Conversely, if civil society – in our case the COB – is aligned with the government it is less likely to publicly scrutinise collectively binding social policies, to the detriment of democratisation. Therefore, using data collected from our elite interviews, questionnaire dissemination and press coverage we assess the strength of the COB as it relates to its relationship with the government.

Similar to Chapter 6, Chapter 7 applies our analytical framework with the techniques laid out in our methodology in order to test the strength of the COB as it relates to the degree of solidarity within the labour confederation. Here we examine the solidarity of relationships within the COB, paying particular attention to the relationships between our three chosen sectors as well as the relationship between the COB and informal, rural farmers. The central objective of this chapter is to determine the level of solidarity within the COB – as well as between the COB and informal sectors – with special attention paid to how Evo Morales' presidency, neoliberalism and the structure of the COB have affected solidarity within the labour movement. In Chapter 7 we work under the theory that the more solidaristic the COB is – within its own ranks as well as with the informal labour

movement – the greater the likelihood it will be able to positively influence democratisation. This hypothesis is based largely on historical developments which demonstrate that the COB was more able to shape democratisation when internally unified as well as with other social movements and less able to do so when divided and without alliances with other groups.

In Chapter 8 we explore the level of COB strength as it pertains to our final indicator; member commitment to union causes. This indicator is broken down into two parts: one, member commitment as a product of members' perception of union democracy; and two, members' commitment to union causes as a product of movement ideology. It has been argued in the literature that when members feel that their union is undemocratic they are less likely to feel attached to union processes and as a result less likely to participate in future actions. Additionally, certain literature has shown that members with a weaker ideological connection to their union are less likely to commitment to collective union causes. Based in these theories we investigate both the level of union democracy and the type and degree of ideology within the COB. The objective of this chapter is to determine both the level of member commitment within the COB and the overall effect this has on the labour confederation's role in processes of democratisation.

Chapter 9 brings together the theoretical arguments and empirical results explored throughout our thesis. Here we address the question if and how the COB influences democratisation in post-neoliberal Bolivia. We investigate the role of the labour confederation in influencing conceptualisation surrounding a government proposed pension reform. The objective of this chapter is to examine how and if the COB influences democratisation and to assess the way in which our strength indicators affected the process.

In the final chapter of this thesis, Chapter 10, we briefly summarise the key arguments laid out in each chapter. We then discuss the conclusions to our central research questions. In particular we make concluding remarks about what we have learned through the utilisation of our strength indicators in regards to the COB's role in democratisation. From these remarks we make methodological recommendations based on our research experiences gained during our completion of this thesis.

As we have conveyed in this introduction, our aim throughout this thesis is to assess the role of the COB in processes of democratisation in post-neoliberal Bolivia. We intend to

achieve this – partially – by building on previous work examining the role of collective actors in democratisation. However, we strive to contribute to the existing literature through a slightly different understanding of democratisation as well as through exploring such a process in a post-neoliberal setting.

## **Chapter 2. Democratisation, Conceptualisation and the COB**

Political democracies in the developing and developed world, while sharing certain characteristics, can have different forms that affect the way citizens are able to utilise rights under such regimes. As authors such as Karl (1990), Rueschemeyer *et al.* (1992), Przeworski (1995), O'Donnell (1999; 2001a; 2001b), Haagh (2002a:7-22), Ferge (1996), Collier and Levitsky (1997) and Whitehead (2006), among others, point out, the processes of democratisation and the resulting forms of such transitions are different across democratic states. Because of such differences traditional frameworks of democratic theory and definitions of democracy in general need to be contextualised (Whitehead, 2002:187). We will also more comprehensively explore differences regarding democratic sequencing in newer democracies as compared to those in more traditional democracies, particularly England and how this has affected the current form of different democracies. Our main concern is how different forms of political democracy allow or prohibit greater democratisation.

### **2.1 Terminology in Context**

Since democracy is 'both a descriptive label and a desirable value' (Whitehead, 2002:7) with both moral and political implications (O'Donnell, 2001a:604), and a central term for our entire discussion it is important that we are clear from the outset how we will understand the term in its various forms. The main elements of democracy that require a clear understanding in a contemporary context are the static terms of political and social democracy and the process of democratisation.

Some formative works, in terms of defining contemporary versions of political democracy, are those of Schumpeter (1954) and Dahl (1956; 1989), whose definitions have provided a significant base from which to build our understanding. These authors have laid forth a foundation for distinguishing between democracies and non-democracies. For a country to be considered a political democracy, or what Dahl refers to as a *polyarchy*, it must sustain certain institutions including: free, frequent and fair elections; universal adult suffrage; freedom of expression; access to alternative sources of information; freedom to form and join autonomous associations; freedom to run for public office; right of elected public

officials to elicit support through votes; and an institutionalised process whereby public policy is enacted through public consensus – i.e. voting, collective negotiations, *et cetera* (Dahl, 1956; Dahl, 1989:233). However, such definitions largely fail to acknowledge and discuss the differences within and between political democracies (O'Donnell, 1999:134).

Democracy and democratisation have taken varied forms in different temporal and geographical spaces. The need therefore arises to contextualise such definitions with added caveats in order to find a more fitting version of the term 'democracy' in light of its different nature throughout developed and developing countries (Collier and Levitsky, 1997). The definition of political democracy we will use for this thesis is based on O'Donnell's understanding of the term. The reason we have chosen to use this definition is due to the fact that it properly contextualises the type of minimal political democracy that creates an environment where, potentially, democratisation – or the use of political rights to strive for social rights – might occur. In constructing his definition, O'Donnell builds from such formative democratic theorists as those mentioned above along with other influential authors such as Przeworski, Huntington, Di Palma and Diamond, Linz, Collier and Levitsky, and Lipset. After engaging such works O'Donnell arrives at a definition of political democracy that we will use throughout the rest of our thesis (O'Donnell, 2001b:9-17).

O'Donnell understands political democracy or a democratic regime as holding free, fair, regular and institutionalised elections which decide on representative decision makers accompanied by universal adult suffrage, whereby elected power is respected, defined (regarding term limits and scope), balanced (through other branches of the government) and accompanied by the political freedoms which buttress such processes – i.e. freedoms of expression, association and information (O'Donnell, 1999:176-177; O'Donnell, 2001a:600). Political democracy defined in such a manner implies that: 1) gaining electoral victory through eliciting votes is agreed as the only way to come to political power (or be expelled from power as the case may be); 2) elections are contested and opposition parties have equal opportunity to win as incumbents, and losers are not ostracized or treated unfairly; 3) winners of elections are allowed to operate within the confines of the constitution; and 4) practically all citizens have equal opportunity to influence election results, run for office and have voice in 'collectively binding decisions'

(Collier and Levitsky, 1997:443-444; O'Donnell, 2001a:599-600; O'Donnell, 2001b:17). The final caveat here, discussing the right of all citizens to have a voice in 'collectively binding decisions', is a key focus of our entire thesis and an important link in the idea of using political rights to struggle for greater social democracy.

The reason we have chosen this definition – rather than more classical versions – is that it uses qualifying statements to help delineate between political democracies that provide the requisite spaces for greater democratisation from those that do not. These qualifying statements are needed especially when discussing more recently established democracies such as those in Latin America. Traditional definitions of democracy stating that political democracies consist of free, fair and regular institutionalised elections accompanied by universal suffrage incorporate too large a range of regimes and fail to discount political democracies that do not provide the opportunities for less powerful groups to press for greater social democracy through spaces provided under such a system. Collier and Levitsky discuss how in Chile and Paraguay following re-democratisation, elected governments were not allowed to freely govern as they were constrained by former authoritarian rulers. Additionally, these authors give the example of Argentina under Carlos Menem, Brazil under Fernando Collor de Mello, and Alberto Fujimori in Peru, as instances where democratically elected leaders took on despotic roles following inauguration thus diminishing the level of political democracy (Collier and Levitsky, 1997:443-444) and preventing the use of political rights to strive for social democracy. These types of democracies might fit classical definitions of political democracy but due to restrictions placed on political freedoms – such as the press, association and expression – fail to present the environments necessary for the type of democratisation we explore in this thesis.

Moreover, in failing to differentiate between and among political democracies traditional sources do not recognise the different stages, processes and results between such regimes. When discussing democratisation in the context of developing countries it is important to define the term in light of these variances. One reason for this is so that we may acknowledge that the peculiarities of newer democracies may have different results in terms of their societal impacts and thus diverge from those in more established democracies (O'Donnell, 1999:134). These peculiarities might affect various actors'

abilities to use political rights – such as their right to association or a voice in collectively binding decisions – to press for more robust social rights, a theme we discuss at length below.

A second type of democracy that we discuss in this thesis is social democracy. While political democracy creates spaces for such things as participation in collective decision-making, social democracy is the effective outcome of such political participation resulting in greater participation in socio-economic rights. Put differently, social democracy provides spaces for all citizens of a certain state to – borrowing from Marshall’s understanding of social citizenship – ‘share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilised being according to the standards prevailing in the society’ (Marshall and Bottomore, 1992:8). More concretely, this entails the rights to certain socio-economic securities such as education, healthcare and pensions, ultimately ensuring for a basic level of material wellbeing. Additionally, and as discussed by Przeworski, social democracy not only provides the opportunities for such welfare but also the mechanisms needed to utilise these services (Przeworski, 1995:41). For instance, primary education might be universally provided by the state but because of the opportunity and material costs of having children at school these same children might be required to forgo schooling in order to work or stay at home looking after siblings while their parents are working. Thus, in this example comprehensive social democracy would provide both the opportunity of schooling plus the means necessary to attend school.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, in this thesis we understand democratisation as the process of making democracy more institutionalised and comprehensive. Put differently, democratisation is the process of using the spaces provided for under political democracy to strive for greater social democracy, thus simultaneously institutionalising the former through its practice while widening and deepening the reach and variety of the latter. Therefore, for our understanding, democratisation cannot occur without the establishment of political democracy and the rights associated with it. We present a more in-depth understanding of democratisation throughout the following sections.

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<sup>1</sup> Such a programme has been implemented in Bolivia under President Morales through the *Juancito Pinto* allowances which provide a nominal amount of money to families with school-age children in order to alleviate the costs of education.

From the discussion above we see that because of the differences between political democracies, we need to contextualise definitions corresponding to the various forms. The next question one might ask is why and how did more traditional democracies succeed in linking political to social democracy where newer democracies have as of yet largely failed?

## **2.2 Variations in Democratic Sequencing**

One of the most convincing reasons for the current differences between newer democracies and more traditional ones is their respective processes of democratic sequencing. It has been argued that democratic sequencing has followed separate paths in developing or newer democracies as compared to that in the more established democracies (Karl, 1990:1-21; Przeworski, 1995:34; O'Donnell, 1999:133-208; O'Donnell, 2001a:602-603; Haagh, 2002a:7-22; Whitehead, 2006:195-216). In order to better understand what has enabled certain traditional democracies to couple institutionalised political democracy with widespread social equality we begin this section with a discussion of the 'traditional' account of democratic sequencing in England, as described by T.H. Marshall (1950). Marshall's work remains a useful theoretical 'landmark' from which to compare democratic sequencing in newer democracies. Following our discussion of Marshall we will then examine how democratic sequencing has differed in newer democracies and the reasons for such variations. In the final segment of this section we discuss how the current politico-economic environment in Bolivia at the time of writing might influence the democratic sequence in that country. Our starting point, then, begins with an exploration of democratic sequencing in Marshall's England.

### **2.2.1 Democratic Sequencing in England: From an 'Inclusive Wager' to Social Welfare**

Marshall claims that the development of democratic rights in England from the 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century moved in a linear progression from the establishment of civil rights, to political rights and finally to social rights – each of these terms are defined more substantially below – manifested in the creation of a welfare state (Marshall and Bottomore, 1992:8-49). Before civil rights were enacted in the 18<sup>th</sup> century certain other formative historical processes had begun, namely state building and capitalism (O'Donnell, 2001b:20,27). The emergence of such processes directly led to a call for legal reformation so as to

accommodate these growing movements. The reasoning behind such a push was a two-fold desire to: 1) strengthen the nation-state through clearly defining citizens within its geographical borders; and 2) to increase market efficiency that had previously been hindered by occupational limitations. Such economic hindrances were said to be attributed to the idea that ‘trade and traffic [could not] be maintained or increased without order and government’ (Marshall and Bottomore, 1992:10-11) and as such needed the state to limit occupational mobility, which ultimately constrained the newly emerging capitalism, and in its own right was a vital component to the growth and strength of nation-states. Thus, the law was reformed so as to increase the sovereignty of the state both politically and economically. The tangential development of the desire for greater political and economic sovereignty was the founding of a universal legal system enjoyed by all ‘full’ citizens.

With the establishment of a more universal legal system civil rights were spawned. Civil rights, according to Marshall, regard the ‘rights necessary for individual freedom’, which include the liberty of person, the freedoms of speech, thought, faith, to own property, conclude valid contracts and justice (Marshall and Bottomore, 1992:8). Such rights were manifested in the creation and implementation of Habeas Corpus, the Toleration Act, abolition of the censorship of the press, Catholic Emancipation and others. Additionally, during this time servile labour was replaced with free labour (Marshall and Bottomore, 1992:10).

For O’Donnell (2001b), the establishment of a universal law before the implementation of other rights was instrumental in the development of future rights and democratisation in general. The creation of a universal legal system helped to establish and embed an ‘inclusive wager’ within society. According to O’Donnell ‘the history of democracy is the history of the reluctant acceptance of the universalistic and institutionalised wager’, and that the reason for such reluctance by elites, or citizens already practicing such agency, was the ‘lack of autonomy’ or ‘lack of responsibility’ possessed by the masses (O’Donnell, 2001b:18-19). In other words, certain privileged segments of society – the highly educated, propertied, political elites, *et cetera* – were fearful of granting legal agency to citizens without ‘moral and cognitive capabilities’ (O’Donnell, 2001b:19). However, with the increasing pressure to reform the legal system to both strengthen the state and make

markets more efficient all citizens – i.e. adult, white males – of the state were granted certain universal rights before the law, and ultimately the inclusive wager was adopted.

In England the implementation of civil rights *before* the adoption of political democracy, or the ‘universalistic democratic wager’ – whereby people accepted the universal right of all citizens to vote or stand for office – ‘significantly tempered the perceived risks of this wager [universal political democracy]’ (O’Donnell, 2001b:20). Haagh also highlights what Marshall describes in England as the importance of strengthening civil rights through expanding social rights, or bringing in formerly excluded sectors into the mainstream (2002a:7-16). Such an idea is similar to O’Donnell’s discussion of the inclusive wager. Both the inclusive wager and bringing formerly excluded sectors into the mainstream entail a certain degree of acceptance of unification of citizenship rights within a given territory. As we will explore below, such a sequence was substantially different in newer democracies such as Bolivia where state building and the emergence of capitalism did not lead to the establishment of a universal law and civil rights, and thus a certain degree of uniformity among a given population prior to political democracy’s conception.

The second phase of Marshall’s democratic sequence began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the establishment of political rights. Marshall defines these as the rights to participate and exercise political power, through choosing or running for political office (Marshall and Bottomore, 1992:8). While the civil aspect of citizenship during this time was universal, the political aspect was reserved for a privileged few. Marshall argues that universal civil rights such as the rights to earn, save and buy property enabled a man to gain certain political rights. However, this created a disconnect in that large segments of society were precluded from these rights. The evolutionary step that followed was to attach political rights to personal status rather than economic standing (Marshall and Bottomore, 1992:13). As previously mentioned, the establishment and acceptance of a certain civil equality and agency made the acceptance, and thus ratification of a ‘universal wager’ whereby larger segments of society were granted the right to vote or run for public office, easier to accept by elites.

The final epoch of democratic sequencing in England discussed by Marshall was the 20<sup>th</sup> century, marked by the establishment of social rights. As mentioned above, these rights included a general level of wellbeing dictated by the standards of the day and are most

commonly related to the education and social services institutions (Marshall and Bottomore, 1992:8). Marshall attributes several factors to the enabling of the expansion of social rights. The first, emanated from elites' social desire to 'abate the nuisance of poverty without disturbing the pattern of inequality' (ibid:27-28). While the upper echelons of society wanted to maintain their elevated status, they did not want to have their cities turning into ghettos. According to Marshall, the second factor leading to the establishment of universal social rights was comprised of two further elements. Firstly, an increase of incomes to the less privileged alongside of a graduated direct taxation system narrowed the gap between rich and poor. Secondly, and perhaps more influentially, was the fact that with the expansion of political rights to 'all' citizens poorer sectors were more able to influence public policy, as compared to times prior when they did not have voting rights, for example. The result of such forces was a diminished sense of inequality, which in turn further accelerated the call for its abolition (Marshall and Bottomore, 1992:28). For Marshall, and then O'Donnell, the ability of lower classes to better their economic situation through political means was based on the fact that civil rights had been established and anchored in a universal legal system. This is the most significant difference in democratic sequencing between more traditional and newer democracies.

Marshall's work is not without critique. Bottomore (1992) claims that Marshall was more concerned with the impact of citizenship on class structure, rather than the other way around. He claims that Marshall's theory fails to properly address 'casual mechanisms' such as labour movements that led to a significant expansion of citizenship. Bottomore highlights the significance of social movements in expanding political rights in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, including the effects of the revolutions across Europe in 1848, the Chartist movement and later campaigns for universal suffrage. He goes on to explain how social movements struggling for the expansion of political citizenship in the 19<sup>th</sup> century spilled into trade unions and socialist parties that advocated the expansion of social citizenship in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Marshall and Bottomore, 1992:73).

A further critique of Marshall is his lack of recognition of ethnic and/or gender divisions. Marshall continually states the significance of class divisions but fails to recognize the issue ethnicity plays in the idea of national identity (Turner, 2001:191). In his discussion, Marshall continually discusses the universal expansion of various rights. However, by

universal he implies adult, white males, failing to mention the limited citizenship of women and other ethnic groups until the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Amidst such critiques, as well as those not discussed above, Marshall's work remains an important source regarding democratic sequencing and one that is useful to compare such sequencing in newer democracies. Although Marshall's work might be rightfully criticised, the work continues to be a useful exploration into the evolution of citizenship and how it relates to democratisation. For our thesis Marshall's research presents an interesting case from which we can compare other case studies, most notably Bolivia.

Marshall's argument demonstrates the role established civil and political rights had in eventually securing widespread social welfare. This sequence was much different in newer democracies – such as Bolivia – where political democracy or the establishment of social democracy was not created in an environment of established and ubiquitous political rights. In the following section we explain how and why democratic sequencing has varied in newer democracies and the results emanating from such variations.

### **2.2.2 Democratic Sequencing in Newer Democracies**

In newer democracies like Bolivia democratic sequencing and the rights associated with such developments has varied greatly from that in England. The democratic process in England was marked by the inception and institutionalisation of a universal legal system and civil rights before the implementation of other political and social rights. The lack of established civil rights or an inclusive wager before the implementation of other political rights had significant reverberations for democratic sequencing in Bolivia. In this section we focus on two separate periods of democratisation, the first beginning with the 1952 revolution and the second in the beginning of the 1980s. O'Donnell suggests that the absence of civil rights in Latin America during the initial stages of state building led to a 'truncated' version of democracy and thus a different pattern of democratic sequencing as to that found in England (O'Donnell, 2001b:20,27). Authors such as Haagh (2002a; 2002b) and Ferge (1996) further claim that the evolutionary process of citizenship, proposed by Marshall, did not follow the same pattern in Chile and certain eastern European socialist societies, respectively – nor did it in Bolivia, as we discuss below. Haagh argues that in Chile – prior to 1973 – the country witnessed considerable civil, political and social welfare. Following Augusto Pinochet's non-democratic ascension to

power in 1973, political and social rights were rescinded as stringent free market policies were implemented. Following political redemocratisation in 1990 one might have expected increased political and social rights. However, political democracy was reinstated at the cost of expanded social democracy. This was the result of a labour movement who was unwilling to contest a business sector set on deepening the neoliberal policies first implemented under Pinochet. Ferge on the other hand demonstrates how under socialist regimes civil rights to property and political rights to democratic elections were compromised for extensive social rights to health, education and other social securities. However, during economic and political liberalisation the aforementioned countries underwent a reinstatement of civil and political citizenship at the expense of many of the social rights that were previously protected (Ferge, 1996; Kohl, 2003:338).

Before we move further into such a discussion we must first address the question, why, in Bolivia and other similar countries, were civil rights not primarily established in relation to other rights, as they had been for adult, white males in Marshall's description of England? One possible and oft-referenced answer is the colonial past of many of the newer democracies. As we saw above, the desire to increase economic efficiency through creating a reformed and universal legal system, served to cultivate a sense of basic equality among the increasingly more nationally identifiable populations. However, in newer democracies the effects of colonialism caused an opposite effect, serving to polarize and create distinct classes and groups within national populations (e.g. between indigenous and European populations), which ultimately disrupted the democratic sequence from its onset.

The historical legacies, caused in large part by Spanish or Portuguese imperialism in Latin America, set in place an environment much different from that found in more established democracies (Rueschemeyer *et al.*, 1992; Diamond *et al.*, 1999:7-8; Kohl and Farthing, 2006:34). As we saw in England, capitalism and state building led to the inception of a universal legal system that guaranteed certain civil rights and helped establish a basic level of equality. In the newer democracies immediately following independence the opposite occurred, historical events transpired that served to segregate populations making the acceptance of a universal wayer or political democracy less likely. Moreover, in England the implementation of a universal law helped make capitalism more efficient through repealing laws that had previously hindered its growth. In Latin America, many of the

newly independent countries served as grounds for primary goods production controlled by a small group of elites. The lack of civil rights was not viewed as a hindrance to the type of capitalism found in the region during that time but rather a necessity to ensure that labour costs remained inexpensive.

The exploitation of natural resources in much of Latin America, first by their colonial rulers and then by developed countries seeking cheap resources (see Chang, 2003) further reinforced the disparity between what Marshall (1950) describes as first and second-class citizenship. Such manufactured racial/class inferiority seemed to preclude the expansion of civil rights in newer Latin American democracies. Furthermore, the initial enslavement or servitude emplaced upon indigenous populations following European colonisation displaced native societies from their sources of subsistence and also served to create a system of negative race relations by which indigenous majorities were disempowered, poor, and viewed and treated as inferior by European immigrants or their descendents. Evidence of this can be seen in the fact that certain civil rights were not granted to the indigenous population until after the 1952 revolution, nearly 125 years after independence from Spain. Moreover, the first indigenous president in Bolivian history was elected in 2005. This is in a country with an indigenous population of more than 55 percent and only 15 percent white (CIA, 2007).

The lack of a universal legal system and/or the uneven application of the law alongside of the socio-politico-economic heterogeneity of the population present during the early development of Bolivia were the causes of a disconnected sequence of democratisation, different from that seen in England. O'Donnell claims that 'when non-originating countries imported, recently or in the past, the institutional paraphernalia of a democratic regime (elections, constitutions, congress, and the like), they did more than this'. They also imported legal systems predicated on 'universalistic conceptions of individual agency' and the rights associated with it. However, unlike in England where the development of legal systems and civil rights was tempered, such development was forced and 'inorganic' in newer democracies. O'Donnell claims that when countries import democratic systems in such a way the passage between political democracy and social rights is most often blocked (O'Donnell, 2001b:23). This has been evidenced in contemporary Bolivia where inconsistent legal systems under military – and then neoliberal – control proved unable to

effectively buttress the institutions necessary for democratisation. In the forthcoming chapters we seek to explore the degree by which the current framework of political rights in Bolivia allows for democratisation.

Przeworski claims that in some 19<sup>th</sup> century European democracies – once suffrage had been expanded to include those formerly excluded, due to education, income, property, *et cetera* – a ‘defining condition of democracy became that all individuals must be empowered to exercise as citizens the same rights and obligations’. He goes on to claim that the difference in newer democracies is that while rights are bestowed upon all citizens the conditions required for the effective exercise of these rights are not, a point we touched upon above regarding the inability of families to pay for the schooling of their children (Przeworski, 1995:34). Without having political rights based in a universal legal system political agency is more likely to be reserved for elites who can use this agency to secure further socio-economic advantages and in turn increase their political power and exclusivity (see Rueschemeyer *et al.*, 1992). Based in the literature we argue that an agent is required that can disconnect this circuit by utilising its collective strength to give political agency to the majority with the aim of securing further social rights, a topic we come to below in our discussion of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in processes of democratisation. For now we turn to a discussion of the challenges that faced Bolivia during political re-democratisation at the end of the 1970’s, which included both similarities and differences to the struggles overcome during the 1952 Revolution.

Following the downfall of military rule – which controlled Bolivia from 1964 until the late 1970s – the country was again faced with the challenge of recreating political democracy. However, unlike during the initial period of political democratisation where the main challenges were uneven applications of the law and/or civil rights, political re-democratisation presented a new set of challenges *alongside* those previous ones. The economic environment during political re-democratisation acted as a further disconnect between political and social democratisation (Rueschemeyer *et al.*, 1992:156; Stallings, 1992:48-88; Waisman, 1999:97; Lemanski-Valente, 2001:173; Haagh, 2002a:13). One of the most glaring differences between the economic environments surrounding the establishment of political democracy in places like England as compared to Bolivia during political re-democratisation was the development of globalised world markets

(Rueschemeyer *et al.*, 1992:69-73). This economic reality altered the sequence of democracy and ultimately the development of social rights in at least two ways. Firstly, globalisation created a class of business elites with influence emanating from outside the boundaries defined by the state (*ibid.*). This interest group gained significant clout and power as opportunities to invest, or more importantly divest, in global markets were dramatically expanding. These opportunities did not present themselves to the upper bourgeoisie during political democratisation in Europe (Kaufman, 1986:103). Such influence placed business elites in a position of privilege as the forces pushing for political democracy required both the economic and political clout of these elites to ensure the sustainability of young democracies. This need derived from recently established regimes reliance both on the business elites' capital but also on their political backing. In the case of Chile, the nascent government was forced to placate to the demands of the capital sector to encourage their support (Haagh, 2002b:90), ultimately to the detriment of expanding social rights. Such developments clearly evidenced the exclusive control elites had over both political and social democracy and their ability to significantly limit the opportunities for democratisation and/or the width of participation in public decision-making.

The second major difference of newer democracies – such as Bolivia – during political re-democratisation was the highly precarious and often grossly underperforming economies inherited from their authoritarian predecessors. This period was marked by severe hyperinflation and general economic decline (Stallings, 1992:48-88; Waisman, 1999:97; Lemanski-Valente, 2001:173). Economic crises, in turn, forced newly dependent countries into debt schemes administered by International Financial Institutions (IFIs), which consequentially asserted their hegemony over individual states as a condition of loan. IFIs more concerned with debt repayment and less with socio-economic welfare devised economic programmes aimed at servicing such debts. These Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) included budget austerity, the de-indexation of salaries, the liberalisation of the banking industry, labour market and labour union reforms and reducing the role of the state in economic and social affairs (Chossudovsky, 1997; Toussaint, 1998; Crisp, 1999; SAPRIN, 2004). Elected politicians were largely unable to contest IFIs' conditionality, as loans were mandatory for economic correction.

Rueschemeyer *et al.* argue that transnational influences, such as IFIs, can play a significant role in the democratisation of less developed countries. These authors state that when less developed countries hold little influence in the international division of labour combined with an unfavourable position in geo-political relations ‘one can speak of sovereignty only in a very reduced and formal sense’. Moreover, these less developed countries’ dependence on more powerful influences can ‘radically inhibit democratisation’. One way this may occur is when local dominant classes align with their foreign counterparts to pursue common interests. In such instances the state of the dependent economy may also become a ‘partner’ in these interactions, which ultimately may not be in the interests of subordinate classes (Rueschemeyer *et al.*, 1995:71-72), a point we explore below. However, these authors are quick to point out that transnational influences may not always hinder democratisation in dependent countries and may even help develop environments conducive to such processes.

Furthermore, during this period proponents of neoliberalism claimed that the comprehensive involvement of the state in economic and social affairs was economically inefficient. The resulting trend during neoliberalism was to diminish the size and influence of the state. As such, austerity measures were put in place to cut formerly state provided welfare such as basic education, healthcare, pensions and certain labour protections such as hiring and firing practices, wages, *et cetera*.

The burden of adjustment in regard to the implementation of SAPs disproportionately affected the poorest sectors. As stipulated by the SAPs, dependent countries were to remove government subsidies. Such aid is normally distributed to disadvantaged families to pay for energy and foodstuffs. The removal of these subsidies affected the poor more than any other sector of society in that subsidies are a proportionally a larger part of their budget as compared to other classes. Moreover, declining exchange rates – a further stipulation of SAPs – negatively affected the poor with regards to purchasing power. As the domestic currency was devalued – so as to make exports more attractive to foreign investors – basic food commodity prices increased as they adjusted to international prices. Since the implementation of adjustment policies in Mexico in 1982 the minimum wage has lost close to 70 percent of its purchasing power. As a result, the number of poor people unable to buy a food basket rose from six million to 30 million between 1994 and 2000. In

El Salvador the situation is similar. Nearly ‘two-thirds of economically active Salvadorans earn less than minimum wage and after adjustment workers’ incomes were reduced by more than one-half over the past 20 years’ (SAPRIN, 2004:211-212). Ultimately, dependent nations’ reliance on IFIs weakened state autonomy vis-à-vis business interests and made opportunities for democratisation more tenuous as these international and domestic elites were reluctant to include wider society into the decision-making process, evident in the acceptance of SAPs and the negative affect they had on social rights, particularly for disadvantaged populations.

O’Donnell claims that during neoliberalism when the role of the state was being diminished, corollary effects such as the destruction of the state’s authority in implementing the law and its ideological legitimisation were also compromised (O’Donnell, 1999:137-138). As we discussed above, an institutionalised and evenly applied legal system is imperative for democratisation. Przeworski further highlights the corrosive qualities neoliberal reforms had on the state’s legitimacy and representative politics in general. He claims that the manner in which neoliberal reforms were implemented – namely in an autocratic way – alienated both voters and other important democratic institutions such as trade unions, congresses and political parties by implying that while these actors are allowed to vote their votes hold little significance in policy formation, thus further concentrating political power and diminishing the influence of the collective voice of the general public. Finally, Przeworski claims that ‘even if neoliberal reform packages made good economics, they are likely to generate voodoo politics’ (Przeworski, 1995:84), ultimately diminishing citizens’ confidence in democracy.

Economic neoliberalism not only undermined the autonomy of recently democratised states, but it also diminished the influence of CSOs such as organised labour through privatisation, trade liberalisation and mass firings that ultimately forced larger portions of the workforce into informal employment. The weakened trade unions were unable to amplify the voice of both their members and other subordinate groups in hopes of influencing policy change. During this period the ability of CSOs to use political rights to press for social rights was significantly diminished.

The basic differences in sequencing that have led to very distinct versions of democracy in newer and more traditional democracies can be summed up in the following description.

In England, state unification was necessary in order to make the country more economically efficient. Such efficacy required the creation of a universal law for all members of a given society and from this spawn the establishment of civil rights. The acceptance of an inclusive wager made the implementation of the political or universal wager easier to accept by elites. Finally, the combination of increased suffrage, the expansion of other rights previously reserved for specific groups to all citizens, and a narrowing gap between rich and poor led to the inception of universal social rights.

In newer democracies this sequence was markedly different. To begin with, colonialism effectively segmented society into groups based on race, class, heritage, *et cetera*. As a result there was no call for a universal law to unite all citizens. During political re-democratisation, still faced with the issues previously mentioned, newly elected democratic regimes were met by severe economic failings. The effect of hyperinflation and plummeting economies dampened the autonomy of the state and significantly diminished organised labour's ability to influence democratisation, partially as a result of loan-based conditionality. Thus, the newer democracies that imported the façade of political democracy from more established democracies without the 'organic' features of civil rights and legal systems are marked by political democracy disconnected from civil and/or social democracy (Przeworski, 1995:34; O'Donnell, 2001b:23). Such a divergent pattern in terms of the evolution of rights in Latin America as to that in established democracies is evidenced by the *de jure* creation of certain political freedoms that have not led to social democratisation but rather to increased socio-economic inequality and *de facto* political repression, as seen in Peru under Alberto Fujimori, Argentina under Carlos Menem and Brazil under Fernando Collor de Mello (Collier and Levitsky, 1997:443-444).

Similar to Ferge's (1996) description of the simultaneous – and related - varying nature of political democracy and social rights in recent eastern European countries, the sequence of establishing rights in Latin America, particularly Bolivia, has not followed the same path as that described by Marshall in his depiction of England. Perhaps most important is the fact that throughout contemporary Bolivia social rights have not been achieved through processes associated with political democracy. The lack of established political rights in which to base greater social rights is one of the most convincing explanations for the continued socio-economic inequality in Bolivia. Although formal political democracy has

been in place in Bolivia since the beginning of the 1980s, successive neoliberal governments have been more receptive to elite influences – both domestic and foreign – than the majority of Bolivian citizens. Put differently, although political freedoms in name have been present in Bolivia for the better part of the past 25 years, the ability of collective actors to utilise such freedoms to press for greater social democracy has been diminished, not least of all because of acts taken by the government to curb the influence of the previously powerful Bolivian labour confederation, a point we discuss at length below.

The question we now turn to is in post-neoliberal Bolivia can political rights – particularly the right to association, expression and information – be used as a foundation and tool to strive for greater and more sustainable social rights?

### **2.3 DIY Democratisation: Using Political Freedoms to strive for Social Rights**

In this section we explore the relationship between political and social democracy, specifically how, if and when political democracy might be used to advance social democracy. O'Donnell describes democratisation as a two-tiered process. The first stage involves discrediting and then expelling from power authoritarian or oligarchic rulers followed by the installation of democratic institutions. The second stage is defined by the 'consolidation', 'institutionalisation' or the 'effective functioning' of the new regime (O'Donnell, 1992:18), including the linking of the political to the civil and social aspects of democratisation. Valenzuela claims that this second facet of democracy can only be pursued once antidemocratic elements have been eliminated, or at the very least marginalised, and the democratically 'beneficent' elements can be pursued without fear of authoritarian regression (Valenzuela, 1992a:70). Furthermore, Haagh (2002a) argues that in countries such as Chile where economic liberalisation took place before political democratisation, the progress to the second stage of democracy was ultimately slowed in order to solidify political democracy. Haagh explores this relationship between political liberalisation and social democratisation in a neoliberal, transitional context. Similar to O'Donnell, Haagh demonstrates a clear divergence in terms of political leading to social democratisation between established and newer democracies (Haagh 2002a:7-22). However, in contrast to O'Donnell (2001a) whose tone seems encouraging in terms of the prospect of political democratisation leading to social and/or civil democracy, Haagh

argues that in fact the opening of political freedoms in neoliberal/transitional Chile led to a narrowing of social freedoms. She goes on to claim that labour reforms created during the early tenure of the democratic government in 1990 – which were aimed at appeasing the influential capital sector – led to a path dependence marked by greater labour flexibilities with fewer protections and ultimately weakened social rights. Haagh claims that the ‘stability of the democratic regime was traded for limited progress in social rights’ (Haagh, 2002b:87). Thus, at least in the case of Chile, we see an example whereby political democracy was not a platform from which to obtain social rights and actually acted as a barrier to advancing social democracy.

Haagh suggests that several factors were influential in terms of disabling political democracy from being used as a platform for striving towards greater social rights. First, she claims that the initiation and implementation of neoliberalism during Augusto Pinochet’s authoritarian rule embedded such policies and insulated them from reform during political re-democratisation. She posits that political democratisation in a sense made it more difficult to fully overhaul the economic policies implemented under Pinochet due to the nature of democratic voting processes (Haagh, 2002b:88). Haagh also highlights how a weakened labour movement was unable to negotiate a deal that would protect and enable greater social democracy with the stronger capital sector that was seeking flexible labour policies (Haagh, 2002a:47-60; Haagh, 2002b). Thus for Haagh, the weakened labour movement and the anaemic<sup>2</sup> state proved influential in the process of political democratisation impeding the progress of social democratisation.

The above authors might then argue that not only must antidemocratic elements be marginalised but also economic liberalisation must not be embedded in policy-making prior to political liberalisation as in Chile if there is to be successful democratisation. In the case of both Valenzuela and O’Donnell political democracy is seen as a prerequisite for what Przeworski calls the substantive conceptions of democracy (Przeworski, 1995:42). However, as shown by Haagh (2002a) in Chile, political democracy does not guarantee for the transition towards social democracy. In a similar regard, while the implementation of the first stage of the transition to democracy in Latin America has been widespread and

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<sup>2</sup> ‘Anaemic’ in the sense that the state was unwilling to challenge the powerful business sector or the policies implemented under Pinochet (Haagh, 2002b:87).

‘stellar’ the second stage has remained limited, as discussed in the introduction (Whitehead, 2006:201). This is one of the key problems this thesis seeks to address; how can political democracy be used to press for greater social democracy?

The major difference between our study and those of the authors’ discussed above is that our research is set in Bolivia where the threat of a return to authoritarian rule seems less pressing. Additionally, even the more recent period of ardent neoliberalism seems to have passed. What this means is that the specific threats to democratisation explored by the authors above seem to be less relevant in Bolivia at the time of writing. Therefore, our framework for analysis will differ from those abovementioned. This thesis will focus more on if and how groups such as the COB are able to utilise political rights to press for greater social rights at a time that would appear more conducive to this type of democratisation than the periods explored by the authors above. We seek to move from and build on the previous discussions in our quest to better understand the potential role of the COB in processes of democratisation.

Based on the definitions above and set in the context of gross socio-economic inequality we now examine the idea of using political rights as a ‘springboard’ for struggling towards the advancement of social rights in contemporary Bolivia. O’Donnell asks ‘to what extent and under what conditions poor sectors and other disadvantaged groups may use the available political rights as a platform of protection and empowerment for struggles toward the extension of their civil and social rights’ (O’Donnell, 2001a:604-609). He argues that a political democracy is the only type of regime in which these disadvantaged actors can autonomously strive for and potentially obtain advanced civil and social rights using the freedoms guaranteed to them under such a system, i.e. freedom of organisation, expression, the press, *et cetera* (O’Donnell, 2001a:606).

Aymarta Sen also highlights the importance of political democracy for obtaining social rights, claiming that it creates a set of opportunities (Sen, 1999:155) that may be used to further democratisation. He discusses the role of political rights in ameliorating socio-economic inequality through allowing for basic capabilities for these disadvantaged groups. For Sen these capabilities are at least three-fold. The first, political and social participation, can help legitimise and institutionalise a democratic regime, and – in line with the theories under discussion – create opportunities for the advancement of social

democracy. The opportunity to participate in political processes allows citizens to both choose their leaders as well as influence policy through the use of their political voice. The practice of such mechanisms can help institutionalise these rights through their normalisation as well as build confidence within a populace of the workings of their respective political democracy. Participation in social rights can help legitimise a democratic regime in demonstrating to its citizens that political democracy also provides substantive equality. However, participation in both may often require the organisation and strength of CSOs such as organised labour. The reason for this is that IFIs, governments and/or business interests may be reluctant to allow for power sharing.

A second capability provided for by political democracy – according to Sen – includes an enhancement of the ‘hearing’ or arena that actors get for expressing their claims (Sen, 1999:155). This capability is provided through political freedoms such as the freedom of expression and the freedom of the press. Democracies that fall outside of our definition above might do so because of the fact that demonstrations or contestation of certain government policies is not aired in the press and/or deemed illegal. Allowing for spaces for such contestation enables the understanding or conceptualisation of the ‘needs’ of the socio-economically disadvantaged (Sen, 1999:148). However, it may prove difficult for individuals and/or unorganised actors to reach such arenas where members of the public and policy makers will take notice. It is in this way trade unions can act as a catalyst and vehicle to exploit said spaces. We return to a discussion of the potential role of trade unions below, for now we continue our examination of Sen’s theory on democratisation and development.

### **2.3.1 Conceptualisation as Democratisation**

The third capability discussed by Sen is the idea of greater conceptualisation of social issues through public debate. Sen states that ‘informed and unregimented’ formation of public values requires spaces for communication, argument and debate. And that these spaces – provided under political democracy through the freedoms of association, expression and democratic choice – can help draw attention to general public needs, potentially resulting in appropriate public action (Sen, 1999:150-152). Sen argues that potential outcomes of public policies must be evaluated critically and adequate attention should be paid to how outside influences such as markets might either be encouraged or

restrained in the process so as to arrive at the most democratic outcome (ibid.). Thus, governments independently or due to the influence of private interests should not be allowed to implement important social policy without public debate and scrutiny and – in line with this – markets should not be viewed as omnipotent regulators and instead should be evaluated as to how they may help or hinder said policies. As we discuss below, one of the limitations of industrial relations literature when discussing democratisation is that it explores the ability of a strong labour movement to forgo industrial actions. This is achieved when the government is aware of the strength of said movement and thus it does not need to flex its strength in order to win concessions. This process would then seemingly bypass many of the benefits described by Sen through conceptualisation. In this thesis we assess the role of the COB in increasing conceptualisation surrounding important social issues. As both Sen (1999) and Rueschemeyer *et al.* (1992) argue, greater participation in discussions surrounding policy formation are more likely to lead to more democratic policy outcomes.

Taking from our understanding of political democracy above, as well as our current discussion on the capabilities afforded by political democracies, we are able to make clear distinctions between the nature and outcomes of governments that allow for public scrutiny and debate of social issues and those that do not. O'Donnell bestows the title of Representative Democracies (RD) and Delegative Democracies (DD) on democratic regimes that allow for democratisation and those that do not, respectively (O'Donnell, 1999:160). DD's, according to O'Donnell, are not consolidated or institutionalised and have not had much effectiveness in dealing with economic or social crises (O'Donnell, 1999:160-161). This is partially due to the crisis of horizontal accountability in DDs as a result of weak corollary institutions, such as civil society, congresses, and judiciary branches. In DDs presidents are generally elected with the understanding that once in power they may rule as seen fit, made possible through the closing or restriction of political freedoms. We saw this above when examining the experiences of countries such as Chile, Paraguay, Argentina, Brazil and Peru following political re-democratisation in the 1990s. DDs are often marred by swift policy-making resulting in more 'mistakes' due to the lack of institutional checks and accountability (O'Donnell, 1999:165-166). For Sen 'critical public discussion is an inescapably important requirement of good public policy' (Sen 1999:123-124) and for this reason swift policy-making prevents the formation of

preferences and conceptualisation of pressing social issues, ultimately prohibiting democratisation. The democratic spaces and freedoms that are open and may be used as platforms to voice and debate social issues in RDs are typically closed in DDs. As such, DDs provide sound evidence of the consequences of limited political democracy stalling further democratisation.

Through the utilisation of certain political rights mentioned above it is more likely that a policy shift would be realised in response to the economic needs of the general population rather than the narrow desires of special interest groups. Perhaps more importantly – as argued by Sen – conceptualisation would transpire through the use of these political rights, affecting the formation of values and priorities within society and ultimately placing greater pressure on the government to protect society-wide socio-economic wellbeing (Sen, 1999:153-154). Thus, in this thesis we focus our investigation on the ability of the COB to utilise political freedoms such as the rights to association and expression to enhance conceptualisation of social needs currently facing disadvantaged Bolivians. This is how we understand the term democratisation throughout the following discussions.

## **2.4 Stage is Set: The Need of an Actor**

Although political democracy presents the opportunity for greater social democracy this transition has largely stalled in the nearly 25 years since the fall of dictatorial rule in Bolivia. This is partially a result of the concentrated power of special interest groups – including domestic and foreign capital – held over both the government and the unorganised masses. The outcomes of such power concentration were the dual processes of increased inequality regarding income distribution and the state playing a decreasing role in ‘compensating for material inequalities’ which negatively affected many Latin American’s confidence in political democracies (Oxhorn, 2003:58; Mainwaring, 2006). Such democratic stagnation has excluded many Bolivians from basic socio-economic rights, not least of all because of the lack of voice disadvantaged groups have had in decision-making processes. Rueschemeyer *et al.* argue that giving real voice to the disadvantaged majority in public decision-making processes is the most ‘promising basis for further progress in the distribution of power and other forms of substantive equality’ (Rueschemeyer *et al.*, 1992:10). One the most powerful tools utilised by CSOs such as organised labour movements in processes of democratisation is their ability to give real

voice to disadvantaged groups through placing their influence in political processes behind such collective voice.

According to authors such as Lipset (1983), O'Donnell (1992) and Przeworski (1995) one way to remedy the dual problems of socio-economic exclusion and the potential return to dictatorial rule is the practice of political democracy itself. If democratic practices in the political sphere become the norm then they will become 'contagious' and 'spill over' into other spheres of social life enabling the consolidation of social democracy (O'Donnell, 1992:20). We look to build on such arguments in stating that while the 'practicing' of political democracy is important, it is not enough to ensure a spill over effect into the social or economic arena. In Bolivia, relatively free, fair and regular elections have been practiced for more than a quarter century and yet continual high rates of socio-economic disparity persist.

Sen claims the opportunities presented by political democracy have to be 'positively grabbed in order to achieve the desired effect' (Sen, 1999:153-154). Thus, as we argue below, the link between political and social democracy is not automatic, neither is the assumption that just because political rights are present they will be utilised. We build our argument here on the works of authors such as Rueschemeyer *et al.* (1992) who use a political economy perspective that focuses on the role of actors whose power is based in economic and organisational resources. However, rather than centre our discussion on the role of such actors in achieving political equality for disadvantaged groups, we argue that an actor is needed to exploit the spaces provided by political democracy in order to strive towards and possibly obtain sustainable social democracy. Based in the literature we suggest that CSOs are the best placed actors to advance democratisation. Below we examine why we believe that among CSOs, the COB is the most capable actor in regards to advancing democratisation within Bolivia.

In Marshall's England we examined how the establishment of a universal legal system enabled the passage of further political and social rights. Przeworski further reinforces the point stating that only under a universal legal system can citizenship in the fullest sense of the term – civil, political and social – be established (Przeworski, 1995:40). As we have seen in newer democracies such as Bolivia social rights have not always been based in universal legal systems and have thus remained incomplete.

In line with the ideas discussed below by Whitehead, Oxhorn and Schmitter, in newer democracies CSOs such as organised labour are dually important (Whitehead, 2006; Oxhorn, 2003; Schmitter, 1986). Firstly, they help to further establish a universal law through the practice of utilising political rights and in doing so force the government to recognise such rights as well as encourage the dispersal of political power. Secondly, they are more capable of using these more established rights to press for wider social rights, than unorganised individuals. In reference to the first, a strong civil society is needed to continually pressure the state to limit the power of special interest groups through public demonstrations and scrutiny of proposed policies. Oxhorn provides a useful definition of civil society, describing it as a ‘social fabric’ of units which ‘peacefully coexist and collectively *resist subordination to the state*, at the same time that they *demand inclusion* into national political structures’ (Oxhorn, 2003:36).<sup>3</sup> The key elements of such a definition are resistance and inclusion and the effect each have on the more equitable dispersion of political power (Oxhorn, 2003:40). Below, we further discuss how the COB is an interesting case study of a CSO that has resisted subordination to left and right leaning governments when other Bolivian CSOs have not.

As discussed in section 2.2.1 in reference to democratic sequencing in England, O’Donnell claims that the history of democracy in general is the history of a reluctant minority sharing political power with the majority (O’Donnell, 2001b:18-19). If this minority remains reluctant to cede control over political power then a strong civil society is needed in order to press such processes. As provided for under political democracy, organising with the aim of dispersing political power among the populace is protected by the law. Authors such as Whitehead and Oxhorn claim that ‘asserting legally established rights [such as the freedoms of expression and assembly] requires activity and vigilance’ from both individuals and groups. Such actions are imperative as ‘the state is always liable to default’ in the recognition of such rights unless pressurised (Whitehead, 2006:210). When these political rights are not backed by the state it enables extra-legal power groups to constrain or subordinate the ‘unorganized majority from expressing and pursuing the ‘public good’’ (Oxhorn, 2003:40). However it is the ability of CSOs that can help mitigate against such tendencies. Moreover, in order to keep such extra-legal power groups at bay

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<sup>3</sup> Emphasis author’s own.

and see that political democracy is the dominant force in the political arena there needs to be a strong element of civil society that is autonomous from the state and has the capacity to defend its own 'ideals' (Schmitter 1986:6).

Further supporting such an argument, Rueschemeyer *et al.* suggest that the growth of civil society has often been the motivating or enabling factor behind pushes toward formal democratic installation and consolidation as well as expanding social democracy in the face of reluctant special interest groups (Rueschemeyer *et al.*, 1992:10-11). Przeworski states that democratic institutions – such as the COB – play an important role in counteracting the potential increasing returns of power often found in political democracies (Przeworski 1995:40). If civil society does not aid in the dispersion of power, powerful special interest groups are liable to increase their stake in policy-making, potentially exacerbating socio-economic inequality. Additionally, political democracies are more likely to fall into the realm of Delegative Democracy – defined as not being institutionalised nor having effectiveness in dealing with social crises – if civil society does not play an active role in achieving greater dispersion of political power through the use of political freedoms.

When civil society is strong and able to use the spaces provided by political democracy to voice and challenge government proposals over important public policy, preferences are more likely to be shaped in a democratic manner through greater conceptualisation of the issue(s) under discussion. If governmental proposals are shown not to be in the public interest through public debate then governments might reconsider the political costs of implementing such policies. When policies are altered as a result of social struggle, a 'certain prior distribution of power resources is recognised and institutionalised by the state, contributing to a further relative dispersion of power resources and concomitantly strengthening civil society' (Oxhorn, 2003:41). When civil society is weak, important public policies are more likely to be implemented without public debate, potentially resulting in pressing social issues being left unattended to and/or ineffectively addressed. Moreover, when policy is formed in this manner – without the input of civil society – political democracy is more likely to weaken, as citizens may feel detached from political processes and thus less likely to participate in future processes.

It should be noted however, that special interest groups might not always seek antidemocratic options and instead be open to certain forms of democracy. They may

welcome limited power dispersion in the form of political democratisation, as it encourages economic growth through foreign investment and membership to trade organisations. However, the establishment of social democracy often requires the capital gains of many powerful interest groups to be redistributed among a country's poorer sectors, to which such interest groups often put up greater resistance. Haagh (2002a) demonstrates that in Chile following political re-democratisation in the early 1990s many of the business elite were behind the push for political democratisation only to then prevent movements toward the expansion of social rights.

While the support of business elites was an important element during political re-democratisation in places like Chile, authors such as Rueschemeyer *et al.* claim that it was not 'capitalists or the capitalist market that brought democracy but rather the contradictions of capitalism that advanced the cause of democracy' (Rueschemeyer *et al.*, 1992:7). This can be explained by the fact that less powerful segments of society stand to gain more through democratisation and an opening up and potential expansion of power than do already powerful segments (*ibid.*:8). Such an idea is even more apparent during struggles towards greater social democracy as disadvantaged social groups benefit comparatively more through wealth redistribution than do powerful elites.

Although spaces for drawing attention to pressing social issues are created through political democracies they still require a vehicle to exploit and successfully navigate them. Moving forward, the question with which we are presently concerned is which CSO is best suited for advancing democratisation? Offe argues that only strong trade union movements, defined by high levels of centralisation and organisation, can 'ward off attacks on basic rights and political democracy' (Offe 1985:167), perhaps to a greater degree than other CSOs. Thus, building from this literature we can conclude that the role of labour in organising and sustaining activity is vital in order to pressure the state into upholding laws such as the freedoms of expression and assembly from which the struggle of other social rights may be based. Put differently, political freedoms need to be used if they are to remain as platforms, spaces or tools for obtaining further social rights. The importance of CSOs – such as organised labour – for democratisation is evident in its role in institutionalising political freedoms through the utilisation of these rights.

The next logical discussion in our argument is to examine what makes the COB better situated than other CSOs in advancing democratisation. Organised labour's ability to successfully mobilise diverse groups in order to achieve a central objective – such as the installation of political democracy – has been widely documented throughout the literature. We briefly examine this ability as a prelude to our discussion below, where we outline the ability of labour to use legal avenues to organise and draw attention to important social issues.

#### **2.4.1 Why Organised Labour/the COB is Better placed for Conceptualisation**

Organised labour is often a vociferous and formative actor within civil society and as such can have a decisive role in democratisation. Authors examining the role of labour organisations in processes of democratisation have suggested that labour movements across different geographical and temporal spaces have often had distinct roles in initiating a transition to and then the stabilisation of political democracy; the first, and vital, stage in attaining social democracy (Schmitter, 1986:6; Valenzuela, 1988:3; Shin, 1994:145-152; Adler and Webster, 2000:3). These authors also state that labour's strategic position in the economy and its ability to mobilise large segments of society has enabled it to play an influential role in bringing about transitions to political democracy by undermining the legitimacy of antidemocratic forces through orchestrating economic and social unrest.

The empirical instances where labour organisations have played crucial roles in initiating political democratisation are bountiful and are not limited to the developing world. In Spain, in the years leading up to parliamentary elections trade unions became the main oppositional threat to the dictatorship, increasing industrial action to never before seen levels between 1974 and 1976 (de Villiers and Anstey, 2000:28). Such events were mirrored in Portugal, where labour unrest, the struggling economy and the fledgling authoritarian government's inability to control either led to a revolution and subsequent transition to democracy (Maxwell, 1986:115). In Bolivia, beginning in 1976, the COB initiated a series of strikes that included a general work stoppage in the mines and a hunger strike led by miners' wives to protest Colonel Hugo Banzer Suárez's military regime. These actions led by the COB posed the greatest resistance to the Banzer regime and ultimately led to political democratisation (Escobar and Alvarez, 1992:52). Similar occurrences transpired in Uruguay where a massive general strike in 1973 led to

democratic elections and the end of 11 years of military rule (Greenfield and Maram, 1987:714). In Peru, the popular movement united around a national strike initiated by labour in 1977. The strike provided a cause that the previously divided left, labour leadership and the bourgeoisie could unify around in its call for a removal of the military government (Cotler, 1986:163).<sup>4</sup> Similar events took place in East Germany, Brazil, Chile, South Africa and others not mentioned here due to time and space constraints. The importance of labour initiating transitions to political democracy resides in the claim that political democracy is a prerequisite for sustainable social democracy. Thus, through enabling such transitions to political democracy labour can help to establish an environment where social democracy may be – though not assuredly – advanced. As we now discuss, a competent agent is needed in order to utilise the spaces provided under political democracy to press for greater social democracy.

Although critical of the potentially non-democratic aspects of labour organisations, Lipset *et al.* (1956) do concede that labour movements have played major roles in ‘fostering the institutions of political democracy in the larger society and in fostering the ideology of equalitarianism’. The authors go on to state that as societies progress the likelihood that they will take on a democratic character partly rests on the possibility that trade unions will remain independent from the state and act to protect not only their own members but also members of the wider citizenry against the power of the state (Lipset, Trow *et al.*, 1956:412). One of the reasons the democratic character of a state may not progress is due to the possibility of the electorate feeling apathetic to the workings of electoral, or so-called representative politics (Mainwaring, 2006:2) – a serious and threatening problem in our case study of Bolivia. D’Art and Turner argue in their study of the relationship between European trade union membership and participation in wider political processes that trade union membership had both a ‘positive’ and ‘significant’ influence on political activism and voter participation (D’Art and Turner, 2007). Other authors have similarly argued that workers’ participation in democratic unions may increase their confidence in state democratic processes (Mainwaring, 2006). In Chapter 8 we further explore such

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<sup>4</sup> The bourgeoisie’s support for the strike derived from its plan to blackmail the military government by claiming that it allowed the Left and trade unions to hold the country to ‘ransom’ during an economic crisis and as such should be removed from power to make way for democracy, of which the bourgeoisie would represent (Cotler, 1986:144).

issues in an effort to understand the degree of strength of the COB as a product of members perceiving their respective unions to be democratic. For now we explore why the COB is useful and interesting when examining processes of democratisation.

The major components of conceptualisation are drawing attention to important social issues and critically assessing and scrutinising public policy proposals. The COB is better situated for this than the rest of Bolivian civil society for at least three reasons. We argue that these three characteristics potentially make the labour confederation more capable of successfully drawing attention to and publicly debating collective policy proposals. The three characteristics of the COB are its historical identity, its independence from the government and its structure. We further substantiate these claims below. However, before we move into such a discussion one reason why the COB is more interesting to examine given our chosen research topic – rather than other CSOs in Bolivia – is because of the fact that as a state recognised labour confederation its existence and methods of action are framed by the law. Thus, its efforts to increase the reach of social rights to excluded groups are founded in political rights. This might be different from some peasant-based social movements that rely on illegal methods to draw attention to their respective causes.<sup>5</sup> The ability of organised labour to utilise political rights such as the rights to association and expression can alert the analyst to the level of political democracy in the country in question, or whether it is an RD or DD. Since, political democracy is a vital component of democratisation it is important from the outset to understand if the country we are studying, Bolivia, is in fact a political democracy as defined above. We argue at this stage of the thesis that it is, however this is a topic we address more comprehensively below. We now return to our discussion of why we believe the COB is better positioned to positively influence democratisation than other Bolivian CSOs.

The first reason for why we believe the COB can be more effective than other Bolivian CSOs in drawing attention to and publicly scrutinising collective policy is because of its extensive historical experience in such processes. As we discuss more extensively in Chapter 4, since labour incorporation the Bolivian labour confederation has played an

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<sup>5</sup> This is not intended as a normative claim about the superiority of trade unions over peasant movements. It is just to say that for our study we are more interested in the use of political democracy to strive for greater social democracy. Using illegal means, no matter how unjust the legal system, to obtain greater social rights is not our primary concern in this thesis.

integral role in organising diverse groups in the name of democratisation, most notably during and following the 1952 Revolution and again during political re-democratisation in the late 1970s/early 1980s. The COB's collectivist ideology – embedded since labour incorporation – alongside of the experience the organisation has gained through years of mobilising its own members as well as other informal groups has provided it with expertise in mobilising for democracy that no other group in Bolivia possesses. For the moment we will leave this discussion due to the fact that we explore at length the historical identity of the COB below, paying particular attention to its role in processes of democratisation. Let it suffice to say for the moment that no other organisation in Bolivia has played as significant a role, nor organised diverse groups as successfully as the COB.

The second reason for why we believe the COB is more capable of influencing processes of democratisation has to do with its independence from all governments, a characteristic that makes it more likely to criticise potentially unfair government proposals. This is in stark contrast to the *campesino*<sup>6</sup> movement at the time of writing. The *campesinos* have inserted themselves into the Morales government and as such are much less likely to critically evaluate government proposals in a public venue because of both the political and economic advances Morales has created for this group. The Confederation of Rural Workers', *Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia* (CSUTB), ardent support of the Morales government has several aspects. Primary among these has to do with the *campesino*'s general level of poverty, structural organisation and level of education/exposure to formal politics. The *campesinos* are one of the poorest groups in the country. They are also highly dispersed geographically and traditionally divided between distinct factions (Domingo, 2001:155-156) – although this trend has shifted somewhat since the inauguration of President Morales. Additionally, as one respondent from our empirical research pointed out, they have not traditionally had a comprehensive education on which to base their political direction (Arce, 25/7/2008). For these reasons this group is generally vulnerable to better organised groups, be they miners as was the case in 1952 or the military governments beginning in 1964 or even President

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<sup>6</sup> The word *campesino* itself means people who live in the countryside. In Bolivia the term has come to incorporate indigenous, rural farmers with small tracts of land who make up the poorer majority of the population.

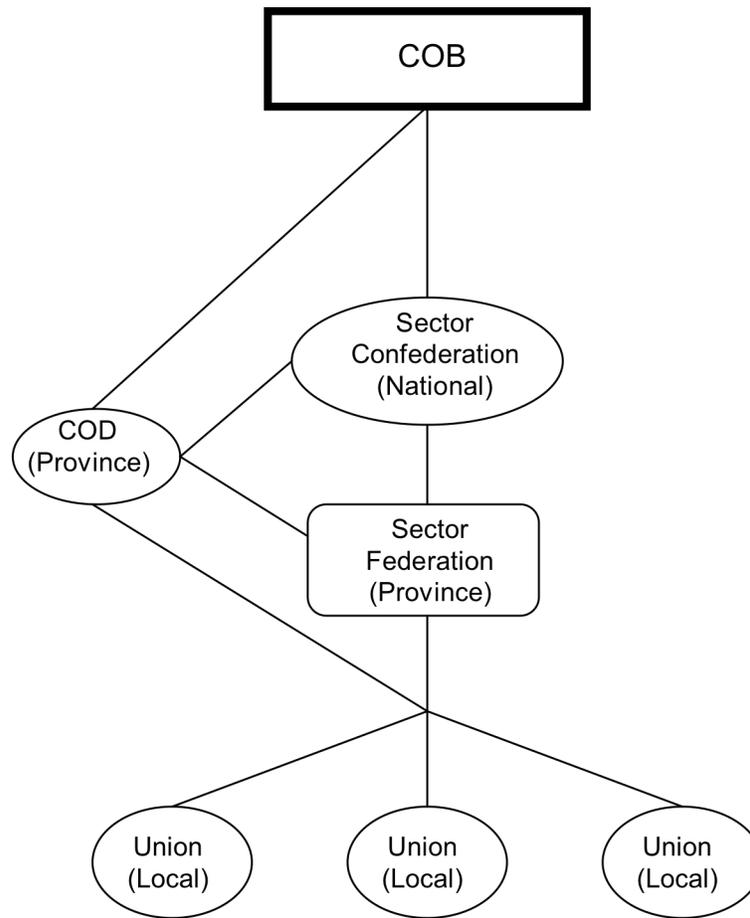
Morales at the time of writing. From a Michelsian critique, we are made aware of the potential dangers of loosely organised and under-educated, yet populous groups – namely the relative ease by which they are co-opted. Harris quoting Joao Pedro Stédile, the national director of the Brazilian social movement Workers Without Land – *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* (MST) – explains that ‘from all we have learned from history, we realise that the health of the social movement depends on a large degree of political and ideological independence’ (Harris, 2007:16). The current problem with the CSUTB with regards to critical evaluation of public policies is that it ceases to resist subordination and allows preferences to be directed and controlled by the government.

As we discussed above, a key component of civil society is its ability to resist subordination to the state. Throughout its existence the COB has maintained a certain level of independence from any and all governments. This has enabled the organisation to pursue its goals without cooption as well as remain openly critical of governmental proposals surrounding public policy. The independence exercised currently – as well as historically – by the COB threatens the government’s powerbase and subsequent ability to run the country as it sees fit. The unwillingness to be subordinated by the state is part of the reason why the COB is a more suitable vehicle – rather than other CSOs – for advancing democratisation through scrutinising and encouraging greater public debate of important social issues.

The third and final characteristic that makes the COB better placed to positively influence democratisation is its structure. Alongside of the experience the labour confederation has gained as a product of its historical identity the structure of the COB also makes it more capable to organise geographically and ideologically diverse groups. Labour movements in general – and the COB in particular – are more capable of mobilising and organising large segments of society in an effective and efficient manner than other social groups. With their relatively large base, history and frequency of mobilising their own members and defined and rigid hierarchical structures labour organisations can better unite other, perhaps less organised groups together under one cause. With the COB at the head of organised labour in Bolivia the rest of the COB-affiliated organisations follow a hierarchical and linear format (see Figure 1), which further lends itself to efficient and effective mobilisation. At the lowest or most basic level are the plant unions, found in

individual mines, hospitals, manufacturing plants, *et cetera*. Ascending the hierarchical ladder from plant level unions are provincial federations, which are sector and province specific. Above federations are the geographical outposts of the COB, the Labour Confederation of the Province, *Confederación Obrera Departmental* (CODs), found in all 9 Bolivian provinces. Above the CODs are the national confederations of each sector, generally located in La Paz. Finally, at the head of all affiliated labour organisations is the COB.

Figure 1 – Structure of COB



The COB's ability to organise based on its structure is an important aspect of drawing attention to social issues. *Campesino* groups, for instance, are more geographical dispersed and perhaps less ideologically founded which makes successful and concentrated mobilisation more difficult.

As a result of its ability to mobilise, organised labour is better able to attract larger and more influential audiences to its objectives. Murillo claims that the larger and more influential a labour movement is, the greater and more significant the audience they will attract (Murillo, 2001:14). If we couple Murillo's argument with Sen's discussion on political democracy creating public openings for raising social issues, we arrive at the idea that the greater the arena – in terms of the size of the audience – the higher the level of conceptualisation, as greater attention is attracted to such a discussion. Thus, labour

institutions like the COB can advance democratisation through voicing demands in larger and more significant arenas than perhaps other groups within civil society. Although the current status of the COB may not be as revered as it once was, the combination of the collective memory of the government, special interest groups and the general public coupled with contemporary activities gives the COB significant clout in greater arenas of conceptualisation.

The COB's ability to mobilise wide-ranging segments of society as a result of its historical identity, remain critical and independent of the government and attract large and influential audiences all combine to make it a better vehicle to utilise political freedoms to help draw attention to and encourage public debate with the objective of forming more appropriate social policy.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter we established the theoretical environment in which we base our thesis. One of the fundamental themes we introduced was the idea of democratisation. We understand this throughout the rest of this thesis as the process of using political rights to press for greater social rights. While we understand this could be examined in a variety of ways – demonstrated above in the discussions of Lipset (1983), Schmitter (1986), Valenzuela (1988), Rueschemeyer *et al.* (1992), O'Donnell (1992), Przeworski (1995) and Haagh (2002a) – we have chosen to explore the concept of democratisation in a slightly different manner. We look to build on and move forward from solely examining the consolidation of political democracy – Haagh does comprehensively examine the relationship between political and social democracy however in a different temporal setting and through a different understanding of democratisation – and instead examine how through the use of political freedoms an agent can strive for greater social democracy in a politically consolidated, post-neoliberal setting.

Additionally, above we explored how authors such as Sen (1999:153-154), Oxhorn (2003:40) and Whitehead (2006:210) claim that the opportunities presented by political democracy have to be actively utilised and positively grabbed in order to both protect their existence and to ultimately reach a more socially democratic end. Therefore, dissimilar to the perhaps more optimistic tone of authors writing during the transitions to political democracy in the early 1980s in Latin America we do not see the link between political and

social democracy as automatic (as argued by Haagh, 2002a). Moving forward we build our argument on the works of authors such as Rueschemeyer *et al.* (1992) who use a political economy perspective that focuses on the role of actors whose power is based in economic and organisational resources. However, rather than centre our discussion on the role of such actors in achieving political equality for disadvantaged groups, we argue that an actor is needed to exploit the spaces provided by political democracy in order to strive towards and possibly obtain sustainable social democracy.

An important component of our analytical framework is the link between political democracy (e.g. equal access to freedoms of association, expression and voice in collectively binding decisions) and social democracy (equal access to basic provisions of a general material wellbeing, e.g. healthcare, education, pensions, *et cetera*). Furthermore, this thesis will utilise Sen's idea of conceptualisation - understood as the process of non-governmental actors using political rights to draw attention to and publicly debate and scrutinise government proposals surrounding important social issues – to investigate the relationship between political and social democracy.

It should be stated that democratisation as we understand it is not the only way to democratise and in many cases, when political rights are absent or grossly skewed, the need arises for democratisation through illegal means. However we would argue that this is more a struggle for political democracy, or political democratisation, which is not the central concern of this thesis. Our argument deals primarily with democratisation in a country such as Bolivia where political democracy appears to be established and therefore where political freedoms seem to be available tools with which to press for greater social rights.

We claimed that the COB presents an interesting actor to study regarding its role in democratisation. While historically this labour institution has played formative roles in democratisation, the onset of nearly 20 years of neoliberal rule has dramatically reduced its influence. Thus, we set out to examine if and how the COB might influence democratisation under a changed political environment. In this chapter we also discussed how the issue of democratisation is both normatively important for a country like Bolivia where poverty is widespread and academically interesting given the country's established political democracy and the recent shift away from neoliberal economic and political

objectives. Finally, we briefly examined several nuances that we argue make the COB a more suited actor for grabbing the opportunities presented by political democracy to press for greater social democracy. In the following chapter we construct a strength index to help us better analyse if and how the COB might influence democratisation in post-neoliberal Bolivia.

### **Chapter 3. Analytical framework for Assessing the Role of the COB in Democratisation**

In this chapter we build on the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 2 by constructing an index through which we assess the COB's role in processes of democratisation. Above, we discussed how we understand the term democratisation as it pertains to the relationship between political and social democracy and the role that conceptualisation can play in the dynamic interplay of these concepts. In order to more accurately and comprehensively understand the COB's role in democratisation we need to understand what influences the COB's ability to shape political and social processes. As previously stated we have framed this thesis in the work of authors such as Rueschemeyer *et al.* (1992) who use a political economy perspective to analyse the power of collective actors such as organised labour.

Thus, in this chapter we create an index of labour strength indicators that have been used in previous research and will best position our analysis to understand if and how the COB is able to influence democratisation. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to address all possible indicators for labour movement strength in regards to its influence in democratisation. We argue that while we base some of our indicators in traditional industrial relations literature the modified strength index that we have created in this chapter is structured so as to better understand the role of organised labour in processes of democratisation as conceptualisation, rather than to understand the role of organised labour in more traditional industrial relations or even in processes of political democratisation. It is in this way that we hope to both add to the existing literature as well as create a methodological framework that can be applied to other discussions of comparative labour movements beyond this thesis. Before entering into a discussion of our chosen strength indicators we explain – in section 3.2 – why many existing labour strength indicators are inadequate for assessing the ability of the COB to influence democratisation. We then examine – in sections 3.3-3.6 – how and why we have chosen the four labour strength indicators we use for assessing the strength of the COB as it pertains to the labour confederation's ability to influence democratisation. In the final section of this chapter – section 3.7 – we discuss how each of our chosen indicators relate to each other and how

their collective use will enable a better understanding of our research. For now we turn to a brief exploration of the COB and some of its characteristics.

### **3.1 An Introduction to the COB**

The COB – similar to other labour movements throughout South America and maybe even more so – suffered significant losses regarding its prominence in the political arena during the nearly 20 years of neoliberal rule, which began in the middle of the 1980s. Given decreased levels of membership, a dearth of experienced leaders and increased globalisation, alongside more liberal hiring and firing practices, one might presume that the COB is no longer relevant enough to influence democratisation. While this may or not be true – a point which we examine below – we argue in this chapter that certain traditional indicators of labour movement strength rooted in industrial relations literature are not accurate or appropriate indicators for assessing the strength of the COB in processes of democratisation. Our reasoning for this centres on the facts that the COB is much more than a labour movement whose demands only pertain to members – e.g. wage increases, better working conditions, *et cetera*, and the process of democratisation is different than assessing success in collective bargaining. In fact, the COB is more closely associated with social movement unionism, which is inclusive of both workplace specific issues and society wide issues (Fairbrother and Yates, 2003:248). However, even among other social movement unions the COB is unique in important ways.

The ways in which the COB is different from other labour/social movements assessed in industrial relations literature stem from the social and political environment in Bolivia, both currently and historically, and certain internal characteristics of the COB itself. Several respondents from our empirical research claimed that there are no other institutions in Bolivia that perform the same role as the COB, namely defending workers' rights at the national level and acting as an independent check of governmental and business groups (Colque, 5/6/2008). Perhaps the characteristic that most separates the COB from other social movement unions is its independence from aligning with a, or forming its own, political party. We argue, based in the literature discussed above, that this aspect of independence is vital in processes of conceptualisation.

One of the most apparent COB characteristics is the wide variety of its aims. The main objectives pursued by the current COB suggest an institution whose remit is beyond its own members and represents wider Bolivian society. The general goals of the COB are multifaceted and include political, social and economic objectives. The first goal is the return of former President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada (Goni) to Bolivia so that he may face prosecution for his alleged crimes committed in 2003. The second objective includes the reformation of the state pensions system. The third facet concerns the complete nationalisation of Bolivia's natural resources. The final aspect of the COB's most central objectives is greater agrarian reform and enhanced techniques for agricultural cultivation. The abovementioned list of goals was described as such by executive members of the COB as well as regional and local union leaders through elite interviews. Respondents did not specify a ranking of importance between the stated goals. However, based on the attention and energy certain goals received we could speculate as to which were more pressing during our empirical research. Based on COB activity pension reform was the goal that received the most attention from the labour organisation. As we discuss more comprehensively below, the COB organised strikes, work stoppages and marches in an effort to shape pension reform in Bolivia.

The issue of nationalisation and how the COB pursues it is more complex than the issue of pension reform. Through elite interviews and questionnaire dissemination we learned that many COB members, alongside of other groups within Bolivia, associate nationalisation with the reclamation of Bolivian resources and pride from private, international companies whose presence in the country grew significantly during neoliberalism.

In general, the goals pursued by the labour confederation suggest that the COB's aims intend to include all sectors of the labour movement and more generally all Bolivians. Furthermore, as evidenced in the variety of these goals we can see that they are clearly not limited to exclusive labour movement demands that seek to only benefit members and in fact more closely resemble those of a collective actor pursuing objectives that seek to include wider society. Now that we have briefly introduced the nature of the COB in its contemporary state we turn our attention to an examination of how previous studies have structured their strength indices when assessing the ability of organised labour to influence political economy.

### **3.2 Labour Strength Indicators**

Academic studies assessing the strengths of labour movements are as diverse in their utilisation of various strength criteria as they are in the different labour movements on which they focus. Certain studies rely more heavily on quantitative data (McGuire, 1999) and indicators associated with it such as union density and total number of union members. Others, utilise more qualitative variables such as historical factors (Valenzuela, 1988; Collier and Collier, 2002), organised labour's relationship with various political parties (Valenzuela, 1992b; Angell, 1972), labour legislation (Collier and Collier, 2002; Cook, 2007), the nature of collective bargaining (Clegg, 1976) and the level of representation within the labour movement (Edelstein, 1967; Anderson, 1978) – to name a few. In this section we discuss why we have chosen to utilise certain indicators to analyse the COB's strength. Most centrally, our decision to include certain indicators over others is based on our desire to understand the role of the COB in processes of democratisation rather than in member-specific collective bargaining or in political democratisation, as other studies have done when choosing and applying labour strength indicators.

We employ the use of more qualitatively based variables for several reasons. First, recent quantitative labour movement data is often more difficult to obtain in developing countries such as Bolivia than it is in more developed countries. Secondly, even if we were able to locate this data often times numbers relating to union density or total number of union members can be misleading, particularly in discussions surrounding democratisation. For instance, higher density numbers are not automatically associated with more strength. Trade unions in Britain in the 1980s had much higher density rates than did their French counterparts and yet French unions were more likely to positively influence wider democratisation than were British unions, whose demands remained more exclusive (Gallie, 1980:10-32). Examples such as this would suggest that other more qualitative factors such as ideology might be important to examine when discussing labour movement strength in relation to processes of democratisation. Additionally, Cook argues that union density figures can be further misleading in that such figures can misrepresent a situation, particularly – as in Mexico – where compulsory membership might inflate the union density while making it more difficult to assess member commitment and/or mobilisation capacity (Cook, 2007:21).

Thirdly, authors such as Fairbrother and Yates have argued that qualitative indicators such as how empowered members feel about their union can help the researcher better understand the true strength of a specific labour movement. These authors argue that the more say members feel they have in union processes, the more committed they are likely to be to the objectives pursued by their union, ultimately making the entire union stronger (Fairbrother and Yates, 2003:250). Finally, qualitative indicators might better enable us to understand complex processes of democratisation – particularly as they relate to conceptualisation – and the role organised labour might play in them than can traditional labour strength indicators alone. One reason for this is that contemporary quantitative indicators might not account for other, long-term influences on labour movement strength, such as historical processes. While quantitative indicators such as union density levels can alert us to the degree of industrial pressure and influence labour movements can potentially hold over employers and/or governments, more information – such as the labour movement’s historical and contemporary relationship with the state – is needed to determine if such potential could be turned into action and what type of action, thus demonstrating actual strength in processes of democratisation. As argued by Visser, labour movement strength goes beyond its ability to apply sanctions through strikes, inflict damage or withhold political support (Visser, 1992:21-22); in our case it is also the ability to influence democratisation through conceptualisation.

Finally, Valenzuela suggests that the immense variation between labour movements has spawned a substantial amount of literature dedicated to comparative analyses, mostly using an industrial relations perspective. However, he argues that an industrial relations perspective alone is too narrow to account for the varying characteristics when comparing labour movements (Valenzuela 1992b:53). In line with such justifications – and more comprehensive reasoning outlined below – we utilise a strength index based mainly on qualitative indicators.

The spine of our labour strength index is adapted largely from authors whose work revolves around the ability of civil society in general – and labour movements in particular – to initiate and see through transitions from authoritarian rule to political democracy. As we have seen, political democratisation differs from how we understand democratisation in this thesis – in that the struggle for the former (political democratisation) is based outside

of legal avenues whereas the latter (democratisation) is, and must be by definition, constructed within the confines of political democracy. However, we believe certain strength indicators used to assess the role of organised labour in processes of political democratisation can be adapted to assess the role of organised labour in processes of democratisation. As Rueschemeyer *et al.* argue the ‘same factors which support the installation and consolidation of formal democracy, namely growth in the strength of civil society in general and of the lower classes in particular, also support progress toward greater equality in political participation and towards greater social and economic equality’ (Rueschemeyer *et al.*, 1992:10-11). Thus, if the same factors are both responsible for political consolidation as are for democratisation – e.g. the growth and strength of civil society – then it would seem appropriate to assess the strength of such factors in a similar manner. In line with this rationale we have constructed a labour strength index based on indicators that have been argued in the literature as important in assessing the ability of certain collective actors to influence political democratisation. In the discussion below we further explore what these indicators have taught us about the strength of other labour movements in processes of political democratisation and how such lessons can be adapted to assess the strength of the organised Bolivian labour movement in regards to its influence in processes of democratisation at the time of writing.

The key authors whose work guided our theoretical framework in the previous chapter are many of the same ones who we turn to in order to build an analytical framework to help determine the strength of the COB. Each of these aforementioned authors utilise, in one form or another, similar indicators for assessing potential explanations for why certain labour movements have been more influential in processes of political democratisation than others. The three key indicators that we have identified in these works are: 1) the historical identity of the labour movement; 2) the labour movement’s relationship with the government; and 3) the unity and/or solidarity of the movement in discussion. It should be noted that the abovementioned authors do include other criteria in their respective analyses. However, in part due to the fact that certain factors are less relevant to this thesis – Valenzuela (1988; 1992b) examines the level of influence enforced by the previous authoritarian government on the new, democratically elected one – and in part due to time and resource constraints we are unable to explore all potentially influential factors.

Based on the theoretical framework examined in Chapter 2 which discusses our central interest in understanding the role of the COB in processes of democratisation and our discussion of established labour strength indicators above we have constructed our own strength index. The first criterion we use to assess the COB's strength in influencing democratisation is its **historical identity**. We have chosen this indicator because – as discussed above – it has been convincingly argued by many of the authors we used to develop our theoretical framework that historical processes of labour movements have significant knock-on effects in relation to their contemporary strength (Valenzuela, 1988; Valenzuela 1992b; Rueschemeyer *et al.*, 1992; and Collier and Collier, 2002). The second criterion we investigate is the **relationship between labour and the government** and the effect this has had on shaping the COB's ability to independently scrutinise and critically evaluate government policy proposals. The third strength indicator we assess in this thesis is the level of **solidarity** within the COB as well as between the COB and other social movements. Here we investigate the various effects of the labour confederation's relationship with the government, the effect neoliberalism has had on labour strength and the organic structure of the COB. The fourth and final indicator we use to determine the strength of the COB is the **commitment of union members**. This includes the sub-themes of the democratic nature of the COB and the ideological nature of the confederation. This criterion is significant in terms of assessing the success of industrial actions as it has been shown that members who feel that their union is democratic and have a high level of ideological attachment are more likely to commit to the successful outcome of labour actions.

Throughout the rest of this chapter we examine the indicators we have demarcated as being important elements in shaping the COB's ability to both draw attention to important social issues as well as critically evaluate and scrutinise said issues in a public arena. We argue that the capability of the COB to draw attention to social issues is largely determined by how it conducts industrial actions, most notably mobilisations. Whether or not the COB decides to mobilise and/or whether or not mobilisations are effective – both in efficiency and comprehensiveness – in drawing attention to important social issues is influenced by all four of our chosen indicators. However, the most important of all of these indicators for determining the influence of the COB in drawing attention to important social issues is the confederation's relationship with the government. If the COB is found to be aligned with

the Morales government and unwilling to mobilise against and/or critically evaluate and publicly scrutinise government proposed social policies then all discussions surrounding the ability to mobilise in the name of democratisation effectively become moot. We now turn to a more in-depth discussion of our chosen indicators in assessing the capability of the COB to influence democratisation.

### **3.3 Indicator 1: Historical Identity**

The first criterion we use to assess the influence of the COB in processes of democratisation is its historical identity. Influential authors in the fields of both industrial relations and democratisation have alluded to the role of history in shaping contemporary labour movements (Valenzuela, 1988; Valenzuela, 1992b; Collier and Collier, 2002; Rueschemeyer *et al.*, 1992). Valenzuela claims that the historical characteristics of labour movements can alert analysts to their respective strength. Whether labour has been ‘heavily subjected to the state, highly divided into many small units, with competing ideological and political allegiances’ can have an overall weakening effect on labour strength (Valenzuela 1988:14). Such variations can diminish the influence and relevance of labour movements in future generations, particularly if and when these negative characteristics have become institutionalised and perpetuated within the labour movement.

Authors such as Valenzuela (1992b:55-58), Cook (2007:16-20) and Collier and Collier (2002) argue that it is also necessary to examine the process of labour incorporation, inclusive of internal labour characteristics such as groups or individuals responsible for organised labour’s rise, their ideologies and political affiliations and external factors such as dominant parties at the time of incorporation. Valenzuela suggests that these variables, particularly the original union leadership group, will have the ‘lasting effect of fixing the ideological and political coloration of the labour movement as a whole’ (Valenzuela, 1992b:55-56).

In a similar vein to Valenzuela, the ‘critical juncture’ framework employed by Collier and Collier suggests that ‘political change cannot be seen only as an incremental process. Rather, it also entails periods of dramatic reorientation – such as the incorporation periods – that commonly occur in distinct ways in different countries, leaving contrasting historical legacies’ (Collier and Collier 2002:745). These authors demonstrate the significance of knock-on effects in terms of shaping both labour movements and their ability to influence

democratisation. According to such authors we can understand much more about the current nature of a labour movement by investigating the process of incorporation and the agents and motives surrounding it.

Based on these theories – which argue that the historical character of a labour movement is an important indicator to assess current relevance in processes of democratisation – we investigate the actors, motives and environment surrounding labour incorporation in Bolivia. We examine not only processes associated with labour incorporation but also the institutionalisation and development of characteristics of the COB initiated during labour incorporation and continued until the present. Specifically, we explore the prevalent ideology surrounding incorporation, the COB's initial relationship with the state and/or other political groups and the processes which led the confederation away from solely pursuing bread and butter, labour specific issues and into wider social issues. We plan to focus our search on four influential periods in Bolivian history; the incorporation of labour, the 1952 Revolution, re-democratisation in the early 1980s and neoliberalism. By examining the COB and its makeup throughout this timeline we hope to gain greater insight into the current ability of the COB to influence democratisation.

### **3.4 Indicator 2: Relationship with Government**

Organised labour's relationship with the government will largely determine its willingness to mobilise against and/or be openly critical of government proposals. Moreover, this relationship might also affect the internal makeup of a labour movement. As has been shown throughout the histories of labour movements in South America, relationships with political parties can have a damaging effect on movement solidarity, ultimately affecting the strength of respective movements in processes of democratisation.

There has been much literature dedicated to the dynamics of labour-partisan relationships in regards to labour strength. Based on the literature, we argue that if and when a labour movement is aligned with a political party said movement would be less likely to critically evaluate and publicly scrutinise collective policies proposed by the aligned governments. Following Sen's argument laid out in Chapter 2 discussing the importance of public scrutiny of social policies, close labour-partisan ties might discourage such scrutiny and public debate and ultimately close off this aspect of democratisation. Therefore, the primary questions we seek to address through this indicator are: 1) what is the COB's

relationship with the Morales government; and 2) what affect does this have on the organisation's ability to influence democratisation?

As has been shown in the past<sup>7</sup>, the relationship between a major political party and organised labour can be a mixed bag. There are several benefits that might persuade labour to align with a political party (Epstein 1989:277; Valenzuela 1992b:64-65; Collier and Collier 2002:49-50). Labour can benefit from having a direct link into the policy-making process while the political party gains an invaluable vote bank. Under this scenario the aligned political party would be more sympathetic to labour demands in exchange for votes and industrial peace. Such direct access to policymakers would theoretically make unions more popular among their members as well as entice other potential members to join. Another significant incentive for labour to 'partner' with a political party is state protection in bargaining with capital. As labour is at an inherent disadvantage when bargaining with capital the state may interject on the side of labour, making negotiations less hazardous for this group. Finally, political parties can act as unifiers and organisers of unions. When aligned with a political party union leaders may choose to use the political party as a means to attract members. This was prevalent throughout the Chilean labour movement where union loyalties were intertwined with political loyalties (Angell, 1972).

Cook argues that political party alliances made the better connected Brazilian labour movement of the early 2000's 'stronger' as compared to the Mexican labour movement, although the latter possessed higher strength index measures in areas of union structure and political unity among peak confederations (Cook, 2007:23). However, Cook is mainly concerned with labour strength in regard to its ability to win concessions for its members. Our focus in this thesis is more concerned with the wider impact of labour and particularly with labour's ability to influence democratisation, which we argue can be impeded when potential loyalty to a political party overrides organised labour's ability to publicly scrutinise said party in reference to democratisation. Therefore, in reference to Cook, while Brazil might be stronger than Mexico for some reasons, its relationship with the ruling Worker's Party makes it less likely to publicly scrutinise government policies.

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<sup>7</sup> See Murillo, 2001.

While there are certainly potential benefits for labour to align with a political party there are numerous costs as well. For instance, labour may support a seemingly labour-sympathetic candidate only to see, upon inauguration, the implementation of labour hostile policies, as was demonstrated in Argentina under Carlos Menem's first term beginning in 1989. Or, a labour-sympathetic government may make strides towards appeasing labour demands only to meet severe industrial action, initiated by an unsatisfied labour movement, as seen in Chile under President Allende and in Bolivia under President Siles Zuazo and his Democratic Popular Union, *Unidad Democrática y Popular* (UDP) government. However, for our thesis the most significant problem with labour aligning with a political party is the former's potential lack of critical evaluation and public scrutiny of social policies proposed by the government. Murillo claims that unions were 'more likely to restrain their militancy when partisan allies were in the government even after the latter had converted' to labour-hostile neoliberalism (Murillo, 2001:197-198). Murillo, referencing Cukerman and Tommasi (1998), also claims that labour-based parties have a comparative advantage for implementing market oriented/labour hostile reforms because they are more 'credible when they claim that need – provoked by economic distress – rather than taste – influenced by their ideology – has induced them to implement these policies'(ibid.).

During the onset of neoliberalism, in countries such as Argentina, Venezuela and Mexico labour-based incumbents blamed globalisation pressures, fiscal deficits, foreign debt, or macroeconomic imbalances for policies presented as both urgent and indispensable and as a result witnessed greater labour restraint than they would have had they not been aligned with organised labour (ibid.:3). This is a key point in understanding the importance of labour independence from political parties. Historically, labour's restraint as a product of an alliance with a political party most often rendered few or no concessions for the labour movement (Murillo 2001:197-198).

There are numerous cases demonstrating labour movements in developing democracies showing restraint toward allied political groups when these groups implemented labour-hostile, market reforms – Mexico, Brazil, Venezuela and South Africa in the 1990s and early 2000s are several examples (Iheduru, 2001:3-4). Additionally, neoliberal policies that were ultimately harmful to social development can gain democratic credibility as

labour, a significant civil society actor, lends legitimacy to such issues through non-action. This then not only becomes a problem for labour but also for both political and social democracy.

Furthermore, a close relationship with a political party may weaken the democratic nature of a labour movement as well as damage its ability to recruit new members. As discussed above, in certain instances labour leaders may choose career advancement within governmental ranks at the expense of their own labour organisation. It is not uncommon for government's trying to subordinate labour to promise union leaders lucrative positions within the government in exchange for labour quiescence. If union members perceive movement leaders as undemocratic the former are more likely to disassociate with their union and/or become less committed to union causes, ultimately resulting in weaker labour movements.

A further potential problem for labour when aligning with a political party occurs when the allied party performs poorly and/or falls out of public favour. Labour's association with the party can potentially cost it future or even current members (Offe, 1985:160-161). Finally, and as we discuss more thoroughly below, labour-partisan alliances can affect labour solidarity. As seen in countries such as Chile, labour movements that are split along political lines are less unified and in turn less able to influence democratisation.

In instances where labour movements have a choice to align with a political party – rather than the cases where they are forced to coalesce – there are certain benefits that can be gained through alignment. However, we argue that in a discussion where organised labour acts as an agent of democratisation through conceptualisation – where independent scrutiny of important social issues is integral – the overall benefits of aligning with a political party are outweighed by the costs.

### **3.4.1 What Makes the Bolivian Case Interesting**

Several authors (Epstein, 1989; Martin 1989; Valenzuela 1992; Murillo 2001; Collier and Collier 2002) have created typologies in order to help categorise specific labour movements based on their relationships to their respective governments. From these typologies such authors go on to make general statements about the strengths and weakness of said labour movements. However, many of these analyses seem to miss the mark in the

case of Bolivia. The relationship between the COB and political parties largely fails to fall into such categories for at least two reasons. One, the political parties in Bolivia seem to be simultaneously ephemeral and dynamic. By this we mean that the life of parties may be short lived, morphing into coalitions, reoccurring after years of absence, or non-existent – as is largely the case at the time of writing where the MAS and the conservative Social and Democratic Power, *Poder Democrático y Social* (PODEMOS) were more political groups than formal political parties. Many of the major political parties present during formative periods of Bolivian history including incorporation, the Revolution and political re-democratisation such as the Revolutionary Party of the Left, *Partida de la Izquierda Revolucionaria* (PIR), the Revolutionary Worker's Party, *Partido Obrero Revolucionario* (POR), the Revolutionary Nationalist Movement, *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario* (MNR), the UDP and the Nationalist Democratic Action, *Acción Democrática y Nacionalista* (ADN) are no longer relevant political forces. This, in one regard, has made lasting partnerships between the COB and a specific party difficult. One potential result of the absence of established and lasting political parties in Bolivia is the fact that since 1952 it has been the COB and not political parties that have been a vehicle for the left (Carr and Ellner, 1993:122), an important factor in our discussions below in which we examine the role of the COB in processes of democratisation.

The second way in which the Bolivian case fails to fit pre-specified typologies is the fact that alongside of there not being any formal, dominant political parties in Bolivia at the time of writing, the COB also maintains a position of strict independence from any government. Martin argues that one characteristic of 'autonomous' movements is a 'formal' link with political parties (Martin, 1989:191). In Bolivia, this is untrue. The credo and practice of complete political autonomy would preclude any type of entrenched partnership between parties and the COB, making even the formal links of 'autonomous movements' – as described by Martin – improbable. In a similar vein, Venezuela argues that 'virtually everywhere national union organisations have established...some kind of a relationship with one or more political parties' (Valenzuela, 1992b:60). Again, in Bolivia this is not the case. While the COB may have had temporary working relationships with governments such as the MNR in the immediate years following the Revolution or with the UDP government following re-democratisation, such relationships were certainly not established. Moreover, Valenzuela goes on to discuss how the closeness of the relationship

between a political party and labour is largely a result of the historical origins of the party and the timing and formation of the party and unions (Valenzuela, 1992b:61-63). As we discuss below, many of the parties that formed during labour incorporation are no longer in existence and never formed an established or lasting partnership with the COB.

Further evidence of the COB's nuances in comparative discussions of labour autonomy can be seen in the work of Edward Epstein. Epstein argues that 'relative labour autonomy results when those controlling the state are either politically weak or under strong challenge from groups not sharing their overall policy preference' (Epstein, 1989:285). However, since labour incorporation the COB has largely remained autonomous from major political parties regardless of their respective strength. It has been the strength of the COB – measured in other areas – and the degree of government repression over the labour confederation that has fluctuated between political regimes, where political autonomy has largely remained a constant characteristic of the COB.

As the Bolivian case largely falls outside of the typologies described above we have decided it would be more beneficial for our study to move onto an exploration of the nuanced relationship between the COB and the MAS and the effect this relationship has had on the labour confederation's ability to influence public policy through conceptualisation, rather than try to find where the COB-MAS relationship fits into the abovementioned typologies. We intend to explore the dynamics of the current relationship and ultimately the effect this relationship has on the COB's ability to influence democratisation.

Additionally, we explore the relationship between the COB and MAS in regards to its effect on labour solidarity. Offe argues that 'unions can better realise their goals when they organise so that they cannot be split along political or ideological lines, either from within or from without' (Offe, 1985:151). The major reason for this is that segregated unions will have less impact through industrial actions than unified movements. If and when labour movements are split between political alliances they become competitive between one another and ultimately diminish their ability to influence public policy in a democratic manner. Thus, not only is it important for trade unions to be independent from partisan influences but also to do so in a unified manner, otherwise their ability to resist future subordination and ultimately influence democratisation is diminished. Moreover, if labour

is fractured along political lines the group that is not aligned with a political party will have less influence in democratisation as it is smaller and weaker as a result of its competition with other labour groups.

While we have based our argument in this section around literature discussing the potential dangers of labour movements aligning with political parties it should be noted that in some cases when organised labour refuses to cooperatively work alongside of the government negative consequences can occur. Following political re-democratisation in Bolivia in the early 1980s the UDP government was in power. After an initial period of cooperation the COB soon became hyperactive in its industrial actions, which directly led to the downfall of the left-leaning UDP government and the ushering in of successive neoliberal regimes – we discuss this process more comprehensively in Chapter 4. The point here is that remaining independent from a government is not synonymous with hyperactive industrial activity.

Finally, and in line with the rest of the theory discussed thus far, the ability of trade unions to remain independent is related to the establishment of certain political rights. Coates argues that without the rights to organise without state interference, to bargain freely and continuously and to industrial action it is much less likely that trade unions can achieve independence from partisan influences (Coates, 1972:67-68). As discussed throughout this thesis, these rights are a vital starting point for any discussion revolving around our understanding of democratisation.

### **3.5 Indicator 3: Solidarity**

Independence from partisan influences not only affects the likelihood of mobilising against and scrutinising government proposals surrounding important social policies, it can also influence the degree of solidarity within a labour movement. For this reason Offe argues that the concept of a ‘unified trade union is the non-affiliation or non-partisanship unions show towards political parties’ (Offe, 1985:151). As discussed above, Offe suggests that non-affiliated unions will be stronger in realising their goals because they are less likely to be split along political or ideological lines. Similar to Offe, Cook argues that organised labour is ‘stronger where there is a single peak labour confederation and where internal political or ideological divisions are limited’ (Cook, 2006:21). Cook goes on to claim that when labour confederations are not unified the government will pick and choose which

sections of the labour movement it wants to align with, ultimately to the detriment of labour strength (ibid.:22-24).

Based in the literature we argue that a strong labour movement – a key component of which is solidarity – will be more likely to draw attention to social issues through larger and wider industrial actions than will segregated, competitive labour movement factions. In terms of influencing conceptualisation of social issues, more centralised and unified labour movements will command more influential audiences during negotiation rounds (Murillo, 2001:5-9). If – as we argued above – political democracy allows for venues where grievances or demands can be voiced and that these spaces and subsequent discussions help address the social needs of a society (Sen, 1999:150-152), then more centralised and unified labour movements will be more likely to attract greater audiences to their industrial actions. The more significant the audiences at these negotiations the more attention will be given to such an event and thus increased awareness will be attached. It is from these theoretical discussions that we explore the importance and status of solidarity within the COB.

A useful term employed by Hyman (1992) for describing segregated or non-solidaristic labour movements is *disaggregation*. This term includes characterisations such as ‘fragmentation within the ‘organised working class’ expressed in intra- and inter-union conflict, and a weakening of the authority of national leaderships and central confederations’. Hyman describes certain characteristics of labour movements ailed by such disaggregation, namely ‘declining membership, influence and/or effectiveness; a retreat from traditional ‘solidaristic’ programmes’ and ‘a vacuum of integrating policy and strategy’ (Hyman, 1992:151). For our discussion these characteristics would have direct negative consequences in terms of the ability of the COB to draw attention to important social issues. The themes we explore in our thesis also mirror those discussed by Hyman. For instance, declining membership not only in terms of actual numbers but also regarding the declining level of participation in industrial actions of members is more likely to influence the success of such actions. A retreat from traditional solidaristic programmes is a direct nod to the effect of ideology and class-consciousness and the role these have played in uniting the organised labour movement around collectivist objectives. Thus,

disaggregation and/or the breakdown of solidarity within a labour movement reverberates through all aspects of its ability to draw attention to important public policies.

Labour solidarity – and in turn labour strength – is also affected by the structure of the labour movement in question. The structure of a labour movement can significantly shape labour’s capability to influence democratisation. This is primarily attributed to the effect structure has in facilitating effective – both in terms of expediency and comprehensiveness – industrial actions. Integral aspects of labour movement structure regarding its ability to effectively mobilise include a high degree of connectivity between unions and a singular, central labour confederation. The first aspect encourages greater articulation between unions of both labour aims and actions. This is dually important in that members from dispersed unions need to be aware and prepared for centrally organised industrial actions. In a similar manner, members need to understand the reasons or aims driving industrial action and this requires articulation between unions. One significant aspect that often distinguishes institutionalised labour movements from newer grassroots social movements is the formers’ degree of organisation. As discussed in Chapter 2, institutionalised labour movements are often better equipped to mobilise large, disperse groups than are other organisations due in part to the formers experience in such processes which has been built on an institutionalised structure. Within labour movements those most effective at influencing policy, other variables considered equal, are synergic – i.e. various organisations throughout the movement are in regular contact with one another and where ideas and resources are easily shared – and possess hierarchical structures and single confederations that permit certain decentralised bargaining.

Centralised and singular labour confederations can help transcend divisions among unions or sections and integrate these diverse membership interests. Unified labour movements, directed by one umbrella confederation allow affiliate unions to concentrate attention on industry-specific economic and work-related issues, an important feature when we discuss union democracy below. ‘National labour confederations serve as ‘amplifiers’ of local union demands, giving broader voice and support to the specific claims being made by individual affiliates’. As amplifiers, umbrella confederations can service lower level unions as agents of ‘collective solidarity and sectoral mobilisation, rather than as national economic agents of a particular occupational category’ (Buchanan, 1995:72).

Empirical evidence has shown that the degree of labour centralisation has historically had an effect on the collective strength of various Latin American labour movements. The union movement in Chile during the 1980s and early 1990s was highly fragmented as a result of incohesive and competing federations and confederations. Haagh points out that Chile, in 1992 ‘had over 300 federations and confederations, of which only a third were affiliated with the CUT [Workers’ United Centre]’. Furthermore, each sector was represented by more than two or three federations which were organised around and affiliated with different political parties and their leaders (Haagh, 2002a:66). The existence of not only multiple confederations and federations but also two working-class political parties proved to weaken the political activities of the Chilean working class (Demmers and Fernández Jilberto, 2001:82). Chile’s experience with fragmented confederations is a telling example of how divisive national bodies, competing with each other for membership rather than working together leads to weakened labour movements and dampens their influence. Ultimately, due to its inherent weaknesses including its lack of autonomy from political parties and the government, the Chilean labour movement was unable to deepen social democracy following the transition to political democracy in 1990 (Haagh, 2002a).

In Argentina during the transition to political democracy in the 1980s the organised labour movement was centralised. Recognising the growing strength of organised labour the government unsuccessfully attempted to decentralise the movement in hopes of rendering it less powerful (Haagh and Cook, 2005:182-183). In the end the state incorporated the labour movement into its ranks<sup>8</sup>, essentially making it ineffective during processes of democratisation.

In Brazil during the 1980s overarching union associations such as the *Central Unica dos Trabalhadores* (CUT) and the *Central Geral dos Trabalhadores* (CGT) represented important organisational changes including greater attention towards internal democratic practices and wider solidarity within the labour movement. The implementation of ‘new unionism’ coupled with the re-installment of political democracy allowed the organised labour movement to articulate labour interests at a higher and more far reaching manner as

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<sup>8</sup> This was not the first time the state co-opted the organised labour movement into its ranks. Similar events transpired under Peron.

well as muster wider backing and ultimately encourage the overall viability of the labour movement as a whole (Weyland, 1996:67).

Finally, solidaristic labour movements are more able to focus their energies on stated objectives rather than on competition for members. This allows for better-organised and ultimately more effective industrial actions. Additionally, solidaristic movements are more likely to have larger and more comprehensive actions, which in turn are more likely to result in greater attention being drawn to important social issues. Therefore, in testing the strength of this indicator in Chapter 7 we explore the effect of the COB's relationship with MAS as well as other influences on labour solidarity, particularly neoliberalism and the structural organisation of the labour confederation. Once we have analysed the degree of solidarity within the Bolivian labour movement we will be better positioned to understand the COB's strength in processes of democratisation.

### **3.6 Indicator 4: Member Commitment**

The next indicator in our strength index is member commitment. Member commitment is an important element of industrial action. If members are not committed they are less likely to join in such actions initially and/or continue to participate in them. Based on previous literature we have noted two major characteristics that potentially affect member commitment. The first is the level of union democracy within a member's union. Research has shown that if a respondent feels that her/his union is not democratic then the member is more likely to become detached from union processes as s/he does not feel s/he has influence. The second part of this section explores the role that ideology plays in member commitment. The type and degree of ideology that members are exposed to can influence the level of commitment members have in their union as well as the types of causes the union collectively pursues. If members have a stronger ideological belief in line with that of their unions then they are more likely to commit to industrial actions aimed at achieving such goals.

#### **3.6.1 Democratic Unionism**

Democratic unionism can affect the success of mobilisations in that if the rank-and-file do not feel their union is democratic they may become less committed to union causes as they feel detached from these processes. Lower commitment from disillusioned members can

potentially lead to fewer members participating in mobilisations as well as reduced membership in the future. Without member commitment and participation in industrial actions organised labour is less likely to draw the attention of the government, the press and most importantly other citizens to important social issues. Thus, the willingness and dedication members have to participate in mobilisations is vital in organised labour utilising political rights – in this case the rights to organisation and expression – to press for wider social rights.

The hypothesis that we work under is if members perceive that they have greater influence in the direction of their union – i.e. it is more democratic – it is more likely that they will be content with their union and committed to pursuing its objectives, thus simultaneously increasing the strength of the union and ultimately the success rate of industrial actions (Stepan-Norris, 1997:476; Fairbrother and Yates, 2003:250; Korkut, 2006:73-74). Therefore, the two things we intend to test for in regards to this indicator in Chapter 8 include: 1) assessing if rank-and-file perceive their respective unions as democratic; and 2) assessing how and if this perception affects their feelings about their unions, particularly in regards to committing to union causes.

Much literature has been dedicated to establishing criteria for assessing the democratic nature of trade unions. However, typologies differ. As a result of such variance the criteria used for determining whether a trade union is democratic or not has remained a contentious point (Morris and Fosh, 2000:95). One of the most significant reasons for this differentiation stems from the fact that certain criterion may need to be amended in light of the surrounding political environment of the union(s) in question. For instance, the prevalent political culture at the time of assessment might affect members' perceptions of what democracy should be. Martin argues that where political culture – in part affected by government behaviour – emphasises democratic practices such as responsiveness to majority opinion and toleration of opposition, trade union leaders will be pressed to act in accordance with these larger processes (Martin, 1968:209). In Argentina under Juan Perón trade unions essentially become vehicles of the state, with many union leaders supporting government policies. Subsequently, questionable external democratic practices under Peron, such as the harsh treatment of potential political opponents, coincided with more oligarchic union practices such as the consolidation of power into the hands of government

approved labour leaders at the expense of local leaders and rank-and-file influence (Epstein, 1989:13-20).

Similarities transpired in Brazil under Getúlio Vargas where his authoritarian government essentially made trade unions dependencies of the state, which significantly affected the internal democracy of the labour movement (Greenfield, 1987:65-66). However, changes to both the Brazilian government and the organisation of the labour movement coincided with the return to political democracy in the 1980s and a resurgence of labour strength. Both the state and labour movement became democratic in a seemingly symbiotic manner. A key factor in labour's re-emergence into the political sphere was its dedication to making union practices more democratic (Moreira Alves, 1989:39, 61; Bethell, 1998:269). The former unions were characterised by fragmented union structure, no representation at the workplace, a lack of attention to the day-to-day problems of the workers on the shop floor and a dependent relationship to the state. The new union structure moved rapidly towards a more centralised organisation, with decentralised collective bargaining, and created workers' councils at the firm level and established complete independence from the state (Schor and You, 2002:169).

In light of the aforementioned discussion we have constructed a set of criteria for assessing the democratic nature of organised labour. We have chosen to test the importance of these specific criteria based on their prevalence throughout the literature as well as their appropriateness and accessibility in terms of data for our case study.

We have placed the criteria into three groups. The first, labelled **electoral arrangements and processes**, includes elements such as: a) the competitiveness of elections (effectiveness of the opposition, closeness of elections, number of candidates, ease of nominations, *et cetera*); b) the frequency of elections; and c) the voting methods practiced during union elections. The second group, **participation**, includes assessing the scope of opportunities – real and perceived – for rank-and-file participation. **Representativeness**, the third and final group in this study, is comprised of elements revolving around: a) leadership (monopoly on political skills, individualistic versus altruistic motives, status gap between leaders and rank-and-file, *et cetera*); b) influence of the rank-and-file within the union; c) union structure; and finally d) local union autonomy. We now explore the theoretical arguments in favour of using such criteria.

### 3.6.1.1 Group 1: Electoral Arrangements and Processes

Our discussion of Group 1 is broken down into three parts entitled: a) competitiveness of elections; b) frequency of elections; and c) voting methods.

a) *Competitiveness of Elections* – One of the most commonly discussed criterion in the literature surrounding union democracy is the competitive nature of elections. This focus on electoral processes within unions is defined by the level of contention within union elections described as both institutionalised opposition and/or effective opposition<sup>9</sup> (Lipset, Trow *et al.*, 1956:13; Edelstein, 1967:20; Anderson, 1978:279; Stepan-Norris, 1997:477; Morris and Fosh, 2000:95). According to Edelstein if a union is able to practice a high degree of effective electoral opposition then it has met the most difficult and symptomatic criterion for formal democracy (Edelstein, 1967:19). Martin defines one aspect of union democracy in comparing it to totalitarianism, stating that the former allows for organised opposition whereas the latter does not (Martin, 1968:206-207). He also claims that competition among leaders makes them more responsive to constituent demands as they become more aware of the possibility that they may be overthrown by the rank-and-file (Martin, 1968:207).

Both the competitive nature of the process of elections (Edelstein, 1967:107) and the competition between parties or factions during elections are important aspects of union democracy (see Lipset, Trow *et al.*, 1956; Lipset, 1960)<sup>10</sup>. Competition was not effective in the more corporatist unions of the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century in Brazil and Argentina where labour unions, their leaders and elections were used to legitimise the state. The Trade Union Law created under Getúlio Vargas in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was fashioned so that the state could control unions through state regulation of union elections (Moreira Alves, 1989:39, 61). This lack of independence essentially stripped the labour movement of any

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<sup>9</sup> Edelstein prefers the term ‘effective’ rather than Lipset *et al.*’s terminology of ‘institutionalised’ to describe the type of opposition conducive to democratic unionism ‘because the legitimacy and the existence of openly functioning parties and factions, implied by the latter term, are considered neither necessary...nor sufficient...for a typically high level of effectiveness of opposition’ (Edelstein, 1967:22).

Martin (1968) also questions Lipset *et al.*’s definition of union democracy as institutionalised opposition. He claims that opposition may be institutionalised without ever winning an election and that office-holders can be defeated without an institutionalised opposition (Martin, 1968:206-207).

<sup>10</sup> Lipset *et al* argue that it is only through an organised and sophisticated opposition – or party – can members be made aware of their possibilities (Lipset *et al.*, 1956:409).

strength in policy-making processes. In Chile, competition among leaders was different. Union leaders were extensions of political/ideological factions, which created significant and legitimate contenders from the factions as each candidate had partisan/ideological followers. Angell argues that this made for more informed voters as members were not merely voting based on their occupation but rather on ideological reasoning, which required more thought (Angell, 1972:219). However, voting along party or ideological lines does not necessarily make for more informed or better voting as followers may vote for *their* representative regardless of his/her policies.

We test the effectiveness of opposition using several indicators. First, we examine the closeness of elections. Close elections are those defined by the loser(s) getting only slightly fewer votes than the eventual winner (Martin, 1968:23). The closeness of elections and/or the frequency of defeats of incumbents can both be seen as effective opposition (Pareto, 1966:60; Edelstein, 1967:22) and thus – as argued in the literature – both are useful measures of democratic unionism. We also discuss the turnover of labour leaders or the possibility of incumbents losing their position as well as the prevalence of assistant executives replacing top executives in elections. The turnover of labour leaders is argued as an important element of democratic unionism as an undisrupted cycle of assistant top officials and top officials exchanging roles implies oligarchy (Pareto, 1966:60; Edelstein and Warner, 1975:112).

Next, we assess the number of candidates running for a particular position. Union democracy suffers when there are less than two candidates or when voters do not have a choice between candidates (Stepan-Norris, 1997). The literature surrounding this indicator suggests that union democracy is more likely when there are fewer more powerful candidates rather than more numerous weaker candidates (Edelstein, 1965:108; Martin, 1968:213-214). This helps to increase the likelihood that there will be equal competition among the contenders, rather than many less competitive candidates taking votes from legitimate contenders resulting in the victory of one candidate who faced little competition.

However, often the higher number of candidates in an election signals an increased level of interest and contention. This brings us to our next indicator – the ease of nominations. If restrictions for nomination are substantial, such as requiring a high number of nominators, members will be less likely to involve themselves in nominating or running for nomination

thus decreasing effective opposition (Edelstein, 1967:22). Additionally, heightened restrictions could make members feel that the barriers for them to become a leader are too great.

b) *Frequency of Elections* – The regularity of elections helps to – among other things – increase the opportunities for rank-and-file to become leaders and rotate leaders from rank-and-file to leadership positions, thus narrowing potential status gaps as leaders are unable to become entrenched in their posts.

c) *Voting Methods* – As with wider state democracy, the manner by which leaders are elected is argued to be fundamental when assessing the level of internal democracy. If voting is not secret, private and free from the scrutiny and judgement of other voters or interested parties, the authenticity of election results may be questioned. In instances where other members of an electorate are permitted to see an individual's preference, this preference may be influenced by whatever ramifications the individual perceives may follow a vote seen as threatening to a particular group, and ultimately signify non-democratic practices.

### **3.6.1.2 Group 2: Participation**

The second group indicator we use for assessing union democracy is participation of members in their union. Participation is argued as an important measure of union democracy in that it helps to keep a check on oligarchic tendencies through alerting leaders to member preferences and problems (Lipset, Trow *et al.*, 1956:11, 404; Anderson, 1978:279). More importantly for our discussion is the idea that the more involved members are in union decision-making, the more likely they are to commit to seeing its successful outcome (Korkut, 2006:73-74). Pateman argues that unions may be considered more democratic once there is greater participation. Additionally, greater participation at the highest union level will become more likely with the practice and availability for participation at lower union levels (Pateman, 1970). According to Pateman, the opportunity to participate helps encourage participation itself. One question we seek to answer through this thesis is, are there opportunities to participate within the COB? Additionally, in what type of opportunities can members participate? Is it in electing representatives or in the actual decision-making process? It could be argued that only elites participate in political processes such as decision-making and negotiating while

members remain apathetic and too uninformed to participate in such processes. We will investigate whether actual participation or the opportunity to participate or even just the feeling that one can participate is important to members' level of content with their union.

Lipset claims that many unions perform a single service for their members, namely bargaining on their behalf during collective bargaining negotiations. He states that an activity such as this requires very little participation from members except when major conflicts arrive (Lipset, 1960:226). In light of this it is normal that the average member within a trade union is inactive in union meetings (Lipset, Trow *et al.*, 1956:11, 404). However, in line with Pateman's theory we seek to determine the level and type of opportunities to participate in union processes, such as union meetings, elections and union leadership positions.

### **3.6.1.3 Group 3: Representativeness**

The third and final group indicator we use in this study for assessing union democracy is representativeness. This encompasses several components, including: a) certain aspects of leadership; b) members' perceived influence within their respective unions; c) the organisational structure of the union; and d) the level of union independence from state and partisan influences.

a) *Leadership* – Authors claim that unions are less likely to be democratic when leaders have a monopoly on political skills, wield control over internal communications, place importance of personal career advancement ahead of the union's wellbeing, and when there is a large status gap between leaders and members, motivating leaders to remain in positions of power (Mosca, 1939; Michels, 1959; Lipset, 1960:220; Pareto, 1966; Edelstein, 1967:114; Crouch, 1982; Schwartzmantel, 1994:82; Greene, 2000:82; Murillo, 2001). Angell states that under Perón, Argentine union leaders enjoyed 'power, financial benefits, and improvement in status' (Angell, 1972:231-232). This elevated status created a stark divide between union leaders and rank-and-file, calling into question the democratic legitimacy of the labour movement.

Leaders' monopoly on political skill may be used as a tool to 'subdue or divert discontent' as well as defeat potential challengers while maintaining an oligarchic grip on the leadership of the union (Lipset, 1960:220). This discrepancy in esoteric knowledge may

serve to further widen the gap between leaders and rank-and-file (Schwartzmantel, 1994:82). Additionally, the status associated with being a leader – including pay, type of work, travel, *et cetera* – may create a situation whereby leaders begin to crave and enjoy their elevated status and this in turn may act as a cohesive element within the exclusive leadership group (Lipset, 1960:222). If the rank-and-file perceive this process to be prevalent within their union they may become less committed to directives coming from union leadership. In turn, this may weaken the strength of unions in industrial actions.

b) *Rank-and-file Influence within the Union* - Members' ability to influence the direction of their union is another important aspect when assessing union democracy. It is possible that labour leaders meet rank-and-file demands with little to no consultation from members, seemingly oligarchic. Proponents of consumer trade unionism would argue that whether or not members are involved in the decision-making process is irrelevant to whether or not general working standards are improved (Morris and Fosh, 2000:97). However, the literature argues that members' input in decision-making processes and their subsequent ability to influence their representative organisations is important. Our main interest is not whether leaders are able to realise member demands but rather the process of arriving at which demands to pursue.<sup>11</sup> As we discussed in the introduction of this chapter, members tend to be less committed to union causes if they feel they are detached from decision-making processes.

c) *Union Structure* - The next criterion we discuss within this group concerns union structure. In much of the literature authors claim that the greater the bureaucratic nature of a trade union the less likely it is to be in direct contact with rank-and-file and thus the less likely it is to be democratic (Lipset, Trow *et al.*, 1956; Coleman, 1960; Lipset, 1960; Anderson, 1978:282). Anderson claims that the bureaucratisation of trade unions defined by 'centralisation of decisions, standardisation of procedures for handling problems, and the formalisation of rules and procedures may all act to limit the democratic procedures within local unions' (Anderson, 1978:282). As union apparatuses become more formalised and professionalised there is a greater probability that the disparity between the outlook of leaders and the rank-and-file will be wider (Greene, 2000:77). This may be partly

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<sup>11</sup> However, it should be noted that rank-and-file disinterest and in turn a weakened commitment may occur if labour leaders are unable to realise member demands (Greene *et al.*, 2000:77).

explained by the fact that leaders will begin to rely more on standardised procedures for direction rather than the demands or concerns of the rank-and-file. Furthermore, these negative characteristics are associated with less union democracy in that they promote power in the hands of leaders and thus may reduce participation (Anderson, 1978:282). Lipset *et al.* do claim, however, that ‘the structure of large-scale organisation inherently requires the development of bureaucratic patterns of behaviour’ and that such structures can help in securing workers’ rights and stability (Lipset, Trow *et al.*, 1956:403; Lipset, 1960:219). Although centralisation and standardisation can lead to apathy from members in the form of diminished participation, these traits can have positive impacts in other ways regarding institutionalisation of the organisation and legitimacy in front of the government.

If some form of bureaucratisation is an inherent requirement of large, complex representative organisations one question we should ask is, what form is most conducive to democratic unionism? The literature suggests that democracy is most likely to become institutionalised in organisations that contain autonomous, sub-units of power that maintain a basic loyalty to a central, larger organisation (Lipset, Trow *et al.*, 1956:15; Edelstein, 1967; Martin, 1968:213-214). Such autonomous sub-units of power may help solidify democratic unionism through creating the ‘conditions necessary for opposition by providing: forums where new ideas are generated; communication networks; training opportunities for potential leaders’ and ‘opportunities to get individuals involved’ (Stepan-Norris, 1997:479). Furthermore, if bargaining takes place at these lower levels members may feel more involved in decision-making processes.

Seemingly contrary to the idea that too much bureaucracy is harmful to democratic unionism<sup>12</sup> is the idea that more labour leaders may be conducive to democratic practices. Certain authors argue that the more equal a ratio of union executives to members the greater likelihood of democratic unionism (Anderson, 1978:291; Stepan-Norris, 1997:485). The reason for this is because if there are more leaders at different levels there will be more ports-of-call and thus more accessibility for members to voice their problems and demands to union hierarchy. Additionally, if there are more leadership positions there are more

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<sup>12</sup> In his study of Canadian local municipal unions Anderson found that although the density of bureaucracy did not have an effect on participation in meetings it did negatively affect members’ influence in union decisions (Anderson, 1978:278-295).

opportunities to become a leader. Thus, in light of the literature discussed here we can deduce that in large representative organisations bureaucracy is a necessary evil and that the negative aspects of this can be alleviated through the existence of autonomous sub-units of power with a greater number of union executives.

d) *Union Autonomy*- This measure has several dimensions, including: i) union leaders' relationships with the government; ii) unified independence from the government; and iii) the dangers of aligning with a labour party.

i) The possibility of leaders becoming co-opted by governmental or other partisan influences can be a significant threat to union democracy. Such problems can cause labour leaders to be less responsive to their members, instead favouring governmental desires in hopes of securing future positions within said governments and thus diminishing the democratic nature of the labour organisation they represent. We saw above the effect such alliances had on trade union democracy and vitality in Brazil and Argentina in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Furthermore, the manner by which unions are funded has implications as to their level of democracy. Haagh states that while decentralised, the Chilean labour movement was relatively democratic, with 75 percent of the national labour confederation's budget coming from foreign donations. Furthermore, labour leader positions were largely voluntary (Haagh, 2002a:71-74). Such autonomy from domestic hegemonic forces and absence of individualistic motives derived from career advancement by labour leaders potentially allows labour to more comprehensively pursue rank-and-file demands. The reason for this is that collusion between elite forces and labour leaders is circumvented and democratic processes are more likely to ensue. Additionally, Haagh and Cook argue that the democratic nature of trade unions led organisationally weak trade unions, such as those in Chile, to push for a wider array of labour rights. The same work argues that while organisationally centralised, the Argentine labour movement was elitist in nature and relatively removed from rank-and-file demands leading to labour concentrating on defending rights such as centralised collective bargaining without pushing for a wider range of rights or attaching occupational rights to ideals of citizenship. Finally, the authors argue that Brazilian labour was both organisationally centralised and based in grassroots

movements, ultimately leading to increased chances that rank-and-file demands would be pursued rather than solely those of labour leaders (Haagh and Cook, 2005:177-188).

ii) Secondly, as we discussed above, unions can better realise their goals when they are united, not split along political or ideological lines, either from within or from without (Offe, 1985:151). For example, if certain segments of a labour movement support the government they may be less inclined to participate in industrial action called against said government's policies.

iii) Finally, as we briefly discussed above in regards to labour autonomy, parties that are supported by organised labour have a 'comparative advantage' when it comes to implementing labour-harmful reforms because such parties can claim that factors such as economic distress rather than 'taste' – influenced by ideology – forced them into enacting such policies (Cikierman and Tommasi, 1998 via Murillo 2001:3). This patience on the part of labour as a result of its alliance with the government may allow the realisation of labour-hostile policies in place of not only rank-and-file demands but also in place of wider democratisation.

### **3.6.2 Ideology**

The type of ideology and the degree to which members are exposed to it can affect member commitment to mobilise for collective issues that might not directly affect them. There are at least three important, interrelated points to highlight here. First, 1) the type of ideology prevalent within a labour movement is likely to affect the type of demands – be they more inclusive or exclusive – pursued by organised labour. Second, 2) the degree to which members follow ideology is likely to influence their commitment to union causes. Finally, 3) it has been argued in the literature that the type and reach of ideology will affect the nature of solidarity within a labour movement. For example, if members are more strongly committed to a collectivist ideology espousing the importance of joining fellow workers in the wider struggle then it is more likely that solidarity within the labour movement will be strong as a result. Conversely, if members are more individualistic then the likelihood of strong solidarity is less.

These interrelated theories affect the influence of the COB in processes of conceptualisation in that weakened mobilisations – partially a product of individualistic

ideology leading to diminished member commitment to wider causes – will draw less attention to important issues. As discussed above, the four most important objectives pursued by the COB at the time of writing suggest a collectivist ideology. In the past, the strong anarcho-syndicalist nature of the COB helped it to successfully press for progressive social policies, enabled by the conviction of its members as social emancipators. In this section we explore the usefulness of ideology as a labour strength indicator.

1) It has been shown that labour movements with a more developed general sense of social consciousness are more likely to pursue collective goals more closely linked to democratisation. As we discuss at length in Chapter 4, the ideology on which the COB was founded was highly collectivist in nature. The labour confederation has gone to great lengths in its past to press for greater social democracy for individuals and groups that are not directly affiliated with the COB. Gallie's study of trade union ideology investigates the relationship between social consciousness and the nature of demands within both French and British trade unions (Gallie, 1980). The author's findings suggest that 'class position is felt to be a source of deprivation by 58 percent of French workers, but only 24 percent of British workers'. This then translated into British workers focusing their efforts on protecting the demands they had already secured. Conversely, the French labour unions sought to educate workers 'to make stronger demands and to recognise the injustice of capitalist society' (ibid:10). Gallie concludes that British unions were all basically reformist whereas their French counterparts held more 'widely variable views on strategy for social change' (ibid.:31). These findings suggest that there is an association between the type of ideology and the nature of goals pursued by organised labour, concluding that the more developed the social consciousness – brought about through a pointed effort to increase and spread a collectivist ideology – the more likely union goals will address wider social issues, rather than limited to more individualistic goals.

2) Although the founding ideology of the COB had a strong collectivist nature, nearly 25 years of neoliberalism and its associated individualistic ideology are likely to have had some impact on the type and reach of ideology present in the COB at the time of writing. A study by Alvin and Sverke (2000) investigates the issue of ideology in relation to shifting employment structures. These authors address the significant global shifts to individualistic ideals – particularly among younger generations – propagated most

significantly during the height of neoliberalism in the 1980s and 1990s. Alvin and Sverke show how the interests of younger generations differ from their older counterparts. The result is a shift from joining trade unions for ideological and collective reasons – defined as membership because of identification with goals, values and ideology of the organisation – to joining for instrumental reasons – defined as membership in exchange for benefits (Alvin and Sverke, 2000:74-75). Alvin and Sverke argue that in their study of Swedish unionism, ‘generation belonging’ is the main explanatory factor for union members’ attitudes towards their union (Alvin and Sverke, 2000). They classify three generations: ‘old timers’ – those born in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and who entered trade unions before the 1960s; ‘idealists’ – those born in the 1940s and 1950s and who joined trade unions in the 1960s; and finally the ‘newcomers’ – those born in the late 1950s or later and who joined trade unions in the 1980s and 1990s. These authors have further constructed a typology of membership in trade unions. The labels are *alienated members* (members who had low scores in both their instrumental and ideological commitment), *instrumental members* (those with a high instrumental commitment but low ideological commitment), *ideological members* (members with a high ideological commitment but a low instrumental commitment), and *devoted members* (those with high commitments to both) (Alvin and Sverke, 2000:75). Their results show that the two labels where the largest amount of respondents classified themselves were *alienated members* and *devoted members* – at 34.9 and 38.1 percent respectively. Within these two groups there were fewer ‘old timers’ in the *alienated* group and more in the *devoted* group (Alvin and Sverke, 2000:80).

These results suggest several things. First, in Sweden an increasingly large number of young people are joining trade unions for individualistic reasons. These new unionists have been shown to have both low ideological commitment and low instrumental commitment. This further suggests that they are less willing to commit to union mobilisations, to the detriment of the entire labour movement. Second, the fact that the majority of respondents were in either the alienated group – defined as having low ideological commitment and low instrumental commitment – or in the devoted group – defined as having high ideological commitment and high instrumental commitment, suggests an association between level of ideological commitment and instrumental commitment. This becomes further evident in the relatively low numbers of respondents

claiming high levels of ideological commitment and low levels of instrumental commitment or vice-versa.

While there are numerous differences between Sweden and Bolivia we feel that the results of Alvin and Sverke's study are interesting and worth investigating in the context of our thesis. If neoliberalism has eroded the ideological commitment of younger workers in a traditionally, social democratic country such as Sweden where trade unions have played formative roles in the democratisation of the country then perhaps similar effects have transpired in Bolivia, where the pace and impact of neoliberalism was more pronounced. These are issues we test for in Chapter 8.

3) The third and final way that ideology affects labour strength is the influence it potentially has on solidarity. Taylor suggests that members of respective labour movements throughout the world have largely succumbed to ideologies of individualism. This, in turn, has perpetuated a 'fragmentation of consciousness amongst a myriad of competing social movements and a fragmentation of identity within an increasingly fragmented and de-centred self'. He goes on to state that 'labour has become increasingly peripheral as a focus of identity formation and political mobilisation' (Taylor, 2002:89). Hyman echoes this sentiment by claiming that disaggregated labour movements – such as those that appeared during and following neoliberalism – were ones that had retreated from traditional 'solidaristic' programmes (Hyman, 1992:151). At the time of writing we see clear evidence of this in the Bolivian case with *campesinos* and *cooperativistas*<sup>13</sup> claiming their own identities separate from that of the COB, as well as other sectors within the COB consciously choosing not to join in solidaristic programmes. As we discuss below this type of fragmentation not only exists between segments of the labour movement but also within the COB itself, between generations.

Based in these arguments we have chosen to examine the level of ideology within the COB in hopes of better understanding the level of commitment of members to union goals. The central argument is that members with a more individualistic ideology are less likely to commit to union activities based on mobilising for collective reasons – i.e. beyond the

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<sup>13</sup> *Cooperativistas* are independent, informal miners who essentially rent a portion of the mine, pay a percentage of their earnings from the sale of whatever they find to the owner and keep the rest for themselves.

scope of benefiting solely union members. Therefore, if our results suggest a weakening of the collectivist ideology within the COB – which has been so formative in regards to the COB’s role in historical democratisation – then it is more likely that member commitment will be lower and the COB will be less able to influence democratisation.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

Throughout this chapter we have examined the indicators we use to assess the strength of the COB and our reasons for selecting these criteria. Aside from their usefulness individually we also have chosen these specific indicators because of the wider framework they form collectively. The first criterion we use – historical identity – will help us better understand each of the other indicators more comprehensively. By this we mean that through exploring historical processes related to how the COB has interacted with previous governments or how the COB came into existence and developed over time – both organisationally and ideologically – we will form a base for comparison and a more complete understanding of the contemporary COB. Moreover, and as we discuss more comprehensively in our methodology – Chapter 5 – our epistemological view encourages us to take into account longer temporal factors that may influence the COB, rather than solely contemporary ones. Thus, the historical identity indicator is imperative in terms of its impact on the other criterion we use in this thesis as well as its impact on the current strength of the COB.

However, we argue the most important indicator for our study is organised labour’s relationship with the government. This criterion is important for the fact that – as discussed in the literature – a labour movement is much less likely to publicly criticise an aligned government, as opposed to an independent labour movement. Thus, if a labour movement is unwilling to publicly criticise government-sponsored policies then it is also less likely that conceptualisation surrounding these policies will occur, potentially resulting in narrowly conceived social policies and stunted democratisation. Moreover, if a labour movement is unwilling to mobilise against a government as a result of its close relationship then discussions of the level of solidarity in industrial actions or the commitment of members to such actions becomes moot. On the other hand if a labour movement is willing to mobilise against a government then factors such as solidarity and member commitment take on added importance.

Historical identity and labour-government relations also heavily influence the third indicator we have chosen to use –solidarity. The solidarity of the COB in terms of its organisation has largely been shaped by historical factors, from how the labour organisation came into existence to how it developed under various political regimes. Additionally, the impact of the elevation to power of a left-leaning president in 2006 might strain solidaristic tendencies within the COB – ultimately weakening organised labour – if certain sectors choose to support the Morales government while others seek to remain independent. In its own right solidarity is an important indicator of strength as it affects the level of attention that can be drawn to important social issues through conceptualisation.

The final strength indicator we assess in this thesis – member commitment – plays an integral role in the construction of our wider analytical framework. Factors of member commitment such as the level of internal democracy and ideology have been argued in the literature as influencing the level of commitment members will have towards union objectives. Moreover, member commitment – which we argued above is a vital component of successful industrial actions – is influenced by the historical identity of a labour movement – most notably through the type and reach of ideology, an individual member’s relationship with the government – a member will be less likely to mobilise against an aligned government, and finally the level of solidarity a member feels towards her/his fellow workers and/or other unions.

Thus, the analytical framework that we have constructed is based on strength indicators discussed in established literature. We argue that our strength index is interesting because we have utilised established indicators designed to analyse the strength of organised labour in political processes – be they collective bargaining negotiations surrounding pay or transitions to political democracy – and used them to assess the role of the COB in processes of democratisation – as we understand the term in this thesis. This index is one of the ways we see our thesis adding to the existing literature and potentially being used to comparatively assess the role of other labour movements in processes of democratisation.

The aim of our discussion in this chapter was to create a strength index that we can use to assess the ability of the COB to influence democratisation. We have chosen four specific

criteria, each argued in the literature as important. For now we turn our attention to the effect the historical identity of the COB has had on its ability to influence democratisation.

## **Chapter 4. Historical Identity**

As discussed above, the historical identity of a specific labour movement affects the nature of the contemporary movement. For our thesis we have argued that alongside of the statement above the historical identity of the COB also influences the other three strength indicators we use throughout this study. As such it is important that we explore and analyse the historical identity of the COB, beginning with the period immediately prior to labour incorporation and leading up to the end of neoliberalism in the early 2000s. In particular we investigate the socio-political environment surrounding labour incorporation and beyond, paying particular attention to: a) the actors responsible for initiating incorporation; b) the nature of the relationship with the government during these formative years; c) the pervasive ideology during incorporation; and d) the inception of organised labour as an agent active in wider social issues, moving beyond labour-specific causes.

We examine these processes along with their development and effects on the organised labour movement across four distinct periods. The first is the time leading up to and during labour incorporation itself, in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Collier and Collier (2002) describe the period as a ‘critical juncture’ in labour development. These authors argue that the way in which labour was incorporated significantly influences the future development of the institution. Following our discussion surrounding labour incorporation we then examine processes surrounding the 1952 Revolution in Bolivia. During this period we focus on how certain characteristics initiated during labour incorporation became established and enacted following the Revolution. The third period we discuss is re-democratisation following the fall of the military rule at the end of the 1970s. The fourth period we examine is the neoliberal era, roughly from 1986 until 2003. Here, we explore the effect liberal economic policies and politically repressive political regimes had on the labour movement, with particular regard to the characteristics developed during incorporation and established during the 1950s.

Our hope in exploring the development of the labour movement across these four periods is so that we can see how certain processes begun during incorporation continued to manifest themselves and influence the COB in processes of democratisation. Finally, in the ultimate

section of this chapter we discuss the nature of the relationship between the COB and the MAS and how this political relationship compares to those explored in the previous periods examined in this chapter.

#### **4.1 Period 1: Labour Incorporation**

Authors such as Martz (1971:361) and Collier and Collier (2002:60) claim that Latin American unions emerged for two main reasons; the need to defend certain rights and the desire to preserve the integrity of the individual, within the unions but also in society as a whole. In many cases, from the time of their inception unions drew their impetus from ethical motives as well as from personal interests. ‘The unions spoke not only for the worker but for vast levels of society... as a result of its call for a better standard of living’ (Martz 1971:361). In most of Latin America the incorporation of labour and the drafting of legal documents recognising its status as an official representative of workers transpired during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Before incorporation and immediately following independence from colonial powers wealthy oligarchs took charge of Latin American political and economic affairs, basing their economic policies on cheap or indentured labour and their political decisions on political exclusion with democracy limited to the literate, landed males. During the initial decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century elites drawn from the middle class began to wrestle power away from the traditional oligarchs.

Under the stewardship of these new leaders the role of the state itself began to change. Rather than acting as a club designed to continue oligarchical dominance, the state began to assume social and welfare responsibilities (Collier and Collier, 2002:6). Roughly coinciding with the emergence of these remodelled states the twin forces of urbanisation and working class organisation began to gain impetus. These nascent governments, eager to retain their power and authority, sought to address the growing concern related to the potentially powerful force of labour. Depending on its political styling, governments dealt with labour in one of two ways: 1) incorporating labour into the state through methods like state sanctioned unions so as to depoliticise the growing movement – this took place under authoritarian governments in Chile and Brazil; or 2) seeking votes from the growing working class through party representation in order to maintain political power – this method of incorporation took place under democratically elected governments in

Argentina, Bolivia and Peru. Collier and Collier define this as state incorporation and party incorporation respectively (Collier and Collier, 2002:163-164).

In general labour legislation during this time created the first legalised and documented industrial codes, dealing with such issues as minimum wage, working conditions and social security (Collier and Collier, 2002:6). In countries like Brazil and Chile the initial labour codes were restrictive and allowed for very little labour autonomy. Also, because the labour laws were written at a time when the nation state was beginning to play a bigger role in national affairs, the state sought a paternalistic relationship with labour. Although labour was 'protected' in some instances from the non-existent threat of market capitalism at the time, any benefit of this was moot as all labour power was controlled by the state. Unlike in non-democratic Brazil and Chile, elites seeking labour support through votes in democracies such as Argentina, Bolivia and Peru, implemented 'favourable' labour legislation that sought to protect labour from the potential hazards of capitalism (Collier and Collier: 163-165).

Labour incorporation was directly related to the growing force of labour in the socio-political arena, and it was this growth that respective governments feared and respected. Because of this these same governments chose to legally recognise labour in a variety of ways so as to harness and/or control the growing power of organised labour. The manner in which organised labour was incorporated is argued to have lasting effects on the movement in question. In this chapter we explore these processes and how they developed over time in a Bolivian context

#### **4.1.1 The Chaco War: The Flame that Started the Fire**

In Bolivia, the Chaco War, which began in 1932, served to unify and organise formerly disparate classes in their shared contempt for the traditional, oligarchic method of rule. University students, middle class military officers, miners and peasant farmers all found themselves in the middle of a war they disapproved of. The constant interaction of these groups enabled them to discuss their shared views on the anachronisms and injustices of traditional politics. It was within this environment that labour was incorporated. The incorporation of labour in Bolivia helped to organise, unify and legitimise workers' organisations. Furthermore, the simultaneous development of these processes helped shape both the labour movement and its role as an agent of wider social change.

The Chaco War acted as a clear dividing line. Standing on one side was the pre-Chaco generation, defined by liberal economic policies and oligarchic rule. On the other side was the post-Chaco generation marked by the younger, university-educated children of elites, mid-ranking officers of the war, miners and rural farmers. The War itself was the tipping point that directly led to significant changes in Bolivian politics.

The trailhead to war was inconspicuous enough. In 1930 Daniel Salamanca was elected president. Salamanca came into office amid escalating revenues from tin exports fuelled by the continuation of uneven development in both the mining and farming industries. The booming tin export sector controlled by three families known as the Tin Barons<sup>14</sup> effectively ran the country both politically and economically through control of the export sector (Kohl and Farthing, 2006:44). Much of the population at this time was employed in the fields with a small, but vital and increasingly militant, section employed in the mines. Conditions in both the mines and fields were very poor. In the mining camps malcontent and militancy abounded as conditions worsened and dialogue between dissatisfied workers sparked political awareness. In the fields the scene was equally disparaging for workers. Dunkerley states that the use of terms such as ‘feudal’ and ‘serfdom’ were not totally out of place when describing the scene on *haciendas*<sup>15</sup> (Dunkerley, 1984:19-20). Agriculture during this time was designed on the colonial *latifundia*<sup>16</sup> system. This system was marked by 8.1 percent of landowners controlling 95.1 percent of cultivated land (Malloy, 1970:192).

Salamanca’s presidential campaign was based on a platform of moderate attitudes towards organised labour. However, once in power his demeanour towards the labour movement took a dramatic shift as he sought to quell the growing labour unrest by outlawing any union who struck on the premise of higher wages or better working conditions (Volk, 1987:41). Such measures effectively served to control the increasingly militant miners for the time being. However, Salamanca was faced with a different and potentially more

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<sup>14</sup> Dunkerley claims that during this time three families controlled 80 percent of the tin industry which in turn accounted for 80 percent of all national exports (Dunkerley, 1984:6).

<sup>15</sup> Haciendas were large tracts of land or estates owned by a wealthy family who in turn would ‘lease’ out smaller tracts to peasants who would work the owner’s land as form of rent for the parcel they leased.

<sup>16</sup> These were types of large, conglomerate agricultural farms formed when other smaller farms were bought or appropriated in some manner.

threatening problem - the Great Depression. At the time of Salamanca's inauguration tin made up almost 80 percent of all Bolivian exports. As a result, the Great Depression had dramatic effects for the tin industry and as a result of Bolivia's dependence on a single product, on the Bolivian economy. From 1929 until 1933 tin exports dropped nearly 70 percent with prices falling by practically two-thirds (Volk, 1987:40-41). In order to address the fledgling economy as well as increasing public dissatisfaction, Salamanca decided to increase his popularity through rectifying past military blunders – namely with Chile (1879-83) and Brazil (1899-1903) – by declaring war on Paraguay in 1932, initiating the Chaco War (ibid.).

The results of the war were politically disastrous for Salamanca. Around 250,000 men between the ages of 17 and 50 – out of a total population of two million – were sent to war. Between 50,000 and 80,000 of those were killed with some 20,000 more captured and imprisoned and over 200,000 square kilometres of land lost to Paraguay (Klein, 1969:187; Dunkerley, 1984:27; Volk, 1987:41). It soon became clear that Salamanca initiated the war to take attention away from pressing domestic issues. The veterans of the war became the vanguard of the post-Chaco Generation. Many of the sentiments of disgust from the post-Chaco generation surrounding the handling of the war were captured in the 'outpouring of social realist novels...that continued to dominate the national literature well into the next decade' (Klein, 2003:183-184). This genre was driven by proletarian rule and highlighted the cruelty of war, the waste of lives and incompetence. These works soon became revolutionary propaganda that proved to be more influential than any competing ideology. 'The enunciation of the primary problems of national society created the framework in which all future debate would occur (ibid.:185). The most significant problems were related to the structure of pre-Chaco rule. Thus, themes such as nationalisation of the mining industry, agrarian reform and overall a more involved role of the government in citizen welfare became the aim of reform and debate. Klein, quoting the Bolivian novelist and activist Tristán Marof, highlights the 'positive' consequence of the war in that it marked 'the liquidation of the old feudal and *caciquista*<sup>17</sup> Bolivia, provided that the soldiers, students and workers have courage and determination, and are provided

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<sup>17</sup> A form of rule where local political leaders have near total control of their designated area.

with an energetic and trained proletarian vanguard, which must arise in the middle of this pain and blood' (Klein, 1969:194).

The most important aspect of the Chaco War for our discussion is the unifying effect politicisation, spawn from heightened awareness of the ineptitude and injustices of traditional politics, had on the population. The horrors of war added further fodder to the fire of discontent already burning before the outbreak of war and acted as a powerful and loud awakening of the inefficiencies of the traditional rule. The war's effects on the ideological beliefs of the post-Chaco generation were significant. Although ideology within this group may not have formally solidified, the beliefs that would form the ideological foundation for future generations were largely based around the contempt they felt for the traditional model of rule, defined as unequal, imperialistic, corrupt and feudal. Such ideological formation encouraged the increasingly powerful labour movement to move beyond calls for labour specific rights and into wider social rights. It was during this time that the Bolivian labour movement began feeling out its role as an agent of social change, a topic we discuss more comprehensively in the following section. However, for now we can highlight the fact that the more socially-minded role of organised labour was a result of both the spread of social constitutionalism throughout the region – which emphasised the welfare state and a basic wellbeing for citizens – and the fact that elites who were responsible for incorporating organised labour into the political scene were proponents of the ideas espoused by social constitutionalism.

Finally, it was within this environment that the beginnings of labour incorporation in Bolivia took hold. The labour movement at this time realised that the powers that created the miserable working conditions were the same as the ones who upheld the gross socio-politico inequality that controlled Bolivia for decades. The Chaco War prompted formerly detached segments of society to establish alliances against the traditional method of rule of which they realised was unjust.

#### **4.1.2 National Reconfiguration**

In 1934 Salamanca was forced out of office and two years later his successor, Tejada Sorzano, was also ousted. In July of 1936, and in the middle of a near complete governmental meltdown, Colonel David Toro and Lieutenant Colonel Germán Busch, two 'progressive' figures from the Chaco War, claimed governmental control of Bolivia (Lora,

1977:170; Dunkerley, 1984:28; Volk, 1987:42). This period has been described as one of corporate state socialism, or military socialism (Klein, 1969:270). Though it was not an outright political democracy it was a clear departure from the traditional mode of rule in Bolivia.

During Toro and Busch's combined rule two formative and important political developments transpired: 1) the creation of a new 'nationalist-statist' constitution in 1938 and; 2) a protectionist labour code the following year. These processes, similar in their ideological foundation, helped to institutionalise and politicise organised labour's role in the political arena. The most prominent objective of the reformed constitution was to 'commit the state to the full responsibility for the health, education, and welfare of all its citizens'. This was meant to be a clear departure from the *laissez-faire* stance of previous governments, defined by their minimal intervention in citizens' lives. The new state would participate in the private lives of citizens in order to provide for the collective good (Klein, 2003:192). This was a hugely important statement reflecting the prevailing ideology of reformers. The year before the labour code came into effect – and indeed during its drafting – the government was reforming the constitution in order to provide for the collective good. Such radical breaks from the past centred around state-led welfare heavily influenced both the labour movement and the resulting labour code.

The wave of social constitutionalism, which had spread across much of Latin America, was clearly evident in the political ideology seen during the military socialism of the Toro/Busch years. Beginning with the Mexican Revolution in 1917, constitutions of this variety broke drastically from the economically liberal mindedness of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, espousing certain inalienable individual rights, notably property. Socialist constitutions reflected the idea that the state should be responsible for the economic and social wellbeing of its citizens, even at the expense of individual rights (Klein, 1969:278). Such ideas spread quickly around South America and soon countries were amending old constitutions and including such measures as the 'social responsibility of capital, the economic rights of the worker, state responsibility for the protection and security of the family, and for the physical and mental welfare of all citizens and classes' (ibid.). In May 1938 the Busch administration began looking into amending the national constitution in light of such ideological changes. Upon examination of the formative constitution of 1880 and the

revamped version in 1930, the government found that the old constitutions were overtly liberal with a 'constitutional representative government, with limited powers in relation to the individual, for a *laissez-faire* attitude toward the economy, a centralised republic and a relatively independent legislature tied to a powerful president' (Klein, 1969:280). Furthermore, while specifically commenting on the right of the individual to property and other liberties against the state, the old constitution was void of any reference to the state's social duties towards its citizens (ibid.). The reformed constitution rested on the new ideology centred on changing the traditional, feudal, imperialistic and oligarchical ways of the past through the expansion of social rights protected and ensured by the state.

The socialist orientation of the prevailing ideology of this time influenced the reformation of the constitution in a strongly anti-imperialist vein, granting the Bolivian state final say in all foreign businesses operating in the country, to the extent that such companies could not appeal to international parties if disgruntled and that the Bolivian state alone could export oil from Bolivia. Klein claims that the collection of human rights and social responsibilities found in the new constitution signalled the assertion of the state into developmental affairs as well as labour's growing influence, all of which would affect future constitutions (Klein, 1969:285, 291). It was within this framework and ideology, striving towards anti-imperialism and state-led welfare that the Bolivian labour movement was incorporated. This environment would have clear influence on the ideological development of organised labour in Bolivia.

#### **4.1.3 Labour Incorporation**

Prior to the elevation of Toro to power, labour unrest and activism increased. In April 1936, two months before the ousting of Tejada Sorzano, Waldo Alvarez, head of the Workers' Federation of Labour, *Federación Obrera de Trabajo* (FOT), presented the then president with a petition<sup>18</sup> seeking certain labour demands, not least of all the introduction of social legislation and 'work for war veterans and protection for people disabled or orphaned in the war' (Lora, 1977:175). Such demands further evidence the increasingly confident labour movement's willingness to attach labour demands to other social rights.

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<sup>18</sup> Accompanying the presentation of the petition was a large May Day demonstration in La Paz. According to Lora 'the demonstration impressed...the shaky government...that they must take the labour unions into account as one of the country's decisive political forces' (Lora, 1977:175).

Furthermore, the developing social consciousness within the increasingly defined organised labour movement – cultivated during the Chaco War – and its budding identity as a protectorate of wider social democracy for the country may have further influenced its call for more substantial social rights applying to members and non-members alike.

Further evidence of labour's increasing importance in the political arena was the creation of the first ever Minister of Labour under the Toro administration. The inaugural occupant of the position was Alvarez. Also during this time, Toro's advisors suggested creating the first Permanent National Assembly of Union Organisations, *Nacional Permanente de Organizaciones Sindicales* (ANPOS), in order to harness the increasing power of the labour movement. ANPOS was charged with the task of 'enforcing the obligatory unionisation of all workers' (Klein, 1969:242; Volk, 1987:42). However, Alvarez and other labour representatives within the labour ministry at the time were predominately Marxists and anarcho-syndicalists from the radical printers union and were adamant against these proposals. These same officials were supportive of labour's organising needs but demanded that the government leave union control in the hands of workers (Klein, 2003:188). As a result, the majority of unions eventually broke with ANPOS seeing it as an attempt by Toro to co-opt union initiatives. Toro did not stand in the way of this labour defiance both because he was largely indifferent to the move (ibid.) and he was struggling to stay in power amidst a crumbling coalition and increasing pressure from Busch. This was an important moment and highlights the unwillingness of the organised labour movement to be co-opted by the government.

The combination of a weakened transitional government, a reformation of political parties and labour organisers emanating from Marxist and anarcho-syndicalist roots embedded an identity of partisan and state independence within the movement. Certain aspects of both Marxism and anarcho-syndicalism influenced the emerging labour movement at an early stage. Anarcho-syndicalism, as described by Martin, 'envisaged the total dispossession of the private employer' (Martin, 1989:23). The Marxists agreed, yet were more adamant on handing possession to the state rather than directly to workers per se. On the idea of partisan politics 'syndicalists believed that political parties were inherently incapable of achieving the true socialism of workers' control. The key to that lay, rather, in industrial organisation and industrial methods – which meant the trade unions and their singular

weapon, the strike' (ibid.:24-25). For anarcho-syndicalists the trade union was the 'organ of social transformation. They held that socialist parties were 'havens for middle class intellectuals and bribable ex-workers' (ibid.). Certain Marxist trends were also apparent in the earlier days of labour incorporation. Not entirely dissimilar to the syndicalist view that trade unions are the organ of social transformation was the Marxist idea that trade unions should serve all workers not just members and that workers got their ideological training through industrial actions. However, dissimilar to syndicalists, Marx hinted and then Lenin made explicit the need of a vanguard or party to make a socialist state (Martin 1989:38-42).

It would seem that the Bolivian labour movement at the time was influenced by each of these ideologies. However, perhaps as a result of the pervasiveness of state/military socialism at the time it did not appear that the movement was striving towards the abolition of the state but rather the nationalisation of industries from private owners into the hands of the state.

In 1936 the labour movement itself created the Union Confederation of Bolivian Workers, *Confederación Sindical de Trabajadores de Bolivia* (CSTB), which was the most important labour organisation in the country until the creation of the COB following the revolution (Volk, 1987:42). The beginnings of labour incorporation in the form of established positions for labour ministers coupled with the organisation of Bolivian labour into such groups as the CSTB eventually led to official labour recognition before the law in the form of *Codigo Busch*.

In 1937 Busch took over power from Toro. The labour code created in his name in 1939 was protective and state-centred in nature. The code was indicative of the Busch regime's desire to both harness labour support as well as regulate its potential power (Cook, 2007:158). This was evident in the stipulation granting the right to strike but only under the regulation of the state (ibid.). The effect of the code reached beyond labour law itself, it also signalled the apparent pro-labour stance of the Busch government, making Busch well received among workers and ultimately affording his government certain political stability (Lora, 1977:182). The structure and the content of the code reflected that of the convention of the constitution. It was paternalistic and aimed to protect labour from the potential dangers of capitalism.

During this time, the labour movement was pressuring the government for the regulation of social rights that had recently been established in the constitution (Lora, 1977:182). The code established the eight-hour working day, the 48-hour working week and stipulated limits on night and overtime work. Additionally, it established one recognised union per enterprise and the requirement that at least 50 percent of workers in a sector be unionised in order to form an industrial union (Lora, 1977:182; Volk, 1987:42; Cook, 2007:158). Lora claims that the most significant measure of the labour code, and for which Busch was 'immortalised', was the decree stating that all mining corporations 'must hand over all foreign exchange earned from mineral exports to the Banco Central' (Lora, 1977:182). While mine owners were obviously opposed to such measures, decrees such as this demonstrated the increased state involvement in the economy, a more central role in general and a clearer, more positive response to the increasing influence of the labour movement. All of these processes parallel sentiments cultivated and expressed in the years immediately after the Chaco War.

In January of 1939 the CSTB held its second ever congress. There were at least two significant developments that transpired during this event that would prove to have lasting effects on the labour movement. A resolution 'proclaimed the complete autonomy of the second congress and of its organisation, the CSTB, which shall not intervene in party political activities or sign or draw up pacts and political programmes, and will dedicate itself solely to trade-union activity within the revolutionary class struggle' (Lora 1977:196). This resolution clearly laid the groundwork for future trade unionists in regards to remaining independent from political parties. Another resolution discussed at this congress was the problem facing the indigenous groups, namely the issue of agrarian reform. The departmental labour federations were told to organise peasants and assist them in obtaining their economic rights. Additionally, members of the second congress decided to set up a bank to help the peasants (ibid.). It was also around this time that the labour movement recognised the difficulty in organising around various guilds and decided to structure the movement based on industry, making the entire labour movement more vertically organised.

Following Busch's suicide in 1939 a conservative military government was set in place. Then in the elections of 1940 the conservative General Enrique Peñaranda won the

presidency with a wide margin of victory. However, he was to be the last of the Pre-Chaco mould, and the demise of such politicians was evident in the increasing power of the left, further apparent in the 20 percent vote the Marxist leader José Antonio Arze won in the general election and the majority won by post-Chaco parties in parliamentary elections two years later (Volk, 1987:43). With the outbreak of World War II and Bolivia acting as the primary supplier of tin to the Allied forces alongside of the recent measures granting greater amounts of tin revenue to the central bank, the economy was in a healthy state (ibid.:43). The condition of the economy during this time and the ensuing years helped to create a stable economic environment for the 1952 Revolution.

There are several formative developments from this period that would permanently shape the Bolivian labour movement. First, the ideology at the time of labour incorporation was based in an environment of social constitutionalism under a socialist military government. This signified that the initial labour code was heavily paternalistic and protective. Additionally, the concentration of Marxists and anarcho-syndicalists within the movement during its formative years influenced the labour movement to adapt a strong sense and desire of independence from political parties and/or the state. Finally, it was also during this period that the movement began to define its role as an actor in pressing for wider social rights with responsibilities beyond its own members. Again, this was partially a result of the ideological background of its founding members as well as the prevailing ideological environment throughout the reformist government. During the 1952 Revolution these developments became particularly pronounced.

## **4.2 Period 2: The 1952 Revolution**

The historical antecedents that proved pivotal in the years leading up to the Revolution of 1952 were the Chaco War, for the effects it had on cultivating a definitive break with the past, and the incorporation of labour, which, among other things, helped the movement organisationally in terms of establishing legal terms for the existence of certain labour rights. Here, we examine how the processes that began during labour incorporation became established and used as a platform from which to strive for greater socio-political change.

Along with a more stabilised government and economy, 1941 saw the creation of the MNR. The MNR was the manifestation of university-educated, professional elites who

played a role in the socialist ‘experiments’ of the 1930s. Such figures included the future presidents Víctor Paz Estenssoro and Hernán Siles Zuazo (Dunkerley, 1984:31). The programme of the MNR was based around ‘general social reform for the welfare of all citizens, but primarily emphasised a strong programme of economic nationalisation’ with main features focusing on the ‘bolivianisation’ of natural resources; ‘nationalisation of communications; and, most important of all, control over the Big Three tin miners’ (Klein, 1969:338). Coinciding with the creation of the MNR was the foundation of the PIR. Both parties pandered to the impoverished masses. The emergence of such leftist parties, along with the Trotskyite party, the POR, reinforces a point we discussed earlier concerning the break in ideology between the pre and post-Chaco generations. Prior to the war there were few parties competing for the support of the lower classes. However, following the war and the ‘experiments’ in military socialism, the political landscape changed creating a more ‘sophisticated working, artisan and urban lower-class consciousness than existed in the majority of nations in Latin America’ (Klein, 1969:341).

This shift in consciousness directly benefited the MNR. In December 1942 a dispute broke out between managers and workers at the Catavi mine, which employed nearly 10,000 miners. Hoping to put a quick end to the situation President Peñaranda sent in troops who proceeded to open fire once confronted by the striking workers. Hundreds of miners and their families were killed in the massacre (Lora, 1977:222). The most significant aspect of this travesty, in terms of party politics, was the stage it set for the ensuing parliamentary investigation. For the MNR the nationally followed parliamentary proceedings examining the Peñaranda administration’s role in the tragedy both elevated its prominence while allowing them to discredit the conservative/traditional government (Volk, 1987:43).

In December 1943 a military coup, backed by the MNR, ousted Peñaranda and elevated Gualberto Villarroel to the presidency. Most significant for the labour movement was the issuing of *Fuero Sindical*, which was a basic bill of labour rights that guaranteed both labour members and trade unions the legal right to organise (Volk, 1987:43). Also created during the rule of Villarroel was the creation of the Formal Miners’ Federation, *Federación Sindical de Trabajadores Mineros de Bolivia* (FSTMB), in 1944 at the congress at the Huanuni mine, which would eventually represent around 60,000 miners throughout the country. At the first congress of the FSTMB the group sought to establish uniform prices

in company stores in all mining camps and the recognition of a minimum wage by all companies (Lora, 1977:236-237). In July of 1946 opposition against Villarroel grew and by the end of the month Villarroel had been overthrown (Lora, 1977:243; Volk, 1987:44).

Along with the fall of Villarroel, 1946 also marked the drafting of the Thesis of Pulacayo at a conference held by the FSTMB. According to Volk, the Thesis was the most radical statement of labour militancy in Latin American history (Volk, 1987:44). The document speaks of overthrowing the capitalist regime through a proletariat revolution, arming workers and the creation of a central labour organisation (Lora, 1977:248). The Thesis also discussed the importance of trade union independence, specifically in regards to the threat of state co-option of the labour movement (Lora, 1977:248), as had been seen in neighbouring Brazil and Argentina. Similar to the events in the second congress of the CSTB, the Thesis once again highlighted the importance of partisan independence.

The six years that followed (1946-1952) became known as the '*sexenio*'. This period witnessed increased labour politicisation and a general ideological shift to the left, coupled with repressive military rule that blanketed the country including several 'massacres' to put down labour activism (Dunkerley, 1984:34). Finally, in 1951 elections were held with Paz Estenssoro and Siles Zuazo representing the MNR. The result of these elections signalled the end of traditional politics in Bolivia (Dunkerley, 1984:36). However, a military coup blocked the ascension to power of the MNR (Volk, 1987:44). What followed 'proved to be critical in determining the course Bolivian history would take over the following thirty years', and beyond (Dunkerley, 1984:37).

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of April, 1952 three days of fighting between civilians – including members of the labour movement – and the army resulted in the implementation of Victor Paz Estenssoro and Hernan Siles Zuazo into their democratically elected posts as president and vice present, respectively. The period immediately following the Revolution clearly evidences the ability and desire of the organised labour movement to play a role in social emancipation, which it was able to achieve under what was an initially labour-sympathetic government. This period was marked by a self-assured labour movement, united in its collectivist, anarcho-syndicalist ideology.

Following the Revolution the Bolivian state underwent significant changes in terms of its structure and role in economic and social welfare. According to Lora, the ideas and

ideological undercurrents of the Thesis of Pulacayo became the predominant political tendency following the revolution, which in of itself demonstrates the influence of the labour movement in matters of the state (Lora, 1977:276). Such themes, based not only in the Thesis but also in the post-Chaco generation, included abolishing the private ownership of industries, implementing agrarian reform and greater state involvement in the general welfare of citizens.

The Revolution also marked an obvious change of environment for the labour movement. Building on the institutionalisation and increased importance it had gained since incorporation, the labour movement began to assert itself into political processes more comprehensively. This development was made easier due to organised labour's growing strength and popularity among the masses in the previous years and the initial subservience of the MNR. Additionally, during this time certain processes and institutions became more established such as trade union independence and the creation of a national labour confederation intended to be more comprehensive than the CSTB. More than anything else the labour movement established itself as a movement seeking the betterment of all citizens, members and non-members alike. The changes witnessed during this period were the culmination of all that had been building up – socio-politically speaking – since labour incorporation.

#### **4.2.1 The Creation of the COB**

Two weeks after the start of the Revolution in April of 1952 the culmination of years of work and desire for one unified umbrella labour organisation in Bolivia came to fruition in the formation of the COB. The COB sought to be more comprehensive in reach and more relevant in political processes than the CSTB. This was soon realised in the fact that the major changes implemented by the MNR came from pressure placed on the government from the COB, whose program for change included the nationalisation of the mines, agrarian reform and the abolition of the military, all of which occurred within one year (Volk, 1987:44-45). Contrary to what is often referred to as the COB and the MNR governing side by side, the COB was actually the sole political vanguard of the country for a time (Lora, 1977:285-286). The COB would often not even wait for the government to implement measures. 'For the majority of the masses the COB was their only leader and

their only government' (Lora, 1977:284). The independence and power of the COB was evident in its superior power over that of the MNR.

Lora asserts that in terms of organisation and ideology the COB was – and continues to be – the highest achievement of the Bolivian labour movement. Following its conception in the chaotic aftermath of the Revolution the COB became the 'most important political force in the country'. Lora goes on to claim that 'it was the culmination of the whole history of the labour movement, an expression of its rich experience and of the level of development of its class consciousness' (Lora, 1977:277).

The highly influential post of COB leader was bestowed upon long time labour advocate Juan Lechín, who was elected executive secretary of the COB and became its most significant voice. He was not only the one genuine representative of the workers and peasants in the cabinet but also the only leader with comprehensive support (Lora, 1977:286). 'In the social disintegration and chaos which followed 9 April, [1952] the COB emerged as the focus around which the workers could organise. It was the only body with the cohesion to point out a direction, not merely discussing but legislating and seeing that its instructions were implemented' (Lora, 1977:281). The COB played a similar role in restoring order in 2003 following the removal of then President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada from power.

The internal makeup of the COB itself was democratic during this period. There was a direct line of communication between labour representatives in parliament and the rank-and-file. The demands of the vociferous and powerful rank-and-file 'overrode sectarian divisions and obliged the labour leaders to relegate their personal ambitions to a secondary level' (Lora, 1977:283). The organisational and unifying power of the COB was remarkable in of itself. 'All the left-wing political groups flocked to the COB...From the beginning, the COB asserted its affiliation with, but basic independence from, the MNR' (Malloy, 1970:185). Furthermore, the COB became a coalition of social classes not just trade unions, including tenant, housewives and student associations, fighting against imperialist and feudal forces. The COB brought 'together all the oppressed groups in the nation who faced economic, social and cultural problems connected with the process of the national revolution' (Lora, 1977:283). The labour movement became a vehicle for all disadvantaged Bolivians and as a result labour demands became wider citizen demands.

Less than one month after the Revolution the May Day demands of the COB included worker control, agrarian reform, universal suffrage and full citizenship for illiterates' (Lora, 1977:282). All of these demands were realised in a remarkably short amount of time given their inherent complexities.

The government in office during these significant developments – the MNR – was structured as a political party that was 'ideologically and socially heterogeneous, united by nationalism' (Carr and Ellner, 1993:126). It was generally opposed to the formerly ruling oligarchy, had a 'populist-modernist orientation' and was 'based around class rhetoric' (Kohl and Farthing, 2006:46). Furthermore, the party drew its support largely from both left and right-wing middle classes with backing from numerous social movements. The support of lower classes was helped by the fact that the traditional literacy requirement for voting was abolished, effectively raising the electorate from around 200,000 to nearly one million, or from seven percent of the population to 29 percent (Klein, 1969:404). Along with expanding political citizenship through relaxing requirements for voting, other rights were reinstated following the Revolution, such as the right to organise and freedom of the press.

Volk highlights two fundamental differences between the MNR and any of the previous regimes: 1) the army established and maintained by the previous mining oligarchs had been replaced by workers' militias; and 2) the government took its ideological direction from the labour movement (Volk, 1987:44). The willingness of the MNR to follow the direction of the labour movement without significant initiative on its own also speaks to the fact that the government was somewhat reluctant to implement such radical changes, evident its apprehension towards agrarian reform.<sup>19</sup> Still, the underlying themes of the MNR programme did fall in line with certain labour movement agendas, namely the intent to form a 'strongly centralised state administration, state control over natural resources, and state responsibility to serve the interests of 'the people'' (Kohl and Farthing, 2006:47). Economically, the MNR set out to establish a 'state capitalist economic model' (Cook, 2007:159), seemingly at odds with the labour movement's Thesis of Pulacayo. On the one

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<sup>19</sup> Evidence of this is seen in the MNR's incoherent measures to enforce the reforms, as reform did not reach the eastern lowlands largely because peasants did not take up arms and force changes in the law, and this has been argued as a major reason for why the region to this day remains highly unequal (Kohl and Farthing, 2006:47).

hand this economic model sought to nationalise many of the formerly privatised industries, thus fulfilling labour's goal of eradicating private ownership of industry. However, the fact that it was still modelled on a capitalist system did not parallel the exact objectives of the Thesis. For several years the relationship between the MNR and the labour movement was one of a lead-from-behind government giving authority to policies pushed forward by a powerful labour movement needing state sanctioning of its demands (Malloy 1970:247).

The first major political task undertaken by the MNR government was the nationalisation of the mines, an issue that had been gaining serious inertia since at least 1946 when the FSTMB began advocating for such reform. Initially, the reluctance of Paz Estenssoro to upset his right leaning supporters was evident in the 'lukewarm' sentiments he had towards nationalisation. The COB, sensing such apprehension, immediately called for the occupation of mines and was driven by the slogan *nacionalización sin indemnización* (nationalisation without indemnity). In addition to such calls were mass parades and demonstrations demanding immediate and total nationalisation. Apprehension on the part of the MNR led to the beginning of labour distrust of the government and its commitment to the principles of the Revolution (Malloy, 1970:174-175).

Finally, in October 1952 the mines of Hochschild, Patiño and Aramayo – which represented nearly 80 percent of the entire tin industry – were nationalised. As a result of the role played by labour in this process, it was granted the right of *control obrero*, or worker control of the mines. This entailed workers' representatives having veto power over all decisions made in the mines, save technical ones (Volk, 1987:45). Such measures in turn led to decrees being passed that resulted in 'extraordinary' job security for Bolivian miners (Klein, 1969:403). Although the MNR was apprehensive to nationalise the mines at first, the party soon decided it was necessary for its own survival. The decision was not solely based on pressure from the labour movement. The issue surrounding the mines was also one of political power. Twice, influential mine owners had unseated MNR representatives in the past (Malloy, 1970:174). In the end the only way to be sure that the owners would not repeat previous actions was to go forward with complete nationalisation. A further result of nationalisation was the creation of the Mining Corporation of Bolivia, *Corporación Minera de Bolivia* (COMIBOL), the state run mining cooperation that took

control of all the holdings of the three biggest mining companies in the country which equalled 163 mines and a work force of some 29,000 (Dunkerley, 1984:58).

The second major policy change implemented under the MNR government was the land reform decree of 1953. While the process was slow in many cases, and almost non-existent in the eastern lowlands, the significance of such reform was evident in the essential abolishment of the *latifundia* class and the associated system (Klein, 1969:404). The traditional landholding structure in Latin America hindered economic progress, caused a highly unequal distribution of income, led to extreme levels of illiteracy, and prevented a significant proportion of the inhabitants from participating in the economic and political life (Alexander, 1974:17; Dorner, 1992:3). Furthermore, the uneven development created by the oligarchic distribution of land pre-agrarian reform, enabled landlords to use their political influence, emanating from their wealth accumulated from their lands, as a means to hold back economic development for the masses and perpetuate social inequality. Thus, politically, agrarian reform was a process whereby debasing large landowners from their economic sources of power produced increased equality in the political and economic arenas (Alexander, 1974:3). On August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1953 the Agrarian Reform decree was enacted. Under this reform all *hacienda* lands were confiscated with a payout to landlords in the form of 25 year indemnification bonds. The lands were given to indigenous workers under the provision that they could not be individually sold. As stated by Klein, eventually the bonds were rendered worthless and the Agrarian Reform decree effectively became 'confiscation without compensation' (Klein, 2003:214-215). Moreover, the reform was so pervasive in areas such as the highlands that nearly all previous *haciendas* had been confiscated and redistributed (ibid.).

The drive for agrarian reform had been growing impetus among the left, and the labour movement in particular, since at least the socialist bent 1930s. At the first congress of the CSTB the organisation instructed each of the federations to organise rural workers and address the issue of agrarian reform. The CSTB even went so far as to set up bank accounts to help with financial issues for these workers. The force and dedication of the COB in pressing for agrarian reform, which more significantly benefited non-members than members, demonstrates the role undertaken by the COB in social issues beyond its own membership.

Up until this point the formative periods in terms of labour initiative resulting in expanded social rights, namely in the late 1930s and again following the Revolution, were marked by rural-urban worker cooperation. However, as we will see below, once the rural peasants were co-opted by the MNR and shifted their ideological beliefs to the right, labour impetus and both political and social democratisation became fragile and eventually broke.

With the nationalisation of the mining industry, agrarian reform and the temporary abolishment of the army – all fervently pushed for by the labour movement – the MNR managed to both assert the role of the state in economic and social issues while simultaneously gaining mass support among the peasant classes and maintaining at the very least a working relationship with the labour movement through granting its most significant demands. Social rights were also extended during this time, a clear descendent of the movement that began in the 1930s, which saw a greater role for the state in social development. Education and health care also began to be administered by the state and theoretically available to all Bolivians. Further social rights advanced during this time were the abolition of certain racist laws prohibiting indigenous peoples from businesses and other public areas. García Linera *et al* (2001) via Kohl and Farthing claim that the COB managed to ‘fuse’ collective demands for labour rights with the greater struggle for social rights (Kohl and Farthing, 2006:47-48). Such a statement is immensely important for our research. The ability of the COB to use its influence and newfound political freedom to press for social rights affecting its own members as well as those of the general population is a vital point for our entire thesis. Thus, the time period under discussion represents a formative and exemplary model of when the labour movement used the freedoms granted under political democracy as a platform from which to advance social democracy. Finally, the years surrounding the Revolution evidenced the institutionalisation of certain processes began during labour incorporation. Not only was the COB more prominent in promoting greater social democracy, but other processes indicative of the COB’s collectivist ideology were also evidenced during this time, including nationalisation of certain industries, agrarian reform and the increased role of the state in the welfare of its citizens.

#### **4.2.2 The Falling Out**

The often strenuous relationship between the MNR and COB did not last. The MNR and its conservative middle-class supporters became wary of the power of the COB and its 'radical' demands. Understanding that the labour movement made up a large portion of their power base, President Paz Estenssoro looked to strengthen his relationship with the other powerful mass-based group - the rural workers. In a further attempt to undermine the COB, Paz Estenssoro began co-opting labour leaders. This was a move intended to de-radicalise the movement while keeping the support of its members. Under such pretences former vice president Siles Zuazo was elected president in the 1956 elections, and although he had closer ties with Lechín and the COB, he was unable to advance any of the movement's demands. The MNR wanted to re-establish its ties with foreign capital and the US in particular. At this time the Bolivian economy was shrinking and in an effort to raise capital the government increased national currency. The result was severe hyperinflation spanning from 1952 until 1956 in which the cost of living increased twenty-fold while inflation rates rose to over 900 percent (Klein, 2003:216). Dunkerley argues that these processes were caused largely by the US government's plan to lower the global price of tin by releasing vast quantities of the metal into the market in a move to combat the 'communist' threat growing within Bolivia (Dunkerley, 1984:86). Eventually, Siles Zuazo accepted an International Monetary Fund stabilisation package that effectively ended many of the labour-led policies implemented since the Revolution. The IMF package, among other things, withheld food subsidies from workers' camps, reduced government spending and tariff protection, unified the foreign exchange rate, and removed price controls and subsidies aimed at supporting the state-owned mining companies (Dunkerley, 1984:87). In addition, it significantly lowered wages and undercut workers' control of COMIBOL (Volk, 1987:45; Cook, 2007:160). A true testament to the strength of the COB during this time, however, was their ability to stop the IMF initiatives to privatise all state-owned enterprises, a move that eventually went forward in the neoliberal packages of the 1980s (Kohl and Farthing, 2006:49).

With the implementation of the IMF restructuring plans and the influx of foreign aid – specifically from the US<sup>20</sup> - the American government ‘convinced’ the MNR to rebuild its professional army based largely on the US model (Volk, 1987:45). The restructuring of the army and loss of autonomy to foreign influences was one of the reasons for the downfall of political democracy and the return to military rule in 1964. Additionally, such American influence forced the return of COMIBOL to private management and the opening up of Bolivian oil fields to North American companies. The advancement in social rights that defined the years immediately following the Revolution were diminished with the implementation and return to orthodox monetary policy and were seen through by the newly trained and well equipped army (Klein, 1969:405). The army was unabashedly anti-labour and anti-communist, regularly using force to quell active unionists. Finally, such processes effectively ended the worker-peasant-middle-class alliance.

When Paz Estenssoro was re-elected president in 1960 he continued to pander to the US and conservative middle-class by nullifying *control obrero*, then criminalising both the COB and the FSTMB. Additionally, the Paz Estenssoro government froze workers' wages in a move that effectively placed the burden of economic readjustment on the working-class – a tactic that resurfaced in the neoliberal years of the 1980s. Such developments led to increased labour unrest resulting in even more and bloodier massacres than that of Catavi, nearly 20 years prior (Klein, 1969:406-407; Volk, 1987:46).

This period began in stark contrast to how it finished. Significant and comprehensive socio-political changes initiated by the labour movement followed the Revolution. However, it ended in political, social and civil repression. State autonomy had diminished as US influences, both monetary and military, were welcomed in as a result of the fledgling economy. The labour movement became criminalised, seemingly nullifying the dramatic progress it had made in regards to both its own development as well as its role in democratisation. What would follow was nearly 20 years of military rule accompanied by varying degrees of oppression.

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<sup>20</sup> In 1958 Bolivia ‘was receiving the highest rate of food aid per capita in the world and becoming dependent on US funds for a third of her total budget’. Furthermore, the amount of US aid to Bolivia increased nearly 600 percent between 1960-1964 (Dunkerley, 1984:87).

For the labour movement this dramatic change in regime type meant restricted or no freedom to organise due to labour-hostile measures taken by respective dictatorships, such as the criminalisation of collective bargaining, strikes and any non-sanctioned union activity. As a result of such measures union strategy was forced to adapt. In the 1950s such strategy had been proactive and offensive. Under the suppressive military regimes the labour movement had become reactive and highly defensive, all while struggling to remain relevant.<sup>21</sup> Authoritarian regimes inadvertently made trade unions more militant in their tactics as the democratic avenues protecting labour freedoms had been closed. The end result was a dramatic weakening of ‘the most highly organised and politicised labour movement in the continent’ (Carr and Ellner, 1993:210-211). The most important theme to take from the military era is the effect the repressive tactics of these regimes had on the labour movement’s organisation and strategy, an effect that would have serious consequences for both the labour movement and the first democratically elected government in nearly 20 years.

In the end, the military dictator Hugo Banzer – and military rule in general – were undone by national strikes by the miners, the closing of universities, the loss of confidence of the nationalist middle-class as a result of the government’s failing to negotiate a water passage with Pinochet’s Chile and the recent election of US president Jimmy Carter, who attached the condition of respect for human rights to food aid (Cook, 2007:161). Towards the end of his rule, Banzer’s government had become so corrupt and fragile that a ‘hunger strike initiated by the wives and children of four miners provided the spark for the COB to force the government to free political prisoners and begin the transition to democracy’ (Kohl and Farthing, 2006:54). The first democratic government in nearly 15 years – the UDP – sought to continue the state-led economic and political projects begun in 1952 (ibid:54). Such aspirations by the new civilian government and the seemingly reassertion of the left created a sense of hope among Bolivians. It was under such pretences that the movement towards political re-democratisation began.

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<sup>21</sup> Although the labour movement was forced to adapt its strategies it remained a constant in the battle for political democracy.

### 4.3 Period 3: Political Re-democratisation

Dunkerley's depiction of the return to democracy suggests one of great uncertainty and turbulence. In a two year period the country experienced 'no less than three elections, six presidents, three coups that succeeded and twice as many that failed to get off the ground, a notable worsening of the economic crisis and increasing polarization between the forces of left and right' (Dunkerley, 1980:51). In the end former Vice President Siles, and his left-leaning coalition government the UDP, won the presidency.

Following Siles' return from exile in 1982, his party wanted to call new elections to strengthen their base. However, in light of the failing economy – which the new government had inherited from the previous authoritarian regimes<sup>22</sup> - the conservative right insisted that the UDP assume power so as to set the party, and the left in general, up for failure (Kohl and Farthing, 2006:54-55). This Machiavellian plot coincided with the inability of the UDP to implement state-led development packages due to the troublesome state of the economy.

Along with the problems of the UDP created by the struggling economy, the 'coalition' government and the left in general seemed to be rapidly deteriorating. Following its election to power the UDP found itself in the middle of a struggle for control. The coalition split and the divided groups, the Leftist Revolutionary Movement, *Movimiento Izquierda Revolucionario* (MIR), led by Vice-President Jaime Paz Zamora, Siles' party the Revolutionary Nationalist Movement of the Left, *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario Izquierda* (MNRI, the MNR of the left), the Communist Party, *Partida Comunista Boliviana* (PCB) and the COB split, unable to resolve their differences (Dunkerley, 1990:20-22). The fractions were fighting for ideological and directional control of the supposedly coalition government.

Initially, the COB claimed that it would support the left-leaning UDP government, expecting a situation similar to that of 1952, where a labour-sympathetic government stood aside and initially allowed the creation of a workers' state. Following the collapse of the military government the labour movement had gained wide support and legitimacy among

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<sup>22</sup> GDP had declined every year between 1981 and 1986, foreign debt was substantial and government spending was at dangerously high levels in order to compensate for capital flight and patronage (Kohl and Farthing, 2006:54-55).

the general population as a result of its role in bringing about political re-democratisation. However, as abovementioned the strategy developed by the labour movement during military rule was militant and reactionary as a result of the oppression of labour activities and members. Such developments were dramatically different from those of the years leading up to 1952. Although the six years prior to the Revolution were marked by military rule, the years preceding those witnessed the increasing legitimization of the labour movement as well as a demonstration of labour's political savvy under democratic conditions. Following the more recent 15 years of military rule, the strategy of the COB had changed significantly. This change would prove to have disastrous effects on the UDP government, on the hopes of reinstating labour supremacy mirroring that in 1952 and on the overall ability of labour to influence democratisation.

Under the newly installed UDP, the now more reactionary COB demanded concessions such as the return to '*control obrero* in the COMIBOL mines, across-the-board wage increases, and a renunciation of the country's growing foreign debt'. Amidst party infighting, disastrously high inflation and a failing economy the COB increased industrial action to some 3,500 strikes in the span of two years and as a result President Siles granted the workers' demands (Kohl and Farthing, 2006:56). Although the actions of the COB would prove to have negative effects on the economy in general, it is important to note here that the COB was both willing to publicly scrutinise the UDP government as well as involve itself in issues beyond strictly member-related issues and into wider socio-political processes.

However, the constant strikes by the labour movement coupled with its inability to come to terms with the UDP signalled the labour organisation's inherent weaknesses. According to Dunkerley, the failure of the COB leadership to come to fruitful conclusions with the UDP stemmed from the unwanted 'compromises' imposed on the movement by the MNR during the later years of the 1950s. He goes on to claim that the effects of this and the military oppression of the previous 15 years had 'instilled such a dedication to organisational independence that the syndicalist vanguard not only held to devices that optimised its distance from the regime but also preferred the risks of constant conflict to those of a social pact' (Dunkerley, 1990:25). Although unions were given near total freedom under the UDP government it was directed in an unproductive, highly combative, militaristic way.

The outcome of these developments dampened labour viability and diminished any prospects of linking political freedoms to advanced social rights. The negative feelings among the COB associated with the first MNR government, the failure of the COB's relationship with the UDP – albeit partially of its own doing – and the base of partisan independence that had been instilled in the labour confederation since its inception seemed to further reinforce the COB's desire to remain independent from future governments, a point we investigate further in Chapter 6.

For every bit the left seemed to lose control, effectiveness, cohesiveness and support during this period the right seemed to gain that same amount. The Bolivian Private Business Confederation, *Confederación de Empresarios Privados de Bolivia* (CEFB), grew more powerful and continued to pressure the already stressed foundations holding the UDP together. The CEFB and the right in general represented a new breed of business people. They were usually highly educated, often by US influences, and had developed a strong bond with international business interests. The CEFB pressured the UDP to implement free-market policies and abandon its role in the economy (Kohl and Farthing, 2006:56). Such pressure and the general growing impetus for this way of thinking represented the forerunner for the neoliberal period that was to follow.

The UDP came in on a platform aspiring to continue the legacy of nationalist, economic and political development begun in 1952 (Kohl and Farthing, 2006:54). However, the economic shortcomings of the UDP evident in the fact that it was both 'technically inept and irresponsibly redistributionist' along with the anaemic state of the economy inherited from the period of authoritarianism (Dunkerley, 1990:15), prevented the government from reinstalling the policies seen in the years immediately following 1952. Finally, although the labour movement was relatively strong during this period as well as having the support of a politically democratic government, it did not manage to successfully utilise political rights, which had recently been re-administered, to strive for greater social rights as it did in 1952. It should be noted that it was not solely the product of labour ineffectiveness that prevented such a connection, the nature of the economy, party infighting and the strength of the right also played a role. However, the constant work stoppages and struggle for control of the government disabled and ultimately crippled the UDP – and the left in

general – from realising any of the developments in democratisation that seemed so promising at the outset of the 1980s.

#### **4.4 Period 4: Neoliberalism**

The failure of the UDP directly led to the electoral victory of the neoliberal MNR-ADN coalition government. Elected on a platform promising the stabilisation and salvation of an economy in crisis the MNR-ADN quickly implemented a series of SAPs that liberalised the economy and ‘freed’ any institutions seen as impediments to the market. This included privatising certain formerly nationalised industries and public services, such as mining, education and healthcare. Organised labour was dramatically weakened during this period as well. Organisationally, tens of thousands of union members in state employment were fired, over 143 union leaders were sent to internal exile in the Amazon (Kohl and Farthing, 2006:76) and intentional and pointed attacks on the collectivist ideology which formed the backbone of the labour movement occurred. Although the Paz Estenssoro government claimed that such measures must take place in the name of economic salvation, it was clear that they were politically motivated as the government intended to destroy the labour movement (*ibid.*). Such actions also clearly demonstrated the government’s disregard for certain political rights, namely the right to association. Thus, much of the neoliberal period can be viewed as a limited political democracy, or a DD in O’Donnell’s words. While this period was marked by the transition from one democratically elected government to another it was far from establishing a political foundation from which struggles for greater social rights could be staged. In fact while such a process may be viewed as further consolidation of political democracy – due to the transfer of power from one democratically elected government to another – it in turn led to a lock-in effect whereby social rights largely remained stagnant throughout successive neoliberal governments.

Largely as a result of the efforts of the UDP and the expansion in state-run projects during the military dictatorships, 70 percent of Bolivia’s economy was state-run in 1985, with 158 state-owned enterprises (Kohl and Farthing, 2006:64). Such heavy-handed involvement in the economy by the state was to dramatically change under the MNR-ADN government. As the debt crises that had perpetuated under Siles and the UDP worsened, the MNR-ADN government was ‘forced’ to turn to the IMF and World Bank for loans as ‘lenders of last resort’. The IMF and World Bank argued that it was the statist model that had created the

crisis, and an orthodox neoliberal paradigm was required to restore growth and lower inflation. According to neoliberal proponents, government intervention during the previous regime had become so ‘pervasive’ and economically ‘irrational’ that the international lenders foresaw little chance of investment being attracted to the region (Crisp and Kelly, 1999:534-539).

Paz Estenssoro and his administration quickly implemented the New Economic Policy, *Nueva Política Económica* (NEP) – a macro economic shock therapy program. Similar to other SAPs, the NEP was designed to make governmental spending and the economy more efficient, alleviate recurrent debt and liquidity crises, promote international market competitiveness, develop the private sector as the main actor in the economy, and recover any enterprises that had been ‘captured’ by the state (Jonakin and Stephens, 2004:157; Cook, 2007:174). These macroeconomic structural adjustments were some of the most drastic, ‘emphatic’, ‘enduring’ and ‘boldest’ movements towards economic liberalism in the world (Dunkerley, 1990:31; Cook, 2007:174). Decree 21060, included a concoction of shock therapy, including the freezing of wages, austerity measures to cut public spending in areas such as healthcare and education, cutting public sector employment and devaluing the currency (Dunkerley, 1990:31; Kohl and Farthing, 2006:65-70; Cook, 2007:174). Furthermore, Bolivian neoliberalism and the subsequent SAPs implemented under Paz Estenssoro in 1986 led to or influenced: the cutting of around 30,000 salaried mining jobs; the implementation of liberal hiring and firing practices; and the onset of an overarching neoliberal ideology of individualism. These measures were greatly at odds with the reforms implemented during labour incorporation and again following the Revolution. They were more akin to the type of *laissez-faire* governance during the oligarchic rule prior to labour incorporation.

From 1985 until 2008 the number of salaried, formal miners dropped nearly 75 percent (Arce, 25/7/2008). Privatisation signalled the reorganisation of the state mining industry, the subsequent closing down of ‘unprofitable’ mines and the firing of some 23,000 workers (Chossudovsky, 1997:215). These miners had been the vanguard of the labour movement both organisationally and ideologically and the substantial loss of such a force had dramatic consequences on the direction, ideological development and overall force of the COB. Additionally, once these miners had been made redundant many took to farming

coca in the Chaparo or moving into *cooperativista*-led mines, each of which had significant consequences for COB solidarity and ideology. The latter of these effects is significant in that many former miners seemed to shift from an anarcho-syndicalist ideological standpoint to a *campesino* or *cooperativista*-based ideology. Unlike anarcho-syndicalism, the politico-economic ideologies of *campesino* and *cooperativistas* tended to be more individual and capitalistic where each individual or small group is a singular actor trying to make profit through selling products in the market. Harris explains that the coca growers, in a position not dissimilar to other *campesino* groups, symbolise ‘a peasant movement fighting for economic survival’ (Harris, 2007:15). Whereas salaried miners have only their labour to sell – which often acts as a source of unity – *campesinos* and *cooperativistas* have a product to sell in the open, competitive market that can act as a source of division and exploitation.

Alongside of the considerable loss in total number of salaried miners, and the subsequent exodus to the countryside or informal mines, there was also a loss of employment protection for union leaders and rank-and-file during the neoliberal years. This was caused in part by the exceedingly loose hiring and firing practices enacted under article 55 of the Supreme Decree 21060. The result was an effective weeding out of many active and formative union leaders and members, seen in government imposed exile to rural corners of Bolivia. Additional disregard for certain political freedoms was evident in the actions taken by the Paz Estenssoro government in 1986. Following peaceful marches and demonstrations by salaried miners the government arrested and deported union leaders deemed responsible for the marches. Such actions were taken by the government in hopes of defusing growing tensions following mine closures and privatisation. According to the government of the time such actions were legitimated under the constitution and enabled by a 90-day state of emergency (ILO, 2007). At the very least such actions suggest a willingness by neoliberal governments to bend the boundaries of the politically democratic right to association. The fall out of this was that active union leaders became less willing to antagonise, potential labour leaders were dissuaded from becoming actual union leaders, rank-and-file feared becoming active within their own union and/or finally, prospective workers were deterred from joining a union, all to the detriment of COB strength.

As the 1980s came to an end, expenditure on health and educational programs had declined by 78 percent in countries such as Bolivia where SAPs had been implemented (Chossudovsky, 1997:104). The effects of Decree 20160 – and neoliberalism in general – on social rights was significant. Dunkerley claims that the results of SAPs in Bolivia were ‘conducive to existential instability and a substantial reduction in the standard of living – neither of which was properly measured or reflected in official statistics’ (Dunkerley, 1990:31). Such attitudes towards social rights under Bolivian neoliberal governments were mirrored in their treatment of organised labour during this same period. Paz Estenssoro viewed the formerly powerful labour movement as an obstacle to economic development and realised that the restructuring of the economy would require removing labour’s ability to challenge the neoliberal vision of the state. The NEP was not only a neoliberal economic plan but also a political one aimed at diminishing the power of labour in relation to the state (Kohl and Farthing, 2006:75). SAPs advocated a shift from ‘pro-collective regulations to pro-individualistic regulations, and from systems based strongly on protective statutory regulations to the increasing use of fiscal measures to regulate behaviour, and limit the freedom of workers’ (Standing, 2002:31). Not only were trade unions losing force as a result of neoliberal legislation but they were also losing strength through dramatically reduced numbers.

Following Paz Estenssoro’s presidency, the subsequent elections also favoured the neoliberals with the victory of Jaime Paz Zamora (1989-1993) and his, misleading in title, MIR (Movement of the Leftist Revolution) government. The creation of the coalition government formed between Paz Zamora and Banzer’s ADN party was laden with irony. The former had been banished during the military dictatorship of the later. However, the political hegemony of neoliberalism among elites was strong enough to coalesce such unlikely partners (Kohl and Farthing, 2006:79). Paz Zamora’s policies and political practices strongly resembled those of his predecessor. One of his first acts in power was the ‘Patriotic Accord’, which established political stability through the continuation of neoliberal economic policies (Cook, 2007:175). In further accordance with Paz Estenssoro, Paz Zamora used presidential decrees in order to bypass Congress and public discussion of policies, moves again indicative of DDs. Through such tactics Paz Zamora was able to continue the processes of free capital flow in and out of the country, increase privatisation of formerly state-owned enterprises and banish and suppress unions and their

leaders (ibid.). These moves obviously weakened the labour movement organisationally as leaders were suppressed and membership levels diminished.

The next important phase in Bolivia's neoliberal history was the return to power of the MNR, this time under Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada (Goni) in 1993. In one term Sánchez de Lozada's administration managed to reform the constitution, judiciary, pension and education systems. He also ambitiously set out to decentralise both the fiscal and administrative structures, administer agrarian reform and deepen the privatisation efforts already undertaken by his predecessors. The aim of Sánchez de Lozada's *Plan de Todos* was to reshape the relationship between the Bolivian state and the rights of its citizens (Kohl and Farthing, 2006:84-85). The Law of Capitalisation sold off 50 percent of state industries – this was on top of those already privatised during initial stages of neoliberalism – which had provided 60 percent of government revenues to multinational corporations.

Eventually, increasing hyperinflation forced Sánchez de Lozada to once again reinstall shock therapy methods, which conflicted with much of the government's desire of creating a 'social market economy' (Cook, 2007:176). Such an idea was predicated on the thought that social rights could be advanced and deepened through making mechanisms of the market more efficient, however only the later of these ever matriculated. The reintroduction of shock therapy and the near decade long implementation of stringent neoliberal policies had produced little to no economic benefit for the majority of citizens, as was promised. In fact, the neoliberal years largely hindered economic choice for underprivileged groups to say nothing of the effect cuts in government programs for healthcare and education had on the majority of citizens. Such disheartening results led to increased frustration by the masses. Groups such as organised labour, university students, coca growers, and regional organisations often 'clashed' with the Sánchez de Lozada administration and in 1995 the COB initiated a series of strikes. The response of the government was to call for two consecutive 90-day 'states of siege' between April and October in order to quell the industrial activism (Cook, 2007:176). Such moves gave the government power to act outside of stated political rights and 'bend' the law to suppress the industrial activism. Tactics during this time included the further banishment of labour leaders, arresting striking members and even physical intimidation. According to Cook

such tactics were not uncommon practice for the 'democratic' governments of this period (Cook, 2007:176)

The labour movement entered the neoliberal period emaciated and largely ineffectual. However, towards the end of this period organised labour in Bolivia seemed to regain some of its vitality. Evidence of increased trade union activism can be seen during the two subsequent neoliberal presidents, Banzer (1997-2001) again, but this time as a civilian, and Sánchez de Lozada's second term (2002-2003). These presidents both tried to further implement neoliberal policies through the privatisation of basic utilities such as water and gas. The result was increased public activism and protest, both of which the COB had a hand in, coming to a head in the 'water war' in Cochabamba in 2000 and the 'gas war' of 2003. In this thesis we investigate the state of the COB beyond these actions staged at the end of neoliberalism and into the initial years of post-neoliberalism under Evo Morales.

The lasting effects of neoliberalism on organised labour in Bolivia were significant. The overarching shift from an ideology more closely linked to socialism and solidarity in the beginning of the 1980s to one of free market capitalism and individualism in the mid 1980s created an ideological pitfall within the labour movement (Arce, 25/7/2008). During this time many of the large state-run companies had become small and medium-sized private companies, either devoid of unions all together or ones where there were unions in name alone. In such environments large groups of workers were less likely to be in close contact with one another and less able to discuss possible feelings of exploitation and organisation. Additionally, the exodus of formally salaried, unionised miners into private enterprises of farming or *cooperativista* mining led to a general decrease in the desire for solidarity and more to one of individual and/or familial survival (Arce, 25/7/2008).

Along with the need and concern for the individual above the 'group', the lack of union activity and organisation deprived would be unionists from essential ideological formation, further distancing workers from solidarity and into a more individualistic realm. Hyman claims that the neoliberal years witnessed a 'shift from collectivism towards individualism...and reduced responsiveness to collectively determined policies and disciplines' (Hyman, 1992:151). He goes on to state that 'whether because of the rise of a 'new individualism' (Zoll, 1988), or as part of a *suave-qui-peut* response to economic crisis, it is widely held that employees [became] less solidaristic, defining their interests

either individualistically or in terms of narrow, particularistic collectivities' (Hyman, 1992:157). Such shifts towards individualism may largely be explained by both a fear of losing jobs during difficult financial times and the deliberate move by neoliberal governments to saturate citizens with neoliberal ideology.

Both Harvey (2005) and Hall (1988) extensively discuss the 'programmatic' attempt of neoliberals during the 1980s and 1990s to construct an ideology based around the protection and expansion of *individual* freedoms. In pursuing this goal Harvey claims that it would have been very difficult for these neoliberals to convince the masses that a project intended to restore 'economic power to a small elite' would be desirable. However, 'a programmatic attempt to advance the cause of individual freedoms could appeal to a mass base and so disguise the drive to restore class power' (Harvey, 2005:40). The ideological construction and 'Machiavellian' (Hall, 1988) implementation of neoliberal ideology was similar in both the developed countries discussed by Hall as well as the developing countries examined by Harvey. For both of these authors the depth and extensiveness that neoliberal economic and political policies reached would not have been possible without the deliberate and comprehensive program of ideological reform. This new type of ideology was based on 'differentiated consumerism and individual libertarianism' which effectively defeated the opposing and former ideology based in social justice and embedded in 'social solidarities and a willingness to submerge individual wants, needs, and desires in the cause of some more general struggle for...social justice' (Harvey, 2005:41-42). As the former type of ideology became popular, further encouraged by the fall of the Soviet Union, the labour movement – and its respective ideological stance – evoked less sympathy from outsiders. Furthermore, labour movements were vilified by neoliberal governments throughout the world and portrayed as enemies of this new push towards the protection of individual freedoms. In Bolivia these processes greatly weakened the influence of the COB, both in its ability to attract new members and subsequently its collective strength and as a result, for much of the neoliberal period the COB was dormant.

The most significant theme regarding the role of the state during neoliberalism was both the desire to correct the economy through removing the state from economic arenas and to diminish the power of organised labour in political processes. Where in the past we saw

the increased role of the state in economic affairs coincide with its increased autonomy during periods of heightened nationalism, the neoliberal period was marked by a complete reversal of this process. As the state was removed from industry, its sovereignty in other areas became precarious as foreign capital and IFIs such as the IMF began to direct policy within the country. Moreover, the intentional economic and political mandates ordered by respective neoliberal governments aimed at weakening organised labour were successful. These plans included diminishing the size of state employment in areas such as mining, exiling labour leaders and systematically reconditioning the ideological makeup from one of state involvement and collectivism to one of *laissez-faire* policies and individualism. The result was the inability of the labour movement to play a formative role in the socio-political arena. However, as previously mentioned, the end of neoliberalism experienced in the early 2000's saw a resurgence in organised labour activity and has provided an interesting transition period in which to study the role of the COB in processes of democratisation.

#### **4.4.1 Social Rights under Neoliberalism**

In general social rights under neoliberalism became highly limited. During the first several governments of this period social rights were outright discarded as inefficiencies of state-led welfare, hindering economic development and as such required elimination. It was not until Sánchez de Lozada that the state's role in social development was once again addressed. However, his plan of 'deepening' market efficiency throughout the country in hopes of making social rights distribution more efficient largely failed and was soon taken over by the reimplementation of shock therapy. The disadvantaged masses, the group most significantly affected by the lack of social protection, were kept at bay for a time being. This was achieved through constant promises by political elites that economic restructuring and success at the top would soon 'trickle' down to the lower classes, spreading economic choice and thus social rights. However, not entirely dissimilar to the promises made by the Reagan and Thatcher governments in the US and Britain, respectively, and more closely in Chile during the 1990s, 'trickle down economics' never fully delivered the promised benefits to the lower classes and effectively served to widen the gap between rich and poor. The reality of neoliberalism was that the burden of adjustment disproportionately affected the poorest sectors of Bolivia. The removal of government subsidies, which normally went

towards energy and foodstuffs, affected the poor more than any other sector of society in that subsidies were proportionally a larger part of their budget. Furthermore, declining exchange rates negatively affected the poor with regards to purchasing power. As the domestic currency was devalued, so as to make exports more attractive to foreign investors, basic food commodity prices increased as they adjusted to international prices.

The rate of growth in outlays on education and health, which had been rapid in Latin America in the 1970s, slowed greatly in the 1980s (Haggard and Kaufman, 1992:225). For health care, this meant that families could no longer rely on the government for basic health services, such as preventative medicines, basic vitamins and antibiotics. Since wages had been decreased, healthcare for family members had become subsidiary to basic nutritional needs (i.e. food). The same can be said of education. As wages decreased and government austerity packages were implemented education was a luxury poor families could not afford. Aside from not being able to cover the costs of materials needed for school, families could not afford the opportunity costs of having children at school.

Thus, while the economic turnaround and ‘salvation’ of the Bolivian economy in the 1980s was hailed by many as a ‘miracle’ and an important step in stopping deeper pauperization, it acted as a justification and springboard from which to implement further economic liberalisation alongside of political repression, which not only left a large portion of the population without social rights, but also diminished labour’s ability to effectively use political rights to struggle for – or even protect – social rights.

#### **4.5 The Location of Post-Neoliberal Bolivia in the Democratic Sequence**

The political environment in Bolivia has changed significantly from the start of 1986 when comprehensive SAPs were introduced in Bolivia until the end of 2005 when Evo Morales was elected president. As we have discussed, the years in between were marked by increased socio-economic instability and labour hostility under various neoliberal presidencies. One of the most compelling reasons to examine democratisation during the current period in Bolivia is because of the apparent shift in how the country is run at the executive level under Morales. The character of the state and/or how it is governed can shape labour’s ability to influence democratisation. O’Donnell highlights the importance of the state claiming that popular sectors cannot bring about successful transition on their

own but need a lawful, non-anaemic and friendly state (O'Donnell, 2001a:607-608). Below we discuss how the current Bolivian political environment under Morales appears more conducive to labour-led democratisation than previous neoliberal regimes. However, in order to better understand whether or not this is the case we need to find answers to the questions: is the current Bolivian government more sovereign from international influences regarding its ability to formulate domestic economic and social policies (a point we discussed above and Rueschemeyer *et al.* (1992) argue is an important factor to consider when examining democratisation); is the Bolivian government under Evo Morales more lawful in its application and protection of the law particularly with regards to the utilisation of political freedoms; and is the government less hostile to popular sectors pressing for greater democratisation?

In January of 2006 the first indigenous president in Bolivian history, Juan Evo Morales Ayma, officially assumed office. Morales, and the political group he heads, the Movement Towards Socialism, *Movimiento al Socialismo* (MAS), were elected on a ticket of promised socio-economic change, through correcting the 'evils' caused by free market capitalism, especially of the U.S. imposed variety. As his first substantial order of business, Morales promised and saw through the reversal of one of the major pillars of neoliberal economic policies, privatisation, through the partial nationalisation of major industries such as natural gas and minerals. He continued his attempt to reverse some of the policies implemented during the neoliberalist period by committing his country to the Bolivian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA), a trade agreement between Cuba, Venezuela and Bolivia, which was created as an alternative to Washington's Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA). The agreement commits Venezuelan oil for Bolivia as well as the initiative called PetroAmerica which seeks to further reverse the Latin American dependence on foreign capital expanded during neoliberalism (Kohl, 2007:17).

Additionally, the contemporary economic situation in Bolivia has changed markedly since the re-installment of democratic rule. In 2002, 65.2 percent of the Bolivian population lived below the national poverty line. In 2007 that number dropped to 37.7 percent (UN Data, 2007). Furthermore, the re-nationalisation of certain industries, the establishment of international trade agreements with other leftist governments and the low levels of national debt and inflation, coupled with high petrol prices and economic growth has signalled a

relatively more sovereign Bolivian state, both from international and domestic capital. While it is important to recognise that certain policies pursued by the Morales government have helped increase the country's sovereignty from international capital, it is also imperative to investigate its willingness to allow the use of political rights to struggle for greater social rights.

Above we saw how it was the formation of the universal rule of law in traditional democracies that allowed for the establishment of protected and universal civil and political rights and eventually social rights. Przeworski echoes such a sentiment in claiming that only under a 'universalist legal system' that the 'state guarantees for a given territory' can citizenship – in the fullest sense, thus politically, civilly and socially – be established (Przeworski, 1995:34-35). This sentiment should be viewed in conjuncture with the non-hostile state, particularly towards organised labour. For instance and as discussed in the previous section, during the beginning of the neoliberal years in Bolivia then President Victor Paz Estenssoro utilised a clause in the constitution stipulating that during a state of emergency the government may supersede certain constitutional rights. Paz Estenssoro used this stipulation to internally exile labour leaders and ultimately diminish the threat of organised labour. Thus, while a lawful state is vital to democratisation it needs to also be non-hostile to groups seeking greater democratisation.

While many segments of the population have hailed Morales' running of the country – particularly rural farmers, indigenous factions and sectors within the COB such as manufacturers – certain groups have become somewhat disillusioned with the promises the president made in his campaign platform but has not as of yet followed through with (Callejas, 2006). Morales has shown signs of addressing certain social issues including a basic income policy as well as a program allocating money to impoverished families intended to promote school attendance. In regards to labour policy President Morales has abolished article 55 of Law 21060, which essentially gave employers the freedom to fire whoever they liked without the need for just cause. However, because of the nature of the current Bolivian legal system such measures remain ineffective. Many respondents commented on the continued lack of job protection union leaders have within their respective companies, indicating that managers can and will fire unionists they deem disruptive to production (Chipara, 24/6/2008; Maidana, 3/7/2008). One-way employers

monitor potential *personae non gratae* within their labour force is through the Bolivian General Law of Work. Article 115, of Decree Law 24 in the General Law of Work states that five days before a strike the responsible leaders must submit their plans to the corresponding political departmental or provincial authorities. One disconcerting clause of this law is that the organisers of said strike must submit their names and addresses to the relevant authorities. This law would seem to make potential organisers wary of initiating a strike or discourage labour activism altogether.

These *de jure* and *de facto* labour policy remnants from the neoliberal years alongside of what certain respondents claim to be continued neoliberal economic policies – with particular regard to the lack of complete nationalisation of all industries – and what other respondents from the middle class state has been Morales’ preferential treatment of rural farmers has frustrated segments of the Bolivian left.

However, amidst all of these developments organised labour has not been persecuted and legal rights have not been manipulated to the degree that they were during neoliberalism. All of these factors considered, it would appear that organised labour’s relationship with the Morales government seems to be less hostile than that of the previous neoliberal administrations, however this remains to be seen. As cautioned by Murillo, leaders who come into power either as heads of the labour party or parties with strong affiliations with the labour movement generally are granted longer ‘time horizons’ from labour backers regarding the implementation of potentially labour-harmful policies. The reason for this is that such reforms are seen as a means to a labour-beneficial end, and are derived from need rather than taste (Murillo 2001:197-198).

While the level to which the Morales administration’s redistributionist policies and processes are realised and the subsequent effect they have on targeted interests remains to be seen, what is important for us here is to understand that there has been *some* change in the Bolivian political and economic environment. What is paramount to recognise for our thesis is that in comparison to previous neoliberal regimes, Morales’ tenure appears to be more democratic. Throughout this thesis we explore evidence of the government’s willingness to allow for greater political freedoms to association, expression, the press and in permitting greater collective voice in decision-making processes. In Chapter 6 we explore in greater depth the relationship between the Morales government and the COB

and the effect said relationship has had on the labour confederation's ability to influence democratisation.

## **4.6 Conclusion**

In the discussion of our analytical framework above we stated that through an examination of the historical identity of the COB we will be better able to understand the current strength of the COB, particularly as it pertains to our other strength indicators. The theoretical rationale behind this is based on such formative authors as Valenzuela (1988; 1992b), Rueschemeyer *et al.* (1992) and Collier and Collier (2002) who – among others – argue that historical processes shape future labour movements.

As we witnessed in this chapter the actors responsible for incorporating and helping to form organised labour in Bolivia came from the post-Chaco generation, were largely well-educated, middle class, Marxist and/or anarcho-syndicalists and created labour organisations during a time of widespread social constitutionalism. This shaped the early labour movement in several ways. First, the influence of Marxism and syndicalism set amidst a background of social constitutionalism – defined by its preference for state welfare and a basic standard of living for all citizens – instilled in the nascent movement a collectivist ideology and a responsibility or duty to society beyond union members. We saw evidence of these tendencies in the early agrarian banks set up by organised labour as well as the push for increased social welfare immediately following the Revolution.

Additionally, the facts that the actors responsible for establishing organised labour in Bolivia came from the post-Chaco generation, had anarcho-syndicalist influences and labour incorporation in Bolivia occurred in an environment of distrust and disdain for the previous method of rule helped instil a desire for independence from all governments. Although the COB and the MNR were on the same side of the Revolution the years that followed saw an independent labour movement force through political and social programs without much regard for the government. Moreover, as we discussed in this chapter, the COB soon became distrustful of the MNR and any links between the two organisations effectively ended. We examined further evidence of COB independence from the government during the reign of the UDP. Although the UDP was labour-friendly and leftist in nature the COB refused to back down from its demands and quell labour unrest for the benefit of the government. While the latter case resulted in the implementation of

neoliberalism the point to be made here is that regardless of the government's political orientation, the COB – largely as a result of the conditions surrounding its inception – has remained independent and not afraid to publicly scrutinise governments from various political backgrounds. It could be argued that this independence has sometimes cost the labour movement its ability to influence political processes and ultimately advance democratisation. However, for our thesis we are most interested in the concept of independence from the government as a strength indicator particularly in reference to the conceptualisation of important social issues.

Finally, in Chapter 3 we discussed how it has been argued in the literature that the historical identity of a labour movement has significant influence on the contemporary strength of said movement. An important reason for such influence is the idea that certain characteristics become embedded in the labour movement from the time of labour incorporation until the present. In this chapter we saw how three key characteristics of labour strength became embedded in the COB. The first was the labour confederation's independence from the government. We examined how the first labour organisations to become incorporated were sceptical of aligning with the government, and as a result developed into an adamant resistance to close political affiliations throughout labour history. Secondly, we discussed how early on organised labour in Bolivia shifted from organising based on craft to organising based on industry. Additionally, since incorporation – and particularly since the 1952 with the creation of the COB – Bolivian organised labour has been hierarchically structured around a singular peak confederation. Thirdly, the most influential ideology surrounding labour during incorporation and beyond was anarcho-syndicalist – and more broadly – socialist. This collectivist ideology created a sense of obligation to expanding and protecting both political and social democracy and making it available to all Bolivian citizens. As we discuss throughout the rest of this thesis the combination of characteristics such as independence from the government, a hierarchical structure centred on a singular, peak confederation and a pervasive collectivist ideology suggests a labour movement well positioned to positively influence democratisation. Thus, we conclude that the COB is strong regarding the assessment of its historical identity.

## **Chapter 5. Methodology**

The main objective of this thesis is to assess the role of the COB in processes of democratisation. While our theoretical and historical chapters are founded in already established literature, the following chapters require primary source data in order to answer the central questions we seek to address in this thesis. Thus, in this chapter we construct a methodology that will better guide our work so as to encourage more accurate and methodologically sound results.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the indicators we utilise to measure COB strength include: 1) its historical identity; 2) its relationship with the government, explored further in Chapter 6; 3) its degree of solidarity, discussed in Chapter 7; and 4) the commitment of its members, examined in Chapter 8. In the first section of this chapter (5.1) we explicitly present the central questions of our thesis and discuss how we intend to find their answers. We then turn to a discussion (5.2) of our ontological and epistemological positions. In the following section (5.3), we explain why – based on our ontological and epistemological positions – we have chosen to use certain research methods in this thesis. In this section we also explore themes such as how and why we chose certain representative sectors, research sites, sampling techniques and data collection and analysis techniques. In the penultimate section of this chapter (5.4) we examine the problems we encountered while in the field and discuss how we were able to circumvent these potential pitfalls. Section 5.5 – the final section in this chapter – outlines certain methodological recommendations for future researchers conducting similar work.

### **5.1 Central Research Questions**

The central question for our empirical research can be broken down into two interrelated parts. First, what is the role of the COB in contemporary processes of democratisation? Second, what affects the COB's ability to play a formative role in democratisation? Within the context of our central research question we analyse the strength indicators laid out above. Each indicator will be discussed both independently and as a part of a wider analytical framework.

With the second indicator of our analytical framework – labour-government relations – we assess the relationship between the COB and the Morales government. In this analysis we evaluate how this relationship affects the ability of the labour confederation to influence democratisation through critical evaluation and scrutiny of government proposals surrounding social issues. Second, we set out to understand how solidarity – our third indicator – has been affected by the relationship with the Morales government, the effects of neoliberalism and its internal structure. The final criterion we use to better understand labour strength is member commitment. Here, we explore whether the COB is democratic or not and what effect this has on members’ commitment to union causes. In a similar manner, we also explore the nature and type of ideology present within the COB and whether and how this affects the commitment of rank-and-file.

We return to a more methodological discussion of how we intend to answer such questions below, but first we turn to a discussion of ontology and epistemology and how each affected the design of our methodology.

## **5.2 Ontological and Epistemological Positions**

Ontological questions seek to understand how the social world fits together and how we make sense of it (della Porta and Keating, 2008:21). Additionally, central to ontological questions is whether or not there exists a social world independent of our knowledge of it (Marsh and Furlong, 2002:18). Further questions probe whether there exist categories to describe the social world because subjective actors have constructed them, or whether categories exist naturally and are there to be discovered (della Porta and Keating, 2008:22). Our ontological position is foundationalist and as such we believe that there is a real world containing social phenomena that exist independently of our knowledge of them (Marsh and Furlong, 2002:18). To contextualise such a statement, we believe that the relationship between the COB and the Morales government exists independent of our knowledge of it and such a relationship can be observed and causal associations can be determined from these observations.

As stated by Marsh and Furlong ‘one’s ontological position affects, but far from determines, one’s epistemological position’ (Marsh and Furlong, 2002:18). While ontology deals with the researcher’s view about the nature of the world and how the world fits together, epistemology deals with issues surrounding what we can know about the

world, how we can know it and reasons for it fitting together as it does (Marsh and Furlong, 2002:18-19; della Porta and Keating, 2008:22). Based on our ontological foundationalist position, epistemologically, we take on a positivist approach where we seek to establish or uncover a causal relationship between social phenomena (Marsh and Furlong, 2002:22). However, unlike traditional positivists we do not believe that direct observation alone will uncover the social phenomenon we seek to understand. In line with the realists or post-positivists we believe that there are ‘deep structural relationships between social phenomena which cannot be directly observed, but which are crucial for any explanation of behaviour’. Moreover, our epistemological view holds that a real material world exists – as influenced by our ontological position – but our knowledge of it is often socially conditioned and subject to challenge and reinterpretation (della Porta and Keating, 2008:24). Additionally, and in line with post-positivism rather than positivism, we accept that theory and experiment are not entirely separable and that our chosen theory will affect the facts we focus on and how we interpret such facts (Marsh and Furlong, 2002:23). Our epistemological position deviates further from the positivist and perhaps closer to the interpretist, in that we do not believe actors’ decisions can be taken as an independent rational choice made by individual actors – as understood in rational choice theory – but more in line with institutionalists in that actions are influenced by larger institutions. Further in line with realists or post-positivists we agree that differences between cases when explaining social phenomena can be partly explained through variation in institutional structures and their historical evolutions (della Porta and Keating, 2008:30). This is especially important as we seek to survey individual rank-and-file members whose views on democracy will be influenced by their own unions and even larger institutions, such as the state.

Such a discussion then begs the question, how did these ontological and epistemological positions influence our methodology? Our foundationalist and post-positivist position inclined us to use *both* quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. We utilised both methods in order to address the different aspects of our research questions as well attempt to build methodological triangulation (Read and Marsh, 2002:237). Through the use of these two methods, manifested in elite interviews and surveying (discussed below), we hoped to establish triangulation by analysing results obtained through complementary

methods. Aside from our desire for data triangulation we also found inherent benefits and drawbacks in both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods.

We now turn to a discussion of how and why we chose our samples, before returning to a more focused discussion of how our ontological and epistemological beliefs shaped our methodology in this thesis.

### **5.3 Research Methods**

We begin our discussion of our research methods with an examination of how and why we chose to investigate specific sectors within the COB over others. In the second part of this section (5.3.2) we briefly discuss the site sections for our research before moving into an exploration of the sampling techniques we used (section 5.3.3). Once we have outlined our representative sectors, the areas we conducted our research and the techniques we used to allocate our sample groups and individuals, we discuss the data collection techniques we employed in this thesis (5.3.4). The specific techniques we used were a combination of elite interviews, questionnaire dissemination, and collecting and observing public news media sources such as newspapers and television-based news programmes. Moving forward from our discussion of data collection techniques we explore the techniques we used to analyse our data (5.3.5).

#### **5.3.1 Representative Sectors**

Table 1 shows the breakdown of the economically active population by sector in Bolivia and the percentage each sector represents of the total. From this table the large number of workers in agriculture becomes apparent. However, we have deliberately chosen not to investigate this sector in our research for several reasons. The most influential reasons being that these workers are not functionally associated with the COB and are spread throughout expansive regions making surveying and interviewing more difficult.

Table 1 – Economically Active Population by Sector

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Number of Employed</b>	<b>As % of Total Economically Active</b>
<b>Agriculture, Forestry, Hunting</b>	1,673,000	36
<b>Mining, Quarrying</b>	72,400	1.5
<b>Manufacturing</b>	514,900	11
<b>Electricity, Gas, Water Supply</b>	15,500	.5
<b>Construction</b>	316,300	6.8
<b>Wholesale and Retail Trade</b>	673,800	14.4
<b>Transport, Storage, Communications</b>	272,300	5.8
<b>Public Administration, Defence, Compulsory Social Security</b>	152,100	3.2
<b>Education</b>	223,100	4.8
<b>Health, Social Work</b>	109,500	2.3
<b>Total</b>	4,672,400	–

Note: Data taken from the ILO's database LABORSTA from the most recent figures (2007)

We chose three primary sectors to investigate. In order to find representative and useful sample groups from within the COB we used secondary source data to establish three criteria for selecting our sectors of investigation – see Table 3 below. These criteria were: 1) the size, based on the number of workers within a sector as a percentage of the total adult workforce; 2) the average monthly wage in bolivianos; and 3) whether the sector is publicly or privately owned.

The first criterion was assembled by breaking down the size of sectors into three categories, large (ten percent and above), medium (five percent to 9.99 percent), and small (0.001 percent to 4.99 percent). This criterion enabled us to choose sectors with varying size, an important element when discussing the ability to draw attention to important social issues through mobilisation. The second criterion was based on wage levels. Wage levels can influence the likelihood of a union member mobilising. The theory behind this is that higher paid employees will be less likely to mobilise for fear of jeopardising their high pay and/or job (Crouch, 1982:201). This criterion was also broken down into three groups, high wages (2,221 bolivianos per month and above), moderate wages (1,196 to 2,220.99 bolivianos per month), and low wages (1,195.99 bolivianos per month and below). The ranges for these groups were created based on percentages of the average monthly wage in

bolivianos, which was 1,709. The upper boundary for the low wage group was 30 percent less than the national average. The lower boundary for the high wage group was 30 percent more than the national average. The wages that fell in between these two groups constituted the moderate wage group. The third and final criterion we used to choose our sectors was whether the sector was privately or publicly run. We felt this would be an interesting criterion regarding solidarity and relationship with the government. In particular we were interested in seeing if there was any difference between private and public sectors joining together in mobilisations and whether one or the other would be less likely to mobilise against the government.

We chose to focus our research on three sectors both as a conscious decision to seek narrow and deep results rather than wide but shallow results as well as a factor of time and resource constraints. The first sector we selected was mining. Perhaps the most compelling reason to study this sector was because of the role it has played – historically – in democratisation in its own right as well as through the COB. Formal miners have been the most vociferous group within the labour movement and since the founding of the FSTMB they have acted as the political vanguard of disadvantaged Bolivians both inside and outside the organised labour movement. The mining sector’s comparatively high wages is what most distinguishes it – aside from its rich history – from the other two sectors we study in our thesis. Moreover, we labelled this sector as public/private due to the fact that at the time of writing there are important mines that are either public (e.g. Huanuni) or private (e.g. Colquiri).

Within the mining sector we focused on three specific mines. These were also chosen based on two criteria. These were: 1) the size, based on the number of workers; and 2) whether the mine was public or privately owned. We were unable to locate accurate wage levels for workers within the mining sector and thus used two criteria to select our chosen mines. The three mines we focused our research on were Huanuni, Colquiri and Himalaya.

Table 2 – Breakdown of Mines by Criteria

	<b>Huanuni</b>	<b>Colquiri</b>	<b>Himalaya</b>
<b>Employment</b>	Large (5,000)	Small (500)	Small (300)
<b>Ownership*</b>	Public	Private/Public	Private

\*Colquiri is owned by the private company Sinchi Wyri but is also part of the state-run mining company COMIBOL. At the time of writing Himalaya is in the midst of becoming nationalised, but is listed here as private as this was its status at the beginning of our research.

The second group we investigated was the manufacturing sector. Table 3 shows that this sector is large in size, with low wage levels and is privately run. Moreover, because this sector has low wage levels it will be interesting to see how it perceives the Morales government's plans for economic restructuring as compared to how the better-paid miners perceive such plans.

The specific manufacturing unions – alongside of the manufacturing federation – we interviewed were all based in or near La Paz. These included the Hibol, Vita and Papilera unions. We chose these three based on our ability – i.e. permission – to access them. Unions within the manufacturing sector were more difficult to gain access to because of the fact that they are private and often times management would not allow us to speak with union leaders or disseminate questionnaires.

The third sector we investigated was health services. Similar to the manufacturing sector, and dissimilar to the miners, the health service sector has a low level of wages. The most important nuance of the health sector in regards to our study is the fact it is the only sector that is administered by the state. This will make it an interesting case when examining its relationship with the government as well as its willingness to mobilise against the government.

Within the health sector we were able to access the Confederation of Health Sector Workers, *Confederación Sindical de Trabajadores de Salud de Bolivia* (CSTSB) as well as the partially private *Caja*, which acts as its own confederation, sometimes in conjuncture with the COB. However, we were only able to interview and disseminate questionnaires to members of one local union – the La Paz Union of Health Sector Workers, affiliated with the CSTSB.

Table 3 – Breakdown of Various Sectors by Influential Criteria

	Mining	Manufacturing	Hydrocarbons	Education	Health Services	Construction
<b>Size</b>	Small (1.5%)	Large (11%)	Small (.5 %)	Medium (4.8%)	Small (2.3%)	Medium (6.8%)
<b>Wage*</b>	High (2698)	Low (1120)	High (3490)	Moderate (1449)	Low (1279)	Low (1050)
<b>Public/ Private</b>	Public/ Private	Private	Public/ Private	Public	Public	Private

Note: shadowed areas represent the sectors in our analysis; all data is from the International Labour Organisation's *LABORSTA* which is a database of labour statistics taken from 2000, unless otherwise indicated. \*In bolivianos per month (as of 27/5/2010 1 boliviano = 0.14 US dollars; 0.12 euros; and 0.1 British pounds sterling).

### 5.3.2 Site Selection

The empirical research for this thesis was based in five geographical locations. The first site was La Paz, the capital of Bolivia. Here we conducted elite interviews with individuals from the COB, members of the government, civilians from research institutions, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and other non-governmental/non-organised labour related institutions. We also disseminated questionnaires to union members from manufacturing and health unions in La Paz. Our rationale for choosing this location was based on several factors. First, the head offices of the COB are located in La Paz. Secondly, the central government is also based there. Third, the national federations of our three sectors of interest – mining, manufacturing and health – are all in La Paz. Finally, many manufacturing unions and health sector unions are located there. The next geographical site we used was El Alto, a working class suburb of La Paz. This site was chosen based on the fact that several manufacturers are located there as well as MAS offices. Similar to La Paz, we conducted elite interviews with manufacturing union leaders in El Alto as well as with MAS officials. We also disseminated questionnaires to manufacturing union members in the suburb.

La Paz was also the centre of public COB demonstrations, often staged down the main roads and those surrounding the buildings of the central government. COB demonstrations were also often held in and started and/or finished Plaza San Francisco, a short distance

from city block that contained both the Congress Building and the Presidential Residence. During the May Day celebrations in June 2008 – which were held outside of the Presidential Residence and led by Evo Morales – the President pledged to further nationalise certain sectors important for the national economy. At the exact same time that these celebrations were taking place the COB held a rally inside of Plaza San Francisco, demanding, among other things, the alteration of the government’s proposed pension reform. We were able to attend both events given their relative proximity.

Alongside of attending pre-planned events such as the May Day rally and other marches in the city centre, we also happened to be coming back from an interview in La Paz when loud, repeated banging noises shook the air. The Bolivian friend who was accompanying us and was clearly not as surprised, explained that the noises were most likely the result of miners lighting dynamite in order to draw attention to their seemingly impromptu march, supposedly a not abnormal occurrence in La Paz.

The third site utilised in our thesis was Oruro, the capital city of the province of the same name. Oruro is also the largest city and central hub for the mining industry in the Oruro province. Here we conducted elite interviews with members of the COB, including the head of the FSTMB, members of the press and union leaders from both public and private mines. We also disseminated questionnaires to miners from the Huanuni and Colquiri mines. The nationally syndicated newspaper *La Patria* is also based in Oruro. Finally, the city is home to the COD of Oruro, one of the most vocal and influential CODs in the country.

During our time in Oruro we were fortunate enough to attend the biennial FSTMB Congress in June of 2008. We were encouraged to attend the event by several different mining elites. The Congress lasted the entire day and centred on electing new members to the executive committee. The political implications of the Congress itself were quite significant given that the leader of the FSTMB holds great influence within the COB as well as within the wider Bolivian political landscape. The fact that we were able to participate and even vote in such an event gave us unique insight into the internal processes of the FSTMB that we would not have been able to obtain had we not been in attendance. The Congress was interesting not only for the political processes that were on display but also for the informal occurrences that took place. For instance, popcorn and food vendors

along with other merchants roamed the aisles during the event as if it were a sporting match. In Chapter 8 we further explore our experience at the Congress and what it demonstrated to us about internal union democracy within the FSTMB.

We also conducted research in the mining village of Huanuni, our fourth site, located about 60 km south of the city of Oruro. At the time of writing Huanuni is the largest and most influential state-run mine in the country. During the course of our time conducting elite interviews and disseminating questionnaires at the mine the union leader of Huanuni was elected to be the executive secretary of the FSTMB, arguably one of the most powerful positions in the entire COB.

The fifth and final site of our empirical research took place in the mining village of Colquiri, about 75 km north of the city of Oruro. Due to certain barriers, such as the apprehension of allowing foreign researchers into the mine, we were only able to disseminate questionnaires to union members through the help of a local Bolivian research assistant.

### **5.3.3 Sampling Techniques**

For this thesis we used nonprobability sampling techniques consisting of purposive sampling. The reason we chose these sampling techniques over others was mainly because of the limited time and resources we had at our disposal. We selected three mutually exclusive groups for our elite interviews. These groups consisted of: 1) COB members; 2) civil servants and members of the government; and 3) non-affiliated civilians. Each one of these groups was chosen so as to provide a more comprehensive and balanced account of issues surrounding the COB's role in socio-political processes. COB members provided insight into each of our empirical indicators from their views on the Morales government to their relationship with other organisations within the COB to how they felt about their own local union. We believed that an empirically-based study about the COB would be incomplete without primary interactions with contemporary and former COB members. The individuals we interviewed from group 1 included representatives from each of the three sectors in our study as well as individuals from all levels of the hierarchal structure of the COB (see Figure 2).

We chose to interview government employees and members of the MAS party to get a better understanding about particular aspects of our research, most notably the relationship between the government and the COB but also about how the COB interacts with agencies under the control of the government, such as the Ministry of Labour. We felt this would give our research an additional perspective and insight into the central themes of this thesis. In particular we wanted to better understand how government officials viewed the COB as a whole, what value it is to Bolivian society, as perceived by government officials, and how it has impeded or accelerated certain political and social processes. For group 2 we interviewed three employees from the Ministry of Labour and one MAS official.

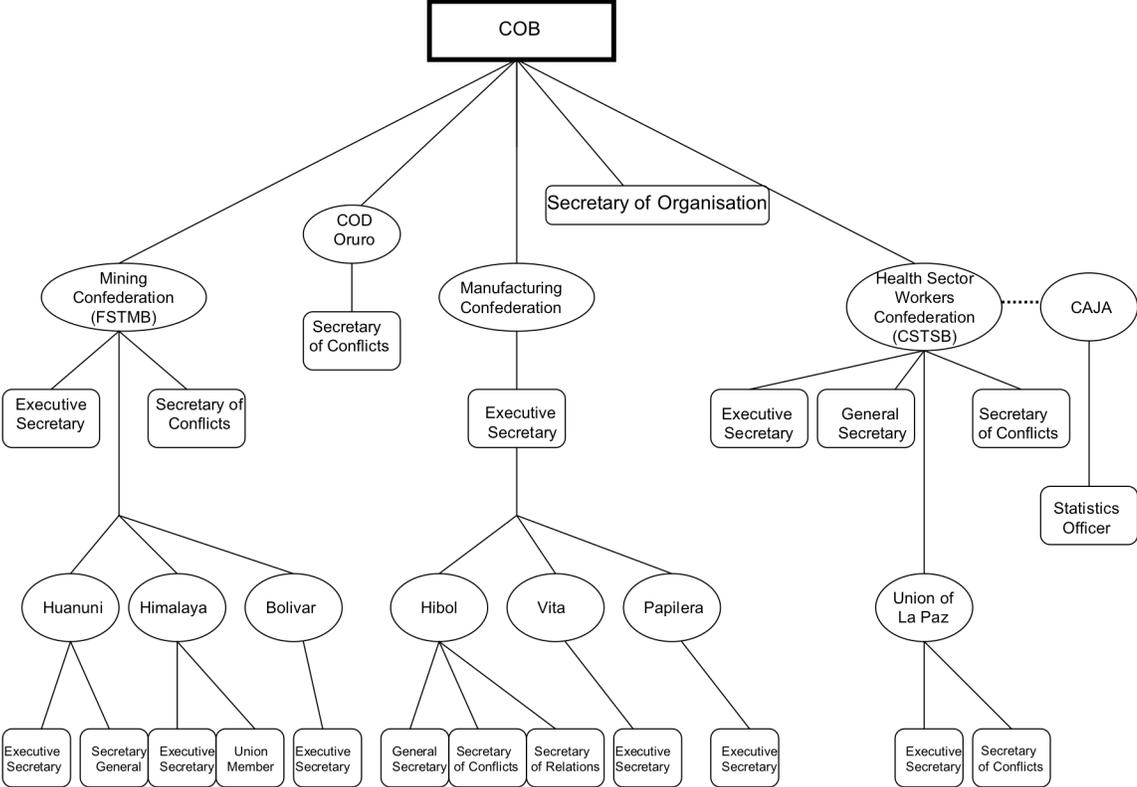
The final group we chose to interview, group three, comprised of non-COB affiliated and non-government affiliated civilians. We felt that gaining perspective of individuals outside of the organised labour movement and outside of the government would add another perspective to our research. As we have discussed, this thesis is primarily concerned with if and how the COB is able to use political freedoms such as the rights to association and expression to increase awareness and better understanding of pressing social issues. Thus, the perspective of non-COB members who will potentially be affected by the outcome of such processes or who witness the actions of the COB in these developments will greatly enhance our understanding of if and how the COB is able to influence democratisation. Moreover, interviewees from group 3 included individuals from across the political and social spectrum so as to try and avoid certain biases that could arise from sympathisers of the left who might be more kind in their views of the Morales government and/or the COB or members from the right who might be more critical. The same measures were taken to interview individuals in this group from upper, middle and lower socio-economic classes. For group three we interviewed a reporter who covers labour issues for the *La Patria* newspaper, the superintendent of business (an organisation independent of the central government), an economist and sociologist from the Centre for the Studies of Labour and Agrarian Development, *Centro de Estudios para el Desarrollo y Agrario* (CEDLA), a research organisation in La Paz, a political activist and anthropologist, and a social worker.

Our sample groups for our questionnaire dissemination included at least one union from each of our chosen sectors – in the case of the mining sector we disseminated questionnaires to three unions. We chose the unions within the mining sector partially

based on criteria discussed in section 5.3.1 and partly based on our ability to access certain private unions. Within the manufacturing sector we also experienced problems gaining access to rank-and-file and were thus limited to disseminating questionnaires in a single union.

In the end we were able to collect 186 completed questionnaires between the three sectors; 64 percent from miners, 28 percent from manufacturers and eight percent from health sector workers. Alongside of our data from questionnaires we were also able to conduct 30 elite interviews; 70 percent from members of the COB or COB-affiliated organisations, 17 percent from government officials and 13 percent from non-affiliated civilians.

Figure 2 – Breakdown of Elite Interviews within the COB



Note: Figure 1 shows job title and organisation of each elite interviewed.

**5.3.4 Data Collection Techniques**

We began our investigations using a combined method of data collection techniques including personal, semi-structured elite interviews and questionnaire dissemination. Once in the field we also began collecting data from nationally published newspapers as well as

television news programmes representing sources from across the political spectrum. During our four months in the field we read three newspapers on a daily basis from the political left, centre and right. At the end of this process we ended up with nearly 200 newspaper articles specifically related to our research.

As mentioned above, our research methodology in general and our data collection and analysis techniques in particular were shaped by our ontological and epistemological positions. Traditional positivists would seek to use solely quantitative methods such as questionnaire dissemination in hopes of obtaining a certain degree of accuracy, generalisability, convenience and replicability (Marshall and Rossman, 1999:130-131). The advantage in this type of data collection is that it offers such benefits while allowing for a greater degree of objectivity. Certain disadvantages of quantitative data might be that ‘they are of little value for examining complex social relationships or intricate patterns of interaction’ (ibid). In order to mitigate for the potential limitations of our quantitatively-based surveys we intended to carry out elite interviews and focus groups. While in questionnaires respondents are limited in what they can express, in interviews respondents are free to expand and bring up issues as they wish, often shedding light on topics not pre-conceived of or addressed in a questionnaire. Additionally, elites were chosen based on their increased experience or expertise in a certain area. Thus, through the interview process topics or issues that the interviewer was unaware of could be exposed and expanded upon by said experts.

On the other hand, certain drawbacks of interviews might include increased time requirements, problems in replicability and the bias that is formed between the interviewer and the interviewee. However, one might lessen the effect of such a bias through being cognizant that ‘the participant’s perspective on the phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it, not as the researcher views it’ and that ‘the most important aspect of the interviewer’s approach concerns conveying the attitude that the participant’s views are valuable and useful’ (Marshall and Rossman, 1999:108). This is particularly relevant for our research in regards to rank-and-file perceptions of democracy within their unions, their feelings towards the Morales government and other qualitative perceptions we use to assess certain indicators within the COB. Additionally, and as we have already discussed, our ontological and epistemological beliefs have shaped which strength

indicators we have chosen. In particular our decision to examine the historical identity of the COB and how certain characteristics such as independence from government and a collectivist ideology have become embedded in the labour movement throughout its existence was directly influenced by our ontological and epistemological views.

#### **5.3.4.1 Elite Interviews**

As stated above, we conducted 21 elite interviews within the COB which were conducted horizontally across all three sectors as well as vertically, covering local unions, federations, the departmental outposts of the COB (CODs) and the COB, as seen in Figure 2. Additionally, we conducted nine interviews with elites outside of the labour movement, partially in an effort to help triangulate responses. Most times interviews were conducted in the respondent's place of work. Interviews usually lasted between 20 and 90 minutes. At the beginning of each interview we obtained permission from the respondent to audio record the session. In tandem with the audio recording we took notes during interviews in an effort to clarify any potentially ambiguous responses and noted non-spoken cues such as body language. While our pre-constructed questions going into each interview were identical, often time constraints or the natural flow of the interview prevented all of the questions from being asked or responded to fully.

The questions discussed below are the ones that were pre-conceived and that we intended to ask during each interview. Alongside of creating general questions regarding such themes as the perception of the current strength of the labour movement and the most pressing problems currently facing members, we aimed and grouped our questioning towards the strength index we developed for assessing the current ability of the COB to influence democratisation.

The first grouping of questions dealt with the relationship between the COB and the Morales government. These questions were constructed so as to help us assess the level of strength of the COB as it pertains to our second strength indicator, the relationship between organised labour and the government. We hypothesised, based in the literature, that the closer or more sympathetic organised labour is to a government the less likely said movement is to publicly scrutinise government-proposed policies. Therefore, questions within this area included: what was the relationship between the COB and MAS like prior to the presidential inauguration of Morales; what role did the COB play in his election;

what has been the most symbiotic element of said relationship; what has been the most contentious; what has been the biggest COB advancement under the MAS; what has been the greatest detraction; what is the most significant difference between the COB's relationship with the Morales government and previous neoliberal governments; how has the relationship changed over the course of Morales' presidency; what COB demands are the government most likely to realise; what demands is it least likely to grant; and what effect might such preferences have on the relationship?

The second group of questions sought to uncover information regarding the solidarity of the COB. From this group of questions we sought information that would help us analyse the third strength indicator in our thesis, solidarity. As discussed above, solidaristic and unified labour movements are more likely to draw greater attention to the causes they pursue than would weaker and/or less solidaristic movements. Questions for this group included: how is industrial action organised throughout the labour movement and what is the relationship between each level of the labour movement regarding interaction, dialogue, unified mobilisations, *et cetera*?

The final set of questions that we posed to elites dealt with the commitment of members to COB causes, our fourth and final strength indicator. Above we outlined the two sub-indicators that form member commitment, union democracy and ideology. Based in the literature, we hypothesised that the more democratic members perceived their union the more likely they were to commit to union causes. Additionally, we hypothesised that the type and pervasiveness of ideology within a labour movement would affect members' commitment. To better understand these issues in the context of the contemporary COB the types of questions we asked in this group included: what are the strategic policy areas pursued by the COB; which individual and collective demands are brought forward; which type of demands are brought forward from below; which are most likely to be met; who does collective bargaining represent; how are dues collected; how are leaders elected; what are the requirements for becoming a leader; how are leaders paid; what is their salary; how long are their term limits; where does union/movement funding come from; is there an overriding ideology within the COB; and are there physical spaces for education as it pertains to unionism?

#### **5.3.4.2 Rank-and-File Questionnaires**

The second data collection technique we utilised was questionnaire dissemination (see Appendix). Where possible we hoped to make this a three-tiered process. We planned to pilot our initial surveys on local elites in order to better tailor our questionnaires towards the most relevant and pressing issues facing individual unions and the workers they embody. Once we piloted rank-and-file in each of our sectors we wanted to construct our surveys based partially on the results from such interactions. However, we were only able to pilot a small sample group within the mining sector. This was largely a result of time and resource constraints. In an attempt to mitigate the lack of benefits that would have been derived from focus groups – e.g. more tailored questions – we ended up constructing our questionnaires after interviewing several elites within the labour movement and piloting it among a small group of rank-and-file.

Following the piloting of our questionnaires the second stage of this process involved constructing final editions and administering relatively succinct questionnaires, involving around 24 questions – the first nine establishing demographic backgrounds. We aimed to keep the number of questions relatively low as we sought to obtain well thought through answers and presumed that the longer the questionnaires, the greater chance of disinterest. Normally, following interviews with local union leaders we would ask if we could disseminate the questionnaires directly to rank-and-file at their places of work. We tried to ensure that we did not focus our dissemination only at union meetings where perhaps only politically active workers might be in attendance, which could potentially bias our results. In unions that would permit us to disseminate the questionnaires at the places of work we did so and collected them in the same 20 minute time period. However, in other places that required workers to complete the questionnaires at home we were forced to return to the workplace the following day in order to collect them. Initially, we found some unionists – particularly within the mining sector – a bit reluctant to accept the questionnaires from us, perhaps as a result of us being a foreigner or outsider. In order to remedy this we enlisted the help of a local Bolivian woman to disseminate the questionnaires on one day and then return the next day to collect them. We also coded each questionnaire and the promise of complete anonymity was made explicit both verbally as questionnaires were disseminated as well as in writing on the questionnaires themselves. Finally, we assured rank-and-file

that neither union leaders nor government officials would have access to the questionnaires and the results were intended strictly for academic purposes.

In order to assess the veracity and attention respondents gave to each question we tested associations between five sequential questions in our questionnaires. Each of the questions pertained to the respondents' perceptions of her/his union. The first four questions asked, in order: 1) if the respondent felt that the union voices her/his demands at the national level; 2) if she/he felt that the union fights for her/his interests; 3) if the respondent felt that she/he is able to influence the direction of the union; and 4) if the respondent felt that she/he has the opportunity to become a labour leader. The subsequent question asked how respondents feel about their union in general. In order to assess whether respondents who were generally content with their union were marking all positive responses to these questions instead of individually thinking about each response, we ran a multivariate analysis. For the analysis we used respondents' feeling about their union as the independent variable and tested it against each of the four preceding questions. Our results showed that while there were statistically significant associations ( $p = 0.000$ ) between our independent variable and three of the questions, one question – pertaining to respondents' feelings about whether the union fought for their interests – was not found to be statistically significant. This specific question was positioned within the questionnaire in the middle of the four dependent questions. Because this question did not follow the same positive/negative pattern of association of the others, we worked under the assumption that respondents answered the questions individually and not as a group giving all the same answer. This brings up another point that we need to address here. The level of statistical significance that we used for this thesis was below 0.05 percent.

Finally, in our original research plans we intended to include follow-up focus groups with rank-and-file to more fully understand responses to the questionnaire. In the focus groups we hoped to get three or four groups of six to ten people from each sector. That would have given us a total of nine to 12 rank-and-file focus groups for our entire thesis. From these groups we hoped to draw out any issues important to the participants but not discussed in the questionnaires. However, given time and resource constraints we were unable to conduct such post-questionnaire focus groups.

#### **5.3.4.3 Media Content**

In conjunction with elite interviews and questionnaire dissemination we also collected newspaper articles and observed television news programming on a daily basis. While, this form of data collection was not as scientific as data collected through questionnaires nor perhaps as methodologically sound as elite interviews we felt that it would help our thesis in that data expressed in this medium would give us insight into the impact of COB actions beyond its internal structure, beyond private dealings with the government and into the public realm, which given the importance of public conceptualisation of pressing social issues in our study is highly relevant. We attempted to collect one newspaper each day from the most popular left-leaning paper, *La Patria*, the most popular centrist paper, *La Razon*, and the most popular right-leaning paper, *El Diario*. While we were not able to obtain each of the papers every day during our time in the field we were able to form a collection of over 200 articles directly related to the COB's role in pension reform through the loose method described above.

#### **5.3.5 Data Analysis Techniques**

Given the varied nature of our data collection techniques our data analyses respective of each technique also varied. In analysing our elite interviews we used a coding technique to help categorise comments into themed groups (Rubin, 1995:240; Hennie, 2010:96). The categories were constructed around each of our strength indicators – excluding historical identity – which were; relationship with the government, labour solidarity and member commitment. Once each interview was transcribed and coded we analysed the data as it related to our research questions.

The technique we used to analyse the data from our questionnaires was relatively basic in terms of traditional quantitative analysis. For the most part the data we collected through questionnaires was analysed through using basic SPSS functions, such as finding frequencies and percentages of certain responses in a given group. In several cases we used a Kruskal Wallis Test to assess the association between certain variables and groups. All of the quantitative data we collected was analysed through SPSS.

The final data analysis technique we used pertains to our collection of newspaper articles. We analysed this data by coding content that related to pension reform directly or the role of the COB in regard to pension reform.

## 5.4 Anticipated and Encountered Problems

The first problem that we anticipated was our ability to communicate with interviewees. However, our level of Spanish seemed coherent enough to conduct our interviews and we encouraged respondents to ask us to repeat or clarify a question if they did not understand it. Additionally, we did not encounter any respondents who did not speak Spanish as their primary working language.

The second potentially significant problem we envisaged was gaining access to interviewees and union members and/or potentially reluctant gatekeepers. Surprisingly, during our time in the field we never encountered a gatekeeper unwilling to speak with us directly or put us in contact with an interviewee. Most often we were able to gain access to participants for our elite interviews by establishing relationships either through third party contacts, through regular interaction with potential interviewees or by being referred by other elites and/or gatekeepers we had already interviewed. For instance, we spent several weeks in Oruro, the epicentre of the Bolivian mining industry. During our time there we would go to the COD-Oruro several times per week in the hopes that members would become more trusting of us. Eventually, we befriended the office manager who then arranged meetings for us with various elites within the mining sector.

While our research methods were initially chosen based on our ontological and epistemological views, the ability or extent to which they were utilised varied while we were in the field due to unforeseen barriers. For instance, in certain sectors it was much easier to implement questionnaires, such as in the public mining sector. However, in other sectors or sub-sectors, particularly privately-owned firms within the manufacturing sector and privately-run mines, it was much more difficult to access unionists and thus we were only able to disseminate questionnaires at one manufacturing plant and one private mine. The reasons behind such difficulties were largely due to our inability to persuade private management to allow us to engage with workers. The result of these difficulties was less quantitative data from the manufacturing sector than from the mining sector.

A further difficulty we faced was time. Due to the amount of time spent accessing elites for interviews and disseminating questionnaires to miners and manufacturers we were left with much less time to disseminate questionnaires to health sector workers, resulting in fewer completed questionnaires. Another difficulty related to time constraints was our

inability to access certain informal sectors. We intentionally did not focus our investigations on *campesino* groups for reasons laid out in section 5.3.1 of this chapter. However, we did attempt to interview the head of the informal miners confederation. On three separate occasions we went to the confederation's office, which was located at the top of a steep and long hill in La Paz. On each attempt we were told by the receptionist we could meet with the executive secretary of the *coopertivista*'s confederation. However, every time we ended up waiting between 90 minutes and two hours for the interview, only to be told that perhaps the following day would be better. In the end we were unable to conduct this interview.

While we did face difficulties in terms of being able to equally disseminate questionnaires among the three sectors in our thesis, which in turn resulted in varying levels of data particularly in the health sector, we were able to conduct roughly the same number of elite interviews across the three sectors.

#### **5.4.1 Conducting Research in a Developing Country**

Doing research in a developing country such as Bolivia presents certain problems that might not be encountered in more socio-economically advanced countries. One problem that we came across while conducting our field work was the frequent disregard for timetables. On many occasions we would agree on a time to hold an interview or disseminate surveys and the individual would not turn up, be too busy with other things or need to reschedule for some undisclosed reason. We were only able to slightly mitigate this problem by being flexible and prepared to undertake other research in the event that our original plans did not materialise.

However, while certain professionalisms such as timetables seemed loose in Bolivia and potentially hampered some of our research, other characteristics actually made conducting research easier. For instance, we were given access to numerous executives of various organisations inside the COB, the government and other institutions with little complication or prior planning. This made it possible to get information via elite interviews from many key figures that in a more socio-economically developed country we might not have been able to because of complicated bureaucratic measures.

#### **5.4.2 Research Biases**

There are several areas of our thesis, discussed in this chapter, where potential biases could negatively impact the results found in the discussions below. The first area has to do with our sample bias regarding the sectors and mines on which we chose to focus our research. Due to the nature of purposive sampling we deliberately chose sectors that were active within the COB. By active we mean that each has participated in the planning and executing of COB industrial actions historically and leading up to the time of writing. Moreover, and as we explore more thoroughly below, each one of our three chosen sectors is important to the overall strength of the COB as stated in elite interviews. Thus, it could be argued that we only chose important and influential sectors within the COB and ignored the role of other, lesser sectors. The central aim of this thesis is to assess the role of the COB in processes of democratisation. Being a labour confederation the COB is made up of various labour organisations. Therefore, the strength of these lower organisations will have an effect on the overall ability of the COB to influence political processes. If we chose to focus on an inactive sector within the COB – such as the construction sector – then our discussions of solidarity within the labour confederation would not have been related to issues surrounding the current government or the issue of pension reform but rather the construction sectors lack of activity in COB actions for other reasons. We deliberately chose active unions so that we could see if factors such as solidarity and the relationship with the government affected each other and the possibility of mobilising and thus influencing democratisation in this way.

The second area of our research that might have contained bias is in the elites we chose for interviews. The majority of interviewees were selected based on purposive sampling and snowballing. Prior to conducting our research we identified individuals from various organisations that would help provide us with expert knowledge as well as increase the possibility of triangulating our results. As we discussed above, the primary method we used to obtain interviews was through gatekeepers – who were most often office managers or receptionists – who were nearly always willing to grant us access to the respondent for which we asked. Although we did engage in it several times, we were wary of gaining access to elites through other elites due to the potential problem it can present in that we might be ‘guided’ to individuals the initial elites wanted us to meet. This might have had an effect on our research as certain interviews became less objective and instead directed

by the particular elite's agenda. We countered this by interviewing individuals of a similar position – of whom we gained access to independently – in addition to the one recommended to us by the elite. Thus, we feel that we were able to mitigate the potential bias of only obtaining information from interviewees to which we were directed so that we would get the information the gatekeeper or recommending elite would want us to get. In nearly all of the cases we were able to speak with the respondent for which we pre-identified as important to our research.

### **5.4.3 Research Ethics**

Perhaps the most pressing issue in terms of research ethics for our thesis was the potential risk posed to respondents from their employer and/or the government. Hypothetically, respondents might face negative consequences if they responded negatively to certain questions regarding their employer and/or the government. However, such perspectives were central to our research and thus required diligent attention to ensure no negative consequences would occur to respondents. Hennie claims that 'the interest in topics that are by nature sensitive heightens the need for ethical consideration in qualitative research' (Hennie, 2010:48). In light of this discussion we ensured anonymity to all rank-and-file who responded to our questionnaires. Regarding elite interviews, we gave interviewees the option of remaining anonymous in our thesis through not divulging their names. However, none of the respondents minded if we used their real names in our research after we explained the purpose and potential availability of the results. Such openness was not surprising given the regularity by which members of the public, such as our respondents, commented negatively about the government in the press.

Additionally, we informed each respondent prior to conducting our research that the interview or questionnaire was totally voluntary. As argued by Babbie, this inherently goes against the benefit of generalisability as only respondents who want to participate are going to and thus research might become biased as a result (Babbie, 1998:438). However, in social research and in our thesis in particular such potential bias was unavoidable.

Finally, we made sure that we were cognisant of the fact that respondents were freely giving their personal time to benefit our research. As such, we disseminated pens for respondents to keep after they had filled out the questionnaires. These were small tokens of gratitude but our participants seemed excited and grateful for receiving them.

## 5.5 Methodological Recommendations

During our time both constructing and conducting the research project outlined in this thesis we encountered several problematic areas that could be avoided in the future.

The first recommendation would be to develop a well-defined research project before embarking on field-work. This will help make a researcher's time in the field more efficient and productive. However, this does not mean that the project should be so rigid that it cannot be altered if certain, unforeseen situations present themselves in the field. For instance, in choosing specific groups to study one should identify secondary and perhaps even tertiary groups in the event that the primary group is unavailable. Similarly, it is important to establish a methodology that is well defined prior to departure for the field but not one in which the sequence of procedures is so rigid that it cannot be varied. For example, if the second and third aspects of one's field-work depend on the completion of the first part and the first part is taking much longer to achieve than anticipated latter parts could suffer. If possible, a better methodology would be structured so that if one part is developing slowly other elements could be conducted simultaneously.

In tandem with our first methodological recommendation, our second would be to establish as many contacts as possible prior to embarking on field-work. This will not only help to make the time in the field more efficient but could also help raise any unforeseen logistical problems, thus enabling the researcher to address them before departing for the field.

Our third recommendation is that when conducting elite interviews make sure that the researcher clearly and fully understands responses. In our experience, given time constraints or scheduling conflicts respondents were likely to only allow one full interview. Because of this, it is important to ensure that the researcher is clear as to what the respondent is saying. If language is a potential barrier it is important to hire an interpreter. Additionally, if a response is unclear ask the interviewee to clarify. This will help with later analysis in that results will not have to be assumed but can be clearly defined through interviewee responses.

Fourthly, in our experience the importance of familiarising oneself with potential elites and/or gatekeepers cannot be overstated. For instance, when seeking interviews at the Oruro-COB, we continually appeared at the head office during a three week period and spoke informally with office staff, rank-and-file, *et cetera*. When the time came to get

interviews with elites, they appeared less suspicious of our intentions and more willing to divulge information important for our thesis. If accessing elites does become a problem, hiring a local research assistant could prove useful in breaking down such potential barriers.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

This chapter provided us with insight into the philosophical and mechanical components that shaped our research methodology. The central aim of this thesis was to construct a methodology that would help establish a basis for uncovering and analysing data in way that would encourage sound conclusions to our central research questions. In this chapter we discussed what we believe to be the most useful methods, given our philosophical background, for obtaining information on the COB and its role in processes of democratisation. In particular we argued that because of our post-positivist epistemological view and our desire for data triangulation our research would benefit from using both qualitative and quantitative methods. We also explored how and why we chose our sample groups and how we applied our chosen research methods to obtain information related to our research topic. Moving forward we look to utilise the methods presented in this chapter throughout the forthcoming discussions.

## **Chapter 6. Labour's Relationship with the Government**

Evo Morales' rise to the presidency was initially supported by the majority of the COB, who were optimistic about the type of changes Morales was promising to introduce. As early as 2003 influential COB leaders such as Jaime Solares and Pedro Montes helped draw support for Morales in working class areas of El Alto and beyond (Muruchi, 31/7/2008). However, less than two years after Morales' presidential victory excitement within the COB began to waver. It soon became clear that, unlike virtually every other leftist party since 1952, the MAS was not subordinate to the COB and enjoyed an independent electoral base outside of COB membership (Kohl and Farthing, 2006:170). This new, political relationship between the historical vanguard of the left, the COB, and the relatively nascent MAS, along with the increasing political agency of peasant-based groups has created conflict between the labour confederation and Morales' political party as well as within the COB itself.

In this chapter we examine the nature of the relationship between the COB and the Morales government. We then briefly discuss how this relationship might affect the COB's ability to mobilise against the government. This second aspect will serve to set up our analysis in Chapter 9, which examines if and to what degree the COB mobilised against the Morales government. In Chapter 2 we examined literature that discussed cases where the willingness of organised labour to mobilise against and/or be openly critical of government-sponsored policies was less likely due to the fact that the government was associated with the labour movement – e.g. the case of the Argentine labour movement during Carlos Menem's presidency. In conjunction with such literature we also explored established theories from authors such as Aymarta Sen who hypothesised that if governments are allowed to implement social policies without conceptualisation both procedural and substantive democracy is more likely to suffer. Thus, in this chapter we intend to uncover the nature of the relationship between the COB and the Morales government in hopes of better understanding the former's willingness to mobilise against the latter.

In the first section of this chapter we examine the relationship between the COB and the Morales government. We do this through an exploration of the data collected from both our qualitative results – in the form of responses to questions surrounding Evo Morales’ government from elite interviews – and our quantitative results – in the form of results from questionnaires disseminated among rank-and-file in our three representative sectors. In the second section of this chapter we briefly discuss our results as they pertain to the likelihood of the COB mobilising against the Morales government.

## **6.1 A Varied Relationship**

According to our respondents the current relationship between the COB and Evo Morales’ government ranges from ‘non-existent’, to ‘the same as the relationship between the labour movement and the previous neoliberal governments’, to ‘while not perfect still better than before’, to finally ‘a sympathetic and accommodating government’. For our analysis the current relationship is best defined as varied and this status is the root of much division within the COB. Additionally, and perhaps signalling even greater divide within the movement is the fact that even *within* certain sectors some union members support President Morales’ government while others seem to be heavily critical. However, for now we leave such discussions regarding the divisiveness within the COB due to varied levels of support for Morales’ government – a topic we return to in Chapter 7 – and move deeper into an examination of the relationship between the COB as it pertains to the willingness of COB members to mobilise against the government. The structure of the following discussion begins with an exploration into the views of executive COB members, government officials and non-affiliated civilians regarding the relationship between the COB and the Morales government. In the second part of this section we examine the relationship between the organised labour movement and the government as it pertains to non-executive COB organisations and members, including union leaders and rank-and-file. In this second part we analyse the qualitative data from elite interviews with union leaders in conjunction with quantitative data obtained from questionnaires disseminated among rank-and-file.

The COB executive we interviewed, Sosimo Paniagua, the Secretary General of Organisation, stated that there is no relationship between the COB and the Morales government. Paniagua did concede that the relationship between the previous neoliberal

governments and the COB was more confrontational and that the relationship between the COB and the MAS is more cordial. However, he also claimed that any relationship with the MAS is the same as the relationships with the previous neoliberal governments. Just as neoliberal governments failed to address the demands of the COB so to has the MAS government (Paniagua, 6/5/2008).

Respondents from the Ministry of Labour and one MAS official had similar sentiments to those expressed above by Paniagua regarding the relationship between the COB and the Morales government. The Director of Union Affairs at the Ministry of Labour, Daniel Santalla, claimed that the relationship between the two organisations was not so close, partly as a result of the privileged position of *campesino* and indigenous groups within the MAS government. However, this same respondent highlighted the fact that the government wanted to improve relations with the COB (Santalla, 7/5/2008). Comments from a second official from the Ministry of Labour, Orlando Barreta, mirrored those of the first, claiming that the government was one made up of social movements, but predominately of the indigenous variety. Barreta also stated that certain sectors have more influence within the Morales government than others. Additionally, he claimed that because of the Morales government's inability to negotiate with the COB as a whole, the government will bargain directly with certain unions or sectors within the COB itself. Alongside of the Morales government's preferential treatment of certain groups over others, our respondent claimed that ineffective COB leadership lacked the skills necessary to effectively interact with a sympathetic government (Barreta, 29/4/2008). As we discuss in Chapter 8, union members themselves had certain negative comments related to leadership within the labour movement.

The member of the MAS we interviewed, Wilfredo Muruchi, Coordinator of Fixed Activities, claimed that during Morales' campaign to become president and immediately following his victory the COB was supportive of the government. However, since that time the labour confederation has distanced itself from the government and the relationship between the MAS and the COB has become tense. He also claimed that leadership within the MAS itself is a significant cause for the strained relationship between his party and the COB. This same respondent stated that while Morales himself is a good leader, much of the other leaders within the MAS are unable to negotiate effectively with the COB. He

also said that similar problems plagued the UDP government in the early 1980s, namely that ineffective leaders within the party were unable to work through issues with the COB in a productive manner (Muruchi, 31/7/2008).

In line with what Muruchi stated, a reporter from *La Patria* who covers labour affairs for the newspaper, Juan Carlos Yapari, claimed that the COB was very excited and optimistic for Morales' victory when he became president. However, since then the two organisations have become increasingly distant. Again, paralleling what we heard in our other interviews, Yapari claimed that the preferential treatment of Evo Morales' government towards sectors such as *campesinos* and *cooperativistas* has caused tension between the COB and the government as well as between the COB and these aforementioned groups. As proof of and as a result of this preferential treatment Yapari claimed that many *campesinos* and *cooperativistas* occupy important posts within the MAS government (Yapari, 13/6/2008). Several of our respondents pointed to the implementation of programs like *Juancito Pinto* and *La Renta Dignidad* – an allowance for impoverished families to send children to school and a basic income, respectively – as government-funded measures specifically designed for rural inhabitants. However, contrary to what several of our interviewees indicated, the Morales government has passed important measures that have directly benefited members of the COB. Among these was the abolishment of article 55 of Law 21060, a remnant of neoliberalism that made it easier for companies to hire and fire employees. Additionally, the Morales government has begun acting as a third party mediator between private companies and workers. The most obvious benefit of this has been that raises for private sector employees have increased in-line with those of public sector workers (Santalla, 7/5/2008).

There are several reoccurring themes that presented themselves in the elite interviews above. First and foremost, according to the interviewees the relationship between the COB and the Morales government is not close. Moreover, negotiations between the two are difficult, making the relationship more distant. Additional causes of the strained relationship – according to these sources – include ineffective leadership in both the COB and the MAS as well as the government's preferential treatment of certain groups over others.

The point regarding specific groups supposedly receiving special treatment from the government – including certain sectors within the COB – is important and interesting for our thesis. The strength indicator we examine in this chapter – relationship with the government – is built around the hypothesis that the more positively or closely associated a group is with the government the less likely it is that this group will publicly scrutinise the government over proposed social policies, even if such policies are harmful to their own interests.

In the following sub-sections we seek to assess the relationship between the COB and the three sectors we studied in this thesis – mining, manufacturing and health – to determine how rank-and-file as well as union leaders perceive the Morales government. Again, this will set up our discussion in Chapter 9 where we analyse which sectors were willing to scrutinise and mobilise against the government. This examination will also give us insight into if and how Morales' presidency has caused tension or disunity within the COB as a result of some sectors being more supportive of the government than others, a theme we explore further in Chapter 7.

### **6.1.1 Within the Mining Sector**

Elite interviews within the mining sector from public and private union leaders as well as members of the FSTMB and COD-Oruro produced similar responses to those discussed above. Hernan Chaparo, union leader of the private mine Bolivar, stated that like all governments the MAS treats different sectors in different ways. He claimed that the Morales government preferred to work with *campesinos* over miners. He also said that the pattern of unpredictable treatment from the government gave the miners more cause to remain independent, as is stated in their by-laws. Chaparo concluded by saying that there are no revolutionary comrades within the COB government (Chaparo, 17/6/2008). Vidal Colque, the Secretary of Conflicts for the COD-Oruro and a representative of the public Huanuni mine, stated that the relationship between organised miners and the Morales government was not close because many within his sector felt the Morales government had ignored miners' requests and instead chose to benefit rural inhabitants (Colque, 5/6/2008).

One interviewee, Guido Mitma, at the time of our interview the union leader of Huanuni and eventually the Secretary General of the FSTMB, had a slightly different view from those above. Mitma claimed that while miners would continue to struggle to be the

vanguards of revolutionary change, there were many lawyers in positions of power within the government and that these lawyers were enabling and sustaining certain ‘oligarchs’ to retain power (Mitma, 16/6/2008). Mitma suggested that perhaps the problem is not with the Morales government itself but with forces beyond its control, such as the congress where the MAS did not have a two-thirds majority.

While there are both certain truths and fallacies within the opinions of the miners above, the main point and a continual theme that came up in our elite interviews with organised miners was that their relationship with the Morales government was not close and that they sought to remain independent from the government. We now examine whether rank-and-file responses within the mining sector were in line with union leaders’.

Responses from rank-and-file miners to question 12 of our survey asked respondents about their level of confidence in the government of Evo Morales as compared to its neoliberal predecessors. Of the salaried miners in our study 43.3 percent indicated that they had the ‘same’ or a ‘lower’ level of confidence in the government of Evo Morales as compared to the previous neoliberal governments. This evidences that while the majority (66.7 percent) of organised miners had more confidence in President Morales’ government than its neoliberal predecessors there was still a large portion (43.3 percent) that did not have a positive<sup>23</sup> view of the MAS government.

By breaking down rank-and-file miners’ feelings about the Morales government by their specific mines we can get a better understanding about how the sector as a whole views the government. To begin, we tested to see if there was a statistically significant difference between the mines regarding their level of confidence in the Morales government as compared to its neoliberal predecessors. Using a Kruskal Wallis Test we found the difference to be statistically significant ( $p = .004$ ). The results shown in Table 4 clearly evidence the differences between the mines in our study.

Table 4 demonstrates that the majority (61.9 percent) of miners from Colquiri had ‘the same’ or lower level of confidence in Evo as his neoliberal predecessors. Additionally, Colquiri is the only mine where respondents expressed ‘much lower’ levels of confidence

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<sup>23</sup> Here we define a positive response as a response of ‘higher’ or ‘much higher’ level of confidence in Evo Morales’ government as compared to its neoliberal predecessors.

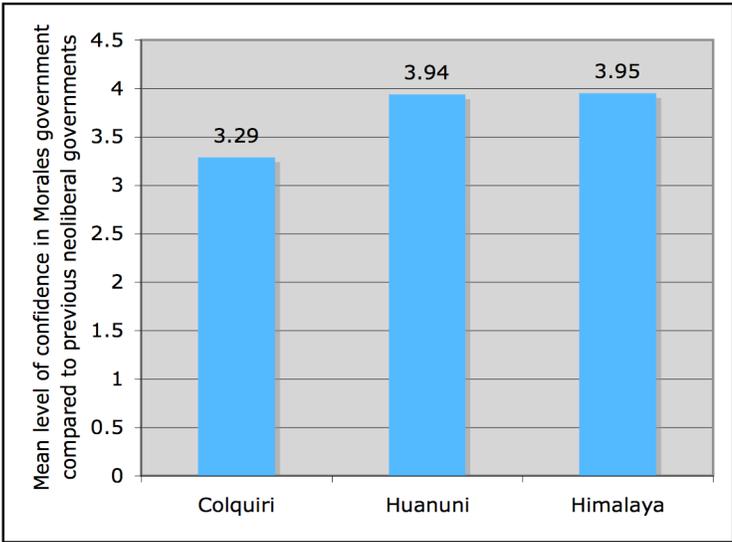
in the Morales government. The majority of respondents from the other two mines in our thesis had ‘higher’ or ‘much higher’ levels of confidence in Evo as compared to his neoliberal predecessors (Huanuni, 75.7 percent; Himalaya, 63.6 percent).

Table 4 – Breakdown of Level of Confidence in the Morales Government across Mines

	Huanuni %	Colquiri %	Himalaya %	As % of Total (N)
<b>Much Lower</b>	0	4.8	0	2.1 (2)
<b>Lower</b>	6.1	9.5	9.1	8.2 (8)
<b>The Same</b>	18.2	47.6	27.3	33 (32)
<b>Higher</b>	51.5	28.6	22.7	35.1 (34)
<b>Much Higher</b>	24.2	9.5	40.9	21.6 (21)
<b>Total %</b>	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0 (97)

Figure 3 makes the difference in levels of confidence in the Morales government as compared to its neoliberal predecessors more apparent. Both averages of Huanuni and Himalaya signify an average score of essentially ‘higher’ (4), whereas the average of Colquiri miners is much closer to ‘the same’ (3). We can conclude that both Huanuni and Himalaya had more positive levels of confidence in the Morales government as compared to its neoliberal predecessors, whereas miners from Colquiri seem to have the same level of confidence in the MAS government as compared to the previous neoliberal governments.

Figure 3 – Mean Level of Confidence in the Morales Government by Mine



\*Responses were scored as such: 1=Much Lower, 2=Lower, 3=The Same, 4=Higher and 5=Much Higher

From this data we can deduce that there are significant differences in miners' views of the Morales government within the mining sector. Important to notice is the fact that miners from the private mine of Colquiri had generally lower levels of confidence in the MAS government than miners from the public or public/private mines of Huanuni and Himalaya. Interestingly, the views of the government as perceived by leaders within the private sector mines – such as Bolivar and Colquiri – and the corresponding rank-and-file showed that they viewed the Morales government the same as previous neoliberal governments. Additionally, while several leaders from public sector mines did claim the relationship with the Morales government was not close and questioned the government's relationship with other groups, at least one leader – Mitma – blamed forces outside of the government for problems within Bolivia. In general, rank-and-file from the public sector mines viewed the Morales government more positively than the previous neoliberal governments. In Chapter 9 we will return to a discussion of the significance of certain mines having less confidence in the Morales government than others and what effect it had on a particular mine's willingness to mobilise against the government. For now we turn to a discussion of how manufacturers in our study viewed the MAS government.

### **6.1.2 Within the Manufacturing Sector**

Leaders from within the manufacturing sector viewed the Morales government differently than the majority of leaders from within the mining sector. The union leader from the paper manufacturer in El Alto, Hector Maidana, claimed that while Morales's tenure has not been perfect it has made great strides towards reclaiming Bolivian 'dignity' which had been lost during the neoliberal years (Maidana 3/7/2008). Maidana also stated that the manufacturing sector had gained much under the Morales government, referring to the previously mentioned wage increases within the private sector.

Carlixto Chipara, the Executive Secretary of the Federation of Manufacturers in La Paz, stated that while the current situation is not perfect, it is far less combustible than before (Chipara 24/6/2008). In reference to neoliberalism, Chipara claimed that it was a difficult period for manufacturers and workers in this sector 'grew tired of it'. As discussed above, during neoliberalism many of the previously state-run factories were dismantled into smaller, private companies. Moreover, this sector suffered significantly from lose hiring and firing practices enable through the passage of Decree 21060. For these reasons

Chipara stated that manufacturers supported the election of Morales. He also claimed that Morales stood for changing Bolivia for the better and his sector supported this change – he specifically pointed to better wages and the establishment of a minimum wage. Furthermore, Chipara said that the president was doing everything he could to make Bolivia better but that it was a difficult task. He also claimed that his sector must compromise with the Morales government because the President has been working for Bolivia with desire and capacity in a way not evident in presidents of the past. Chipara did say that he does not want President Morales to abuse power by granting favours to special groups but instead to benefit all workers. He concluded by stating that because the process of change facing the Morales government is so difficult the manufacturers need to have patience (Chipara, 24/6/2008).

There are at least two key points to take from the Chipara interview. First, manufacturers such as Chipara had generally negative employment-related experiences during neoliberalism. Second, his call for patience regarding the Morales government is significant considering Chipara is a high ranking official within the manufacturing sector who has the potential to influence many manufacturing unionists. These are both points we return to in Chapter 9 when discussing the manufacturing sector's willingness to mobilise against the government.

The Secretary General of the Hibol factory in La Paz, Alofioni Condoni, had a similar view regarding the Morales government. Condoni claimed that the previous neoliberal governments only sought after the wellbeing of private capital without regard for workers. He claims that under the Morales government there have been changes to the benefit of workers and that while conditions are not perfect, they are better, including more dialogue with government agencies such as the Ministry of Labour (Condoni, 8/7/2008).

In comparison with leaders from the mining sector, leaders from the manufacturing sector seemed to have a more sympathetic view of the Morales government, to the point of suggesting that patience is needed to allow the government to continue on with its 'progress'. Additionally, elites from this sector often compared the MAS government against that of the previous neoliberal ones. Respondents cited the difficulties imposed on them by the neoliberal governments and the relative positive change implemented by the Morales government. Similar to how we proceeded above with miners we now assess the

relationship between manufacturers and the Morales government as perceived by rank-and-file.

Within the manufacturing sector 90.3 percent of rank-and-file respondents claimed they had a ‘higher’ (41.5 percent) or ‘much higher’ (48.8 percent) level of confidence in the Morales government than in its neoliberal predecessors. Only 7.3 percent had the same level of confidence in the Morales government as the previous neoliberal regimes and 2.4 percent had a lower level of confidence in the MAS government. Furthermore, there were no respondents within this sector who claimed their level of confidence was ‘much lower’ in the Morales government than in the previous neoliberal governments.

Both the number of positive responses – defined as a response of ‘higher’ or ‘much higher’ – and the relatively narrow spectrum of results would suggest both that manufacturers view the Morales government more positively than the mining sector and that this sector is more unified in their positive view of the president. In Chapter 9 we explore the effect this more positive view of the MAS government has had on manufacturers willingness to mobilise against the government.

### **6.1.3 Within the Health Sector**

Our interviews with unionised health sector elites were less sympathetic to the Morales government than comments made by their manufacturing counterparts. The Executive Secretary of the Confederation of Health Workers, Jose Luis Delgado, stated that the relationship between his sector and the government is ‘not so good’. He claimed that the government does not listen to their demands or requests for dialogue. Delgado concluded by saying that one fundamental thing regarding the relationship with the government is that the health sector does not allow political party affiliations with any leaders (Delgado, 10/7/2008).

Paralleling many of the sentiments of Delgado, the head of the health workers’ union at the General Hospital in La Paz, Lordes Ruiz, claimed that they – health workers – had much hope for the Morales government. However, following the President’s inauguration he has been deaf to their demands, which include better job security and better resources (Ruiz, 29/7/2008). In line with what was expressed by other interviewees Susana Tolativate, the Secretary of Conflicts for the health workers’ union at the General Hospital in La Paz,

claimed that because the health sector does not directly contribute to the production of primary goods, such as coca, they do not receive the type of attention and service from the government that groups such as rural farmers do (Tolativate, 29/7/2008).

Finally, the Secretary General of the Confederation of Health Workers, Silvio Flores, stated that the health workers have had many difficulties with the Morales government (Flores, 18/7/2008). Perhaps Flores was pointing to events such as the 10-day general strike in 2007 conducted by health sector workers in which they were docked pay because the government deemed it was an illegal industrial action (Delgado, 10/7/2008).

In general, health sector leaders suggested that the relationship between their organisations and the Morales government was not very close. Most felt that the government did not listen to their demands nor was it effective at cultivating dialogue between the two institutions, themes that were expressed by both executive COB leaders as well as government officials. One difference between health sector leaders and mining leaders was that the latter – notably the union leader Mitma from the Huanuni mine – seemed to pass the blame of problems facing workers and wider Bolivia away from Morales onto other actors, particularly influential lawyers and the ‘oligarchs’ they seek to keep in power. All of the health sector leaders we interviewed seemed to blame the Morales government for failures in negotiations with the labour movement and failures facing Bolivia in general. We now turn our attention to how health sector rank-and-file viewed the Morales government.

Health sector rank-and-file’s collective level of confidence in the Morales government as compared to its neoliberal predecessors was similar to this sector’s leaders as well as salaried miners. The majority – 53.9 percent – of unionists we surveyed within the health sector had a positive level of confidence in the Morales government as compared to its neoliberal predecessors – 15.4 percent ‘much higher’ and 38.5 percent ‘higher’. Of the respondents who did not respond positively to this question, 15.3 percent claimed their level of confidence was the ‘same’ as the previous neoliberal governments while 30.8 percent stated it was ‘much lower’ than its neoliberal predecessors. Another similarity between the miners and health sector workers in this thesis was the fairly even distribution between positive responses (53.9) and negative responses (46.1) regarding the level of confidence in the Morales government among health sector workers.

Overall, these results suggest a larger portion of health sector workers had a negative level of confidence – defined as responses including ‘the same’, ‘lower’ and ‘much lower’ – in the Morales government as compared to manufacturers. Additionally, the health sector as a whole was split regarding its collective level of confidence in the Morales government. Again, the ramifications of these findings in regards to the effect the relationship between organised labour and the government has on the former’s willingness to mobilise against the latter will be explored in Chapter 9.

## 6.2 Discussion

The majority (65.6 percent) of rank-and-file across all of the sectors we investigated were more confident in the Morales administration than its neoliberal predecessors – see Figure 4 below. However, Table 5 also makes clear the fact that between and even within certain sectors there were varying levels of confidence in the Morales administration. Based in established theory we hypothesised that groups who were more closely aligned – or more sympathetic/more confident – in a government would be less likely to mobilise against said government than would non-aligned – or less sympathetic/less confident – groups. With this hypothesis in mind, we found in this chapter that at the highest level the COB and the Morales government’s relationship was distant, even though the majority of rank-and-file were more confident in the Morales administration than its neoliberal predecessors. This was based on data derived from elite interviews with executive members of the COB as well as government officials and non-affiliated civilians with expert knowledge of the situation. From these findings we hypothesise that the COB would be willing to mobilise against the Morales government.

Table 5 – Level of Confidence in Morales Administration compared to Neoliberal Predecessors by Sector

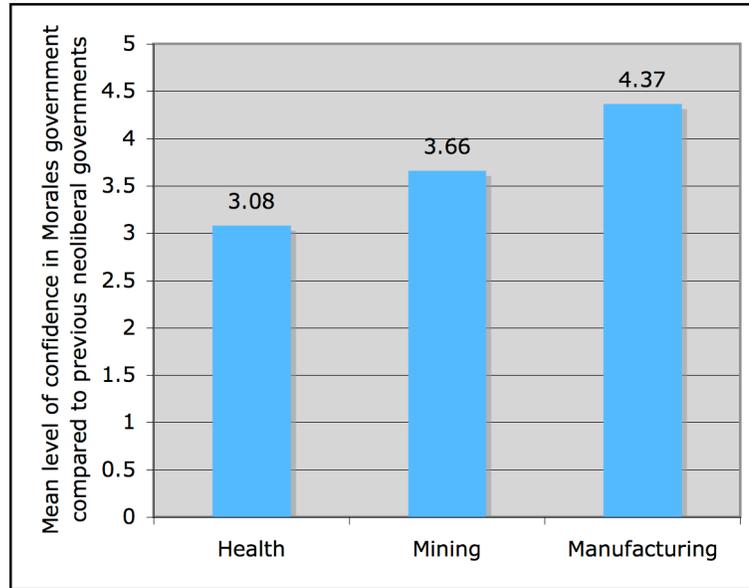
	<b>Miners %</b>	<b>Manufacturers %</b>	<b>Health Sector Workers %</b>	<b>As % of Total (N)</b>
<b>Much Lower</b>	2.1	0	30.8	4 (6)
<b>Lower</b>	8.2	2.4	0	6 (9)
<b>The Same</b>	33	7.3	15.3	24.5 (37)
<b>Higher</b>	35.1	41.5	38.5	37.1 (56)
<b>Much Higher</b>	21.6	48.8	15.4	28.5 (43)
<b>Total %</b>	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0 (151)

While we presume that at the executive level the COB would be willing to mobilise against the government, the hypotheses based on data taken from sectors *within* the COB suggests a slightly different outcome. We found that the majority (56.7 percent) of miners were more confident in the Morales government than its neoliberal predecessors. However, there was significant variation between the mines in our study – see Figure 3 above. We found that private sector miners from the Colquiri mine had the lowest average level of confidence (3.29) in the Morales administration as compared to its neoliberal predecessors among the three mines in our thesis. Again, based in the theory that frames this chapter alongside of the data we collected from elite interviews and questionnaires disseminated within this mine we hypothesise that Colquiri miners would be more willing to mobilise against the Morales government than the other two mines in our study.

In comparison we found that public sector miners from Huanuni had a higher average level of confidence (3.94) in the Morales government than its neoliberal predecessors than did miners from Colquiri (3.29). Moreover, our interview with the union leader of Huanuni – Mitma – revealed at least two things. First, Mitma highlighted and emphasised the importance of independence among miners from the government. Second, he seemed to blame influences other than the Morales administration for problems facing workers and Bolivia in general. This second finding was in contrast to what was stated by other union leaders within the mining sector. Based on these results it is difficult to hypothesise whether or not public miners from Huanuni would be willing to mobilise against the Morales government. On the one hand, there are the comments from union leaders stating the importance of the embedded independence of salaried miners from the government. On the other hand, we found that public sector miners in general were less critical of the government than their private sector counterparts – yet still more critical than manufacturing rank-and-file. Additionally, the FSTMB has been the vanguard of organised labour since its inception, a fact not lost on the federation's members. During our interview with Mitma he spoke of the need and duty to protect all workers and remain solidaristic in this endeavour. Thus, with these results we hypothesise that while public sector miners had a higher level of confidence in the Morales government than its neoliberal predecessors than did private sector miners and at least one highly influential union leader – Mitma – seemed somewhat sympathetic to the Morales government, the fact that the miners have historically and currently played such a influential role in the

development of the COB that they would mobilise against the government if so agreed upon by private sector miners, other involved sectors and the COB.

Figure 4 – Mean Level of Confidence in Morales Government by Sector



\*Responses were scored as such: 1=Much Lower, 2=Lower, 3=The Same, 4=Higher and 5=Much Higher

Through a similar analysis as to that above, results from manufacturers showed that rank-and-file had a higher average level of confidence (4.37) in the Morales government than its neoliberal predecessors than did any other sector in this thesis. Moreover, comments from labour leaders in this sector revealed sympathetic feelings towards the MAS, leading to calls for patience as the government's struggles to reclaim Bolivian dignity are a process and take time. Moreover, private sector employees such as those within manufacturing have directly benefited from the Morales government as a result of wage raises and the establishment of a minimum wage. Given the facts that manufacturing leaders seemed sympathetic to the Morales government and even called for patience during the administration's time in office, alongside of the relatively high average level of confidence in the Morales government as compared to its neoliberal predecessors among rank-and-file, we hypothesise that this sector would be reluctant to mobilise against the government.

The final sector we investigated in our thesis, public health workers, had the lowest average level of confidence (3.08) in the Morales government as compared to its neoliberal predecessors among our three sectors. In line with the low average level of confidence in the Morales government among rank-and-file were comments made by health sector

leaders. The union leaders we interviewed within this sector all commented on the absence of dialogue between them and the government. Additionally, many of these leaders also highlighted the preference the Morales government has shown to rural-based groups. Between the three sectors where we conducted elite interviews, leaders from the health sector were the least sympathetic and most critical of the Morales government. Based on these results we hypothesise that the health sector would be willing to mobilise against the government, a topic – along with those hypotheses explored above – we assess in greater detail in Chapter 9.

### **6.3 Conclusion**

In our theoretical discussion of why we chose to use the relationship between organised labour and the government as a strength indicator we stated that we would address two primary questions. The first question we posed was what is the COB's relationship with the Morales government? The second question we sought to answer was what affect did this relationship have on the COB's ability to influence democratisation. Based on the results above stemming from elite interviews and questionnaire dissemination we can conclude that the relationship between the COB and the Morales government is varied. In general, the majority of our respondents from the COB and the government perceived the relationship between their two institutions as distant. The reasons for this included the government's preferential treatment of certain groups over others. One group in particular that was cited as receiving special treatment was the *campesino* movement. However, as we discussed this group was not the only one that has gained under the Morales administration. The increase of the minimum wage and salary raises for private sector workers have also benefited formal sector workers, notable among those manufacturers. Another stated cause of conflict between the government and the COB was ineffective leadership within each of the organisations.

In response to the second question posed above, we will not be able to answer it until Chapter 9 when we discuss if and which sectors of the COB mobilised against the government and the effect this had on the COB's ability to influence democratisation. However, we can state that the varied responses from labour leaders and data from rank-and-file related to perspectives about the Morales government could have negative affects on labour solidarity, the next strength indicator utilised in this thesis. It is not a certainty

that divergent views within a labour confederation surrounding political parties signals segregated labour movements. However, if varied views about political parties within a labour movement lead certain groups to choose their support of a government over joining other labour organisations in industrial actions against said government, the solidarity of the movement in question is likely to become compromised. In Chapter 3 we explored the literature surrounding the argument that unified and solidaristic labour confederations are stronger than competitive and non-solitaristic ones. Thus, as we explore more comprehensively in Chapters 7 and 9, if we find that certain groups within the COB – such as manufacturers – are unwilling to join in industrial actions against the MAS government this might be a signal of diminished solidarity and a weakened COB in general. We now turn our attention to a discussion of the level of solidarity within the labour confederation in relation to both how it has been affected by the Morales government as well as other factors, such as neoliberalism and its own internal structure.

Throughout this thesis we argue that the COB's relative independence from the government has been and continues to be a major strength regarding the labour confederation's ability to influence democratisation. In Chapter 3 we argued that this independence is the most important aspect of the COB in discussions of how we understand democratisation. However, in Chapter 2 we also highlighted certain potential drawbacks in terms of remaining autonomous from the government. Perhaps the most significant disadvantage is lacking direct voice during legislative processes. Unlike other Bolivian social movements and even other labour movements throughout the region, the COB's main source of influence during policy formation is through industrial actions and other methods of popular demonstrations. Since the 1990s, and especially under the Morales administration, *campesino* and indigenous groups have greatly benefited from having elected representatives on local, regional and national legislative bodies. Additionally, and as we discussed above, the contemporary Brazilian labour movement has successfully formed a political party that has at the time of writing produced two presidents. Having a representative from the workers' party as the chief executive of a country increases the likelihood of realising labour demands. However, unlike other labour movements the COB remains outside of the Marxist/Leninist idea that organised labour needs to form a political party in order to progress society as it wants. It is clearly stated in

COB by-laws that the labour confederation will not form a political party nor will it officially participate in other already existing parties.

While various leftist political parties have come and gone the COB has remained the most active, consistent and successful agent of the left. At the time of writing other social movements appear to have more political sway within Bolivia, in large part due to the presidency of Evo Morales, than does the COB. However, as we argue throughout this thesis the COB's continual autonomy from any and all governments has proved successful in not only allowing the labour confederation to remain a relevant advocate of many Bolivians but also has better positioned it as a democratising agent. We hold that these positive attributes outweigh any potential benefits that may be derived from having elected representatives within the government.

## **Chapter 7. Solidarity: Partisan Relationships, Neoliberalism and Organisation**

Labour solidarity – as argued in Chapter 3 – is an influential factor in organised labour’s ability to influence democratisation. The differences within the COB surrounding varying levels of confidence in the Morales government are likely to have diminishing effects on the organisation’s solidarity, particularly during industrial actions, a point we explore in Chapter 9. If, as we discussed above, manufacturers choose their political sympathy for the Morales government over their allegiance to the COB, particularly when it comes to mobilising against government-sponsored policies, the solidarity, and thus strength, of the entire movement will be weakened. Alongside of the affront to COB solidarity as a result of varying views of the Morales government the confederation also faces threats to solidarity caused by the lingering effects of neoliberalism. However, amidst such threats the structure of the COB is centralised and hierarchical and it is the sole peak confederation in Bolivia, all of which are conducive to solidarity. In this section we assess the overall level of solidarity within the Bolivian labour movement in respect of both its weaknesses and strengths.

In the first section of this chapter – 7.1 – we explore the effect varying views of the Morales government among our respondents has had on COB solidarity. In accordance with the theory discussed in Chapter 3, the political differences found within the COB are likely to weaken the confederation’s ability to independently scrutinise certain government proposals and ultimately its role in democratisation. In Chapter 3 we examined authors such as Offe and Valenzuela who argued that non-affiliated labour movements are often stronger than affiliated ones because the former cannot be divided along political or ideological lines. Such differences caused by affiliation and/or non-affiliation exist between miners and manufacturers as discussed in the previous chapter. Additionally, similar divisions appear between the COB and other influential movements such as the *campesinos*. In Chapter 9 we examine more comprehensively the effect diminished solidarity caused by political differences surrounding the presidency of Evo Morales has had on the ability of the COB to influence democratisation.

In the second section of this chapter – 7.2 – we discuss how neoliberalism and its after-effects have shaped contemporary solidarity within the COB. Most notably among these have been the division of salaried miners and informal miners – *cooperativistas* – caused by massive layoffs in the formal mining sector during the initial years of Bolivian neoliberalism. Additionally, we examine weakened unionism among manufacturers as a result of neoliberal legislation which made hiring and firing more flexible.

In the final section of this chapter – 7.3 – we examine one aspect of the COB that has been argued to help strengthen labour solidarity, namely its organisational structure and the presence of a singular, peak confederation. In Chapter 3 we discussed established theory such as Angell, Offe and Cook who – among others – argue that centralised and singular labour confederations are better able to organise and mobilise diverse groups around a single cause in an effective and efficient manner than are competing or non-centralised labour confederations. Below we discuss how the structure and organisation of the COB is conducive to increased solidarity.

Although in actuality divisions exist within the COB, certain aspects of our results suggest a desire for unity and solidarity within the labour confederation. Several respondents discussed the need to aid all workers, especially those from less protected sectors (Chipara, 24/6/2008; Colque, 5/6/2008). The leader of the Federation of Manufacturers in La Paz stated that they [manufacturers] are proletariats first and support the COB and the wider struggle (Chipara 24/6/2008).<sup>24</sup> The union leader of Huanuni, and eventually the head of the FSTMB, took an analogous stance when asked if there were any difficulties between public and private miners, stating that ‘all of us sell our working power, we are all selling the same, whether to the state or to private companies. So yes we are fighting alongside of one another. We are not against the workers of private companies we are against the private companies’ (Mitma, 16/6/2008). Comments such as these would suggest that there is not only sympathy within the COB for other workers but also a desire to help the less fortunate and less protected among them.

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<sup>24</sup> As we discuss below, the manufacturers do support the COB in its struggle for nationalisation and certain other goals. However, when the COB’s struggle ran counter to the government’s plans the manufacturing sector seemed less willing to support the labour confederation.

While many of our participants spoke of the need and desire to help fellow workers, realisation of such a desire was not always fruitful or seen through. According to several respondents – including members of the COB, the press and the government – the COB is suffering from a lack of solidarity. One experienced Bolivian sociologist/economist claimed that unity within the COB is fictitious. He suggested that fights between sectors and the supposed preferential treatment of the COB towards certain factions has created splits and heightened tensions within the movement. He concluded by stating that in-house fighting and indecisions have greatly disabled the unity, and ultimately, the influence of the COB (Arce, 25/7/2008). As we discuss below, much of this disunity stems from processes began during neoliberalism.

Finally, speaking in a very matter-of-fact manner, Sosimo Paniagua, the Secretary of Organisation for the COB, claimed that solidarity is one of the biggest problems facing the movement today (Paniagua, 6/5/2008). Paniagua's statement was in reference to the differences within the COB regarding varying levels of support for the Morales government as well as divisions between formal and informal sectors. Below we discuss more comprehensively the context behind Paniagua's comments. Overall, these statements suggest a simultaneous desire for solidarity and unity but a reality that is much different. In conjuncture with the political divisions described above in Chapter 6 we now examine the effect these political differences have had on COB solidarity.

## **7.1 Political Differences Surrounding the Morales Presidency**

Juan Carlos Yapari, a journalist for *La Patria* newspaper, stated that splits and the lack of cohesion within the labour movement caused by political differences surrounding support for the Morales government – which supersede social or labour issues – has significantly divided the movement and detracted from its ability to influence policy. Yapari went on to say that unlike in 1982, when all sectors were united by the cause to re-democratise Bolivia, each sector now fights for its own interest, or worse still, fights between each other (Yapari, 13/6/2008). In this section we explore the basis and degree of these political differences within the COB.

### **7.1.1 Differences within the COB**

In Chapter 6 we extensively discussed the varied relationship between the COB and the Morales government. We concluded that the relationship was incongruent between different sectors within the COB. As discussed in Chapter 3 by authors such as Offe, labour movements affiliated with partisan influences are more likely to be split along political or ideological lines than those that remain independent. While on the whole the COB is not affiliated with the Morales government in formal terms, the closeness of the relationship between the administration and certain sectors of the COB has divided the confederation along political lines and – as suggested by Yapari above – these political differences have superseded the importance of other social and labour issues within the labour confederation. In other words the political differences caused by the Morales administration have overshadowed other areas of agreement within the COB and potentially diminished the strength of the confederation in organising in the name of democratisation. Thus, the differences within the COB related to the Morales administration are important factors to consider when assessing the solidarity and therefore strength of the COB.

Our quantitative results support the findings from Chapter 6 that suggested that there are significant differences between sectors within the COB related to feelings toward the Morales administration. We used a Kruskal Wallis one-way analysis of variance to calculate whether the difference in level of confidence in the Morales government was statistically significant between sectors. We found that it was ( $p = .001$ ). As discussed in the previous chapter, we found that manufacturers had the highest average level of confidence in the Morales government, miners the second highest and health workers the lowest. Based in the established literature outlined in Chapter 3 and the data obtained through elite interviews, these varying levels of closeness to the Morales government have split the COB along political lines. The result of these splits – in terms of mobilising against the Morales government – is discussed further in Chapter 9.

In addition to our findings regarding the differing levels of confidence in the Morales administration between sectors we also found differing levels within the most important sector of the COB – mining. Again, using a Kruskal Wallis one-way analysis of variance we found the difference between mines to be statistically significant ( $p = .004$ ). As

outlined in the previous chapter, miners from Himalaya had the highest average level of confidence in the Morales administration, miners from Huanuni the second highest and miners from Colquiri the lowest.

The statistical analyses above alongside of the data from elite interviews discussed in Chapter 6 suggest that the relationship between the Morales government and certain parts of the FSTMB varies. This result suggests potential political differences within the mining sector. These results in tandem with the differences between our three sectors discussed above could negatively affect the strength of the COB in organising against the government. We now turn to an examination of the effect political differences have had on the COB's relationship with *campesinos*

### **7.1.2 The Relationship between the COB and *Campesinos***

Even though *campesinos* are not part of our empirical research, this group's importance regarding potential COB strength makes it worth mentioning at this point. Alongside of the political differences we found within the mining sector the split between *campesinos* and the COB has been one of the most detrimental for the labour confederation regarding its strength. The relationship between *campesinos* – and/or their representative organisation, the CSUTB – and the COB has repeatedly shifted from one of alliance and shared goals to one of loose association and conflicting objectives. Offe discusses the potential weakening effect of labour confederations that are viewed as only looking after the interests of formal workers (Offe, 1985:161). Such exclusivity can cause divisions and ultimately weaken solidarity. The COB, and the organisation that preceded it the CSTB, have incorporated the goals of informal workers into their plans as early as the 1930s, evidenced in the addition of *campesino* welfare into their stated objectives. Additionally, the period immediately following the Revolution coincided with a closer alliance between the COB and informal workers and ultimately greater COB influence in democratisation. Traditionally, as argued by Pilar Domingo, peasant participation in COB activities has been limited (Domingo, 2001:155-156). *Campesinos* limited and/or adverse relationship with the COB alongside of their 'significant factionalism and division' (ibid.) has previously weakened both their wider political voice as well as that of the COB's.

At the time of writing the COB is still attempting to align with the CSUTB. One particular example of this is the fact that one of the four aspects of the COB's central, multi-tiered

demands for the government includes greater agrarian reform with increased mechanisation and better techniques for farming. These demands evidence an attempt by the COB to incorporate the struggles of CSUTB members into the wider agenda of the COB. However, this service is not entirely reciprocated. According to an employee at the Ministry of Work, although formally a part of the COB, the CSUTB's negotiations and actions remain outside of the labour confederation (Barreta, 29/4/2008). Such segregation has greatly reduced the powerbase and influence of the COB. This has not been helped by the fact that the Morales government has publicly tried to vilify and discredit the labour confederation by claiming that the COB is only out for its members' interests at the expense of non-members (La-Razon 2008h).

Perhaps the most convincing reason for the *campesino*'s increasingly distanced relationship with the COB has to do with their uncritical support of the Morales government. The CSUTB's ardent backing of Evo has several aspects. First, and perhaps most axiomatic, is the fact that President Morales has allowed many CSUTB leaders to hold important advisory positions. A front page article of *La Razon* – with a caption claiming the six people in the photograph are the most influential 'non-governmental' actors in Morales' circle – shows six *campesino* leaders seated around a table with President Morales (La-Razon, 2008h). Certain policies implemented under the Morales administration also target demographic groups largely comprised of *campesinos*. Following the logic of authors such as Offe (1985), these measures could be viewed as proactive ways the government use specific policies to both draw potential COB allies away from the labour movement and also pacify certain COB-affiliated sectors.

A further potential reason for the *campesino*'s uncritical support of President Morales has to do with this group's general level of poverty, structural organisation and level of education/exposure to formal politics, points we discussed at length in Chapter 2. While the COB continues to maintain a stance of political and ideological independence from the government it is quite clear that other social movements such as the *campesinos* have not.

The final aspect of the *campesino*'s ardent support for the Morales government discussed here is related to his background. He is of indigenous descent, a former *cocalero* (coca farmer) and union leader of the *cocaleros*. Thus, Morales is seen as not only a man for the

people but also quite literally a man of the people, an indigenous, former *cocalero* rising to the ranks of president for the first time in the history of Bolivia.

The fact that Morales is both of indigenous decent and a former *cocalero* union leader has further endeared him to both the *campesinos* and indigenous groups. Moreover, the rise to power of a leader with a strong following from two highly populous, previously neglected and increasingly politically relevant factions should be of no surprise, especially as these two groups have become increasingly united in recent years. Klein argues that the CSUTB and indigenous groups began to marry their causes for the first time in the early 1990s. The author goes on to claim that this decade was also the beginning of the Bolivian state's recognition of more defined *campesino* and indigenous rights (Klein, 2003:260-261). The emergence of these groups into the Bolivian political sphere, culminating in Morales' election to the presidency in 2006, is evident in the amount of literature dedicated to these newly empowered social movements.

With these rural groups' candidate in the Presidential Palace, and the newfound ability to shape Bolivian policy, contemporary literature has shifted its focus to these primarily rural-based social movements and for the most part away from discussions of the COB. As Kohl and Farthing point out, for many years the political discourse and analysis surrounding Bolivia centred on a class-based approach and largely ignored the pressing issues of indigenous identity (Kohl and Farthing, 2006:175-176). The emphasis of the class-based approach was encouraged by the role of the COB as the central opposition and leftist voice from at least 1952 until 1985 (Crabtree, 2005:3). However, with the wane of the political force of the COB in the second half of the 1980s and the increase in political relevance of *campesino* and indigenous groups in the 1990s, more attention has been placed on issues of indigenous identity and rural citizens. One question that needs to be posed is, will these other social movements incorporate the welfare of the entire Bolivian population into their political programme, or will they focus solely on those of their core constituents (i.e. *campesinos* and indigenous groups)? Throughout this thesis we demonstrate that the COB has historically incorporated various groups into its social and political demands. Furthermore, when we asked various miners within the COB to describe their relationship with *campesino* and indigenous groups each one claimed that there was no divide, that just as they are miners they are also indigenous and that many actually came from the

countryside. These miners did not perceive the demands of the COB to be counter to the demands of other social movements, quite the contrary in fact. They believed that the COB was a protectorate of *campesino* and indigenous rights, as has been documented throughout the labour confederation's history.

The current status of the relationship between the COB and the *campesinos* is of particular concern regarding the holistic strength of the labour movement. As history has shown, some of the most successful and influential labour movements were those that had strong informal and formal labour linkages. In Bolivia, during both the 1952 revolution and again during re-democratisation in the late 1970s/early 1980s these groups were united around a common goal. However, at the time of writing these groups' respective goals or at least the method for obtaining these goals seems less congruent, particularly as the COB has remained independent of the Morales government and these other social movements have become embedded within it. Such a discrepancy has weakened the COB's force and ultimately its ability to influence democratisation.

## **7.2 The Lingering Effects of Neoliberalism on COB Solidarity**

In Chapter 4 we discussed some of the effects neoliberalism had on the COB's ability to influence democratisation. In this section we examine the effects of neoliberalism nearly a quarter of a century after the first neoliberal policies were implemented. In particular, we discuss the negative effects such labour-hostile policies had on the organisation of certain sectors as well as the willingness of union members to be active within their unions.

### **7.2.1 The Mining Sector**

The mining sector in Bolivia has been and remains the most important and influential force in the COB. Salaried miners continue to be the vanguard of the confederation, hold more sway within the COB and initiate and make up much of industrial action processes. Thus, the degree of centrality, organisation and unity within this sector inevitably has knock-on effects for the wider COB.

A major division within the mining sector between formal, salaried union members of the FSTMB and the more informal *cooperativistas* is a direct result of policies implemented during neoliberalism. This spilt has diminished the COB's capacity to influence democratisation through weakened mobilisations and collective voice. While

*cooperativistas* have existed for decades, the major split between them and salaried miners has its roots at least as far back as the middle of the 1980s, coinciding with the introduction of SAPs and the consequential firing of around 30,000 salaried miners (Yapari 13/6/2008; Chossudovsky, 1997:215). When the mines were privatised – a further measure of the structural adjustment policies – many medium and small-sized mines were forced to close, as they could no longer compete with the recently introduced large, capital-rich, multi-national mining companies. The small mines that did remain were able to do so through exploiting cheap labour (Arce, 25/7/2008). This cheap labour consisted of the thousands of miners that had recently become unemployed. In a move to alleviate some of the unemployment the government created a scheme whereby any mine not occupied by other companies could be privately run. Many of the recently fired miners, unable to find a formal job in another sector and already familiar with the trade, became employed through *cooperativista*-run mines.<sup>25</sup>

This sub-industry has grown significantly since the mid 1980s. Before 1986 there were around 25,000 or 30,000 salaried miners in comparison to about 5,000 *cooperativistas* (Chaparo, 17/6/2008). Currently about five percent of Bolivian miners are salaried and working in formal mines as compared to around 95 percent in *cooperativista*-led mines (Arce, 25/7/2008). Such a large pool of unaffiliated miners represents an important potential source of power for the COB, a source that would greatly improve the COB's influence in conceptualisation.

This dramatic shift in the composition of miners has altered the force of the FSTMB within the COB and ultimately the influence of the COB in general. A significant reason for this has been the simultaneous numerical decline of the FSTMB and the rise of the *cooperativistas*. *Cooperativistas* initiate and participate in their own industrial action independent and seemingly without regard for the plans of the COB. *Cooperativista* unions are also structured much differently than their FSTMB-affiliated counterparts. For

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<sup>25</sup> The process for opening a *cooperativista*-led mine is fairly pedestrian. The potential 'mine owner' locates an 'available' piece of land that he or she wants to mine. In theory, he or she will seek permission from the relevant authorities to work the specified parcel of land. This person will then advertise that he or she is opening a mine and wait for applicants. What the 'owner' then says to the recently hired workers is 'you find the minerals and I will sell them and give you a portion of the profit'. One respondent claimed that such a process is actually a very interesting Marxist social experiment – a worker-run company that uses exploited labour to make a profit (Arce, 25/7/2009).

one, there are 548 *cooperativista* unions affiliated with the Federation of *Cooperativistas* as compared to 42 formal unions in the FSTMB. This discrepancy in number of unions is not solely related to the more numerous *cooperativistas* but also to the less formal structure of formation.

*Cooperativistas* significantly differ from FSTMB-affiliated unions in another manner, namely in their relationship with the government. The *cooperativistas* have, at least in the past 25 years, maintained a ‘closer’ and more reliant relationship with respective governments. In Chapter 2 we explored the dangers of union leaders becoming co-opted by the government. Apropos of this discussion there have been *ex-cooperativistas* in the Morales administration serving as ministers, vice-ministers and in other governmental positions (Yapari, 13/6/2008). This is significantly different from the policy of political autonomy from any and all governments practiced by the FSTMB and the COB. Additionally, similar to the *campesinos*, the *cooperativistas* relationship with the COB seems to be heavily political in the sense that depending on their own situation and what a respective government is offering their loyalties may change. In 2003 the *cooperativistas* acted in concert with the FSTMB against the Sánchez de Lozada government (Arce, 25/7/2008). However, since President Morales’ rise to power they have become increasingly separated from COB activities.

Finally, a further divisive factor between the *cooperativistas* and the FSTMB is the individualist ideology cultivated by the government throughout Bolivia during the neoliberal era and continued in the business model of *cooperativista*-run mines. While formal sector miners work for a salary, and thus have only their labour to sell, *cooperativistas*’ pay is based on the amount of product they accumulate each day, ultimately putting them in competition with one another. Such an ideology further normalises neoliberal themes of individualism – as further discussed in Chapter 8. This individualistic ideology runs counter to the anarcho-sindicalist roots of the COB and more specifically the FSTMB and has acted as a further divider between these two sub-sectors.

### **7.2.2 The Manufacturing Sector**

Together with miners the manufacturing sector has historically played an important role in the development of the COB. Many respondents both inside and outside of the COB commented that manufacturers have been one of the most influential sectors. At the time

of writing there were around 150 manufacturing unions, some with 20 members others with upwards of 1,500 (Chipara, 24/6/2008). These unions are positioned within one of the nine provincial federations throughout Bolivia and collectively represented by a singular manufacturing confederation. Similar to the fate of the miners, following neoliberalism manufacturing unions and their confederation waned in terms of influence within the COB. The manufacturing sector has continued to feel the effect of discriminatory actions taken by businesses under neoliberal measures aimed to make hiring and firing more flexible. As a result of such flexibility one respondent outside of the labour movement claimed that at the time of writing less than 15 percent of workers within manufacturing were affiliated with unions (Arce, 25/7/2008). These numbers can be explained by the fact that workers are afraid that union activism or even affiliation might cost them their jobs. In the past, many manufacturers would not even vote against certain conservative constitutional measures for fear of losing their job (Chipara, 24/6/2008). Such institutionalised fear might partly explain a comparatively less radicalised manufacturing sector in COB mobilisations. Evidence of this can be seen in this sector's significantly lower number of strikes (15) from 1997-1999, as compared to miners (34) and health sector workers (113) (LABORSTA, 2007).

Despite the negative effects of neoliberalism on unionists willingness to mobilise within manufacturing, the sector maintains certain solidarity building practices. For example, the Departmental Federation of Manufacturers in La Paz holds weekly meetings between local union leaders at the federation's central office. Topics such as how to better service members, effectively lead a union and organise between unions were discussed. Alongside of weekly meetings the manufacturing federation in La Paz also held regular trainings and discussions centred on issues such as syndicalisation in contemporary Bolivia. Finally, within the federation there is a position dedicated to organising and arranging sporting events intended to cultivate relationships within the organisation. We did not experience similar positions and processes in the other two sectors we investigated.

While there appear to be many positive and strengthening processes within the manufacturing sector the presence of an institutionalised fear of losing their jobs, as well as widespread support for President Morales, would suggest that this sector would remain absent from participating in COB mobilisations in response to the government's proposal

for pension reform. If, as we discuss in Chapter 9, manufacturers are found to resist joining fellow COB members in mobilisations due to the aforementioned reasons, the nature of solidarity within the COB would be weakened.

### **7.2.3 The Health Sector**

The health sector in Bolivia suffers – similar to the mining sector – from a significant split in its membership between two factions. One group, the Confederation of Health Workers, works directly within the government as a state enterprise, to the degree that their head office is located in the building of the Ministry of Health in La Paz. The other faction, the *Caja*, while still associated and partly funded by the government also has a private element and does not reach to all regions and parts of the country that the Confederation of Health Workers does. The Confederation of Health Workers and the *Caja* have separate administrative buildings, hospitals, rural clinics and unions.

According to several respondents, the divide that remains between these two groups is largely to do with the higher pay and seclusion of one group from the other. *Caja* members generally receive better compensation than other health workers. For instance, one respondent stated that a nurse in the *Caja* will receive a salary of 2,700 bolivianos (378 US dollars) per month after only five years of work whereas a nurse in the public sector will have a wage of around 2,300 bolivianos (322 US dollars) per month after 20 years of work (Tulitivate, 29/7/2008). Such discrepancy in pay for the same job has created a degree of animosity within the sector. Another respondent from the Confederation of Health Workers claimed that while her union struggles for greater pay for all workers, the *Caja* is concerned mainly with their own issues (Ruiz, 29/7/2009). The veracity of this statement is up for debate; however what is not is that there are significant differences regarding pay between *Caja* workers and those in the public sphere. This has created a division within the health sector and ultimately dampened its influence and power within the COB and before the government.

## **7.3 Organisational Solidarity**

While at the time of writing the COB suffers from weakened solidarity caused by political differences and the after-effects of neoliberalism, there is at least one aspect of the COB that promotes solidarity – namely its organisational structure. How a movement organises

can have significant effects on its ability to cultivate solidarity. For instance, and as discussed in Chapter 2, when there is more than one central labour confederation that competes with other similar organisations for rank-and-file support, solidarity can become compromised. Furthermore, when this is the case not only is it more difficult to mobilise competing groups around a singular cause but also the ability to mobilise in an efficient and effective manner can become more difficult, ultimately weakening the ability of organised labour to influence conceptualisation.

In Bolivia unions are organised by industry – a change from organising around craft that occurred before labour incorporation – which is conducive to greater solidarity. Unions are permitted, as stated by the General Law of Work, in organisations with 21 or more workers. One of the most significant aspects of the Bolivian labour movement regarding its structure is the presence of the COB. Unlike in many Latin American countries the COB is the sole, overarching labour confederation whose command and hierarchical positioning is widely recognised. The COB's status as the singular organised labour confederation in Bolivia helps to structurally organise the labour movement in a manner that provides opportunities for more efficient and effective mobilisations. Again, dissimilar to other Latin American countries where several confederations compete between each other for members, the COB is able to focus its energies on its own objectives rather than on campaigning against competing confederations. Additionally, because the COB is the only confederation organising and realising mobilisations it can call upon its various affiliated institutions in a unified and expedient manner. The existence of CODs throughout the country helps to ensure that the COB's presence is both felt and available for use. During our time in the field the COD-Oruro was often the hub of labour activity and a place where union leaders, federation leaders and COB representatives would meet to discuss and plan labour actions. Moreover, on more than one occasion members of the press were invited to the COD-Oruro to cover developing stories related to planned mobilisations or to get opinions on government proposals. The COB's structure – see Figure 1 above – also lends itself to a more efficient and systematic method for bringing demands forward from the local level. As we discuss more fully in Chapter 8 below, the majority of the rank-and-file felt that their demands were brought to the national level largely enabled by the efficiency of said structure.

Although the COB is the singular labour confederation representing organised labour within Bolivia, it does not often collectively bargain on behalf of its members on issues such as salary increases and/or work conditions. These types of negotiations are often left up to the plant specific unions. While decentralised bargaining does weaken the stance of the union against their employer as well as place workers from various unions in competition with one another there is at least one positive element of this arrangement. As authors such as Stepan-Norris (1997) argue, decentralised bargaining through semi-autonomous sub-units of a larger organisation can help solidify the perception of democratic unionism among members, as they are more likely to feel involved in union processes. This is a topic we discuss more comprehensively below. The fact that the COB is largely absent from collective bargaining also enables it to pursue other wider objectives, perhaps goals that are more socially inclusive like pension and agrarian reform.

There are at least two important points about the COB's structure that potentially make it conducive to drawing attention to important social issues through mobilisations. The first is that the COB is the singular organised labour confederation in Bolivia. This fact allows it to focus attention on its goals and not on competing with other confederations. Second, the organic structure of the COB is conducive to quick information dissemination. The geographical proximity of COD's in every department allows for regular and comprehensive interaction with other unions and federations. This makes both organising mobilisations easier as well as bringing member demands to higher levels in a more systematic manner.

## **7.4 Conclusion**

Within this chapter we explored three factors affecting the solidarity of the COB. The first factor we discussed was the political differences found within the COB caused by varying views of the Morales government. We also evidenced similar splits between the COB and *campesinos*. As outlined in Chapter 3 and briefly revisited in the introduction to this chapter, authors such as Offe, Angell, Valenzuela and Cook argue that solidarity within a labour movement can become compromised when certain factions are affiliated with a political group because these same factions can then be split along political or ideological lines. We saw evidence of this in Chile during the 1980s and early 1990s when various federations and confederations competed with one another for membership along political

and ideological lines, ultimately to the detriment of labour strength. As we discuss in Chapter 9, if and when certain factions within the COB choose political alliances over labour movement solidarity the entire strength of the labour confederation is more likely to become compromised.

The second factor of COB solidarity we explored was organisational divisions caused by neoliberalism. We found that there were significant divisions within the mining sector between salaried, formal miners and *cooperativistas*. As a direct result of massive layoffs in the 1980s tens of thousands of formerly salaried public sector miners were forced into the informal labour market and ultimately many became *cooperativistas*. This dramatic shift in the employment structure of Bolivian miners weakened solidarity within this sector as *cooperativistas* began to organise and mobilise outside of the COB. We also witnessed organisational division between the COB and the *campesino* movement. While we recognise that the *campesino* movement effectively remains independent of the COB, the lack of solidarity between the two organisations directly weakens the labour movement in Bolivia, evidenced in the fact that when the two were aligned they were able to help install democracy in 1952 and in the early 1980s. Finally, we discussed splits within the health sector between public sector workers and those within the *Caja*. The higher wages, better working conditions and absence from many COB-related activities of employees in the public/private *Caja* have created tensions within the health sector. In Chapter 3 we examined Hyman's term disaggregation, which – among other things – was defined by labour fragmentation and inter/intra union conflict. Several of the outcomes of disaggregation included the inability to link policy with action as well as membership decline. Throughout this chapter we have seen evidence of fragmentation and even inter/intra union conflict. Whether or not such disaggregation leads to the inability to link policy with action by the COB is a topic we revisit in Chapter 9. Thus, alongside of political differences, organisational divisions have also weakened solidarity within the COB.

The final factor of COB solidarity we discussed in this chapter was how the structure of the COB and the fact that it is the sole peak labour confederation is conducive to cultivating further solidarity. The hierarchical structure of the COB and the fact that it does not have to compete with other confederations enables the COB to organise, disseminate and

process information, and initiate industrial actions in a more effective and efficient manner than more loosely organised and competing confederations. In Chapter 9 we further investigate evidence of such connectivity within the COB when examining industrial actions orchestrated by the labour confederation in response to the government's proposal for pension reform. In general the structure of the COB and its presence as the sole labour confederation in Bolivia are a significant source of strength in regards to solidarity.

Finally, the weakened state of solidarity within the COB has been caused in part by political differences surrounding feelings about the Morales government as well as after-effects of neoliberalism. In Chapter 9 we examine the extent to which such negative factors influenced the solidarity of the COB in its mobilisations surrounding pension reform. For a better understanding of the COB's capacity to draw attention through mobilisations as well as publicly scrutinise government proposals over social issues we should examine other factors that affect such labour actions – namely member commitment to union causes.

## **Chapter 8. Member Commitment**

The next strength indicator that we use to assess the ability of the COB to influence democratisation is the commitment of its members to union causes. It has been shown throughout the literature that the success of industrial actions – a significant aspect of which is drawing attention to important social issues – is influenced by the commitment of rank-and-file. We have highlighted two important elements of member commitment that we explore in this chapter. The first is rank-and-file perception of the democratic nature of their union. As discussed in Chapter 3, union members are less likely to participate in or continue to participate in industrial actions if they feel their union is undemocratic. The second factor we investigate is the character of the prevalent ideology within the COB. This has also been shown to influence not only the level of commitment of members to union causes but also the type of causes organised labour is likely to pursue.

### **8.1 Union Democracy**

For this section, the hypothesis that we work under is if members perceive that they have greater influence in the direction of their union – i.e. it is more democratic – it is more likely that they will be content with their union and committed to pursuing its objectives, thus simultaneously increasing the strength of the union and ultimately the success rate of industrial actions (Stepan-Norris, 1997:476; Fairbrother and Yates, 2003:250; Korkut, 2006:73-74). Therefore, the two things we intend to test for in regards to this indicator include: 1) assessing if rank-and-file perceive their respective unions as democratic; and 2) assessing if and how this perception affects their feelings about their unions, particularly in regards to committing to union causes.

Before we examine our results related to union democracy we need to briefly revisit a discussion from section 3.6.1, which argued that the democratic nature of wider institutions such as the state can influence the expectations of unionists regarding the level of democracy within their union. While our respondents were mixed over their feelings toward the Morales government the majority – 55.6 percent – had more confidence in the MAS administration than its neoliberal predecessors. The general feelings of improvement are in relation to the neoliberal years – i.e. members were asked about their feelings

regarding the political environment presently as compared to the neoliberal era – when not only trade unions, their leaders and their political rights, but also wider decision-making practices were dealt with in ways that seemed to breach political democracy. Therefore, we work under the assumption that the majority of trade unionists feel that the current administration is generally more democratic than the previous ones. Based on our current discussion we could assume that current COB members recognise the importance of certain democratic practices such as fair elections, opportunities to participate and the ability to influence decision-making processes within their unions, similar practices that they might currently feel more entitled to within their state.

We now turn our attention to an analysis and discussion of the data collected during our time in the field relating to internal union democracy and its effect on members' commitment to union causes. The results presented below parallel the union democracy indicators we introduced in Section 3.6.1 above, which included electoral arrangements and processes, participation and representativeness.

### **8.1.1 Results for Group 1: Electoral Arrangements and Processes**

*a) Effective Opposition* – Within the COB – including local, regional and national levels – candidates did not run on tickets associated with a particular party, faction or ideological group.<sup>26</sup> This can be assessed in at least two ways. On the one hand it may demonstrate that members were not voting solely to act in accordance with larger ideological/partisan influences and thus acting autonomously within the confines of the specific election. On the other hand, the lack of clear ideological/partisan divides may demonstrate the lack of definitive ideologies inside the COB as well as the lack of institutionalised political parties in Bolivia. The negative result of this is that competing ideologies are not debated during these elections. In turn, this deprives members of the exposure to debates evidencing the strengths and weaknesses of each ideology. As we argued in Chapter 3 and argue in the following section, having a clear and defined ideology is an important element for members' commitment to union causes. Thus, from one perspective the absence of candidates running on various ideological platforms detracts from the strength of the COB.

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<sup>26</sup> This differs significantly from what transpired in Chile under Allende where members tended to vote for union candidates based on their affiliation with political parties (Angell, 1972).

However this also evidences a certain degree of solidarity as members are not torn between competing ideological groups and thus are stronger.

Aside from the lack of competition between ideological/political groups within the COB, at the general congress of the FSTMB – which happens biennially – we also found that elections for Secretary General were not close. Guido Mitma, the former head of the Huanuni union, won with a clear majority. There were no serious contenders with significant support to challenge Mitma. This may be a result of the previous congress being unable to elect a Secretary General and instead postponing elections and placing interim officers in all executive positions. However, the lack of close elections did not appear to detract from members' sense of democratic elections. Once Mitma had secured leadership, serious debate took place surrounding the need to elect candidates from other mines to fill out the executive committee so that it would be more balanced and representative. The end result was that the majority agreed that there should be representatives from both smaller and larger mines on the executive committee.

Another aspect of electoral arrangements we discussed in Chapter 3 was the rotation between top leaders. Since 2003 the turnover of leaders within the wider COB has not always been democratic. As discussed above, rotation between leaders and assistant leaders could be regarded as a sign of oligarchy. The fact that the leader of the COD-Oruro in 2003, Pedro Montes – arguably the most influential COD in the country – and the leader of the COB at the time, Jaime Solares, effectively switched positions, evidences a certain interchange of top officials and assistant top officials. However, this rotation of leaders has given credibility and experience to leadership within the COB at a time when effective leaders have been lacking. Although it does suggest a certain level of oligarchy, members did not communicate this as a detriment to the union movement. Furthermore, this practice does not appear ubiquitous as many leaders within the FSTMB (e.g. Mitma), CODs and even the COB have term limits and are constantly being drawn from local unions.

Regarding the ease of nominations, each local union present at the FSTMB congress was able to nominate candidates to represent its members at the assembly. Before voting began, the floor was opened for nominations. Each candidate was presented to the congress and discussions were opened to the floor where participants could make an argument for or against any particular candidate. Voters then decided on their preferred

nominee. Finally, the floor was continually open during the congress, permitting and promoting discussion and debate. The most significant aspect of these processes included the ease of nominations. There appeared to be no barriers to nominating members from the floor. This would help to explain why the majority of our respondents perceived they had opportunities to become leaders – see Table 6 below.

*b) Frequency of Elections* – COB, FSTMB and most other federation-level elections take place once every two years. At lower levels elections take place annually. This frequency provides more opportunities for rank-and-file to both become leaders and vote for leaders and thus actively participate in their union. This aspect, along with the ease of nominations, helps to explain the high level – nearly 80 percent – of members stating that they felt they had an opportunity to be a leader.

*c) Voting Methods* – The method of voting within the much of the COB in general – as described to us – and within the FSTMB in particular is undemocratic on several accounts. First, an open method of majority hand-raising whereby voters can be judged and influenced by other members is not conducive to a democratic voting environment. Secondly, the electorate at the congress is limited and unequal in terms of its makeup. Supposedly, each union within the FSTMB is allowed an equal number of representatives inside the site where the congress takes place. The site of the 2008 congress was held at one of the buildings belonging to the Technical University of Oruro. The site holds about 250 people. All participants must register if they want the opportunity to vote during the congress. Once registered, participants are given an official blue voting card, supposedly legitimising which hands may be counted as official votes.<sup>27</sup> Although many unions did have representatives at the congress, both in the electorate and candidates, certain unions, particularly the state-run Huanuni, held a clear majority in the room where the elections took place. For each executive position, of which there were 33, a candidate's name and the mine she/he represented were read to the electorate. As the names were read members of the crowd raised their hand attached to the blue voting card. There did not appear to be any systematic or democratic way of counting the hands. It was more a general perception of if there were more hands for one candidate over another. Furthermore, there did not

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<sup>27</sup> Even though the author of this thesis was not affiliated with any mine he was allowed to register his name and given a voting card, as perhaps were others.

appear to be any restrictions stopping people from voting multiple times. Due to the fact that Huanuni appeared to have more members in the crowd their preference for candidates seemed to dictate many results.

Amidst these democratic deficiencies respondents did not express any grievances towards the nature of voting during union elections. The majority of responses from our study claimed that members felt they had at least some opportunity to become a leader as well as influence their union. This may signal that non-democratic voting methods do not have a significant impact on members' perception of the democratic nature of their union.

### **8.1.2 Results for Group 2: Participation**

*a) Participation in Elections* – The overall number of elected positions, regularity and frequency of union elections within the COB provides significant opportunities for rank-and-file to participate as voters and/or as candidates. The number of positions in the executive committee of the FSTMB up for contention at the congress was 33. Leadership positions at lower levels are usually quite numerous as well. The number of executive positions spread between the COB, the FSTMB, other federations, CODs and local unions creates even greater opportunities for rank-and-file participation. As argued by Pateman, more opportunities for participation create more incentives to participate (Pateman, 1970). Although this may not translate to more members running for leadership it at least gives unionists the sense that the opportunities are there if they so choose to act upon them. We found a highly statistically significant association ( $p = .001$ ) between members' perception about their opportunity to participate through becoming a leader and their level of content with their union. We chose to examine the relationship between members who responded that they felt 'more or less' about their union, those that felt 'content' with their union and those that felt 'very content' with their union because of the concentration of numbers within these groups. Members who felt 'very discontent' and 'discontent' were significant outliers.

Thus, we decided the most interesting comparison was to find out if there was an association between members feeling apathetic (scored as 'more or less') towards their union and feeling happy (scored as 'content' or 'very content') about their union with their perceived level of opportunity to be a leader. The results shown below suggest that the members who felt they *could* be involved in leadership positions would then be more likely

to feel more involved with union processes, feel more content with their union and, in line with the theory, be more dedicated to seeing through successful union outcomes.

Table 6 – Feelings about Union by Perceived Opportunity to be Leader

	No Opportunity %	Some Opportunity %	Very Much Opportunity %	Total % (N)
<b>More or Less</b>	27.6	56.9	15.5	100.0 (58)
<b>Content</b>	4.8	42.9	52.4	100.0 (21)
<b>Very Content</b>	9.1	18.2	72.7	100.0 (11)
<b>As % of Total</b>	30.6	48.2	21.2	100 (90)

Perhaps the most telling aspect of Table 6 is the higher percentage of members who felt ‘more or less’ about their union responding that they felt they had ‘no opportunity’ to become a leader. This group’s percentage of 27.6 who scored ‘no opportunity’ is nearly 20 percent higher than the next highest group. This same group also posted the highest response for ‘some opportunity’ (56.9 percent) and the lowest response for ‘very much opportunity’ (15.5 percent). This data reaffirms the theory that members who feel they have less opportunity to participate in their union will feel less content about their union. If members are less content with their union – as influenced by not feeling involved – then they are less likely to participate in industrial action.

**8.1.3 Results for Group 3: Representativeness**

*a) Leadership* – The potential democratic pitfall regarding labour leaders controlling a monopoly on political skills is mitigated in the COB by the high turnover of leaders as a result of regular elections and term limits. As seen in Table 6 above, the majority of respondents felt they had some level of opportunity to be a leader.

Regarding leaders’ theoretical attraction to elevated status levels we found that the pay of labour leaders was quite minimal with some reportedly taking on the post with no monetary benefits. There is no universal method for collecting fees within the entire COB structure, nor is there a universal method for the amount fees should be (Paniagua,

6/5/2008). Members can ask the company to deduct a certain amount from their pay-check each month or give the money directly to the union themselves. One respondent claimed that of the numerous affiliate organisations of the COB only about five actually contributed the supposedly mandated one boliviano per month, per worker to the COB. The finances collected through these means go towards funding marches, strikes, travel expenses, secretaries, office materials, sporting events for members, infrastructure, leaders' cell phones, *et cetera*. Leaders receive their regular commission from the company but money raised from member contributions do not go towards their personal, supplemental income (Maidana, 3/7/2008). One leader said that the money raised from dues did not always cover the costs of being a union leader and that he himself had to occasionally pay the cost of his union-issued cell phone (Maidana, 3/7/2008). Another respondent claimed that many times leaders did not undertake the position for the pay – as an hour-by-hour comparison would show they make less than rank-and-file – but rather for belief in the cause (Chipara, 24/6/2008).

Furthermore, we found that leaders' perceived equal status – a product of the little to no extra pay they receive coupled with the regular turnover within executive positions rotated among the rank-and-file – helps to explain why they are not viewed as oligarchical by members. Furthermore, the majority of members – 86.6 percent – stated that they felt their leaders brought rank-and-file demands to the national level. Additionally, the majority of respondents – 79.8 percent – felt that they themselves had an equal opportunity to become a leader. There was also a noticeable absence in rank-and-file responses claiming that leaders were not democratic. Only 6.7 percent of miners claimed that leaders were problematic in this sense. Finally, the fact that only 12.9 percent of respondents felt that their union was not looking out for their interests suggests that members do not perceive there to be significant anti-democratic practices surrounding union leadership.

While certain aspects of labour leadership are a cause of concern for the COB – described below – it is not for the reasons laid forth in much established theory. Many authors discuss topics such as leaders' desire for career advancement, ideological differentiation between leaders, and other oligarchic tendencies (see Mosca, 1896; Pareto, 1923; Michels, 1959; Crouch, 1982; Valenzuela, 1992; Murillo, 2001). These authors claim that such issues can be divisive, ultimately affecting solidarity, rank-and-file commitment and

recruitment. In turn these elements can produce a general weakening of the labour movement. Such problems become evident when labour leaders are less responsive to their rank-and-file, instead favouring governmental desires in hopes of securing future positions within said governments and thus diminishing the democratic nature of the labour organisation. Moreover, an elitist critique of large, democratic organisations such as labour movements suggests that with leadership comes esoteric knowledge associated with the practice of such a post. This process serves to further widen the gap between leaders and ‘ordinary’ members (Schwartzmantel, 1994).

According to our research, labour leadership within the COB is not currently faced with these problems. Firstly, regarding labour leaders seeking governmental approval in hopes of career advancement, the COB has maintained a strict adherence to its policy of independence from any and all governments. Therefore, in very few instances throughout the history of the COB have leaders been promoted within the ranks of the government. Secondly, regarding splits in the ideological stances of leaders within the COB, most leaders spoke loosely on issues that resembled an anarcho-syndicalist approach and there were no ideological tensions expressed between our respondents. However, while the lack of divisions caused from ideological differences can be viewed as a positive on one hand, on the other hand it suggests a lack of a developed and pervasive ideology throughout the COB, a topic we return to below.

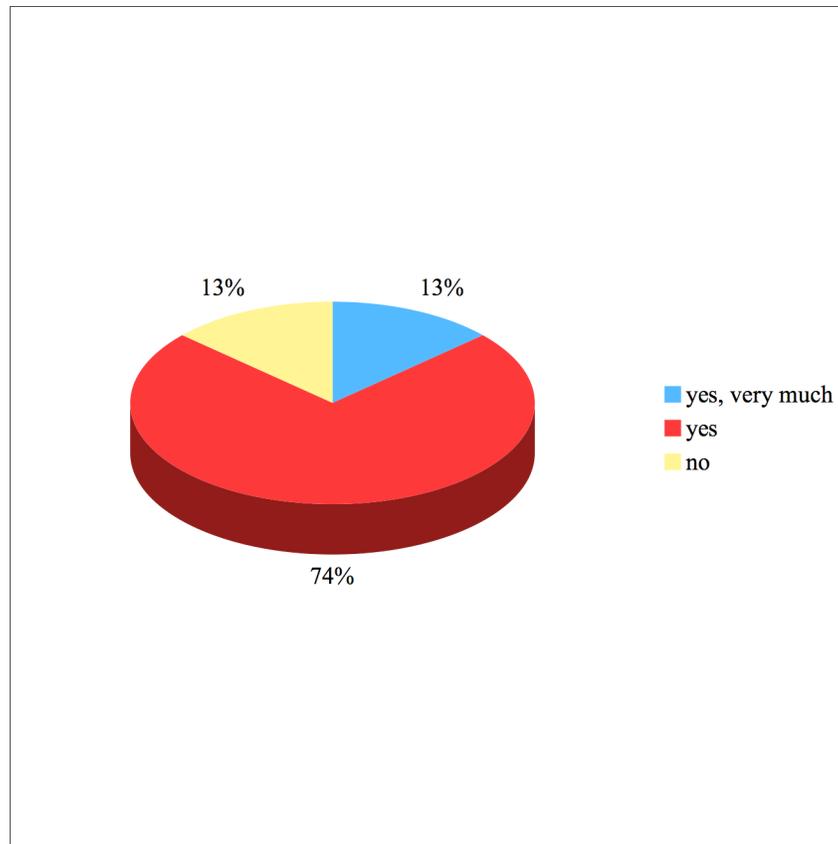
*b) Members’ Ability to Influence Union-* We tested members’ perceived ability to influence their respective unions through several means. First, we asked rank-and-file if they felt they could influence the direction of their union. Of the respondents surveyed in our study 46.6 percent claimed that they felt they had some influence, with 20.4 expressing that they felt they had a lot of influence and 33.0 percent stating that they felt they did not have any.

Second, we compared the demands rank-and-file listed as the most important to them, the demands leaders said were most pressing for their members and finally, what government officials said were the most common demands they received at their offices. The most cited responses from rank-and-file for the open question of ‘what are your most important demands for the union’ were *salary* and *job stability*. These were by far the largest totals and significant because of the fact that the question was open and respondents were allowed to write any demand they wanted without restrictions. The results from our

interviews with both labour leaders and government officials working within the Ministry of Work were similar. All claimed that *salary* and *job stability* were the most common demands they received from the rank-and-file and labour leaders, respectively. This data would suggest that leaders are responsive to rank-and-file demands by bringing them in front of the government. While salary is not such an interesting result – as this demand is ubiquitous throughout labour movements the world over – the fact that job stability was so prevalent hints at the current precariousness of employment in Bolivia, a carry-over from the employment instability indicative of the neoliberal era.

Perhaps more important for our current discussion is the evidence that leaders do struggle for rank-and-file demands at the national level. On average, across the three mines in our study, 87.6 percent of respondents claimed that they felt that their union brought their demands to the national stage to some degree. However, our results also showed that only 1.2 percent of miners claimed that pensions were one of their central demands. As we explore in Chapter 9, the most significant action taken by the COB during our time in Bolivia was in response to the government's proposal for pension reform, seemingly unrelated to the proportion of demands from members. Yet this fact did not seem to diminish members' feelings that union leaders did in fact fight for and bring their demands forward, as our results suggest.

Figure 5 – Do You Feel that Your Union Brings Your Demands Forward



Finally, we analysed the association between rank-and-file perceived influence within their union and level of content with their union. The results showed that there was a highly statistically significant association between members' perceived influence and their level of content ( $p = .000$ ). This would suggest that members who felt they could not influence the direction of their union were less content with their union and thus less likely to be committed to its objectives.

Table 7 – Feelings about Union by Perception of Ability to Influence

	No Influence %	A Little Influence %	A Lot of Influence %	Total % (N)
<b>More or Less</b>	42.6	51.9	5.6	100.0 (54)
<b>Content</b>	15.8	47.4	36.8	100.0 (19)
<b>Very Content</b>	0.0	20.0	80.0	100.0 (10)
<b>As % of Total</b>	30.6	48.2	21.2	100 (83)

Our results showing the relationship between the level of perception of influence within a respondent's union and level of content with a respondent's union are similar to those we found above, where we used perception of opportunity to become a leader as our independent variable. Respondents who felt they had less influence within their union also felt less content with their union. Perhaps most convincing is the fact that 42.6 percent of respondents who felt more or less about their union also felt they had no influence in their union, suggesting both a general level of apathy among respondents within the COB and the effect perception of influence had on said apathy.

*c) Union Structure* – Although the structure of the COB is highly centralised at the national level – which many of the previously discussed authors would argue discourages democratic unionism – it is comprised of many sub-units that are loyal to the labour confederation and are somewhat autonomous. The organic structure of COB affiliated organizations follows a hierarchical and linear format – as discussed above (see Figure 1).

This structure strengthens the COB in at least two ways. One, the presence of each of the organisations described above allows for greater participation among rank-and-file in leadership roles as a result of the greater number of leadership positions available. Two, the hierarchical and linear organisation, culminating in a singular labour confederation increases the likelihood of swift and comprehensive industrial action as well as limits the potential for internal disputes. Another aspect of the COB is that the practice of centralised collective bargaining in many regards is lacking, particularly regarding salary negotiations, as this is done by sector and sometimes by company. Although the lack of collective bargaining at the national level might decrease the force or influence of demands during

negotiations, the autonomy and opportunity given to these labour sub-units may be seen as a positive regarding democratic unionism as rank-and-file feel more connected to decision-making processes.

*d) Union Autonomy-* The COB has maintained a policy of independence from any and all governments. Therefore, in very few instances historically have COB leaders been promoted within the ranks of the government. Furthermore, one of the stipulations for being a labour leader at any level within the COB is that prospective candidates must not be affiliated with a third party that might raise conflict of interest issues (Paniagua, 6/5/2008). This stipulation helps ensure that leaders' intentions will not be compromised by outside or third party influences. However, we did not test for the possibility of union leaders being promoted within the company as a method for management to keep unions subdued. If rank-and-file perceived this happening then it might increase the likelihood that participation and commitment would drop and leaders would lose credibility among rank-and-file.

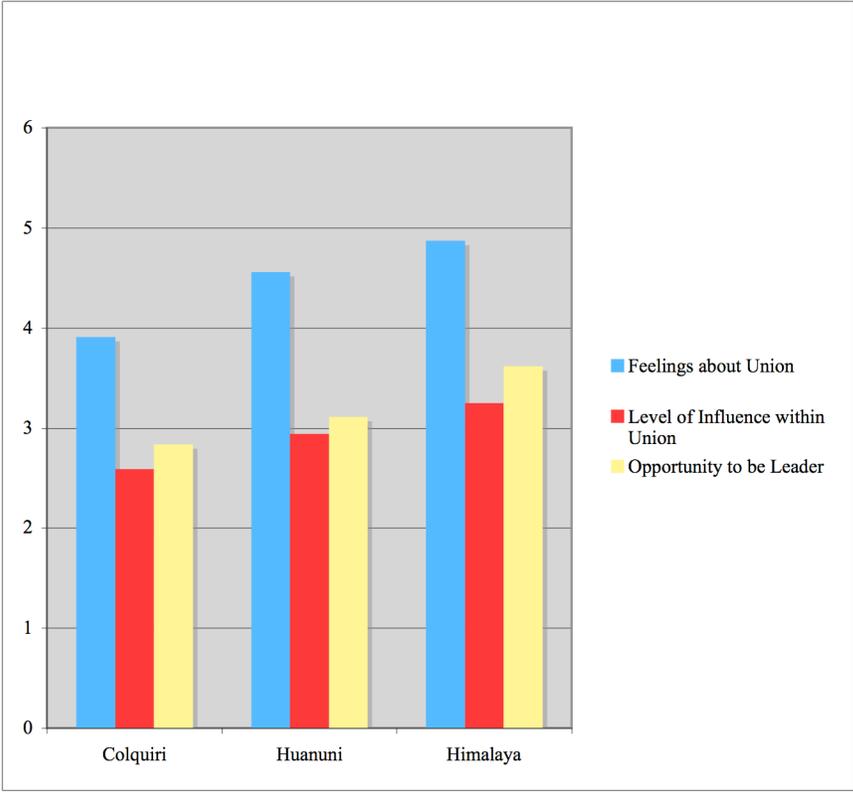
#### **8.1.4 Colquiri**

A cross-mine comparison of our results pertaining to democratic unionism may help to clarify some of the key findings discussed above. First, we see that in general miners from Colquiri were less content with their union than the other two mines we investigated. In response to the question asking how content they were with their union, miners from Colquiri posted a mean score of 3.91 which is below the mark of '4' signifying a response of 'more or less' – a score of '3' signified 'discontent' and a score of '5' signified 'content'.

Alongside of their comparatively more apathetic feeling about their union, miners from Colquiri also posted the lowest mean score for perceived level of influence within their mines (2.59). A score of '4' for this variable signified 'a lot of influence', '3' signified 'a little influence' and a score of '2' signified 'no influence'. Colquiri miners also had the lowest mean score for opportunity to become a leader (2.84). A score of '4' for this variable signified 'much opportunity', a score of '3' signified 'some opportunity' and a score of '2' signified 'no opportunity'.

From Figure 6 below we can see that for the miners of Colquiri neither of their average scores for the variables of level of influence or opportunity to be a leader exceeded a score of ‘3’ – scored as less than a ‘little influence’ within the union and less than ‘some opportunity’ to become a leader, respectively. Particularly concerning when discussing level of commitment to union causes is the fact that nearly as many respondents felt they had ‘no influence’ as did that felt they had ‘a little influence’. Ultimately, what Figure 6 shows is that there seems to be a strong association between feelings about one’s union and both the level of influence within the union and opportunity to become a leader – a result we found to be statistically significant above.

Figure 6 – Feelings about Union by Opportunity to be Leader by Level of Influence within Union by Mining Sector



Based on these results alone one could argue that respondents from Colquiri were unhappy about their union and thus responded to every question about their union negatively. This would then call into question the direction of the association between our variables. However, if we introduce a variable about unions where miners from Colquiri answered positively we could then argue that respondents did answer each question individually.

This would then suggest that general feelings about their unions were dependent on the other variables, rather than *vice-versa*.

Our results from miners' responses to whether they felt their union brought their demands to the national level helps in demonstrating that respondents did answer questions about their unions individually, rather than as a product of how they felt about their union. Of Colquiri respondents, 84.7 percent felt that their union brought their demands forward, this is in comparison to 73.3 percent from Huanuni. Additionally, 82.9 percent of miners from Colquiri felt that their union fought for their interests, rather than solely the interests of the union. The results for the same variable showed that miners from Huanuni were not significantly different at 84.6 percent. These final two results suggest that members of Colquiri did not answer all questions about their unions negatively, even though they felt less positive about their union as compared to members of other mines.

Finally, using a Kruskal Wallis Test we found there to be no statistical association between whether respondents felt their union brought their demands forward and their feelings about their unions. This data suggests that the variables of 'level of influence within union' and 'opportunity to be a leader' were more influential in determining how a respondent felt about her/his union.

From our data we can assume that there is an association between how respondents feel about certain democratic indicators – level of influence within union and opportunity to become a leader – and how they feel about their union. We can also assume that respondents answered the questions individually and did not simply mark all questions about their unions negatively or positively based solely on how they felt about their union in general.

#### **8.1.5 Discussion**

Overall, our findings suggest that the perception of union democracy for rank-and-file within the COB – particularly the perception of ability to influence the union and the perception of ability to become a leader – was, in general, positive. We discussed significant marks against the democratic nature of the COB in the form of its ineffective opposition, voting method, regulation of participation at elections, lack of regular meetings and occasional rotation of top officials between posts. However, on the whole members

still felt that their unions were democratic largely as a result of their perceived ability to participate in elections or leadership positions, the representativeness of leaders, that they have at least some influence in the direction of their unions and that member demands were heard and acted upon. We found a statistically significant association ( $p = .000$ ) between the level of opportunity members felt they had to become leaders and level of content with their unions, the latter suggesting greater union strength.

Additionally, the plentiful opportunities to become a leader or vote for a leader as a result of frequent elections accompanied by numerous positions at each election created opportunities for participation, which – as argued by Pateman (1970) – encourages greater participation from members and ultimately a greater sense of involvement in union affairs.

According to the literature, the more democratic a member perceives her/his union the more likely she/he is to be committed to seeing through union outcomes, ultimately strengthening the union. As we have discussed throughout this chapter the rank-and-file of the COB perceive their unions to be democratic. Therefore, we argue that member commitment within the COB as a product of union democracy is strong.

## **8.2 Ideology within the COB**

An additional factor that affects members' commitment to union causes is the degree and type of ideology prevalent within a labour movement. The hypothesis that we work under in this section is that if a unified ideology – in the case of the COB a collectivist ideology – is in some way lacking then members are less likely to be committed to union actions, thus diminishing the reach and effect of said actions. Shifts in ideology within working sectors of Bolivia have not only weakened the COB regarding diminished solidarity but have also undermined the anarcho-syndicalist spirit of rank-and-file, a vital component in the COB's successes historically. In this section we explore the character and reach of ideology within the COB.

In our historical review we saw how the periods surrounding labour incorporation and the Revolution coincided with a pervasive and oft-referenced anarcho-syndicalist ideology, among labour leaders and rank-and-file alike. This was evidenced in the ideologically charged labour congresses and national publications headed by organised labour. Moreover, such periods were marked by increased awareness and action in addressing

wider social issues, such as agrarian reform. The point here is that times of heightened ideological awareness within the COB seemed to coincide with greater rank-and-file resolve to address wider social issues.

In assessing the current nature of ideology within the COB we found important results within our own data. First, we asked respondents what the three most significant problems currently facing the organised Bolivian labour movement were – Question 23 of our questionnaire. Of all workers surveyed 28.7 percent felt that a lack of social consciousness was the biggest problem facing the labour movement. This was larger than any other response for this question. Although the central objectives of the COB at the time of writing specifically address the desire for agrarian reform, it seems that the ideology from which such goals were based has not permeated through to the lower levels of the labour confederation. Second, results from our data also suggest that ideological development is lacking in the contemporary Bolivian labour movement. This is apparent in the result showing that – in response to Question 14 of our questionnaire asking about members' three most important demands for their unions – for 12.6 percent<sup>28</sup> of our respondents, one of their most important demands for their union was greater 'syndicalism' which included greater consciousness, training, discipline, force and conviction.

What these results suggest is that there is a lack of ideological training and development throughout the COB and that this underdevelopment has affected the level of social consciousness. Therefore if, as discussed in section 2.6.2, there is an association between ideological commitment and instrumental commitment, the diminished ideological development within the COB is of concern in regards to the labour confederation's strength.

Results from our analysis suggest that the primary cause for the diminished ideology within the COB is due to neoliberalism. The effect this period had on ideological development within the organised labour movement is multifaceted, consisting of at least three aspects. The first aspect we explore in section 8.2.1 is the effect deliberate programs implemented by various neoliberal governments seeking to shift the general prevailing

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<sup>28</sup> This amount is substantial given that the question was open-ended. Moreover, this was the fourth most cited response for question 14 of our questionnaire.

ideology from more collectivist to increasingly individualistic had on the ideological development of organised labour. The second factor we examine in section 8.2.2 is how this shift influenced employment structures and the effect this has had on the current nature of ideology within the COB. The third facet we discuss in section 8.2.3 is the effect poor leadership has had on ideological cultivation and development within the COB. The fourth and final aspect we explore in section 8.2.4 is the effect Morales' presidency has had on ideological development within the COB. The central aim of this section is to examine how the nature of ideology currently found within the COB has affected member commitment to union causes.

### **8.2.1 The Effects of Neoliberalism on COB Ideology**

One of the challenges the COB now faces includes a fragmented ideology within the wider labour movement. This fragmentation is partly due to the invasive ideological program of individualism set forth during the neoliberal era – discussed at length in section 3.6.2. This ideological program included at least two interrelated steps. The first was to champion individualism and the worthiness of individual freedoms at the expense of many collectivist ideals and legislation, including the role of the state in social welfare. This dramatic shift from a collectivist ideology seen in the beginning of the 1980s to one of individualism in the mid 1980s and beyond, created what one of our respondents claimed as an 'ideological pitfall' within the organised labour movement.

The second step in implementing the economic and political program of neoliberalism required the weakening through public vilification of any organisation – particularly organised labour – that resisted such individualistic ideology. One method governments used for weakening a labour movement was to turn the public against it. Hyman argues that in such situations the media and everyday political debate – which are both heavily influenced by the power of capital – 'encourage trade unions to disavow as 'subversive', 'irresponsible' or 'economically disastrous' any but the most modest of objectives' (Hyman, 1975:53). Bolivian neoliberalism was no exception. Throughout this era successive Bolivian governments sought to discredit and silence the COB. One way such governments achieved this was through branding the labour confederation's collectivist ideology as an impediment to economic growth and a front against individual freedoms. Even at the time of writing we see evidence of similar tactics employed by the Morales

government. The President's well financed plan to turn the public against the COB through discrediting the labour confederation by suggesting that it practiced the same methods as the 'opposition' is clearly a pointed attempt to liken the COB to the conservatives, hoping to weaken the organisation both internally and in front of the wider public (La-Razon 2008j). The Morales government does not seem to be discrediting the collectivist ideology of the COB *per se* but rather claim that the labour confederation is too individualistic, particularly in its claims for pension reform. Regardless, both the attempts of past neoliberal governments and the current attempt of the Morales government seek to disempower the COB through diminishing the merit of its ideology as well as publicly vilifying the movement as a whole.

### **8.2.2 Shifts in Employment Structures**

Alongside of neoliberals' politically driven effort to shift ideology towards an individualistic end, were its economic attempts to arrive at a similar endpoint. Such processes included the closing of nationalised industries that resulted in mass firings as well as the reduction in the size of firms from large, public firms to small private ones. The results of such shifts negatively affected organised labour both numerically – in that there were less formal employees that could join unions – and due to the fact that crucial worker-worker interaction was reduced as smaller firms provided less opportunity for such contact. Additionally, the new type of workers entering employment as a result of the large-scale firings had a different ideological commitment than the now unemployed middle-aged male unionists. In Bolivia, as well as in other labour markets throughout the world, the type of people entering employment has shifted. At the time of writing, many women and young men are entering both formal and informal employment at higher rates than before. According to several of our sources these 'new' generations of workers lack experience in industrial militarism, they lack 'convictions' and are largely void of any ideology (Yapari, 13/6/2008; Arce, 25/7/2008). Furthermore, one respondent claimed that whereas the older generations spoke of revolution and communism, the younger generations now speak of 'hip-hop'. These generations have become depoliticised and this in of itself speaks of the crises of ideology (Chaparo, 17/6/2008; Arce, 25/7/2008). Moreover, unions are having difficulty in 'converting' the young to the levels of social consciousness experienced in the past (Yapari, 13/6/2008).

Data from our questionnaires mirrors that of the elite interviews above. This same data also parallels Alvin and Sverke's (2000) findings, discussed in Section 3.6.2. These authors found that there were more 'old timers' in the category of 'devoted members' and more 'newcomers' in the category of 'alienated members'. Table 8 evidences these similarities related to generational differences in feelings about one's union.

Table 8 – Generational Differences in Feelings about Union

	<b>19 to 30 years old %</b>	<b>31 to 45 years old %</b>	<b>46 to 59 years old %</b>	<b>60 years and older %</b>	<b>As % of Total (N)</b>
<b>Very Discontent</b>	0	1.4	0	0	.6 (1)
<b>Discontent</b>	2.2	2.8	6.5	0	3.2 (5)
<b>More or Less</b>	63.8	48.6	41.9	1.3	50.6 (80)
<b>Content</b>	25.5	29.1	38.7	20.0	30.4 (48)
<b>Very Content</b>	8.5	18.1	12.9	78.7.0	15.2 (24)
<b>Total %</b>	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0 (158)

The difference between generations in feelings about their union is statistically significant,  $p = 0.028$

Table 8 demonstrates that the newer and increasingly larger numbers of younger generations are less content about their respective trade unions. More concerning in regards to member commitment is the fact that – according to Alvin and Sverke's findings – younger generations who are increasingly making up larger amounts of the workforce are not ideologically committed and in association with this, not instrumentally committed. This suggests that these larger numbers of younger generations are less likely to participate in union mobilisations aimed at collectivist goals.

If, as we have argued, member commitment – influenced by ideology – is an important component for labour union strength and these newer generations can be classified as increasingly 'individualistic' and/or less interested in union activities, then the influence of the labour movement in shaping conceptualisation seems to be diminishing. However, as several sources claimed, the blame does not fall entirely on the shoulders of these neophytes, quite the contrary. The real onus is placed on the existing members and the labour leaders whose collective duty it is to help cultivate consciousness among the

younger generations. As these new workers are entering trade unions for the first time they are not provided with, nor are they particularly surrounded by, the type of union training and education that would aid in cultivating new, conscious generations of trade unionists and trade union leaders. This brings us to the third explanation regarding the current state of ideology within the COB – problems with labour leadership. Here we are reminded of the negative effects of weak leadership, particularly in this case the malnourishment of ideological cultivation in younger generations of workers.

### **8.2.3 COB Leadership and Ideology**

Amidst the negative fallout of the neoliberal years on labour influence and ideology, Hyman argues that what is needed is the development of a new and/or reinvigorated consciousness among labour leaders and rank-and-file (Hyman, 1992:166); a sentiment echoed in our own data. However, according to our results the current crop of leadership within the COB have not – as of yet – proven they are up to the task of reinvigorating ideology within the labour movement. A major contributor to the lack of established and experienced leaders within the COB at the time of writing is the ruinous effect neoliberal policies – aimed at quieting and expelling vociferous labour leaders – had on the labour movement.

The problems related to leadership within the COB are pervasive and a cause of concern for the labour confederation. Question 23 from our questionnaire asked respondents what are the three most significant problems currently facing the labour movement? Nearly 20 percent (18.2) of all workers responded that direction was one of the biggest problems. Of all responses given, this was the third most cited answer to Question 23. This apparent lack of direction suggests inadequate leadership within the COB. One of the most fundamental dilemmas – and best explanations for members' perceived lack of movement direction – regarding leadership in the COB is the lack of quality and stable leaders. During our time in the field all three sectors we studied – manufacturers, miners and health workers – had transitional leaders in office. For manufacturers the process to elect a new executive committee of their federation took over a year. Within the FSTMB, although they did finally elect a permanent executive committee, the inability to choose a new executive in the previous election speaks volumes to the apparent lack of clearly trusted and widely accepted leaders. Additionally, one of the health sector unions we spoke with

had a transitional leader in power until a more permanent one could be found. All of these instances have left the members of such institutions, as well as the COB at large, in a state of limbo. This issue of transitory leadership was commented on by both elites and rank-and-file as a detriment to the COB. Moreover, such unstable leadership makes ideological development less likely. Because ideology refers both to a set of ideas and beliefs as well as a plan and/or direction for achieving objectives formulated by said beliefs, interim leaders are less likely to either cultivate the trust in rank-and-file or possess the experience needed in such a process.

#### **8.2.4 The Effect of Evo Morales' Presidency on Ideological Development**

The final explanation for the lack of social consciousness – as a product of diminished collectivist ideology – within the COB that we explore within this thesis has to do with the recent changes in the Bolivian socio-political environment. In 2003, on the heels of expelling the English mining company – Allied Deals – from Huanuni which enabled the eventual nationalisation of the mine in 2000, the ‘water war’ of that same year and the 2003 ‘gas war’, the labour movement was heavily active in the removal of Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada from office and seemed poised for a resurgence in terms of political relevance. However, over the past several years and especially with the election of Evo Morales and the arguably ‘populist’ measures – *Juancito Pinto* and *La Renta Dignidad* – his government has passed, the labour movement has become more passive. According to several of our respondents, these aforementioned measures have ‘been sufficient to calm the people’ (Arce, 25/7/2008). As a result of these ‘calmer times’ labour leaders have ‘rested on their laurels’ and become complacent (Colque, 5/6/2008). The knock-on effect of this complacency among labour leadership has caused younger generations to miss out on formative labour activism (Arce, 25/7/2008). This is in contrast to older generations of COB members who were able to cultivate collectivist ideology during formative events such as political re-democratisation in the early 1980s.

The character and reach of a collectivist ideology within the COB has become more individualistic and diminished in its scope from previous levels. We argued that the causes of this change were due in large part to shifting ideology espoused by various governments to the public, a change in employment structures, diminished leadership and changes in the Bolivian political environment. According to our hypothesis above, this diminished

ideology suggests and aligns with our own data showing a weakened instrumental commitment from COB rank-and-file.

### **8.3 Conclusion**

In analysing our data surrounding member commitment we found that results tended to be mixed. Our first factor within this indicator, union democracy, showed that the majority of respondents from within the COB felt that their unions were democratic. This was shaped by their feelings that they were able to participate in elections through voting or in running for leadership positions, that union leaders were representative and that they had influence in the direction of their respective unions. According to the theory outlined in Chapter 3, a union's democratic nature influences member commitment to union objectives as members are more likely to feel connected to the success of said objectives the more democratic they perceive their union to be. Additionally, as discussed above, Pateman (1970) argues that greater opportunity for participation increases the likelihood of participation. In line with this theory, the majority of respondents felt there was ample opportunity to participate in union proceedings. Therefore, the theories we based our research on alongside of our findings suggest that member commitment within the COB as a product of union democracy is high.

In this chapter we also saw how ideology within the COB has been negatively affected by neoliberalism and individualistic ideology, shifts in employment structures to younger generations with perhaps less ideological commitment to their respective unions, failures of leadership within the COB and finally the influence Evo Morales' presidency. Our data suggests that as a result of these abovementioned factors the current diminished degree and pervasiveness of a unified, collectivist ideology within the COB has had a negative effect on the level of member commitment.

We can conclude that given the results from our findings surrounding ideology within the COB accompanied by the previous results showing diminished levels of solidarity and widespread support for the Morales government, COB members at the time of writing are less likely to commit to union causes that seek to discredit certain government proposals. However, the data discussed in this chapter also shows that commitment among most members could be high due to the positive attitudes regarding union democracy. Additionally, while many of the factors we discussed as having a negative effect on the

collectivist ideology of the COB were widespread they were not all-encompassing in their reach and depth, meaning that perhaps certain members/unions were still ideologically committed to the COB and its objectives.

Finally, in the following chapter – Chapter 9 – we will be better able to understand the nature of member commitment to COB causes as a product of union democracy and ideology as we investigate empirical evidence surrounding COB mobilisations in response to the government’s pension reform proposal.

## **Chapter 9. Pension Reform, Democratisation and the COB**

In the Bolivian Autumn of 2008 the COB enhanced activities intended to challenge the Morales administration's proposal for pension reform. These events and their outcomes provided useful insight into the role of the COB in processes of democratisation as well as the influence of our strength indicators in such processes. Throughout this thesis we have argued that the labour confederation's historical identity, relationship with the government, solidarity and commitment of its members have shaped the COB's role in processes of democratisation. We use this chapter to explore the effect our strength indicators have had on the COB's ability to critically evaluate and cultivate debate surrounding the government's pension reform proposal and in doing so potentially influence democratisation.

In order to better facilitate a cogent exploration of the COB's role in pension reform – and wider democratisation in general – we have broken down Chapter 9 into three sections. In the first – section 9.1 – we re-examine the central theories presented in Chapter 2 surrounding democratisation theory and in particular how CSOs such as the COB can affect processes of democratisation. We then move into a discussion exploring the importance of pension reform for social democracy in section 9.2. In the following section of this chapter – section 9.3 – we examine empirical evidence of COB-led conceptualisation surrounding pension reform. The final section of Chapter 9 – section 9.4 – analyses the effects our strength indicators had on the COB's ability to influence these processes. Section 9.4 is further broken down into three parts. In the first subsection – 9.4.1 – we assess how the relationship between members of the COB and the Morales government affected the labour confederation's ability to influence conceptualisation around pension reform. In the following subsection – 9.4.2 – we discuss how labour solidarity influenced COB strength in the abovementioned processes. The final subsection – 9.4.3 – is dedicated to an examination of how member commitment affected the COB during the process of pension reform in Bolivia.

This chapter serves as evidence that as a result of certain indicators of COB strength the confederation was able – or only able – to influence conceptualisation to a certain degree.

Our empirical evidence is based on the actions – including countrywide mobilisations, high-level political meetings and the subsequent coverage in the Bolivian press – of the COB in pursuit of a reformed pensions system during a four-month window from May 2008 until August 2008. It should be noted that almost immediately following Morales’ ascension to the presidency in 2006 the COB began debating pension reform. However, it was not until 2008 that such debate led to widespread mobilisations.

## **9.1 The Role of the COB in Democratisation**

Before we get deeper into the central discussion of this chapter it is important to review several key theoretical points made in Chapter 2. The first area that we revisit deals with using political democracy as a springboard for drawing attention to pressing social issues with the aim of creating more appropriate and/or democratic policies addressing said issues. As we discussed in Chapter 2, Bolivia at the time of writing seems more conducive to democratisation than during political re-democratisation in the early 1980s and/or during neoliberalism. One of the reasons for this is that unlike in the early 1980s political democracy at the time of writing has become more established, partially evidenced through successive elections of presidents from various political groups – e.g. Siles from the left-leaning UDP to Paz Estenssoro of the neoliberal MNR-ADN to Morales and his left leaning political group MAS. Moreover, political rights such as the freedom of the press, freedom of association and freedom of expression seem to be more protected under Morales than the previous neoliberal governments. In Chapter 4 we discussed the harsh treatment of union leaders and organisers by various neoliberal presidents.

As we explored at length above, the establishment of political democracy and the rights associated with it are integral to any discussion of democratisation. The reason for this is that political democracy presents unique opportunities to use political freedoms to both further institutionalise this type of political regime as well as struggle for more substantial social freedoms. However, while political democracy does provide opportunities to press for greater social democracy, these opportunities need to be positively grabbed by actors capable of successfully utilising them if democratisation is to occur.

In conjunction with the discussion above – outlining the importance of political democracy in democratisation and the current status of political democracy in Bolivia – we examined the role CSOs can play in democratisation. In Chapter 2 we discussed the theory that

strong CSOs are sometimes able to utilise spaces provided by political democracy to voice and challenge government proposals over important public policy, potentially resulting in greater power dispersion in policy-making and ultimately more democratic policies. Through these public challenges, preferences are more likely to be formed among the populace and more comprehensively defined through greater understanding and conceptualisation of the issue(s) under discussion. Furthermore, if these same CSOs are strong and able to draw enough support then governments might reconsider the political costs of implementing such policies.

In the Bolivian winter of 2008, following weeks of COB mobilisations, meetings between top level government officials and COB leaders resulted in the Morales administration's pension reform proposal being altered to take into account some of the COB's demands before it was sent to Congress to be further discussed (La-Prensa, 2008). This change followed significant public debate surrounding pension reform as a direct result of the COB's actions, ultimately shaping conceptualisation around an important social issue.

In this chapter we focus on the COB's use of the political rights of expression, association, information and the right to a voice in collectively binding decisions in order to publicly debate and scrutinise a government proposed pension reform. While the immediate aim of the COB may have been to adapt the proposal to one more aligned with the COB's version, other and perhaps more important consequences also emerged from this process – namely the greater conceptualisation of pension reform. It is important to highlight that what we are most concerned with in this thesis is the *process* of democratisation in the form of conceptualisation, rather than a static and/or definitive end. Thus, we are interested in examining the process of using political rights – which we argue are more readily available at the time of writing than during neoliberalism – to draw greater attention to pressing social issues with the aim of creating more appropriate and socially democratic policies. Before we move further along in this chapter we briefly discuss the importance of pension reform as a social issue.

## **9.2 Pensions and Social Democracy**

The greater the potential impact of a social issue the more comprehensively it should be debated and scrutinised in public, potentially resulting in better and more appropriate policy design (Sen, 1999). Perhaps the most pressing issue in Bolivia at the time of writing

is the high instances of poverty, prohibiting much of the population from achieving socio-economic rights. One of the groups most affected by poverty is the elderly. Of the 1.2 billion people in the world living on less than US\$1 per day just under 10 percent – 100 million – are above 60 years of age (ILO, 2006). High rates of poverty among the elderly also typically amplify socio-economic hardships within households where these elderly reside.

In Bolivia these patterns are similar if not even more exaggerated. Nearly 40 percent of the total Bolivian population lives below the poverty line (UN Data, 2007). Moreover, elderly people are overrepresented within such impoverished groups (Barrientos, 2006:372). This is not surprising considering this demographic's general inability to find secure and stable work. The risk management strategies that are open to younger members of a society – holding multiple jobs, subsistence farming, selling of assets, acquiring new skills in an effort to improve employability – are often no longer available to the elderly (ILO, 2006). Elderly populations' inability to work and gain income not only affects their ability to participate in socio-economic life, it also has significant repercussions on the respective households in which they live. In Bolivia it is not uncommon for elderly citizens to live with the family of one of their children. As the elderly are generally no longer employed they are not adding to the collective income, while at the same time consuming household resources that are most likely already at relatively low levels. This situation further amplifies the hardships of poverty.

Capital distribution through pensions has been shown to reduce poverty (see Case and Deaton, 1998) through relieving the cost of caring for elderly family members as well as potentially incorporating them into economic activities. When elderly people do receive money through pensions research has shown that they often times reinvest it in income-generating activities as well as in areas that have been shown to aid in the health and education of dependents (HelpAge-International, 2004:4). HelpAge International cites the example of an elderly woman in Bolivia using the money she received from her pension to buy blankets in bulk and then resell them on the open market for a profit (HelpAge-International, 2006:5).

The COB's own proposal for pension reform is not the central issue we are most concerned with, rather its ability to use avenues provided through political democracy to both help

institutionalise and substantiate democracy through the conceptualisation of an important social issue. The potential impact of pensions regarding poverty alleviation is significant, not only for the individual receiving the money but also for the wider population. It is for this reason that pensions are such an important issue and why, as suggested by Sen, they deserve significant debate and public scrutiny in order to make appropriate public policy more likely. We do not intend to engage into a technical discussion of each of the proposals from the government, the COB and the previous models but rather generalise the central aspects of each. The main aim of this chapter – and more so thesis – is not to assess which model is more appropriate but rather to examine the COB's role in generating and forcing public debate surrounding pension reform.

Briefly, the Morales government's proposal is not substantially different from the previous, neoliberal model, created during the administration of Sánchez de Lozada. Under the former system a universal pension scheme, *Bonosol*, was created to generate old age pensions for all Bolivians of a certain age regardless of personal contributions to the fund through privatising the formerly state-led pension funds. The Morales administration's vision for pension reform supposedly extends this model with certain 'socialist' additions. The government's proposal would be funded primarily by salaried workers, who would be required to pay 10 percent of their salary into a mixed private and communal fund. Employers would be required to pay 1.7 percent of workers' salary to the fund. Twenty percent of these contributions would be earmarked for a social fund aimed towards creating pensions for workers with lower incomes – such as *campesinos*, artisans, *et cetera*. Further additions include a higher 'rich tax' that would generate further capital for the social fund. Similar to its neoliberal predecessor, the Morales government's proposal would seem to require salaried workers to bear the brunt of funding the state pension scheme. Under such a proposal the state and private business appear largely exempt from shouldering the cost of pension reform.

Unlike the government's proposal for pension reform, the COB's proposal calls for 12.21 percent of formal workers' total salary to go towards pension funds, with 10 percent going towards retirement, 1.71 percent to a social fund and 0.5 percent towards commission costs for the private company that runs the Bolivian pension system (CEDLA, 2008). However, as the CEDLA report points out, COB leaders' omission of requiring employers to finance

larger portions of the pension fund makes the system unsustainable. While the COB's proposal does not explicitly claim that the state and/or private business would have to fund more significant portions of the pension proposal, it is clear that extra funding would have to come from one of these two institutions if not salaried workers themselves.

Pension reform has been shown to be an effective tool in poverty reduction, a fact seemingly recognised by both the state and the COB. We argue that because of the importance and collective reach of pension reform, wider public debate, scrutiny and consultation would enrich and broaden the scope and efficacy of such reform, a process the government and private business were willing to forgo – as we discuss below. We now turn our focus to how the COB was able to use certain political rights to bring greater public debate and changes to the Bolivian government's proposal for pension reform.

### **9.3 Conceptualisation of Pension Reform**

The industrial actions of the COB in response to the government's proposal for pension reform drew substantial amount of attention to the issue. As we have discussed throughout this thesis the freedoms of association, expression and the press are all fundamental aspects of political democracy. Without these freedoms the ability to use political democracy as a platform to struggle for social democracy is greatly hampered. The COB utilised the political freedoms of association to mobilise its members and expression to voice its collective desire for an amended version of the government's proposal. In turn, the mobilisations and high-level meetings with government officials attracted press coverage that further highlighted the issue of pension reform to the public. In response to the actions of the COB, the press disseminated basic information on current and proposed structures of the pension system in Bolivia, providing information to citizens with access to such press mediums as well as alerting them to the issues surrounding pension reform. Finally, numerous social policy experts who commented on different approaches to pension reform in the press were asked to appear before the government to give advice and conducted and published more extensive research on the issue themselves. The most significant results of these processes regarding democratisation were: 1) increased institutionalisation of certain political freedoms necessary for greater civic engagement in policy-making; and 2) greater conceptualisation of the issue of pensions as a social right through a critical – or more critical – evaluation of pension reform. This process demonstrated both the seemingly

institutionalised level of political democracy – evident in the Morales administration’s willingness to allow the COB to organise and mobilise against government policies as well as permitting widespread freedom of the press – and the role the COB can play in processes of democratisation. We now examine in greater depth what these processes and their outcomes demonstrated about the COB’s strength and how it influenced democratisation.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of July, 2008 the COB called a general strike. This was the result of months of inability to come to an agreement with the government over a reformed pensions system. In the days leading up to the 21<sup>st</sup> of July the COB and the government met to discuss a system that would accommodate some of the demands put forth by the labour confederation (La-Razon, 2008h). However, these talks failed to produce a satisfactory outcome for the COB and the general strike went ahead. The following weeks saw numerous marches, work stoppages, demonstrations and blockades of primary trade and travel routes between major cities including La Paz, Oruro, Chuquisaca, Cochabamba and Potosi (El-Diario, 2008c; La-Prensa, 2008).

The blockades themselves highlighted the issue of pension reform as did the response of the police. One incident involving police forces and COB members drew significant press coverage, as photos showing police breaking blockades and bloodying COB members through the use of tear gas and physical abuse were run on the front page of several major newspapers (La-Razon, 2008n; La-Patria, 2008e). Alongside of blockades the COB also organised marches and demonstrations in public spaces within various city centres. These actions brought the issue of pension reform into the public sphere through primary interaction with citizens in the streets. Several times during this period the COB held demonstrations in the Plaza San Francisco – one of the principal public spaces in La Paz – using the forum to discuss the confederation’s struggle for a better pension system. Additionally, during marches, participants often carried signs speaking out against the government’s proposal for pension reform. Such signs increased awareness of the issue through both primary viewing from citizens on the streets as well as when the images were reproduced in the press.

Press coverage of the COB’s activities had an even greater effect in bringing the issue of pension reform into the public forum than did the mobilisations themselves. From May to

August 2008 major Bolivian newspapers across various political affiliations such as *La Patria*, *La Prensa*, *La Razon* and *El Diario* as well as major television channels from government sympathetic, state-owned channels to the Santa Cruz-based right wing channel were filled with reports on either the COB's industrial actions, pension reform or both. In the month of July in particular, articles on pension reform dominated press coverage. In the span of eight days – from the 17<sup>th</sup> of July, 2008 until the 25<sup>th</sup> of July, 2008 – *La Razon* alone ran at least seven full-page spreads on pension reform (La-Razon, 2008b; La-Razon, 2008c; La-Razon, 2008e; La-Razon, 2008g; La-Razon, 2008i; La-Razon, 2008l; La-Razon, 2008o). Each of these reports included colourful graphs, flowcharts and graphics laying out the structure of how current and proposed pension systems would look, how they would affect different demographic groups, how they might be funded and if they would be financially sustainable. Alongside of bringing the issue of pension reform to the public forum such articles also gave readers previously unknown knowledge on pension structures, providing them a more informed base from which to scrutinise various models.

In addition to the numerous informational reports on pension reform, the press also carried articles either written by or written about current and former industry experts and their views on the proposed reforms. These pieces often compared the diverging proposals of the government and the COB (La-Razon, 2008f; La-Razon, 2008k; La-Razon, 2008q; La-Razon, 2008a; La-Patria, 2008a; La-Patria, 2008b). These articles added expert knowledge and insight into the increasingly public debate on pension reform.

Furthermore, newspaper editorials and publications from research institutes added other dimensions to the scrutiny of Bolivian pension reform. Editorials presented more opinionated views of the issue, which added an alternative tone to the straight reporting. Such articles warned of the importance of pension reform and the affect the outcome would have on society, one article even cautioned the government to consider the reform with diligence in light of the impact of its outcome (La-Razon, 2008d). In addition to newspaper editorials, reports constructed by independent research institutes such as the Centre for the Studies of Labour and Agrarian Development (CEDLA), presented rational, quantitative research alongside of well-argued critiques of each pension system proposal and included recommendations of a best-case-scenario reform (CEDLA, 2008). The report from CEDLA criticised the proposal of the government by claiming that it attempts to pass

along the burden of payment of the system onto the backs of salaried workers rather than by the state and/or private businesses. It also questioned the proposed pension reform set forth by the COB, stating that it did not do enough to right the impending problems of the current pension system in Bolivia and was too weak in its demands for greater funding from the state and private enterprises.

Overall, and most importantly, It is highly unlikely that such attention would have been dedicated to such an important social issue had it not been for COB's actions against the government's proposals for pension reform.

#### **9.4 Influence of Strength Indicators in the Pension Reform Process**

As a result of specific strengths examined throughout this thesis, the COB was able to organise mobilisations across various locations and sectors that served to disrupt daily life for weeks on end resulting in significant press coverage and most importantly increased public attention to the debate surrounding pension reform. In this section we explore how and to what degree each of our strength indicators influenced the aforementioned process.

##### **9.4.1 The COB's Relationship with the Government**

In Chapters 3 and 4 we discussed the historical nature of the COB's independence from various governments, dating back to labour incorporation. We argued that this characteristic was unique and placed the COB in a more likely position to positively influence democratisation. The reasoning for this was that its independence would make the labour confederation less likely to form an alliance with a government and conversely more likely to publicly scrutinise said government as and when it saw fit. In Chapter 6 we re-addressed a question posed earlier in this thesis asking what effect the COB's varied relationship with the Morales government had on its ability to influence democratisation. Our data suggests that the varied relationship influenced the COB in several ways.

Firstly, the fact that the COB mobilised against the government and publicly scrutinised its pension reform proposal suggests a certain degree of independence. Our results from Chapter 6 showed that COB leaders, certain segments of the FSTMB and health sector workers were more critical of the Morales administration than others and – in line with our theory – were therefore more likely to mobilise against the government. Throughout the COB's mobilisations in response to pension reform in 2008, leaders of the COB, salaried

miners and health sector workers were the most prominent and regular groups participating in these industrial actions (El-Diario, 2008a; El-Diario, 2008c), thus supporting our hypothesis.

Secondly, the group that was shown to be most sympathetic to the Morales administration in our results from Chapter 6 – manufacturers – were noticeably absent from the abovementioned mobilisations, a point noted by the press (El-Diario, 2008b) as well as by firsthand accounts. In Chapter 6 we discussed how manufacturing leaders claimed that President Morales was restoring Bolivian dignity and that his work was difficult and required patience. These types of sentiments alongside of manufacturing rank-and-file's positive view of the Morales government align with the sectors lack of mobilisation against the government during COB mobilisations in 2008, again supporting our hypothesis from Chapter 6.

Thirdly, our results from Chapter 6 also showed that within the mining sector, members of the public Huanuni mine were less critical of the Morales administration than were miners from the privately run Colquiri mine. Actions of the miners from Huanuni corresponded with our hypothesis that respondents who were less critical of the Morales administration would be less likely to mobilise against his government. Huanuni miners were initially reluctant to join in both the general strike and other COB-sponsored activities. This was particularly evident in the brief failures of a march staged in Oruro. The event organised by the COD-Oruro, in July of 2008, was sparsely attended the first day and had to be rescheduled for the following day, due to a lack of numbers. In the middle of a disappointing general strike and failed marches, Jaime Solares – the head of the COD-Oruro – called a meeting in Caracollo. Health sector workers, miners from the Inti Raymi and Amayapampa mines – both private mines – and urban teachers, attended this event. During the meeting Solares called into question certain union leaders and stated that the COB will continue in its effort to blockade major transportation routes, even if the Huanuni miners failed to join (La-Patria, 2008c). Although Huanuni miners did eventually join in the industrial actions their initial lack of support further supports our hypothesis. Additionally, and as we discuss in the following subsection, such actions suggest a divided FSTMB and a weakening of solidarity in independence from the government. This is worrying for the future of COB strength. If the differences in the mining sector are in fact

legitimate, the entire COB faces serious problems as the mining confederation has been historically – and continues to be currently – the driving force of the COB. Although Huanuni miners did eventually join in the cause – which most likely affected its outcome – their initial reluctance is concerning.

In general, it appears that our hypothesis surrounding the strength indicator based on the COB-government relationship held true based on COB activities in response to pension reform in 2008. Moreover, the COB remains dedicated to independence from the government, evidenced in elite interviews and actions of COB leaders, certain miners and health sector workers. However, several important and influential segments within the labour confederation seemed willing to restrain from mobilising against the Morales administration, to the detriment of this strength indicator.

#### **9.4.2 Labour Solidarity**

The industrial actions of 2008 in response to pension reform further highlighted the nature of labour solidarity within the COB and the effect it had on the labour confederation's ability to influence democratisation. In Chapter 7 we explored three aspects of COB solidarity that we hypothesised would influence the role of the COB in democratisation. The first aspect we discussed was the impact of splits within the labour confederation caused by political differences. We explored literature from authors such as Angell, Offe and Cook who suggested that labour movements split in such a manner are weaker than more solidaristic movements. As discussed in the previous section, we found an association between COB members who were sympathetic to the Morales administration and those who did not mobilise against the government during the pension reform industrial actions of 2008 – e.g. manufacturers. In line with the previously discussed theory regarding solidarity, such splits along political lines weakened the force of the COB during mobilisations. On the first day of the general strike several COB-affiliated sectors continued normal working schedules, including certain mining unions. Even sectors that would eventually join the cause seemed to dismiss the original call for work stoppages (La-Patria 2008d). This fact was most likely noted by the Morales government and a point that could potentially be used against the COB in future actions.

Although, there were political differences within the COB that led certain sectors to abstain from mobilisations other sectors appeared to put political differences aside and join in

industrial actions with other COB sectors. The fact that eventually miners from the state-run mine of Huanuni – who were shown to be less critical of Evo in Chapter 6 than miners from Colquiri– joined their counterparts from private mines in mobilisations against the government demonstrated that at least within certain sectors solidarity seemed to trump relationships with the government.

The second factor regarding solidarity we discussed in Chapter 7 was the effect neoliberalism has had on the degree of unity within the COB. We examined how the mass firing of formal miners led to an increase of informal *cooperativistas* and created a split within the mining sector, a process that is still evident at the time of writing when the majority of miners in Bolivia are informal. We also discussed how the health sector has been divided between the fully public sub-sector and the public/private sub-sector, the *Caja*. Throughout the COB's mobilisations in 2008 neither *cooperativistas* nor members of the *Caja* joined the labour confederation's industrial actions.

The third and final factor of COB solidarity we explored in Chapter 7 related to the structural organisation of the movement. As we have discussed throughout this thesis, the COB is the singular organised labour confederation in Bolivia. This fact has allowed it to focus its attention and resources on its goals and not on competing with other confederations. Second, the organic structure of the COB is conducive to quick information dissemination. Throughout the pension reform mobilisations the existence of COD's in every province provided the COB with the ability to quickly organise and disseminate information to locations outside of La Paz. This was made most evident in the COD-Oruro where COB members carried out marches and strikes immediately following the executive decision to begin industrial actions.

A historical comparison surrounding the solidarity of the COB during industrial activities in 2008 and those of the COB in the early 1950s – post-Revolution – and in the early 1980s during political re-democratisation will help us better understand the current state of this strength indicator. As discussed in Chapter 4, the push for democratisation and the formal creation of the COB in 1952 helped unify the labour organisation around a definitive cause. Additionally, several of our respondents (Arce, 25/7/2008; Chipara, 24/6/2008; Yapari, 3/6/2008) discussed how in the early 1980s the COB was unified around a central cause and that such solidarity gave it great strength. These same respondents then suggested that

the COB at the time of writing was dissimilar to that of the early 1980s in that at the time of writing the labour confederation is split and often fights between sectors and lacks a unified direction.

While the absence of important sectors such as manufacturers in the COB's industrial actions did not prevent the labour confederation from influencing democratisation in cultivating debate around an important social issue, it does hint at a weakening of one of the most important characteristics of the COB, its solidarity in organising. If more sectors begin to abstain from joining in COB-led industrial actions – particularly as a result of political relationships with the government – then not only the solidarity but also the strength of the labour confederation in general is likely to diminish.

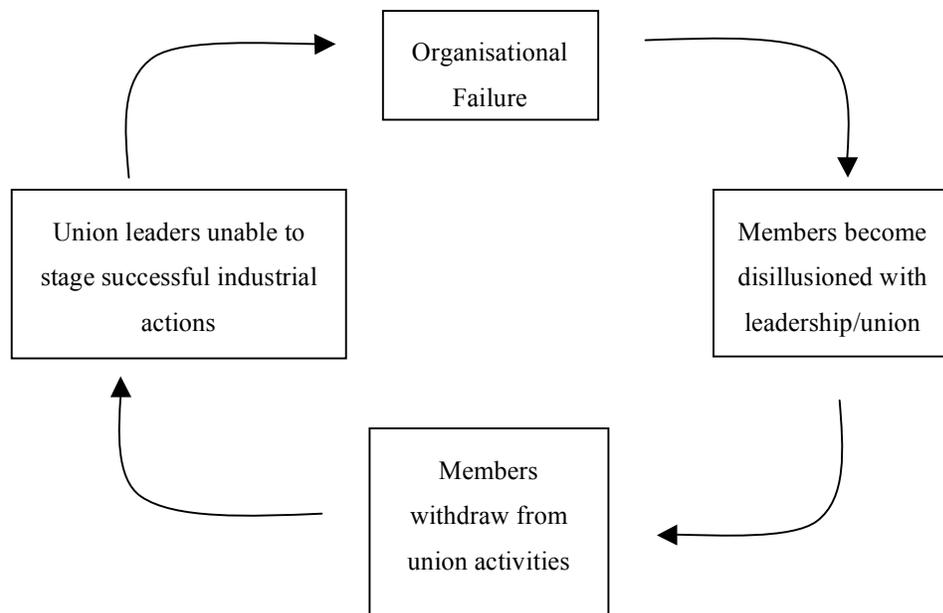
#### **9.4.3 Member Commitment**

The impact of our final strength indicator – member commitment – was evidenced in several ways during the pension reform mobilisations in 2008. As discussed in Chapter 8, the majority of respondents felt that their unions were democratic. The literature surrounding this indicator on which we based our research argued that the more democratic a member feels about her/his union the more likely she/he will be to commit to and see through successful union causes. Therefore, in our study once a sector decided to move beyond any sympathies felt towards the Morales government and join the COB's industrial actions – e.g. formal miners but not manufacturers – its members would likely commit to such actions based on their feelings about the democratic nature of their union. Evidence of such commitment can be seen in the fact that COB members from sectors such as formal mining and the health sector were willing to accept physical abuse from both police officers and members of the MAS during COB mobilisations – as discussed above.

However, we also explored another influential factor in determining the strength of member commitment – ideology. We found in Chapter 8 that a unified and pervasive collectivist ideology within the COB has been increasingly replaced by more individualist beliefs or supplanted by sympathetic feelings towards the Morales government, ultimately affecting members' commitment to union causes. We also discussed in Chapter 8 that deficiencies within the labour leadership have negatively affected the commitment of union members. Our data suggests that nearly 20 percent of respondents claimed that direction was the most significant problem facing the labour movement. Moreover, around 15

percent of respondents claimed that their union lacked training in syndicalism. We also discussed how such comments from rank-and-file were not surprising given the fact that within each of the three sectors we investigated interim leaders had been in top positions for at least several months – in the manufacturing sector it was almost one year. Poor leadership manifested itself in at least one way during the pension reform mobilisations of 2008. During the first several attempts at a coordinated march through Oruro at the beginning of the general strike, the turnout was so poor that the event had to be postponed for a later date. The initial failure of labour leadership to organise a march through the Oruro city centre risks initiating a self-perpetuating demise of member commitment to union causes (see Figure 18 below). As organisational failures such as these become evident to rank-and-file, members may become disillusioned with leadership and then, potentially, disillusioned with the union in general, ultimately resigning from union activities. What is needed in the face of such processes – as argued by Hyman (1992) – is a reinvigorated ideology, enabled in part by competent leadership.

Figure 7 – Circuit of Demise



## 9.5 Conclusion

‘There is no escape from the necessity of critical scrutiny’ (Sen 1999:126). During the period under discussion the Morales administration wanted to push through its version of pension reform. Without contention from the COB, the MAS may have succeeded as right-wing politicians and private business interests were ready to accept the government’s pension reform, which is not surprising given the little financial responsibility these groups were charged with under the government’s proposal (La-Razon, 2008m). However, such streamlined policy-making was stalled due to the COB’s industrial actions. These actions brought significant attention to the issue through press coverage, public debate and greater scrutiny in public arenas. The COB was able to use the strengths discussed above alongside of its historical identity – which in addition to shaping the contemporary labour confederation helped give the COB a certain elevated status among the Bolivian public, including the press – to voice and draw significant attention to pension reform, ultimately resulting in greater debate of this important social issue.

Additionally, the pension reform process also evidenced the establishment and accessibility of political democracy in Bolivia at the time of writing. In this chapter we discussed how the COB was able to organise and mobilise freely under the protection of the law. We also examined how the labour confederation was able to publicly express its feelings about both the pension reform and the Morales government. Finally, the freedom of the press and the information disseminated by this free press was a vital component in terms of the COB’s ability to influence democratisation through greater conceptualisation of pension reform.

However, while these processes did evidence the COB’s continued influential role in democratisation, the entire process also highlighted certain weaknesses within the organisation. Primary among these deficiencies were the political differences within the COB – which led to both members being unwilling to mobilise against the government and threatened the overall solidarity of the institution – and the inability to convincingly organise COB-affiliated federations as a result of inadequate leadership. All of these deficiencies combined to diminish the strength of the labour confederation analysed in this

specific processes of democratisation. While the COB can take certain solace in its continued ability to influence social policy and more importantly conceptualisation, this may be overshadowed by the looming weaknesses evidenced during the abovementioned events. The result of all of these deficiencies could ultimately lead to an inept labour confederation that plays a minimal role in policy formation and wider processes of democratisation.

Finally, the COB's ability to cultivate a more critical, public discussion of pension reform suggests a continued degree of relevance and importance in democratic processes in Bolivia at the time of writing, amidst the abovementioned concerns. While the extent to which the COB was able to alter the government's actual proposal for pension reform might be quite small, the COB's actions did enhance conceptualisation of pension reform. We argue that these achievements were a direct result of the COB's strengths and important in terms of democratisation.

## **Chapter 10. Conclusion**

The advances made in establishing political democracy in Bolivia over the past 30 years have been laudable. It is important for all Bolivians that such institutionalisation continues. Throughout this thesis we have argued that as political democracy – and the freedoms guaranteed under it – become normalised there is a greater likelihood for the wider and deeper dispersion of social democracy. However, the further establishment of political democracy alone will not guarantee greater social democracy. Collective agents such as the COB are needed in order to advance the dual processes of institutionalising political democracy and increased social democracy. The actions of the COB in democratising processes surrounding Bolivian pension reform illustrated this.

One could argue that had the COB been stronger or the government weaker, the COB's version of pension reform would have been implemented without conceptualisation surrounding this important social issue. This might be true. However, we have not argued that the COB always advances democratisation. From the beginning of this thesis we have stated that our main objectives were to find out if and how the COB is able to influence democratisation. We concluded that in the case of pension reform the labour confederation was responsible for advancing democratisation in the form of increasing conceptualisation of an important social issue. We also saw the effect certain labour strength indicators had in this process.

We breakdown the rest of this chapter in a manner conducive to concluding our research outlined above. In the first section of this chapter – section 10.1 – we provide a succinct review of the line of argument discussed throughout this thesis. Moving forward – in section 10.2 – we bring together the central conclusions explored above in an effort to answer the research questions laid out at the beginning of our study. In the third section of this chapter – section 10.3 – we offer a brief comparative perspective of the COB in relation to other labour movements throughout the regino. The final section of this chapter – section 10.4 – succinctly concludes the central findings and outcomes of this thesis with a look to the future role of the COB in processes of democratisation.

## 10.1 Thesis Summary and Chapter Specific Findings

The central aim of this thesis was to better understand the role of the COB in processes of democratisation. In order to achieve this aim we set out to answer the question, what is the role of the COB in processes of democratisation in post-neoliberal Bolivia and what affects the outcome of this role?

We began addressing this research question in our introduction by exploring the potential academic value that could be added through our discussion. In addressing this we claimed that much democratisation literature has focused on examining the initial push towards political democracy in Latin America in the 1980s and early 1990s. We argued that our thesis distinguishes itself from such studies in that: 1) it examines the role of organised labour in processes of democratisation – different from processes of political democratisation; and 2) our study is temporally different in that it examines processes of democratisation nearly 30 years after the re-establishment of political democracy as well as after the period defined by neoliberalism. While historically the labour confederation has played formative roles in democratisation – seen during and following the 1952 Revolution and re-democratisation in the late 1970s/early 1980s, the onset of nearly 20 years of neoliberal rule reduced its influence in political processes. Thus, we set out to examine the role of the COB in processes of democratisation under the Morales government. In this chapter we also discussed how the issue of democratisation is both normatively important for a country like Bolivia where poverty is ubiquitous and academically interesting given our analytical framework.

In Chapter 2 we introduced and clarified the central theoretical concepts utilised throughout the thesis. Most importantly, these included our understandings of political democracy, social democracy, conceptualisation and democratisation. Based in the literature we argued that political democracy – and the rights associated with it such as the freedoms of organisation, expression and the press – is a necessary and primary component in processes of democratisation. In section 2.2.3 we briefly discussed how political democracy in Bolivia at the time of writing appeared more established than during neoliberalism – evidenced by the enforced protection of the rights to organisation and expression, a more stable economy and a government less dependent on foreign influences – and thus more conducive for democratisation than during the previous neoliberal

regimes. We understood democratisation in this thesis as the process of using established political rights as a platform from which to strive for greater social rights. Democratisation understood in this way allows for the further establishment of political rights through their utilisation while increasing the likelihood of greater and wider social rights. We then laid out how we focused our research within the field of democratisation theory to the idea of conceptualisation as democratisation. Our understanding of conceptualisation was based on Sen's (1999) definition of the term as the process of non-governmental actors using political rights to draw attention to and publicly debate and scrutinise government proposals surrounding important social issues. Democratisation in this form potentially brings more actors into the decision-making process surrounding public policies and theoretically increases the likelihood of more democratic policy outcomes.

Following the introduction into our understanding of political and social democracy and democratisation we moved into a discussion of how and why an actor – such as CSOs – is needed in order to utilise the spaces provided by political democracy to strive towards greater social democracy. We outlined how authors such as Rueschemeyer *et al.* (1992), Przeworski (1995), Sen (1999), Oxhorn (2003) and Whitehead (2006) commented on the importance of non-governmental actors asserting their legally established rights in order to protect themselves from potentially anti-democratic forces. Such forces might include private business interests and/or the state itself. O'Donnell (1999) writes of the threats posed by Delegative Democracies in that a weak civil society is often unable to balance the power of such regimes, often resulting in swift policy-making with narrow interests due to the fact that governments in these scenarios are able to rule as they see fit. Additionally, as was the case in much of the private sector during neoliberalism in Bolivia, certain firms would seek to dismiss workers for being active in their unions or would not allow the formation of unions at all. We argued that organisations such as the COB are important in forcing the state to recognise legal rights such as the right to organisation so that institutions like the COB can press for greater social rights through legal avenues.

Moving forward from our discussion of the importance of a strong civil society in democratisation we then argued that within civil society organised labour is often the most capable actor to utilise political rights in pressing for greater social democracy. We examined how authors such as Lipset *et al.* (1956), Mainwaring (2006) and D'Art and

Turner (2007) – among others – argued that trade unions can help foster democratic tendencies and protect society-wide interests through greater participation in voting and other political activism. Moreover, we examined the formative role of numerous organised labour movements in successfully overthrowing authoritarian regimes and replacing them with democratic rule. We argued that this was important in our current discussion of democratisation because as authors such as Rueschemeyer *et al.* (1992) claimed, similar to how forces such as organised labour were able to overcome special interest groups reluctant to relinquish political power during political re-democratisation the same forces can also be an enabling force in expanding social equality against the will of special interest groups (Rueschemeyer *et al.*, 1992:10-11). Finally, we discussed how the strategic position of organised labour in the economy as well as its ability and experience in mobilising large, potentially unorganised groups has enabled it to remain a relevant force in democratisation.

From this discussion we moved into an examination of why the COB in particular is more capable of advancing Bolivian democratisation than other social movements. We argued that the COB is better placed than other CSOs to utilise political rights such as the freedoms of association and expression to draw attention to and critically evaluate proposed social policies for at least three reasons. First, the COB – and its predecessor, the CSTB – has significant experience in organising and mobilising various groups, dating back to labour incorporation and including formative historical events such as the 1952 Revolution and re-democratisation in the early 1980s. Second, unlike geographically dispersed and often disconnected *campesino* and *cooperativista* movements, the structure of the COB is hierarchical and well connected through widespread geographical outposts. This structure and connectivity is conducive to efficient and effective organising. The third, and most important, reason for why we argue the COB is better suited to advance democratisation than other CSOs is because of its institutionalised independence from the government. Throughout this thesis we have discussed the links between the *campesino* movement and various governments – including the military regime in 1964, the neoliberal governments beginning in 1986 and the Morales government currently. We outlined arguments from authors such as Schmitter (1986) and Oxhorn (2003) who argue that key elements of CSOs well positioned to advance democratisation are that they are autonomous and resist subordination from the state. In Chapter 2 we discussed how the COB – unlike

*campesino* and *cooperativista* groups – has remained committed to political independence. We concluded that these three elements make the COB more capable of advancing democratisation than other Bolivian CSOs and – in the case of independence from all governments – unique among many other organised labour movements throughout Latin America.

Finally, in Chapter 2 we outlined how our research sought to expand the boundaries of established democratisation literature in that we seek to better understand the role of organised labour in processes of democratisation in a post-neoliberal setting. While significant works exist on the role of collective actors such as organised labour during transitions to political democracy and democratisation immediately following the establishment of political democracy (see Haagh, 2002a), few sources have examined the influence organised labour has had in democratisation in post-neoliberal settings.

Moving forward, Chapter 3 used the theoretical framework established in Chapter 2 as a foundation on which to construct a strength index based on indicators that have been shown to be influential in processes of political democratisation and collective bargaining within industrial relations and democratisation literature. We began this chapter by discussing how and why certain traditional labour strength indicators were inadequate or inappropriate for assessing the strength of organised labour in processes of democratisation in a post-neoliberal setting. The central conclusions for why such indicators were insufficient were because certain indicators – such as the influence of authoritarian leaders in the post-transition environment – that had become important in democratisation theory in the political transitions of the early 1980s and 1990s are no longer relevant to our specific thesis. Additionally, our study assesses the role of organised labour in processes that expand beyond the traditional framework of most industrial relations literature – i.e. in assessing the role of labour in utilising political rights to increase conceptualisation of important social issues. As such, indicators that are constructed so as to test the ability of organised labour to obtain member-specific concessions from the government are not central to our thesis. Of the four strength indicators we utilised for assessing the ability of the COB to influence democratisation – historical identity, relationship with the government, solidarity and member commitment – we argued that the COB's relationship with the Morales government was the most important. Our rationale for this was that a

CSO such as the COB would be much less likely to mobilise against and publicly scrutinise a government proposal if it was aligned with this same government. We then argued that if we did find the COB to be independent of the Morales government the proceeding indicators would become important in alerting us to the degree of influence the COB could have in processes of democratisation.

In Chapter 4 we explored our first strength indicator– the historical identity of the COB. Chapter 4 was dedicated to analysing how this indicator has affected the COB’s strength at the time of writing. Most centrally, we discussed how certain COB nuances have become institutionalised over time as a result of the circumstances surrounding labour incorporation. We explored how the initial founding of the organised labour movement was shaped by anarcho-syndicalist ideology and that as a result of this, independence from the government and dedication to taking up wider social causes became embedded in the labour confederation. Another characteristic that had developed within the labour movement was the establishment of the COB as the sole, peak labour confederation. We argued that during certain periods various governments diminished the capability of the COB to influence socio-political processes – for instance during the initial years of military rule or at the height of neoliberalism. However, COB characteristics such as independence from the government and struggling for social issues beyond the interests of members remained constant. We concluded Chapter 4 by stating that the COB’s role in socio-political proceedings was dampened as a result of various labour hostile policies implemented by successive neoliberal presidents. However, most interesting for our study moving forward from this point was to determine if and how the COB was able to influence democratisation in a potentially less labour-hostile environment and one in which political rights seemed to be more securely established.

In Chapter 5 we constructed a methodology aimed at assessing the strength indicators laid out in Chapter 3. The chapter began by restating our central research question and sub-questions, each geared towards understanding if and how the COB influences democratisation. We stated that our foundationalist ontological position and post-positivist epistemological position influenced the research methods we used throughout this thesis. Briefly, such methods included considering the influence of wider institutions and historical processes in our analyses – most evident in Chapter 4. Additionally, our post-

positivist epistemological position led us to use both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analyses techniques, which included elite interviews and questionnaire dissemination. Moreover, we discussed how we used non-probability sampling techniques to select elites for interviewing and unions at which to disseminate questionnaires. We utilised qualitative coding techniques to uncover patterns from our elite interviews. In analysing data from our questionnaires we used basic quantitative analyses available through SPSS, including Kruskal Wallis One-Way Analysis Tests. Finally, we discussed certain obstacles we encountered while in the field and how we attempted to overcome them.

We stated throughout this thesis that the COB's relationship with the Morales government was the most important strength indicator because if the labour confederation was found to be aligned with the government the chances of COB-led democratisation would be much less. Therefore, in Chapter 6 we sought to answer one of two related questions. The first was what is the relationship between the COB and the Morales government? The second – what was the effect of this relationship on the COB's ability to influence democratisation – was answered later in Chapter 9. In reference to the first, we found that the relationship between the COB and the Morales government was not close. COB executives, members of the government and civilians with expert knowledge all claimed that the relationship between the two institutions was tenuous. The most cited reasons for this included the Morales government's supposed preferential treatment of certain groups – most notably *campesinos* – and the inability of leaders within the COB as well as the government to effectively communicate between each other. Although we found that the relationship between the COB at its highest level and the Morales administration was not close, results regarding the relationship between our chosen sectors within the COB and the Morales government varied. We found that even within one sector – mining – certain unions sympathised more with the Morales government than others. For instance, we found that public miners from Huanuni were less critical of the Morales government than were private miners from Colquiri. Our data also revealed that manufacturers sympathised with the government more than any other group within our thesis. Health sector workers were critical of the government, similar to miners from Colquiri. We concluded Chapter 6 by hypothesising that the groups who were more sympathetic of the government would be less likely to mobilise against it. Such hypotheses were examined in Chapter 9.

The effects of varied relationships between factions of the COB and the Morales government were also discussed in Chapter 7, where we analysed our next strength indicator – solidarity. Alongside of the weakening effect such variations had on COB solidarity we also found that lingering effects of the neoliberal period diminished this strength indicator. Our data suggested that the two main detriments to COB solidarity – varied relationships with the Morales government and neoliberalism – caused frictions within and between each of the three sectors we studied. We found that organisational splits caused by neoliberalism included a significant division between formal miners and informal *cooperativistas*. As we discussed during the early neoliberal years tens of thousands of formal miners were fired and subsequently became *cooperativistas*. At the time of writing *cooperativistas* are most often absent from COB activities, a further slight to solidarity. However, amidst the differences caused by varied relationships with the Morales government and the after effects of neoliberalism, Chapter 7 also demonstrated that the organic structure of the COB and the fact that it is the sole formal labour confederation in Bolivia are both factors conducive to cultivating solidarity.

In Chapter 8 we assessed our final strength indicator, member commitment. Based in the literature we argued that at least two factors influenced member commitment – union democracy and ideology. Our results showed that the majority of respondents believed that their union was democratic. This was influenced by the fact that members felt they had opportunities to participate in elections through voting or running for office, that they could influence the direction of their union and that union leaders were representative. The theory we used in relation to this indicator argued that the more democratic a union the more likely it is that members will feel connected to union goals and thus the more likely it is that they will be committed to seeing through the successful outcomes of these goals. Additionally, we discussed theories outlined by authors such as Pateman (1970) who argued that greater opportunities for participation increase the likelihood that members will participate. Our data showed that members felt there were many opportunities to participate in union processes. Based on these findings, commitment among members as a product of union democracy appeared high.

The second factor that we argued shaped member commitment was ideology. We found that the anarcho-syndicalist ideology embedded in the labour confederation since

incorporation and which espoused independence from the government and collectivism has been eroded by several factors. These included neoliberalism and its associated ideology of individualism, shifts in employment structures and failures within the leadership of the COB. In general, these findings suggested weakened member commitment as a product of ideology within the labour confederation. In Chapter 9 we discussed how the strengths of member commitment derived from the COB's democratic nature and/or the weaknesses caused by a diminished collectivist ideology affected overall member commitment to union causes. In Chapter 9 we analysed empirical evidence of the influence of member commitment within the COB.

In the penultimate chapter of this thesis, Chapter 9, we investigated how the COB influenced democratisation – through conceptualisation associated with pension reform – and what role our strength indicators played in affecting the outcome of this process. Our central conclusion from this chapter was that without the actions of the COB pension reform likely would have been enacted without public debate, thus diminishing the probability of a more democratic outcome. Ultimately, this process evidenced the COB was still influential in Bolivian democratisation.

Through our examination of pension reform in Bolivia we were better able to understand the influence of our strength indicators – historical identity, labour-government relationship, solidarity and member commitment – on the COB's role in such processes. Our discussion in Chapter 9 also highlighted certain weaknesses with regards to our strength indicators. Most prominent among these were the political differences and lack of solidarity caused by varied relationships with the Morales government between sectors within the COB, negative effects caused by neoliberalism including organisational splits, and a diminished collectivist ideology. Chapter 9 further evidenced that political democracy in Bolivia appears established at the time of writing. This was made evident by the ability of the COB to legally utilise political rights such as the freedom of association, expression and the press.

## **10.2 Conclusions**

The opportunity to scrutinise government policies in of itself suggests a certain level of political democracy, of which we defined above. Additionally, the ability or the degree of potential success when utilising said opportunities for scrutiny requires a vehicle, in our

case the COB. Through its use of the freedoms associated with political democracy – association, speech and the press – the COB drew significant public attention, debate, knowledge dissemination and scrutiny to the social issue of pension reform, attention that would most likely not otherwise have transpired. Sen might argue that perhaps more important than the resulting altered pension proposal of the government was the fact that conceptualisation and preference formation surrounding pension reform was enhanced throughout the Bolivian populace as a direct result of the actions taken by the COB.

The most interesting results of our research relate to the areas where we set out to expand the existing literature, most notably in examining the role of organised labour in processes of democratisation in post-neoliberal Bolivia. More specifically, we aimed to expand the existing literature in at least three ways. Firstly, we empirically examined the role of organised labour in democratisation – understood as using political rights to increase conceptualisation surrounding important social issues with the aim of creating more democratic policies – in a post-neoliberal setting. Secondly, we constructed a strength index based on indicators chosen from the literature to more accurately assess the role of organised labour in processes of democratisation in such a setting. We argued that the creation of this index was needed as many of the established indices were constructed so as to assess influences surrounding organised labour in processes of political re-democratisation and/or other traditional industrial relations processes such as collective bargaining, and not in processes of democratisation. Thirdly, our chosen actor – the COB – and country – Bolivia – have received relatively little attention in comparison to other South American labour movements and countries. The conclusions that have come out of our research presented in this thesis add greater understanding to how and where Bolivia fits into wider discussions concerning democratisation and labour studies.

The specific research question we posed at the beginning of this thesis, and explored throughout, was as follows:

*What is the role of the COB in processes of democratisation in post-neoliberal Bolivia and what affects the degree and outcome of this role?*

Through our research we uncovered at least three important and inter-related conclusions pertaining to the question above.

**1.) Established political democracy, when protected, does present opportunities for democratisation** – We found that political democracy under the Morales government offered more opportunities for the COB to press for democratisation than did its neoliberal predecessors. We saw this in the ability of the COB to organise freely. As we discussed above, the neoliberal government of Victor Paz Estenssoro activated a 90-day state of emergency to prevent the COB from organising freely. Moreover, under Paz Estenssoro union leaders and active members were physically assaulted and regularly exiled to remote corners of Bolivia. At the time of writing, collective demonstration and union organisation are almost daily episodes in Bolivia. Other political rights such as the freedom of expression was also clearly evidenced in both COB mobilisations and right-wing demonstrations during our time in the field. Moreover, the press – representing the full political spectrum - seemed free to both report on such actions as well as add opinions on the Morales government’s handling of Bolivian policy. Additionally, the Morales government’s relationship with private industry seemed less collusive than his predecessors. The government no longer appeared as a rubber stamp for private business. This was partially a result of the increased state autonomy from external IFIs dictating domestic policy. These results suggest that political democracy and all it entails were more established in Bolivia under Morales than they were under his neoliberal predecessors and thus increasing the political opportunities necessary for democratisation.

One might argue that examining the role of the COB in processes of democratisation under a more labour-friendly government – such as the Morales government as compared to previous neoliberal governments – takes emphasis away from organised labour and in turn makes the government the independent variable when assessing democratisation. However, as we have argued throughout this thesis, we are most interested in understanding if and how the COB is able to utilise political rights to encourage greater social democracy. If – as during neoliberalism – political rights are limited and unavailable for use when striving for greater social rights, then the discussion again returns to one of political democratisation rather than democratisation as we understand it here.

**2.) Without a capable actor democratisation would likely not have transpired in our case study** – Without the COB’s intervention in pension reform, democratisation would likely not have otherwise happened, to the detriment of both institutionalising political

democracy and widening conceptualisation of pension reform. As previously mentioned, the Morales government, its political opposition in government and private business were all willing to pass the government's pension reform proposal had it not been for the protests of the COB. Due largely to the COB's continued independence from the government, the labour confederation was willing to mobilise against a left-leaning administration, to the benefit of democratisation. Such willingness to publicly scrutinise the government was not mirrored in other Bolivian social movements. In particular the *campesino* movement – which has become politically intertwined with the Morales government – has, as of the time of writing, yet to come out and criticise the government publicly. In general, the literature we discussed above outlined the ways in which trade unions have played increasingly important roles in democratisation. We examined how trade unions throughout the world have played formative roles in overthrowing authoritarian regimes and replacing them with politically democratic ones. Based in the literature, this thesis also discussed how many of the same ways in which trade unions positively influenced political democratisation so to can they advance democratisation, most notably by dislodging power from concentrated and often reluctant special interest groups and making decision-making and its outcome more democratic. In our case study we found that at the time of writing the most formative actor in processes of Bolivian democratisation was organised labour.

In general, our data suggests that the COB did positively influence democratisation. It achieved this through increasing conceptualisation surrounding the important social issue of pension reform. It drew attention to the issue through reoccurring, legal mobilisations and strikes while encouraging greater debate and critical evaluation surrounding pension reform in the press and in the streets. It achieved all this against the will of what may have previously been perceived as a labour sympathetic government. In other words, while perhaps different labour movements may have aligned with a 'socialist' government the COB remained independent from the Morales government and carried on with its agenda.

### **3.) Certain strength indicators affected the COB's ability to influence democratisation**

– The reason why the COB was able to influence democratisation in the way that it did was largely a product of certain COB characteristics discussed throughout this thesis. Most notably we examined the historical identity of the COB as well as how the labour

confederation –unlike other labour movements – has remained independent from the government. As a product of its anarcho-syndicalist roots the COB has combined such abovementioned influence with the pursuit of collectivist goals since incorporation in the 1930s. This was evidenced above in the role of the COB – and its predecessor, the CSTB – in setting up special banks for rural farmers, pressing for and seeing through agrarian and educational reform, eliminating certain racist laws and helping to install universal suffrage – to name a few. The COB has and continues to be an important actor and – as described by several of our respondents – the only organisation that has continually and successfully defended political and social democracy in Bolivia.

In conjunction with the historical identity of the COB another characteristic of the labour confederation is its relationship with the government. Most importantly, the COB has remained independent from the various governments throughout Bolivian history. This was the case even when the labour confederation was in a position of *co-gobierno* with the MNR in the years immediately following the Revolution as well as with the labour-sympathetic UDP government during political re-democratisation. In both instances – particularly in the latter – the COB did not restrain from criticising and/or mobilising against the government in pursuit of its objectives.

Perhaps the most unique characteristic about the COB that we have discussed throughout this thesis is its continued independence from political groups combined with prevailing relevance in political processes. While many Latin American labour movements have been antagonistic towards right-wing, neoliberal and/or military governments fewer have done so during left-leaning, labour-sympathetic administrations. In Chapter 2 we outlined how democratisation has suffered as a result of labour movements restraining activities once a labour-sympathetic government has come to power. Additionally we saw how labour supported governments are often given more time and patience by labour to implement potentially labour harmful policies (see Murillo, 2001). The fact that the COB has remained independent from a left-leaning government has enabled it to publicly criticise an important social policy while fostering wider discussion surrounding the issue. Such conceptualisation would likely not have occurred had the COB been aligned with the Morales government.

However, as we have argued, independence from the government is not the only characteristic that makes the COB an important actor in Bolivian democratisation. For instance, if the COB was independent from the government and exclusive in its demands – or only defended rights and sought objectives limited to its members – then the role of the labour confederation in wider democratisation would be limited. However, the COB’s continued independence from the government alongside of its historical identity related to its embedded collectivist ideology have combined to make the labour confederation an important and formative actor in Bolivian democratisation. This is not to say that other labour movements have not played important roles in democratisation in their respective countries. However, the ability and uniqueness of the COB in remaining independent from all governments alongside of its rich historical identity regarding its role in previous processes of democratisation make the COB a more continuously relevant factor in democratisation than perhaps in other cases.

#### **10.2.1 Concluding Remarks: Strength Indicators**

We found that each of our indicators influenced the COB’s role in democratisation. In the previous section we discussed how the COB’s continued independence from the government and its historical identity have made it an important and continually relevant actor in democratisation. Above, we also argued that two other indicators are influential in determining the ability of the COB to influence democratisation, those are solidarity within the labour movement and the commitment of members to union causes.

In this thesis we have discussed how the COB’s independence from the Morales government was the most important indicator – **relationship with the government** – in our thesis. We argued that without independence the COB would have been much less likely to draw attention to and publicly scrutinise the issue of pension reform. However, we also identified certain weaknesses related to this indicator. We found that the relationship with the government negatively affected the COB’s strength in that it created political differences within the labour confederation and discouraged several important sectors from mobilising against Morales. Yet, the most important aspect of this indicator is to note that the COB at the executive level, miners, health workers and other important sectors such as urban teachers remained independent from the government. Thus, we argue that this

indicator is moderate, but the degree of independence from the aforementioned groups is still enough to encourage COB-led democratisation.

The first indicator we discussed in this thesis – **historical identity** – positively shaped the COB in a way that helped enable it to influence democratisation. This indicator achieved this in several ways. First, the historical identity of the COB – shaped by its anarcho-syndicalist beginnings - established a *modus operandi* of independence from all governments, discussed above as highly important in processes of democratisation. Secondly, the historical identity of the COB helped institutionalise the labour confederation as a protectorate of political and social democracy within Bolivia, driven by its collectivist ideology. Thirdly, how the COB has organised historically – particularly regarding organising by sector rather than craft and having a singular labour confederation – has helped strengthen the COB regarding its ability to successfully organise and mobilise various segments of society. Thus, we conclude that the strength indicator of historical identity within the COB is very strong in regards to our study.

The third strength indicator examined in our thesis, **solidarity**, suffered because of the political differences caused by varying relationships with the Morales government within the COB and the lingering effects of neoliberalism. These weaknesses manifested themselves in that certain sectors were less willing to join the COB's calls for mobilising against the government's proposal for pension reform. Additionally, mass firings within the mining sector during neoliberalism created a significant split between formal and informal miners, ultimately weakening the force of this sector as a result of fractured solidarity. A further consequence of neoliberalism was the effect it has had on manufacturers' willingness to join other sectors of the COB in industrial actions for fear of losing their jobs due to lose neoliberal hiring and firing practices. However, other factors – such as the structure of the COB – were shown to be conducive to cultivating solidarity. We argued that because the COB is the sole, peak labour confederation in Bolivia with easily accessible geographical outposts – CODs – in every province, competition for membership as a result of ideological splits or multiple labour confederations was avoided. Moreover, the ability of union members to congregate at COD offices as well as interact with other unions and sectors further encouraged solidarity within the labour confederation.

In general, we claimed that solidarity has weakened between and even within important sectors of the COB in comparison to previous levels. However, the continued relationship between certain factions of the COB – miners, health sector workers and urban teachers – alongside of its presence as the singular organised labour confederation in Bolivia have enabled a level of solidarity which proved to be important in mobilising – particularly in light of the fact that respondents from Huanuni seemed sympathetic to the Morales government but eventually chose solidarity with the COB over their feelings towards the government.

Our results show that our fourth and final strength indicator – **member commitment** – was strong as a product of the democratic nature of the COB but weakened by a diminished collectivist ideology. The majority of respondents felt that their union was democratic and – in line with the theory discussed above – more likely to be committed to union objectives such as mobilisations against the government’s proposal for pension reform. We also found that the COB’s historical collectivist ideology seemed to be diminished by factors such as neoliberalism, ineffective COB leadership and Evo Morales’ presidency. Again, in line with the theory in which we framed our thesis such ideological diminishment would suggest that members would be less committed to union objectives. However, in Chapter 9 our data shows that certain COB members were committed to their unions causes to the point of risking physical abuse from police forces. We concluded that if union leadership agreed to join in COB mobilisations members were likely to commit to such causes. However, many of our respondents did mention that ideological cultivation within the COB seemed to be lacking, which in turn might suggest future apathy among members. Therefore, in general we concluded that at the time of writing member commitment to union causes was strong, however, such strength was accompanied by concerns over future commitment as a result of trends in ideological development.

In conclusion, we found that the COB remained committed to independence from the government, the historical identity of the COB strongly influenced the COB’s role in democratisation, that the solidarity between several important sectors and strong member commitment were all factors that contributed to enabling the labour confederation to play an influential role in democratisation. However, an important question that has been posed by authors examining global trends involving labour movements (see Regini, 1992) is how

much longer will and/or can the COB's relevance in such processes last, given the other declining strength indicators and the global trend of the diminished roles of labour movements in political and social processes?

### **10.2.2 Concluding Remarks: Conceptualisation as a Form of Democratisation**

We recognise that understanding democratisation as utilising political rights to help advance conceptualisation surrounding important social issues could be argued as being a more abstract way of measuring democratisation than say by measuring the successful establishment of inclusive and definitive social policies. Furthermore, we agree that democratisation through the utilisation of political rights – such as organisation – to force the government into adapting certain social policies is both important and interesting. However, it does by-pass valuable discussions surrounding the inclusion of wider society into the process of making collectively-binding policies. As argued by authors such as Sen (1999), democratisation – as we understand it in this thesis – helps to include disadvantaged sectors into policy-making thus simultaneously strengthening political democracy while increasing the likelihood of more appropriate social policy outcomes and thus greater social democracy.

Although certain segments of Bolivian society may have benefited from the expedient passage of the government's pension reform proposal – particularly *campesino* groups – the fact that the COB's actions forced greater debate around such an important issue and in doing so included wider segments of Bolivian society into the decision-making process, helped strengthen political democracy in the country while potentially widening social democracy. While we recognise the potential difficulty in measuring the degree of inclusion in policy-making we feel it is possible to say – through our analysis above – that a larger portion of Bolivian society was involved in shaping the eventual outcome of the pension reform as a result of the COB's actions than would have been had the government implemented its earliest version of the reform.

### **10.3 The COB in Comparative Perspective**

Perhaps the best way to understand the nuances of the COB and its role in Bolivian processes of democratisation is to briefly examine the labour confederation alongside of other Latin American labour movements. Throughout this thesis we have explored certain

characteristics of the COB that we argue make it an important socioeconomic actor. The characteristic that we have argued is the most important in terms of enabling the COB to remain a relevant democratising agent is its continued autonomy from any and all governments. This nuance is also what makes the COB unique among other Latin American labour movements. As we have discussed throughout this thesis, in countries such as Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Mexico and Venezuela – among others – organised labour has traditionally – and in many cases continues to be – strongly and intimately associated with at least one major political party.

In Brazil, labour incorporation and the years that followed were defined by a constricted labour movement that was controlled by the state and in which only state-sanctioned unions were permitted to exist. Following political re-democratisation in the mid-1980s, Brazilian trade unions and their political arm the Workers' Party – *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT) – gained more freedoms and influence within the country. In fact, a PT candidate has been the country's president since 2003 (Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva) and this trend will continue at least through the end of 2014 with the recent election of Dilma Rousseff.

Historically, the Argentine labour movement has also been closely linked with formal political parties, most notably with the Peronist or Justicialist Party. Rather than force unions into becoming agents of the state through illegalising all non-sanctioned unions, as in Brazil, the Argentine government, beginning around the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, sought to co-opt union leaders through promises of career advancement or other financial incentives and garner the support of rank-and-file by passing labour-friendly policies. Such practices resulted in union leaders regularly taking up positions within allied governments. At the end of the 1980s and again in the mid-1990s the labour-backed candidate Carlos Menem was elected president. As we discussed above, Menem's first term in office was marked by neoliberal, labour-hostile policies, even though he was organised labour's candidate.

Chilean unions have also often been intimately associated with various leftist political parties. Traditionally, unions represented the link between the party and workers. Union leaders often ran on platforms highlighting their association with a particular political party in hopes of gaining support from members of the respective party. Similar to the three

previously mentioned countries, the majority of the Mexican labour movement has traditionally had a close relationship with one political party, in this case the Institutionalised Revolutionary Party – *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI).

In stark contrast to the previously discussed examples since labour incorporation the COB has remained independent from any and all governments. One of the stated premises of the COB is that it does not seek to create a political party nor join any other established political parties, making it completely different from the case in contemporary Brazil. Additionally, unlike in Argentina where the Peronist party has been a leader and organiser of the left and labour in general, the COB has been the only constant leader of the left and organised labour. Moreover, other leftist groups have historically taken their direction from the Bolivian labour confederation. Finally, dissimilar to the histories of Chile, Mexico and Venezuela the COB was never splintered among its support for various political parties, nor was it ever aligned with one political party from which it took its directions.

In section 3.4.1 we discussed the potential negative effects of close party ties, particularly in discussions of democratisation as furthering conceptualisation of pressing social needs. Murillo (2001) discusses how there is significant empirical evidence of unions restraining their militancy once partisan allies were in power even after said allies had converted to labour-hostile neoliberalism. She goes on to explain how labour restraint brought on by an alliance with a political party rarely produced concessions for the allied labour movement (Murillo, 2001:197-198). In fact in numerous countries, including Mexico, Brazil, Venezuela and South Africa in the 1990s and 2000s labour allies in the government implemented labour-hostile policies (Iheduru, 2001:3-4).

We are not suggesting that close ties between organised labour and political parties always produce negative results for the former. Sometimes having political representation at the legislative level can render substantive and positive outcomes for labour. However, as discussed throughout this thesis, political alliances can often prohibit public, critical evaluation of government policies by organised labour. Furthermore, we have argued throughout this thesis that the reason the COB, more so than any other social movement in the country and perhaps even in the region, has succeeded in being a continual democratising agent is because it has remained unaffiliated with any government, affording

it certain credibility and permanence in a country where political parties in general and those of the left in particular have always been ephemeral.

#### **10.4 The Future of the COB in Processes of Democratisation**

In this thesis we saw that weakened solidarity was both a product and causation of the manufacturing sector aligning with the Morales government rather than with fellow COB members during mobilisations against the government. We also discussed how the lack of support from informal sectors was a cause of concern for COB strength. Another source of concern regarding solidarity between labour sectors is the unionisation and solidarity among emerging Bolivian industries. While the importance of the mining sector in the development and advancement of the Bolivian labour movement historically and currently is indisputable, the lack of involvement in labour activities from emerging industries such as hydrocarbons is of concern. One labour leader suggests that because hydrocarbons have recently become such a vital part of the Bolivian economy their workforces, though relatively small, have become over politicised (Colque, 5/6/2008). Put differently, workers in this sector have been specially chosen to: one, ensure allegiance to the company/state; and two, remain absent from national labour activities.

Hydrocarbon workers' reluctance to join COB activities is similar to trends in other labour markets throughout the world. Hyman (1992) states that characteristics indicative of contemporary changing employment structures include the decline of traditional 'smokestack' industries, that were 'typically seen as a natural generator of solidaristic collectivism' coupled with the 'growth of new occupational groups with scarce skills and consequential privileged situation in the labour market' (Hyman, 1992:153). Hyman goes on to point out that one of the 'struggles' trade unions face in recruiting said skilled workers is that they often prefer 'individual' rather than collective strategies for organising (Gulowsen, 1998:168 via Hyman, 1992:153). Crouch (1982) reaffirms the idea that skilled workers rarely join the 'wider struggle' claiming that confederations of 'white-collar' workers are rarely involved in politics. He gives the example of US labour unions, stating that their abstention from politics is at least partly explained by the fact that unionization in that country 'tends to be limited to economically secure groups' (Crouch, 1982:201). Founded in such an argument, we can conclude that the divide between the COB and the

hydrocarbon sector is compounded by the proclivity of skilled workers to bargain independently and not risk their jobs for the wider struggle.

The emergence of the hydrocarbons industry in Bolivia alongside of its fast rising importance in the Bolivian economy has presented problems for the COB in several ways. Firstly, skilled workers from the hydrocarbons sector are less likely to join in COB-related or other political activities as a result of their special skill set and elevated pay. Additionally, the sector's geographic location in the East of Bolivia presents further problems for the COB in terms of including hydrocarbon workers in COB activities. This is largely a result of the normally remote locations of hydrocarbon bases and the fact that the eastern part of Bolivia is notoriously politically conservative. Finally, the sparsely employed and weakly unionised hydrocarbon sector is gaining economic importance while traditional fountains of union solidarity such as the mining and manufacturing sectors – that were once abundantly employed and unionised – decline in economic and political importance. All of these factors surrounding the changing Bolivian industrial structure have weakened the COB.

From such discussions it becomes evident that one of the most pressing issues facing the COB is recreating solidarity. A pertinent question to ask might then be, do things like national demands for substantive democracy – or more specifically a reformed pensions system – contribute to the development of solidarity? Hyman (1992) suggests that it can. He claims that:

[T]here are opportunities for policies which appeal to new working-class constituencies (or often, old sections whose interests have hitherto been neglected); for initiatives which address members' interests outside the workplace, and thus provide a fertile basis for transcending particularistic employment identities; and for programmes which link workers' interests as producers and consumers (as, for example, in demands for the improvement of public health care) so as to enable the construction of new types of encompassing and solidaristic alliances (Hyman 1992:164).

While the struggle for pension reform did not persuade sectors such as manufacturers to mobilise against the government, the heightened activity in industrial actions and high-level meetings with government officials brought together leaders from various federations. These processes in turn helped reignite solidarity around a common goal – pension reform. Although it appears Evo Morales' presidency has weakened the COB through creating political divisions among its members as well as seemingly pacifying

segments of rank-and-file, more concentrated efforts such as the struggle for pension reform have the potential to strengthen a seemingly weakened COB.

The historical importance of the COB in processes of democratisation has been highlighted throughout this thesis. As authors such as Lora, Dunkerley and Carr and Ellner have pointed out, the COB has been one of the most influential and important labour movements in all of South America. Moreover, respondents in our thesis claimed that no other organisation in Bolivia has continually fought for political and social democracy as successfully or adamantly as the COB. Therefore, based on our research it would seem that the vitality of Bolivian political and social democracy would benefit from the continued presence and influence of the COB in processes of democratisation.

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1**

#### **Questionnaire: English Version**

(For the actual version of the questionnaire disseminated to respondents see Appendix 2, which contains the Spanish version of this document).

First and foremost, thank you very much for completing this questionnaire. This questionnaire is completely anonymous so it is not necessary to write your name anywhere on the document. No one will know who has completed this questionnaire. The responses to these questions will be used for my doctoral thesis and nothing more. No government, union leader, colleague or any other person will use or be able to see this questionnaire.

Please, for each question only choose one response, unless the question indicates otherwise. Also, there are two sides to each page. The following questions are constructed in hopes of understanding the situation of contemporary workers.

#### **Questionnaire:**

##### **1.) Where are you from?**

- a.) Oruro (dept)      b.) Potosí (dept)      c.) La Paz (dept)      e.) Other

##### **2.) You are from:**

- a.) A city      b.) The countryside      c.) A mine      d.) Other

**3.) How old are you?**

- a.) Less than 18 years old
- b.) Between 19 and 30 years old
- c.) Between 31 and 45 years old
- d.) Between 46 and 59 years old
- e.) Over 60 years old

**4.) You are a:**

- a.) Man
- b.) Woman

**5.) Where do you live currently?**

- a.) In a house you own
- b.) In a house you rent
- c.) In an apartment you own
- d.) In an apartment you rent
- e.) In a residence owned by the mine
- f.) Other

**6.) What was the highest level of school you attended?**

- a.) Less than primary school
- b.) Primary school
- c.) Secondary school
- d.) University
- e.) Higher than university

**7.) How long have you worked in your current job?**

- a.) Less than one year      b.) Between 1 and 5 years      c.) Between 6 and 10 years  
d.) Between 11 and 15 years      e.) More than 16 years

**8.) Where did your father work?**

- a.) In the mines      b.) In manufacturing      c.) In agriculture      d.) Other

**9.) What is your current job title?**

- a.) \_\_\_\_\_

**10.) How would you classify your life currently?**

- a.) Very good      b.) Good      c.) More or less      d.) Bad      e.) Very bad  
f.) I do not know

**11.) How was your situation during the previous neoliberal governments (Goni, Tuto, Jaime Paz)?**

a.) Very good    b.) Good    c.) More or less    d.) Bad    e.) Very bad

f.) I do not know

**12.) What is the level of confidence you have in the government of Evo Morales in comparison to the previous neoliberal governments?**

a.) Much higher than the previous governments    b.) Higher than the previous governments

c.) The same as the previous governments

d.) Lower than the previous governments    e.) Much lower than the previous governments

**13.) What are the THREE most significant problems facing you currently (choose 3 responses please)?**

a.) Housing    b.) Health    c.) Family    d.) Economic

e.) Children's education    f.) Stability    g.) Union leaders

h.) Nothing    i.) Other

**14.) What are the three most important demands you have for your union?**

a.) \_\_\_\_\_

b.) \_\_\_\_\_

c.) \_\_\_\_\_

**15.) Do you feel that your union fights for your demands at the national level?**

a.) Yes, very much                      b.) Yes                      c.) No                      f.) I do not know

**16.) Do you feel that your union fights for your interests or the interests of the union or both?**

a.) For my interests                      b.) Only for the interests of the union

c.) Both, my interests and the interests of the union                      d.) I do not know

**17.) Do you feel that you can influence or control the direction of your union?**

a.) Yes, I have much influence                      b.) Yes, I have a little influence

c.) No, I do not have influence                      d.) I do not know

**18.) Do you feel that you have the opportunity to be a union leader?**

- a.) Yes, much opportunity      b.) Yes, a little      c.) No      d.) I do not know

**19.) How do you feel about your union?**

- a.) Very content      b.) Content      c.) More or less  
d.) Discontent      e.) Very discontent      d.) I do not know

**20.) What would be three changes you would suggest for your union?**

- a.) \_\_\_\_\_  
b.) \_\_\_\_\_  
c.) \_\_\_\_\_

**21.) Did you vote in the previous presidential elections in 2005?**

- a.) Yes      b.) No      c.) Other

**22.) Has your membership in a union affected your political activity, particularly regarding your voting?**

- a.) Yes it has had an effect, I vote more frequently                      b.) It has not had an effect  
c.) Yes it has had an effect, I vote less frequently                      d.) I do not know

**23.) Currently, what are the THREE most significant problems that face the labour movement (chose three responses please)?**

- a.) Direction                      b.) The government                      c.) The economy                      d.) It lacks power  
e.) The COB                      f.) Membership                      g.) It lacks social consciousness  
i.) It lacks experience                      j.) Other

**24.) Between 0 and 10 how would you classify the power or influence of the labour movement in three distinct periods (For example: During 1952 10; During the 1980s and 1990s 2; Currently 5)?**

- a.) During 1952 - \_\_\_\_\_  
b.) During the 1980s y 1990s - \_\_\_\_\_  
c.)Currently - \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you very much for your time, have a good day

## **Appendix 2**

### **Questionnaire: Spanish Version**

Antes que nada, muchas gracias para responder a este cuestionario. Este cuestionario es completamente anónimo y no es necesario escribir su nombre en ningún lado. Ninguna persona sabrá quien ha completado este cuestionario. Las respuestas a estas preguntas serán utilizadas para mi tesis doctoral y nada más. Ningún gobierno, ni dirigente, ni otro trabajador o otra persona utilizara o podrá ver este cuestionario.

Por favor, para cada pregunta solo elija una respuesta, a menos que la pregunta lo indique. También hay dos lados a cada página. Las siguientes preguntas están dirigidas a ver la situación del minero actualmente.

Cuestionario:

#### **1.) ¿De donde es, Usted?**

- a.) Oruro (dept)      b.) Potosí (dept)      c.) La Paz (dept)      e.) Otro

#### **2.) Usted es de:**

- a.) Una ciudad      b.) El campo      c.) La Mina      d.) Otro

**3.) ¿Cuántos años tiene Usted?**

- a.) Menos de 18 años      b.) Entre 19 y 30 años      c.) Entre 31 y 45 años  
d.) Entre 46 y 59 años      e.) Más que 60 años

**4.) Usted Es un/a:**

- a.) Hombre      b.) Mujer

**5.) ¿Donde vive Usted actualmente?**

- a.) En casa propia      b.) En una casa alquilada  
c.) En un apartamento (cuartos) propio      d.) En un apartamento (cuartos) alquilado  
e.) En una residencia (campamento) de la mina      f.) Otro

**6.) ¿Hasta que nivel de escuela Usted ha atendido?**

- a.) Menos que escuela primaria      b.) Escuela primaria      c.) Escuela secundaria  
d.) Universidad      e.) Más que universidad

**7.) ¿Por cuanto tiempo Ustd. ha trabajado en su trabajo actual?**

- a.) Menos de un año      b.) Entre 1 y 5 años      c.) Entre 6 y 10 años  
d.) Entre 11 y 15 años      e.) Más de 16 años

**8.) ¿Donde trabaja o trabajaba su padre?**

- a.) En las minas      b.) Con los fabriles      c.) En agricultura      d.) Otro

**9.) ¿Qué cargo ocupa actualmente?**

- a.) \_\_\_\_\_

**10.) ¿Como califica su situación de la vida, actualmente?**

- a.) Muy bien      b.) Bien      c.) Más o menos      d.) Mal      e.) Muy mal  
f.) No se

**11.) ¿Como era su situación durante los gobiernos anteriores neoliberales (Goni, Tuto, Jaime Paz)?**

- a.) Muy bien      b.) Bien      c.) Más o menos      d.) Mal      e.) Muy mal
- f.) No se

**12.)¿Cuál es el nivel de confianza hacia el gobierno de Evo Morales en comparación a los anteriores gobiernos neoliberales?**

- a.) Mucho mas alto que los anteriores      b.) Alto que los anteriores
- c.) El mismo nivel de confianza que los anteriores
- d.) Bajo que los anteriores      e.) Mucho mas bajo que los anteriores

**13.) ¿Cuales son los TRES problemas mas graves que enfrentan Usted, actualmente (elija 3 respuestas por favor)?**

- a.) Vivienda      b.) Salud      c.) Familiares      d.) Económica
- e.) Educación para sus hijos      f.) Estabilidad      g.) Dirigentes
- h.) Nada      i.) Otro

**14.) ¿Cuales son las tres demandas más importantes que Usted tiene para su sindicato?**

d.) \_\_\_\_\_

e.) \_\_\_\_\_

f.) \_\_\_\_\_

**15.) ¿Usted siente que su sindicato lucha por sus demandas a nivel nacional?**

a.) Si, mucho

b.) Si

c.) No, nada

f.) No Se

**16.) ¿Usted siente que su sindicato lucha por sus intereses o lucha para los intereses del sindicato, o los dos?**

b.) Por mis intereses

b.) Solo los intereses del sindicato

c.) Ambos, mis intereses y los intereses del sindicato

d.) No se

**17.) ¿Usted se siente que puede influir o controlar la dirección del sindicato?**

a.) Si, tengo mucha influencia

b.) Si, tengo un poco influencia

c.) No, no tengo influencia

d.) No se

**18.) ¿Usted siente que tiene la oportunidad para ser dirigente?**

- a.) Si, mucha oportunidad      b.) Si, un poco      c.) No      d.) No se

**19.) ¿Como se siente, Usted, con su sindicato?**

- a.) Muy contento/a      b.) Contento/a      c.) Más o menos  
d.) Descontento/a      e.) Muy descontento/a      f.) No se

**20.) ¿Cuales serian los tres cambios que sugeriría Usted para su sindicato?**

- a.) \_\_\_\_\_  
b.) \_\_\_\_\_  
c.) \_\_\_\_\_

**21.) ¿Usted votó en las últimas elecciones del 2005 por el presidente?**

- a.) Si      b.) No      c.) Otro

**22.) ¿Su membresía en el sindicato ha tenido efecto sobre su actividad política, especialmente en la votación?**

- a.) Si tiene un efecto, voto más frecuentemente      b.) No tiene un efecto  
c.) Si tiene un efecto, voto menos frecuentemente      d.) No se

**23.) ¿Actualmente, cuales son los TRES problemas mas graves que enfrenta *el movimiento obrero* (elija 3 respuestas por favor)?**

- a.) Dirección                      b.) El Gobierno                      c.) La Economía                      d.) Falta Poder
- e.) La COB                      f.) Membresía                      g.) Falta conciencia social
- h.) Falta experiencia                      i.) Otro

**24.) ¿Entre 0 y 10 cuanto calificaría el poder o influencia del movimiento obrero en tres periodos distintos? (Por ejemplo: Durante 1952 10; Durante 1980s y 1990s 2 ; Actualmente 5).**

- a.) Durante 1952 - \_\_\_\_\_
- b.) Durante los 1980s y 1990s - \_\_\_\_\_
- c.) Actualmente - \_\_\_\_\_

Muchísimas gracias por su tiempo, suerte

## **Appendix 3**

### **Research Abstract Presented to Respondents (English)**

My research looks at the relationship between political and social democracy in contemporary Bolivia. The central aim of this research is to determine how and to what degree the labour movement is using political freedoms to advance social rights. Bolivia is a country with significant inequalities in terms of the concentration of wealth and in turn making the poor many and the rich few. In this regard the case of Bolivia is counter to much democracy theory, which states that greater political democracy will ‘naturally’ lead to greater socio-economic equality. In Bolivia socio-economic inequality persists even though political democracy has been established for nearly 25 years. As such, it would seem that the ‘natural’ progression from political democracy to social democracy has remained disconnected. I want to research how labour unions utilise political freedoms, such as the right to organise, which is guaranteed under political democracy, to press for greater social rights, such as pensions.

## **Appendix 4**

### **Research Abstract Presented to Respondents (Spanish)**

Mi investigación busca la relación entre democracia política y social en la Bolivia contemporánea. La pregunta central que planteo, dada la actual, es determinar en que grado el movimiento obrero boliviano esta practicando libertades políticas para avanzar en el tema de derechos sociales. Bolivia es un país que presenta grandes desigualdades en términos de concentración de riqueza, donde se distinguen muchos pobres y pocos ricos. De manera contraria a la teoría democrática que plantea que la democratización política promoverá mayor igualdad socio-económica con más y mejor derechos sociales ‘naturalmente’, en Bolivia la desigualdad socio-económica y pocos derechos sociales se han mantenido durante 25 anos desde el establecimiento de la democracia política. Así, parecería que el desarrollo ‘natural’ de liberalización política al progreso de derechos sociales ha quedado desvinculado. Yo quiero investigar en que medida los sindicatos al utilizar sus libertades políticas, como el derecho a la organización, que garantiza la democracia política, inciden en la obtención de derechos sociales, como pensiones.

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