

- J.F. Where were you born and when?
- A.E. (Laugh) where was I born and when - I was born in Cape Town in 1948.
- J.F. And what area - in town or?
- A.E. My father lived in Hex River Valley at the time I was born, but I was born in this hospital in Cape Town here.
- J.F. And what did your parents do?
- A.E. At that time?
- J.F. Throughout (531) (You're very faint and there's a lot of noise)
- A.E. It would take ten hours to say what they've done throughout - they've done a hundred different things, but they farmed and worked on various things - construction and trading - mainly failed business projects is probably what they've done (Laugh)
- J.F. And so where did you grow up, or was it also all over the place?
- A.E. I've grown up all over the place - born in Cape Town for a year or two, and then went to what was then Southern Rhodesia, and then Northern Rhodesia, then back to South Africa, and then back to Rhodesia, and then back to South Africa.
- J.F. So how would you describe your class background in terms of - that's what I'm trying to get ... your parents and how you grew up.
- A.E. Oh, it would be a sort of, I think, very much petty bourgeois background mainly - a lot of ups and downs financially - more downs than ups that I can remember.
- J.F. And do you think - did your parents give you any direction in terms of non racialism, or was that something that didn't come from them at all.
- A.E. No, it - my father was always very firm on that point, and my mother to a lesser degree, but my father was fairly active in politics at one point in Rhodesia, and supported the Welensky government, but he himself, at a personal level was always very, very strong on that point, and insisted in throughout my childhood I would have been involved with black people in one way or another.
- J.F. Insisted what?
- A.E. He insisted that it would be on an equal footing - any involvement with black people - he probably shaped that quite a lot.
- J.F. Was he a liberal?
- A.E. He was very much a kind of classical liberal, ja.
- J.F. And then was there anything in your background, or before you went to university, that pushed you in any direction, or did that come later - politically.

A.E. Politically - well, I come from what would be as best described as a kind of liberal - almost radical liberal household, I suppose, which - it shaped me in a lot of ways - also his own personal views on the world probably shaped me quite a lot.

(Durban)
At university it was more, I think, the studies I did in economics and development economics that began to move me politically, and then increasingly people like Rick Turner (563) - the contact I had with Rick Turner systematised my thinking towards the left, I think.

J.F. So you went to Durban?

A.E. Ja, to university at Durban.

J.F. So was Rick Turner - the Christian part wasn't the big part - it was his socialist....

A.E. (I never looked upon Rick as being Christian in any way. I think those involvements in SPROCAS (567) have to be in a very particular context.)

J.F. So how you - was he quite an important force for you?

A.E. I'd say he was fairly important, ja, but I wasn't taught by him or anything like that - I was never taught by him. (I just got involved in discussions with him. I was doing Honours in economics. I'd say the reading in economics was a thing - in development economics - my own reading) that really convinced me that liberal theories were not an answer in any way, and then Rick contributed to that, and the kind of activity around the wages commission and in activity around the unions were the things that really shaped my thinking.)

J.F. So just - again this is second nature - do you - just spell it out in a simple way - why was the liberal not an answer at that juncture in your life - was there anything concretely that made you see - anything that you read - because you're making the assumption that people know what that means.

A.E. (At a sort of theoretical level, the things that made it very clear were development economics that I was reading, and I think particularly people like Giovanni Arrighi (582) and Saul - I don't know if people will be familiar with those, but their writings on under-development were very convincing to me - some (.....) (585) and others, and then in 1974/'75 I spent a year in Britain, where I read myself fairly thoroughly on those areas,)

The debates here in Natal - (Natal in) '74 - '73/'74 was very active, and there were many, many inter-disciplinary seminars that were held, and Eddie Webster was very active at that time here, so we had a lot of inter-disciplinary seminars into which Turner also put an input, although it had to be indirect because he was banned, so a very fertile debating area that stage, which - the debates between the liberal perceptions and kind of Marxist perceptions were very, very active across a wide front, in English departments, anthropology, economics, psychology, a whole range of inter-disciplinary seminars were held there.)

J.F. And this was only academic level - was there anything concretely that...

A.E. Well, from 1972 I'd assisted in some of the wage board hearings, here in Natal in the stevedoring industry, and I'd assisted in a wage dispute in the textile industry in '72, just giving evidence, and from late '72, early '73 we began discussing the formation of the IE - Institute of Industrial Education, and I was involved with Rick Turner in writing some of the books on economics and that, which were then used.

He did the bulk of the work, but the discussions I had with him were very useful indeed.

J.F. I keep wanting to pull back because I'm hoping that people who aren't just academics would look at this, and so I want to make sure that there aren't, again, the assumptions - can I take it back on a really simple level to say how you, as a white, got involved with workers - when you say assisted in wage boards, I don't know what that means exactly - can you tell me the steps there - why you felt trade unions were important and what it was like, especially in the early '70's with the B.C. background, for a white to get involved with black workers?

A.E. Well, I think the first point that's very important to realise is that amongst black workers B.C. was not a force at all. You had a mixture of two things which have never ceased to amaze me actually:

One was a tremendous tolerance by black workers towards whites, even though they realise that it was whites giving them a hard time, and I do feel that that arises out of their position in factories, where they can see that there's something bigger than just the whites here that were suppressing them.

On the other hand, you often had a problem with black workers in that they were condescending to any white that assisted, and then that kind of more assertive feeling that B.C. had developed amongst students/wasn't there amongst black workers, so it was a fairly complex interaction, which was one, I think, a realisation by workers that this is not only a white problem, because they could see in the factory black supervisors, black personnel people starting to rise in the '70's, and I think that's very obvious to them that a factory worked more than on just on whiteness. and others.

At the same time there was a tendency in many of them to accept whites because they didn't have the kind of assertiveness that B.C. had developed elsewhere, so in the '70's B.C. amongst factory workers was not a force in Natal in any way at all, and I would say wasn't a force anywhere in South Africa.

It was a - it's power lay in the intelligentia, in the students, and I think for very understandable and acceptable reasons.

My feeling that workers were central arose from my realisation that, in fact, you had to restructure the economy if you were going to overcome the problems of under-development, and that was very clear to me.

The writings on South Africa, the change in historiography that was initiated in the '70's, looking at South Africa, not just in terms of race, but looking at the economic structures that evolved - why migrant labour was so important to

A.E. gold mines, - what it did to profitability, and how it totally reshaped the South African society, - made it clear to me that the only way, in the long run, that this was going to change was through worker organisation.)

If there had been a peasantry of any substance in South Africa, obviously through organising them as well.

Then when it came to unions as such, what we were looking at was to try and organise workers in a different way to the existing unions - organise them on the shop floor, organise them as participating in the unions as much as possible, - so my involvement in the wage board hearings, and in the IE, in the education thing that we started in 1973, only confirmed those views that I'd developed from my reading.)

J.F. And what about, just on an inter-personal level, what were the initial relations with black workers and blacks involved in the unions like? - was it really that smooth getting into it, or was there any kind of feeling out how you relate to each other?

A.E. Oh, it was very easy for people who were prepared to do some work with black workers to be accepted, because there was just such a hunger for support and assistance. → to p.22

I personally, and I think many of us here in Natal, were very fortunate to be involved personally with some amazing people. One of them here in the printing unit, Dexisa (658) - you should talk to him, who had a long political experience themselves.

They assisted us. We got involved with some worker leaders who now are very senior in the organisation who are just very powerful, determined people, and at a inter-personal level well, they've certainly shaped my life a lot.

I would see them as my closest friends in many respects.)

J.F. What kind of political backgrounds are you saying they came from?

A.E. Well, some of them had the A.N.C. backgrounds - (mostly I would say A.N.C. was a dominant political force, and many of them had SACTU backgrounds - had been involved in SACTU unions in the past, and I think their experience of that was very important in shaping our initial activities.

They were very much part of the drive to root the unions as deeply in the factories as possible, because they had been part of the crushing of the earlier movement and didn't want to reproduce that, so they were an important part.

The other factor that made it necessary to organise at a factory level was that you were fighting for recognition, and to get recognition we fought on a factory by factory basis, so a number of factors converged into forcing the unions into the factories, therefore forcing them onto a much greater worker alliance, and the experience of these people politically in the past.

J.F. So then just take me through the past ten or twelve years - you got involved from '72 - on any kind of official basis or was it just you, a student, helping out?

A.E. Well, by '72 I was a lecturer in economics, and I was being asked to assist on an economics kind of advice, and then assist in drafting these books we used for the IE.

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When I was then - started - from 1974 I became - '7 - ja, early '74, I became formally involved in one of the committees that used to control the education project here in Natal, then went away for a year - '74/'75, and when I came back I got involved in that committee again, and then more and more deeply involved in what they call the secretariat of the unions here.

It was a committee that - of workers and officials that co-ordinated union activity here in Natal. It would take a bit of time and - there was quite - there was a sort of structure - committee structure, and I sat on one of those committees, representing the Institute of Industrial Education, and then, with bannings and that (Interruption)

J.F. I can go back with all the different questions that we got - you..

A.E. All right - then in 1976, when people were ba - quite a lot of people were banned in November, 1976 - I took over as the acting secretary of the trade union advisory and co-ordinating council - TUAC. TUACC

At this time I was still lecturing in economics, but from 1976 onwards, I'd say most of my work was down here and very little at university, and then in 1977 I was formally elected to that position, even though I was lecturing, and I resigned my post the latter part of 1977 - I resigned from the university. (town)

That took six months so, formally speaking, I was full time from the beginning of 1978 in the union.

J.F. Why did you resign?

A.E. Because it's impossible to do two jobs at once, and also this was much more interesting and challenging, and lecturing by that stage was becoming a bit of a hassle - pain/the ass really, compared to the involvement in union work, and then I've been full time ever since then. I don't know if you want me to carry on the chronology. /in.the

J.F. Just brief on what positions you held.

A.E. I was then what was called the secretary of ^{the} trade union advisory and co-ordinating council, and then we began in 1977 discussions that led to the formation of FOSATU in 1979, and I was elected in 1979 as the general secretary of FOSATU, which I - I held that position till May, 1981, when I moved back into textile union - national union of textile workers, as a branch secretary here in Natal, and held that position until the end of 1982, at which point it was felt that we should start giving education much more priority again, so I was moved back from textiles to FOSATU education secretary, which - that was the beginning of 1983, and I've been in that position ever since.

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(all part of 3)

J.F.

Now the education part - what was that like, changing gears from speaking to white students on the hill to speaking to black workers, and how did you find you had to learn to speak - that's what I was trying to get at initially when you were citing your readings - all that kind of thing - obviously you didn't make references like that - did you have to totally change your approach - your language - was it easy.

A.E.

No, it was a very much a - Ah, great - it was very much a learning experience, I think. I enjoyed teaching at the university, anyway - I think I found it a challenge and tried quite hard to engage people there, so it was a matter of transferring that over to a different situation where you weren't citing, as you say, weren't citing authors all the time.

You were actually trying to deal with ideas, but what I found very useful was that you were forced to deal with problems, and we, for various reasons we try to deal with education from the point of view of taking peoples' actual problems and then expanding from that to a more general perception, but, ja, it was a very much a learning process - of being much more conscious of the language you used.

In fact, what was important, I suppose, you spend more time learning from the people you are meant to be teaching than teaching them, and we encourage them into change and discussion as much as was possible.

In my own mind, I guess I lived a sort of schizophrenic world - you had to change gear, sometimes from lecturing and then change to a different gear when you talk to workers, but very definitely the worker stuff is much more exciting, more challenging.

People were just so keen to learn, and the problems they presented you were very much more difficult ones, and to address those problems.

I was helping with organising, also, from 1976. There was a factory here in Natal which is fairly famous called Smith and Nephew (776) which was the only signed (776) recognition agreement in South Africa at that point, so from 1976 - during the course of 1976 I was running some local level seminars with Johnny Copeland, who was in the organisation formally then.

Copelyn

I was handling Pinetown - he handled Jacobs, and we ran just general discussions about history, workers and that. Those were very important for me in shaping my understanding about education, but as a result of that I got involved in Smith and Nephew organising, and

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J.F. continue with Smith and Nephew.

A.E. Well, (didn't) (002) really take Smith and Nephew as an example. The thing that taught me a lot was that when Shop stewards would come and present a complaint in the factory and they ask : What do you think about it - I just remember these feelings of abject terror because you didn't know where the hell to go or what the hell to advise people, and fairly soon became clear that, in fact, shop stewards had as many ideas themselves, and it was possibly a mistake for them to ask you to give advice, so the role that I increasingly began playing was that shop stewards would talk through the thing, and the kind of thing that an intellectual can bring to a situation as a wider perspective,

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Maybe some wider knowledge of law, wider knowledge of the company's location in South Africa at that time, because it was a British company, for example, a wider understanding of how it would link in with the sort of pressures that were building up with codes of conduct and that, so the challenge, I think, was to link the answers that shop stewards had to wider perspectives, and I think that's a skill that one began learning - how to link those things through.

On the education side, we used to just discuss a lot of stuff like - at that time, particularly, INKATHA was a really serious issue for people, so we would sit and have discussions, seven or eight of us, as part of a seminar, and we'd talk about worker history - history of South Africa, and there I would use the information I'd gathered in reading at the university, because much of that history would also be new for black people involved, because they had been given old, distorted history.

Then we just used to sit and discuss that, and I - it's hard to give you much more concrete stuff, other than endless discussion was what taught you, and interaction in this discussion - talking to people, trying to address the problems of INKATHA, for example.

J.F. What ^{issues} would they raise that a university white student wouldn't raise - and do you remember any time when you had to kind of rethink theory or they raised a point that impressed you that ..

A.E. Ja - you jolting my memory - I'm trying to drag it out of my memory - it's...

J.F. Or even generally - maybe it's so second nature to you - what kinds of things were they interested in - you talk about their keen interest - what did they want to know more about?

A.E. Well, I think people were very - like, for example, the history side - people were very interested in the kind of perceptions that we were bringing of the migrant workers, - what was their role in the gold mines here. They were keen to know more about those early unions - the ICU and things like that, which some people had a small inkling of but not much, so at that point one was just bringing a lot of information.

A.E.

There was the challenge of how to present that information. You couldn't just come in and give a lecture as if you were giving it to white students.

They would be very keen on the actual - much more (detailed workings of organisations - how the organisation actually worked - what were they trying to solve) - what were the problems, whereas white students would be approaching this problem, not from their own concrete experience, - they would be looking at this just as another paper they had to write in economics, or paper they had to write on (history, quite understandably).

Their own day to day experience didn't raise any of these problems. It was more abstract for them - it was just history, whereas for workers) - they were trying to address their present problems.

For example, the whole question of (ICU) as a union, (or SACTU as a union) - how did it operate - was designed to give them information which they could use in arguments and discussions in recruiting workers there and then, so you were forced down to much more concrete issues all the time, so you'd get a general history point, then we'd get forced down to a concrete issue, and then often, much more often, I think, for me, people would ask a problem about - in the factory.

Let's take a problem about the role of supervisors, - that supervisors are just shits. (038) Then you try from that - say : Well, what is the job the supervisor's doing, - why is he supervising you, - why's he got to do it so strictly, or why are management pushing you so hard? - and from there you could work to a question of profits and the role of profits.

Workers would be very clear that profits is what the factory's about, but) to - (you can try and) situate the supervisor in that sit - profit (042) and (take workers away from just a perception that the supervisor himself, as a person, is a shit, and you try and) move it away from those things - (move it into profits, and then from profits move it to a wider assessment of class, so instead of dealing with classes in the abstract, which you would do with white students, here you would deal with concrete issues, and try and elucidate those issues in terms of the class,) that you'd have to build up, step by step, moving outwards, and (what's exciting about talking to workers is that they've got as much knowledge that is valid and valuable as you have, so it becomes an interchange, - an interaction,) and I think success - people who can successfully make that transformation as intellectuals are, therefore, more accepted.

Those intellectuals who persist in trying to deal with the abstract, who cannot make the transformation in terms of language and acceptability just aren't accepted after a while.)

J.F.

Because my focus is non racialism, I'm really interested to ask you this - was it a separate concept - I think I really want to get at this, is whether there's non racialism in a kind of liberal we can all work together, but did you see when they began to really understand, or maybe already understood and began to articulate a class analysis, that non racialism was somehow superimposed, or was that becoming basic to an analysis - the class analysis - how did non racialism fit into all this?

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A.E. Well, I - this is maybe looking back - we might not have been quite like this in the beginning, but one thing's very, very clear, if you take FOSATU's conception of non-racialism, it's got very little to do, if anything - in fact, I'd say it's completely different from the sort of non racialism that might be espoused by even UDF, for example.

We wouldn't accept different racial constituencies within the organisation, and that, I think's very, very important.

What we've been trying to do is to say : Well, let's look at the shop floor, where we've got problems. Now, the easiest way of elucidating non racialism is the actual working experience of the division of races in the factory, where it's quite obvious that management have drawn Indian people.

Non-racialism in the unions relates very much more to Indian and Coloured than to white, as such. We would then look at the effects of those divisions in the workplace, and the debilitating effect on organisation of those weaknesses, so what worker leadership, and workers themselves could see is that : Look, the division's obviously bugging us.

We can see why they^{are} dividing us, but we can see also that it's weakening us, so our preoccupation with non racialism has been very much working from the bottom, trying to link Indian and African workers here in Natal to be Coloured and African elsewhere - to link those workers together in some concrete activities, where both of them could see that : Look, the unity was beneficial rather than the division, and trying to overcome those divisions in the workplace.)

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With regard to whites, as such, white intellectuals were accepted in the organisation for what they could offer and bring to it, so people would say that : "Look, the fact that you^{are} white mustn't block you from coming in, if you can bring something useful," but by working in the union, whites had to learn very, very fast to offer something useful, and that's why I go back to that experience when I first was asked complaints in a factory, how to solve it, I didn't have a foggiest how to solve it - I just didn't know - just seemed so terribly complicated and difficult, and it was shop stewards who sort of taught you, that : Look, let's approach it this way, let's approach it that way, and what you brought into it, as I said earlier, was these wider perspectives from time to time, but working at the factory level, where people could see : Look, the division's dangerous, then it became clear that, in the wider arena, racism is not the answer - that we should take a non-racial position, but I stress the non racism is not our conception of it.

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It's not the same, ^{non-racialism,} maybe, as some of the political organisations. We wouldn't acknowledge separate Indian shop stewards, for example, so whilst racism is a tremendous reality in the shop floor, we've chosen to address it by refusing to accept it in the workplace, whereas there's a tendency in the political movements to accept different constituencies - racial constituencies, and bring them together at some broader umbrella level.)

We say : No, look at the bottom there, whilst racism is the ...

A.E. overriding reality you dealing with, the way you've got to address it is just by fighting it, and - but by fighting it (with understanding and sophistication.) You can't come along - let's take, when you've got Indian and African shop stewards together in a factory, is that Indian shop stewards would sort of - Indians would tend to say : Look, can't we have our own shop steward, and we would say : No, as a matter of policy we refuse to allow that there are separate shop stewards.

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Then in our education programmes and in the discussions in the shop stewards' committee, we would address the problem : Well, what are your separate problems - what are the difficulties that Indians have got, and if you've got those difficulties, let's rather get Indian - African shop stewards to handle those problems.

I think you'd get a much more - very good insight into that if you address some of the shop stewards - African shop stewards that have to deal with Indian factories.

There are two guys in particular who've done a tremendous amount on that front, and it would be interesting in talking to. One guy's Elias Banda, who worked in a factory where there was majority Indians and helped recruit it, and the other guy who's very interesting on this is Isaac Ndlovu, who's a textile organiser in Pietermaritzburg.

If you get the chance you should definitely speak to those people, because, for Natal - or Gwala - Jabulani Gwala - textile organiser - there - it's - they've had a lot of experience in trying to bring together Indian and African workers, and I think, would elucidate what I'm saying more carefully.

J.F. So what about how this theory fits into politics in practice - how has that been - how has that worked out in practice through the '70's and into the '80's?

.A.E The trying to bring people together?

J.F. Well, I'm just saying, you're talking about factory floor issues - is that the sole concern - how does politics fit into that?

A.E. Well, I think what that then did was to translate it into FOSATU's non racial stand, where we said : Look, we take the non racial position as unions, and we worked out, in some detail, - it would take a bit of time - the sort of guidelines that we then - what we meant by that, and we worked out guidelines as to how, for example, even white workers might be integrated into the unions, which on a number - a few occasions they have come in, but basically we were saying that : Look, the - for a white worker to come into the union, they must commit themselves to the acceptance that there is a real struggle we^{are} involved in now, as dealing basically with unskilled, semi-skilled workers' problems, and those are basically black.

We just debated that, so that at the level - political - (wider political level, it's really been our insistence on a non racial struggle. Within the unions, all constitutions are non racial - the federation's constitution is non racial.

We've had to defend the involvement of whites like myself

- A.E. in senior positions. We've had to debate and argue those things politically, and it's a movement which is, no doubt, in FOSATU's leadership, and in its own public statements, movement towards the left - it's been a definite move in (its) (114) conceptions, I would say, at the level of leadership, that would sit on national executive, central committees and things. (Interruption)
- A.E. ... this kind of insistence on non racial also translated into a whole range of debates - debates with other unions about involvement in white (and why) (117) - debates with other organisations, more and more these days, about the role of whites and what sort of struggle we fighting, and I think what I was saying was that the level of leadership that would sit on executive and central committees, I would style that leadership as socialist.) → to p. 23, ④ cont'd
- J.F. Of the whites?
- A.E. No, the black - and then the leader - the role of whites these days in the organisation is far, far less - far less influential than it might have been at an earlier day.) to p. 22, ② cont'd
- J.F. So is there a movement - I'm just thinking of the split, and the kind of criticism - critiques, especially having come from the Transvaal, where everything's a lot - more intense scale - do you think any of the points they raised made an impact in terms of having to be answered and (.....) (126) in any way - what did you - when you say all these debates ... what was the critique in - what's the response been?
- A.E. I really don't believe that UMAWOSA was a major impact on that, and I don't just say that to - because they were a splinter. I think the problems of relating to communities in (and) (129) wider politics had been there for a long time.
- J.F. Let's not say UMAWOSA - just say the critique of whites, or what, to me maybe, is intellectuals or apolitical whatever - what do you think the critique was about, and was it at all valid - is it - it seems to be continuing.
- A.E. I think the criticism that present (132) has made against whites - it's worth concretising it in UMAWOSA's case, as against particular organisers who were influential in the union that they were splitting from, and certainly in my view, those things have to be listened to more carefully.
- Much of the white leadership have adopted a political position which needs to be assessed at this point - continually assessed, and I think there is a tension at times, not only with the white leadership, but there's a tension within the organisation, which - there's whites on both sides of the tension, if you like (138) between the - as to the speed with which we should be moving, and the nature in which we should move in (moving) (139) that we should be moving, everyone's accepted all along, but there's been some argument of how exactly one should move in the community.
- There'd be those - and I'd say the tension could be boiled down to this, that both agree that worker interest should be made paramount, and the question is, the people who would sort of say : All right, that must happen fairly slowly, let us just move into the community and accept a more subordinate ...

A.E.

.... position, and those who say : No, we can move into the community and be more dominant, and how we should be more dominant as workers, so that kind of tension happens.

Where you've got a split in a union, for example, like where there's a lot of things coming into play, all sorts of tensions - personal, policy, all sorts of things - in those situations it's always been the case that if a white's involved, or an Indian for that matter, or any of them - that racism would be more used in the split, because it's an easier way of justifying your split - there's no doubt about it, and sometimes it's a real part of the split, too, but never a dominant part, in my experience at all.

The criticisms of white intellectuals now - it's quite difficult to know where those are coming from. I think there's a much greater assertiveness, again, on the race issue, in a new form B.C. is coming back in, I think, to some extent, but it's coming in in an environment that is just moving to the left very rapidly indeed, so, in a sense, the politics are moving to the left in a - in such - towards a sort of socialist perception, which undercuts B.C. as a political position, but at the same time, B.C. as an assertiveness, that blacks should be taking a much more active role is very much there.

J.F.

I don't know that I've seen that at all on interviews I've done - I've been actually astounded by the amount of young people for whom B.C. was a non event - I'd be asking people from Fort Hare about B.C., and they'd finally say : Look, we didn't have that on our campus, we're non racial progressives - so, to me, maybe it's just what's in my mind, but I think, especially from an international perspective - having lived in South Africa in the '70's and early '80's when things were much less articulated - now everyone talks about, not only politics, but directly to A.N.C. - the American State Department will even suggest that one day they might be talked to - I'm just wondering if - I don't know if I want to pursue - I definitely don't want to pursue on UMAWOSA, because that - I'm not interested in those personality things - I don't - I'm wondering if it's the B.C. aspect of, or whether you think it has to do with the kind of resurgence of the congress tradition at all, that people see politics in the forefront - they see people daring to articulate more and more, and just almost the populism kind of a feeling that that's what making movement - one of the workers who's a FOSATU worker I interviewed was saying it's the children who've made the movement, and we must join with them and - kind of UDF was the children, and we have to - we should get in touch with them, and I'm just wondering if you see that as a factor - that when you're saying moving left that it's workers saying : We have to identify more with a popular movement, and that that's - that that is a factor that has to be considered from the kind of early '80's point of view that that wasn't at all to be touched - unions and apolitical movement would have no - it wouldn't affiliate to UDF, or they wouldn't get involved with community groups - they wouldn't even work together, whereas now that's happened.

A.E.

I don't think that was the position in the early '80's, and it's very important to understand this, because I think there was tremendous - there were misconceptions, understandably maybe, but they politically very wrong.

5 If you take FOSATU, for instance, (FOSATU's position has never been to shy clear of politics. It's been the opposite.) It's actually taken the position that we must create working class politics. (It's been an explicit attempt to forge a kind of working class politics.

Now, how that can be done has been changing rapidly over the last few years. To begin with, the starting point of all our operations was that no working class politics is going to be possible unless there's strength in the factories.

You going to have an organised strength in the factories, then - the style of FOSATU organising's very markedly different to other unions, not only in South Africa, but in the world, I would say) - the very different style of organising.

It's heavily based on factories; heavily based on worker involvement in that, and the key elements of leadership are shop stewards, and they not just hanging in the wind, - they're structurally integrated into the unions, and in fact, the leadership of any national executive committee of any FOSATU union) - (all) of them have to be shop stewards,

Now that's important because it means they've got a working constituency, day to day, on the shop floor. If you a president of FOSATU like Chris Dlamini, when you go back to the factory you still a shop steward in your department, and you got to deal with the complaints in that department, so the leadership is tied very, very tightly into actual factory based working structures, and the shop stewards are the key element, and I think that style of organising means that the leadership are very much worker based - heavily worker based, and all committees are dominated formally by workers - they vote etc.

Now what we were look - and the local councils, and the bringing together of unions in a tight federation - very markedly different style of organising, with the intention of creating a fairly powerful worker base, and that base is there now and it's an important base.

It's allowing for movement into the community on a much more concerted basis by workers. What we've always look to is : O.K., how do you play the role in the community? There was - when the UDF was first starting, and before the UDF, the feeling was : Look, those guys are offering nothing at a community level - they too high level) - big deal stuff - they not dealing with issues in the local community, and what we were trying to do on a very low-key basis was, where it was feasible and possible, to use the strength of the factories to move into the communities. In areas like Uitenhage, from 1980 on, they were trying to do that.

What's happened ^{since} in the last year and a half is, the sweep of youngsters in the township has meant that, if you want to establish any working class politics, you not going to do it by standing back. You going to only be able to do it by moving in, and the differences within us (211) are not just the question of moving in - that's there - but how we should ...

A.E. shape and style that - what links should be made with the youth, exactly.) There was a time, I think, a year ago, when people felt that : Look, that should be done, maybe through the UDF. There was a group that said : Let's affiliate to the UDF.

I would say, at this point, there's no-one even arguing that case seriously any more, but what they saying is that you must work with the groups that emerge in the local townships, and those are not structured on the national basis at all - they've got no structure.

We must work with them, and we must work with them with whatever's possible at the time, and there's where there's been much more rapid developments in the last year - with mistakes, too.

Uitenhage was a problem there, although the guys, if you listen to them, they'll still justify their stand, because they very disparaging about the UDF leadership in that area, but in other areas there's been a rapid movement into the community and trying to bring those people together in one or other way.

I'd say the conception that we looking at now, most, would be some kind of group council, or grouping in which constituencies were represented - factories, schools, local areas, and the Eastern Transvaal would be the guys that forged that breakthrough.

I think we learning as we go - (you're working in a political environment that's changing very rapidly indeed, and what people are looking for is how to adjust to that, most - not the principle of moving in, but how, once you in, you make a contribution that will generate working class politics, or - and protect working class interests.

I would say within the FOSATU camp, - within the unity ^{unions} movement camp, what people are always seeking to do is to address the question of workers' interests, protecting worker interests, building those up and ensuring that whatever popular energies are there begin moving in that direction, and I think the reason why it's been easier to make contact with the youth is that they very radical.

They, themselves, are talking about the left and the socialists and whatever, so it's possible to make more contact with them, I think.)

J.F. What's the unity movement...

A.E. Unity unions - those unions that are trying to get together.

J.F. The federation that going to be formed?

A.E. Ja, ja - there was a core of unions which is now being expanded, and there's much more common ground within that core, but I think there might well be common ground within the wider group that's now emerging.

J.F. And this new grouping you're talking about - would that - are you talking about a rival to UDF, or are you talking about, as UDF is under attack, perhaps something would emerge that would be community and unions linking together in some structure or...

A.E. Ja, we not seeking to be rivals to the UDF at a national level or anything like that. It's just that it's much easier for unions to deal with the issue at a local level, and that's what we try to do.

J.F. But those might well be UDF affiliate..

A.E. Yes, there's no problem with that, but their reality is that even if the UDF affiliated, they've also got to deal with the local problems.

Every township, every area has its own distinct and definite problems, so we try to address that. That's where the unions can also offer greatest assistance, is at the local level, through their strength in the factories, and it is proving to be quite useful and important.

J.F. Do you think that the movement has been actually faster than was anticipated - would you have predicted, three years ago, that FOSATU Workers' News would have, in big, bold letters : Boycott on the front page - there have been kind of theoretical debates about whether that's a good idea, and now things are just happening fast - I'm just wondering if you feel that it is a case, that things are moving almost unpredictably fast at this stage?

A.E. I think one things that's been clear to all of us is, you can't predict what's going to happen - that's been clear for years back. We realised - especially since FOSATU started, that there's no way that you can sit and do what you want to do hoping that things around you stay still - they just keep moving.

We have a lot of difficulty adjusting to the speed, because we trying to mix democratic practices through the structure of factories and that - it takes some time to do it, but obviously we've got to adjust to what's happening in this (260) speed, and we definitely have difficulties in that - there's no doubt about it, and we often - I think a general criticism that we all share of ourselves is, we move too slowly, but the problem we have is that we could - all right, to move very fast - you would then have to give all authority to the general secretary to flip out statements all over the place all the time, and we very unhappy with that kind of way of operating.

J.F. Do you think there's any ideological gap that will have to be bridged, or do you think that might - just events might overtake - I'm just wondering, when you talked about the kind of theories of ethnicity, the congress tradition of saying : We'll work through communities, and your talking about a non racialism which is a theory that you want to support - do you think that that's some kind of gap that has to be bridged, or do you think it's just two kind of pragmatic approaches.

A.E. Which - I'm not quite...

J.F. I'm talking about saying : We don't believe in separate Indian, Coloured, Asian - congress says we don't believe that that is the reality - that's how we're going to work - then you saying : We're going to be totally non racial - is that a big rift that - that it's going to have to be bridged in years to come, in terms of what your workers are going to ...

J.F. be believing viz-viz what the UDF or congress people will support, or is that something that will work itself out - is that a big ideological gap - you believe not in four nations - they believe in four nations, finish.

A.E. It's a part of a potentially wider difference - it - not sure it indicates or anything (278) is that four nation thing - I'd say we would not be happy with that style of presenting things, because on - when you come to organising people on the ground in the factories, that's not a way that you can organise unity.

You can't accept four nations in the factories, so I think one has to now look at unions, and see that there's some special factors affecting unions that - and this - what shapes us. We - I think we not trying to say : Look, our style of organising the factories must be translated to everything, because you have got different situations - townships are in different places - they've got different problems - there's no doubt about that, and you've got to accept those differences, and got to be discussion between them.

All we saying is that you can't take the four nation idea and use that in the factories - that would be out, and you would massively weaken our organisation, which is why we fought the constitutional thing so strongly and moved to fight them.

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The other differences maybe - oh, there's a debate that's going on - it's - what's the programme we fighting for - is it socialist or is it purely nationalist - that's - no doubt whatsoever that's the debate that's emerging, and four nations (.....) (293) in that - people saying : Well, look, if you can still acknowledge that, is that not just a nationalist platform that you standing on - shouldn't we be trying to transform those kinds of arguments and move towards a much clearer left perception.

From FOSATU (296) we don't come along with blueprints. All we saying is that, now you workers and others are prepared, and are moving to the left and can see that unless you've got some answers to the political economy of this country, we going to go nowhere, no matter who the government is.

J.F. Just backtracking - just a couple of things - is INKATA - is that a big problem?

A.E. In the very real factor that - to their cost, some people have realised you can't treat lightly, and I think that's been clear to us all along.

Within FOSATU we've dealt with it on a very sensitive basis, and we've dealt with it by giving regions that have that problem a large degree of autonomy to deal with it. We don't attempt to impose a line on INKATA throughout FOSATU.

If we try to do that, for example, Eastern Cape, Western Cape and Transvaal regions of FOSATU would be massively hostile to INKATA, and very keen to make statements attacking, whereas in Southern Natal, Northern Natal regions of FOSATU have got a much bigger problem, and we've then accommodated that by allowing much greater autonomy, and we've just had to do that. Any grouping that attacks INKATA must be in

- A.E. a position to physically defend itself, and if they can't physically defend themselves, then I think any attack's just damned irresponsible.
- J.F. What's the percentage of workers organised in this country according to - what figures could you say it would be (315) -
- A.E. I'm not sure.
- J.F. some people say ten and some people say fifteen percent.
- A.E. Well, I think it depends what you take - there's something close to - probably close to two million people of all races organised into unions of all sorts of forms, and of industrial work forces, something like six and a half, seven million, including agriculture - that's what - that's getting more than twenty percent - depends what you include in the work-force.
- If you take it as a percentage of economically active, which is*basically ten or twelve million, then you looking at - ja, twenty percent - ten percent. * closer to.
- If you take - it's a difficult question because it depends what you measuring with what, but it's more than ten percent, I would say - definitely - quite a interestingly high proportion, I think.
- J.F. Have you ever been detained?
- A.E. Me, no.
- J.F. And is FOSATU - been harassed by the police at this...
- A.E. In the present or in the past?
- J.F. Well, both (329)
- A.E. Ja, it always has - quite a lot of people - there've been people detained at various times. Virtually all of us have had our passports taken away at some stage, then given back.
- FOSATU's experienced it mainly, I think, like most unions at a lower level - they don't often come at senior official level. They harass shop stewards a lot.
- J.F. I think these are my wide ranging questions - people talk about the lessons of the fifties, that non racial organisation was crushed then - do you think that that's something people talk about - is that in any way being discussed less - do you think it's a big factor - do people talk about - you said there was the SACTU tradition - what - how is that viewed - parallels of the fifties, and what the implications are for current activity?
- A.E. Well, I think the first point is that the A.N.C.'s and SACTU's greatest achievement, without any shadow of doubt, is their ability to entrench a non racial approach. That's led to progressive attitudes on a range of fronts. In my mind that's a massive political achievement which really - an amazing political achievement, really, for South Africa, and that means that, I think, the imprint of the A.N.C. legacy on that issue is just dominant, as you were saying earlier, and I agree with that. B.C. has never been a major political

A.E. force in this country. It's been a factor - it's been a consideration. Even now, the kind of assertiveness - if you use B.C. in that more broad thing as an assertiveness is there, but it's just not a major political force and never has been, because of A.N.C.'s tremendous centrality in those things, and SACTU's.

On the more narrow union front, yes, there's been a lot of assessment and discussion in our ranks as to whether SACTU's mode of operating was correct at that point in time, and whether it wasn't - I think most of us would agree and accept that they had very little choices other than to operate that way, but that we don't necessarily have to follow that style of organising now, when you've got a very substantial change in conditions, and that was argued much more fully in that speech that Foster gave in '82, but that's the result of long going discussions in FOSATU, and it goes back to what I said earlier.

Our style of organising is - has been-to try and build a worker base, and avoid direct political affiliations to groupings, because we could see that would just divide the worker base that we might have, and use that as the starting point for worker organisation.

Even now, in South Africa, it's not true to say that UDF is the hegemonic political force. We would actually divide many of our unions if we were to affiliate - there's no doubt whatsoever about that.

We could write off very important industrial areas in Natal, and we could write off quite interesting and important areas in the Eastern Cape from the other extreme, so you've got UDF sitting here, you've got INKATHA there, and then you've got left wing groups to the left of UDF there, which are very significant in that, in the Cape.

J.F. In the Eastern Cape - left of UDF?

A.E. Yes.

J.F. What kind of groups are they?

A.E. Oh, the old unity movement tradition.

J.F. You mean the Western Cape?

A.E. And the Eastern Cape - not widely accepted, but it's very true. Much smaller - much smaller, but it's definitely there, but Western Cape certainly is. Quite large chunks of the unions which have split off if we were to affiliate to UDF, but much more problematic, I think, is Natal.

That's much more problematic, and Natal's a crucial industrial area, and large parts of Transvaal would be hassled, too.

J.F. This is a really sweeping question - what kind of thoughts you have, or are under discussion in FOSATU about the evolution of the struggle in the future, short term and long term - can you perhaps - how do you see things progressing, and then ultimately do you see a non-racial future - in practice do you think that that'll - what the future holds, and what the role of whites would be - that's a lot of questions, but if you can say anything you care to say.

A.E. I'm not so sure I want to comment on how we see things going in the short term. I think there's a lot of dangers of a lot of trials floating around at the moment, and we do certainly have ideas on what we want to do there, but - I don't know.

It's a touch and go in the long term. I suppose in the medium term what we looking at is, if there's going to be some kind of settlement discussions between A.N.C. and the State, then, from our point of view, I think, as workers we would be a little concerned that worker interests would not necessarily be protected in those discussions, so most of our thinking is designed to try and strengthen worker organisation so that whatever discussions might emerge at some point, workers are going to be a very powerful force in those in order to protect their interests, but we've got a lot of fears that our interests won't be protected in any settlement.

On the question of whites, I would say that the prospects of some kind of non racial political solution in South Africa are very high indeed. I don't see whites being kicked into the sea or anything like that, and I see them playing, as in Zimbabwe, a subordinate political role as whites, and not being kicked out.

I don't think there's that desire on the part of most black political movements, and it would be just a tremendously difficult process to do, given that there are so many whites here, and so many who are an important part of the workforce here, so the prospects of some kind of non racial South Africa are very high indeed.

J.F. I don't have that many more questions, but I just feel as if change my battery (419)

END OF SIDE ONE.

J.F. you're involved with black workers - are you at all concerned with making inroads into the larger white community - do you think there's any point - you talked about the one and a half white workers that joined FOSATU unions, and people always mention them - but does that mean - are you interested in - do you think there are any chances of winning over sections of the white working class - do you look at splits with the farmers and workers in the National Party, or is that - do you think that's just such a small area that you're not concerned with it?

- A.E. I don - me personally, I don't spend much energy, or virtually no energy at all, in trying to understand white politics - the splits and what's happening with Botha and all this jazz.
- J.F. Skip the National Party - I'm just saying if that illuminates the point of view of one white worker, but I'm just - getting back to the other part of the question - I'm not interested in white politics (587).
- A.E. Ja, we do - we look for openings at a very low level. If we find whites in a factory, and - shop stewards do that - whites in a factory want to join, they won't just spurn them - they'll address that problem.

Might be that people are joining for very opportunistic reasons and aren't allowed to join, and we also watch - we watch what's happening in the union movement, to see other big unions that might have whites, Coloureds Indians in it.

If they prepared to make a move - we watch that fairly carefully, so we do have a very close concern with those areas, but as for P.F.P., N.P., C.P. politics and that, I think I - if you ask me about it I'd be a total ignoramus.

- J.F. And what about, just in your own personal expression, do you think it's at all interesting to see young whites trying to work in - very to end conscription - that kind of thing - do you think that that's any area that is worth moving in - do you devote any attention to thinking about this bloc of whites, and whether there's some heterogeneity - opportunity for splits and this kind of thing?

- A.E. In some areas - those areas like white student politics - white involvement in, as you say, end conscription campaign - white academics and intellectuals, ja, I would certainly - I do give that some attention, and my own view that they can play a fairly important role, and must actively work in those areas.

There's been a tendency to, what I call, a sort of honey-pot approach, where every progressive white just focuses around the issues of meetings and things like that. There's not enough work by people in their own areas of expertise, to make a contribution in that area, and I think that might be changing a bit, and it's a very healthy change, but I think, for example, white academics went through a bad period of just wanting to be relevant in a kind of way that meant that they must join UDF as the only step, but I think that's changing.

I think there's a lot more work being done now on issues like the economy, on research and things like that. That's important, I think, for white students to make attempts to transform the thinking of white students is an important area.

The End Conscription Campaign - those things are definitely important areas of politics. For someone like me, or others - I just don't have the time or the energies to be actively involved in any of those things, and I see myself as fully committed to this organisation. I don't share my times or energies with other organisations.

- J.F. Does your position and your story hold any relevance for young whites that a whole new generation - do you think there's more room for more whites to come in and be general secretaries of unions, and to get involved in posts in unions - do you think that was a phase - (do you see lots more whites coming into the unions?)
- from p. 4*
- A.E. (2) No - our situation is quite idiosyncratic. I think I could give reasons why it happened, but I think it was quite unusual, and not going to be repeated. → add p. 12
- J.F. But what does that hold for whites - if they believe what you believe - you've referred again and again to academia, but it's not everyone who - not many who want to go into that position, maybe especially now, so what does that mean on the ground floor whites - you're saying: Look, my position is a unique one - don't think you can come and fill my boots when I've left - where does that leave whites?
- A.E. I mean I think there'll always be - there are a few points I'd like to make. Firstly, I think, as the unions get bigger, there are going to be more posts - ancillary type posts in research, education etc., in which whites will come in and play a very important and valuable role.
- 2*
cont'd from p. 12
- I think out of that experience, some of those whites might become very effective organisers, and I don't say that I sort of would never be replaced. I think that might well be, but all I was trying to say was that the structures are much bigger now, worker involvement's much greater, black involvement's far, far greater - that in general, people would, in any event, look towards having black secretaries rather than whites, because they more effective at this point, and they more effective in relating to the wider problem.
- The reason whites are in now at the moment, I think is because we're in a sort of half-way stage. The unions are very big. The administrative skills required for running these unions as senior officials is really quite high, and whites - those whites that are experienced organisers - more readily have those skills at this point in time, but they very rapidly being caught.
- I think black organisers will be able to fill those positions, and already do fill them much more effectively than whites would be able to fill them, too, but whites will still have many other roles within the organisations of unions - research roles, support roles, assistance, but I think that what whites should be looking for is, firstly, they got to accept that their political role is less now than it ever was and ever will be;
- That's the hard reality they've just got to accept. I think what whites can do is much less now, but there are a number of other areas that can be done, and we've just mentioned them. I think fighting battles within white student politics - I think white students should be addressing their own campuses.
- There's a tremendous amount of work that can be done there. Those campuses are a racial fuck up - an educational fuck up - they say nothing of relevance to the society, or very little ...

A.E. of relevance, so those white students who want to make a massive contribution should be - try to forge links with black students to transform the university campuses - they're a mess at this point, and I think that's where academics should also be fighting.

If you look at the actual internal workings of the campuses at present, they do nothing constructive towards blacks students. They're preoccupied with the view that they're correct - they know what's happening, and that the black students need to be adjusted to fit in with them. I think they need to realise that it's the other way round.

They need a kick in the head, and they need to understand what's happening in the society around them, so those are very big areas of battle which should be fought, and it'll take up a lot of peoples' political energies.

J.F. And then what about your own future - do you have any plans to move - - are you already making a move (648)

A.E. I've no desire to move out of trade unions. If they fire me, they fire me - I'd have to find somewhere else, but I've got no desire whatsoever. I don't see any other areas as being personally attractive to me.

J.F. Now, (are you on the FOSATU executive?) because (you said it was all shop stewards?)

A.E. The central committees and the executive) and that (sit with worker majorities. I sit on the central committee, but with no voting power, so if you looking at FOSATU, then on the central committee, constitutionally there would be a majority of workers) - all those workers would have to be shop stewards, but full time officials of the affiliates sit on that central committee as well, with a voting power, but a full time official of the federation who's in that meeting, which there'd be two of them - a general secretary and myself as education secretary have no voting powers at all.

Then in the unions as such, then the executive of the union would be all shop stewards. (The full time official who comes in as a secretary has no voting power, but speaking power.)

END OF INTERVIEW.