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# Black workers' perception of problem solving

J.A. Slabbert

Translated by Isabel Botha



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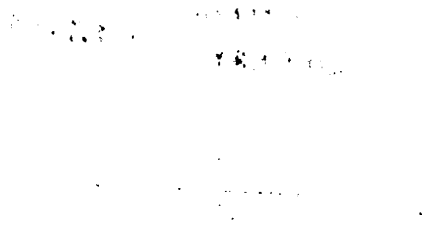
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Report MM-104

# Black workers' perception of problem solving

J.A. Slabbert



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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND

Black workers are increasingly occupying skilled and semi-skilled positions in industry. This has made them difficult to replace and has increased their power in the organization.

Conflict between those who have more and those who have less is as old as man and a certain amount of conflict can be regarded as normal and even healthy for an organization. It is when the conflict becomes disruptive that real problems arise.

Any organisation employing workers has an industrial relations (IR) system, be it formal or informal, and at the core of the system lies the manner in which problems that lead to disruptive conflict, are resolved. In the larger organization the IR system and with it the problem solving process, and its procedures, tend to become more prescribed and formal. It is of the utmost importance for the organization that this process should be visible and perceived to be credible which in turn depends on two-way communication.

As the employer cannot discuss problems with the workforce as a whole, representatives have to be chosen. These representatives, the voice of the workers, can be organized in many ways i.e. work committees, liaison committees or unions.

At the moment bread and butter issues (wages and working conditions) are the focal point of IR in most organizations and in the past the industrial council (IC) system was the core of IR. Whether this will be the case in the post Wiehahn era is a moot point. IC's come in many shapes and sizes but all have in common that they are bodies composed of registered trade unions and registered employer organizations formed for collective bargaining. Wages and working conditions are then determined by the bargaining process at IC level and this system has worked reasonably well in the past because it has been accepted by the bargaining parties. With the rise of the Black unions the situation

has changed somewhat. Some of the larger umbrella groupings, for example the Council of Unions of SA (CUSA) and the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU), are sceptical of the system but would accept it under certain stringent conditions, hardly acceptable to many employers. The unregistered and unaffiliated Black unions are, to say the least, hostile towards IC's and refuse to join them.

One can now well ask why unions differ so much on this issue? Ramaphosa gave the underlying reason when, in another context at an Azanian People's Organization (Azapo) congress, he said: "Groups do not have love affairs. Groups conduct their business ... on the basis of what they conceive to be their vital interests. We are going to have to understand that not love or even race, but interests, primarily economic interests, are at stake. And the question we must deal with in our attempt to understand alignment is: who profits least?" (Financial Mail, January 13 1984 : 45.)

Any labour party would prefer to bargain at the level where it knows it can get the best bargain. As Duff points out, even employers would prefer to bargain at plant level if the union at plant level is weak but reasonably strong nationally (Duff 1984 : 5). The relative power the parties have, change in time due to various factors. In times of recession the power of the employer is enhanced because of the fear of dismissals but when order books are full the opposite is usually true.

The power play of the union and management is also influenced by the perceptions the workers have about wages, working conditions and human relations at their place of work and all these work related perceptions are coloured by non-work related living conditions in general.

Research by the HSRC on Black workers' perception of the role and function of labour unions (Terblanche 1983) and management's handling of strikes (Lotz 1983) clearly indicate how important communication between management and worker is in resolving any problem.

Strikes are usually seen as a breakdown in negotiation, a kind of last resort action. This cannot be said of the wave of wildcat strikes

that became a regular occurrence since 1981. Strikes were called for the flimsiest of reasons or no reason at all and often before management was even aware that something was wrong.

The ease with which a strike can be called by unions or organized by political bodies (even taking wide spread intimidation into consideration) does point towards a feeling of frustration on the part of the worker. And it does not matter whether this feeling or attitude is based on fact or fancy, the feeling is a reality that has to be dealt with.

Bester (1981 : 5) remarks that despite the fact that many politicians, employers and certain journalists are constantly emphasizing the moral unfairness of a "wild-cat strike", no one has so far tried to find out whether there are weak spots in the legal problem solving procedure that is available to the Black worker or whether the whole system is over-bureaucratized. It can for example, take up to three months for grievances to pass though all the stages of the negotiating process, and still remain unresolved in some cases. Bester also poses the question whether Black workers are adequately trained to understand and interpret these laws, regulations and procedures, because when they do not feel committed to procedures that are unacceptable or incomprehensible to them, a lack of trust develops and they believe that unconstitutional action is the only solution. For this reason it is important to make an effective, acceptable problem solving procedure available to Black workers, because only then will they realize that negotiation as a means of solving problems can yield better results than confrontation.

This is no simple task and poses complex problems, the most important of which would be the Black man's perception of the current problem solving process and the way he would prefer it to be. The growing trend of strikes by Black workers on the one hand, and the quest for labour peace in order to maintain a satisfactory economic growth rate on the other hand, render it essential to obtain more information on this matter. Furthermore, if it is taken into account that management spends a great deal of time on the processes of negotiation, more infor-

mation in this regard may also contribute to the problem solving strategy followed by management. The information is also important for the trade union because it can give an indication of where it should form its power base.

## 1.2 AIM

The aim of the study is to determine Black workers' perception of problem solving in industry and for operational purposes it is divided as follows:

(1) To ascertain Black workers' attitude towards the available communication channels for problem solving and airing grievances.

(2) To describe (a) the characteristics of a worker organization which would help with problem solving, and (b) the union's role in problem solving.

## 1.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

### 1.3.1 Survey procedure

The field survey method was used to collect the necessary data during July-August 1982 in Pretoria and during October 1982 in Port Elizabeth. Structured interviews were conducted with the interviewers using a questionnaire. To minimize communication problems between interviewer and respondent, the questionnaire was translated into Xhosa, Zulu and Tswana.

The questionnaire can be divided into the following sections:

(1) Biographical information (questions 1-6).

(2) Attitude of the workers towards the firm for which they work to determine whether problems exist and how problems are communicated to management (questions 7-12).

- (3) How problems are solved in industry (questions 12.1, 14.12 - 14.17 and 15).
- (4) The structure of an organization that can communicate workers' problems to management (questions 13, 14.1 - 14.11 and 18).
- (5) The union's role in problem solving (questions 16 and 17).

### 1.3.2 Pilot study

A pilot study was carried out in order to test the questionnaire and train the selected fieldworkers of CESTIR (HSRC's Centre for Services and Training in Research). The pilot study and training took place under the direct supervision of the project leader in collaboration with CESTIR officials and was conducted in precisely the same way as described by Terblanche (1983 : 11-12).

### 1.3.3 The sample

As described in Terblanche (1983 : 12-13): respondents meeting the following requirements were randomly selected:

- (1) Black male workers;
- (2) in the age category 16 to 64 years;
- (3) living permanently in either of the urban areas of Pretoria or Port Elizabeth, and
- (4) not unemployed at the time of the investigation.

### 1.3.4 Statistical analysis

The basic statistical analysis technique used in the study is known as Automatic Interaction Detection (AID). A special application of AID called CHAID is mainly used in this study.

Basically the CHAID programme divides the statistical population into subpopulations which differ significantly on the matter under investiga-

tion. For a detailed explanation of the programme see Du Toit and Stumpf (1982).

#### 1.4 SURVEY GROUP

The survey group consisted of 1075 Black male workers, 545 and 530 of whom lived in the Pretoria and Port Elizabeth areas, respectively. However, the totals of the different tables do not always correspond with the number of workers in the respective areas from which the survey group was drawn, because respondents did not always answer all the questions.

##### 1.4.1 Age distribution and employer sector

Table 1.1 shows the age distribution of respondents in the Pretoria area compared with that of respondents in the Port Elizabeth area, whereas the employer sector is analyzed in Table 1.2. In Table 1.1 and all the subsequent tables a distinction is drawn only between the two areas themselves and not between the different residential areas in each larger area. The reason for this is that preliminary analyses revealed no significant differences between the responses of respondents living in the different residential areas.

The age structure of the survey group as presented in Table 1.1 points to a typical age distribution that is found fairly generally in all economic sectors. It was, for example, determined that relatively few Black youths are employed - a finding that is in keeping with the 5 % sample of the 1980 Population Census - whereas a strong concentration of workers is found between the ages 20-34 years. According to Table 1.1 more than half of the survey group falls within this age category (54,8 %), whereas the 5 % sample of the 1980 Population Census showed that 50 % of the economically active Black male workers belonged to the age category 20-34 years (compare 5 % Sample of the 1980 Population Census: 89-117). In the age categories higher than 34 years, the number of workers in the respective categories again decreases gradually with increasing age.



TABLE 1.1  
AGE DISTRIBUTION BY AREA

Age group	Area				Total	
	Pretoria		Port Elizabeth			
	N	%	N	%	N	%
15 - 19	10	1,8	8	1,5	18	1,7
20 - 24	105	19,3	74	14,0	179	16,7
25 - 29	139	25,6	80	15,1	219	20,4
30 - 34	90	16,5	100	18,9	190	17,7
35 - 39	61	11,2	73	13,8	134	12,5
40 - 44	40	7,4	63	11,9	103	9,6
45 - 49	45	8,3	53	10,0	98	9,1
50 - 54	23	4,2	36	6,8	59	5,5
55 - 59	14	2,6	35	6,6	49	4,6
60 - 64	11	2,0	7	1,3	18	1,7
65 +	6	1,1	1	0,2	7	0,7
TOTAL	544	100	530	100	1074	100
Median age	30,5		34,5		32,7	
Unspecified	1				1	

From Table 1.1 it is also clear that the median age of Black male workers in Port Elizabeth is considerably higher than that of workers in the Pretoria area. This may probably be attributed to the fact that the unemployment rate among Black male workers in Port Elizabeth, expressed as a percentage of the total economically active Black male population is higher than is the case in Pretoria, namely 14,5 % in Port Elizabeth as against 5,9 in Pretoria (percentages processed from the 5 % sample of the 1980 Population Census). If it is taken into account that younger Black workers usually make up the group that is the most seriously hit by unemployment (compare *inter alia* Slabbert 1982 : 1 and Smit 1980 : 32-35 in this regard), it can be expected that economically active Black male workers in the Port Elizabeth area will on the whole be older than economically active Black male workers in Pretoria.

TABLE 1.2  
EMPLOYER SECTOR BY AREA

Employer sector	Area				Total	
	Pretoria		Port Elizabeth			
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Agriculture	1	0,2			1	0,1
Commerce	46	9,0	60	11,5	106	10,2
Manufacturing	305	59,6	345	66,0	650	62,8
Services and financing	17	3,3	13	2,5	30	2,9
Government services	49	9,6	28	5,4	77	7,4
Building and construction	46	9,0	38	7,3	84	8,1
Mining and quarrying	1	0,2	1	0,2	2	0,2
Electricity, gas and water	45	8,9	23	4,4	68	6,5
Transport and communication	2	0,4	15	2,9	17	1,6
TOTAL	512	100	523	100	1035	100
Unspecified	33		7		40	

According to Table 1.2 more than half of the survey group, 62,9 % (59,6 % and 66 % of the Black male workers in the Pretoria and Port Elizabeth areas, respectively) are employed in the industrial sector.

#### 1.4.2 Qualification structure and occupation

Table 1.3 shows the highest educational qualification obtained by respondents, according to area.

TABLE 1.3  
HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION BY AREA

Educational qualification	Area				Total	
	Pretoria		Port Elizabeth			
	N	%	N	%	N	%
None	12	2,2	16	3,1	28	2,6
Grd. 1 - Std 1	22	4,1	43	8,3	65	6,1
Stds 3 - 5	125	23,1	135	26,2	260	24,6
Stds 6 and 7	172	31,7	164	31,8	336	31,8
Std 8	108	19,9	85	16,5	193	18,2
Std 9	40	7,4	33	6,4	73	6,9
Std 10/NTS III	63	11,6	40	7,8	103	9,7
TOTAL	542	100	516	100	1058	100
Unspecified	3		14		17	

It appears from Table 1.3 that 66,6 % of the survey group obtained at least a Std 6 or higher qualification. According to the 5 % sample of the 1980 Population Census, only 22,5 % of the total number of economically active Black male workers in the RSA were recorded as possessing a similar qualification. If it is taken into account that 5,5 % of the workers in the Pretoria and Port Elizabeth areas also obtained a post-school qualification, it is obvious that the training level of the survey group is much higher than that of the average Black worker in the RSA. This is the result of the fact that the survey group was selected in such a way that no unemployed migrant worker was included. Furthermore the investigation was conducted in urban areas only, where Black workers are on the whole better qualified than their counterparts in the rural areas.

The relatively high level of education of the members of the survey group is reflected in their occupational structure as stated in Table 1.4. For example Manpower Survey No. 14 of the Department of Manpower (1981) shows that 34,7 % of all Black male workers in the RSA do manual labour and only 3,6 % work as clerical assistants. In contrast with this, Table 1.4 reveals that only 12,5 % of the survey group work as manual labourers whereas 12,7 % do clerical work. The survey group thus differs from the Black male labour force in the RSA in various important aspects. Apart from the fact that their level of education is higher than that of Blacks in general, they usually also hold positions that are more advanced in the occupational hierarchy. It can therefore be expected that the survey group is in general on a higher occupational level than the total Black male labour force of the RSA.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE ATTITUDE OF WORKERS TOWARDS THE HANDLING OF THEIR PROBLEMS AND GRIEVANCES

It can be expected that problems and grievances experienced by workers on the shop floor will not only shape the negotiating process but will also greatly determine the functioning of the labour-relation system. For example the effectiveness of problem solving through the channels of communication available to workers on the shop floor can be expected to be a contributing factor to labour stability. If it is taken into account that the majority of Black workers on the shop floor function as part of a group or team, it is important not only to be familiar with the problems that they experience on the shop floor but also to know what their views of the available channels of communication for problem solving are.

#### 2.1 ATTITUDE OF WORKERS TOWARDS THE FIRM

According to Terblanche (1983: 16) workers attempt to satisfy certain needs through the firm in exchange for their labour. The extent to which the employer succeeds in satisfying these needs will therefore play an important role in the attitude of workers towards the firm. This attitude will not only affect the behaviour of workers within and outside the job context but will also have an effect on their perception of the problem solving process.

Workers were subsequently requested to indicate if they liked the firm for which they worked (see Appendix, Question 7). This information has been analyzed in Figure 2.1. The attitudes of workers were used in the analysis as the dependent variable, whereas the five independent variables mentioned below were used as possible explanatory variables.

The combinations making up the categories within each explanatory variable in Figure 2.1 and thereafter, are as follows:

- (a) Age: 15-24; 25-44; 45+.
- (b) Qualifications: No training - Std 5 (inclusive); Stds 6-7; Stds 8-10.

(c) Occupation: Professional, semi-professional and administrative workers, foremen and supervisors; clerical, transport and communication workers, as well as sales workers; technicians, artisans and apprentices; operators and semi-skilled workers, labourers and service workers.

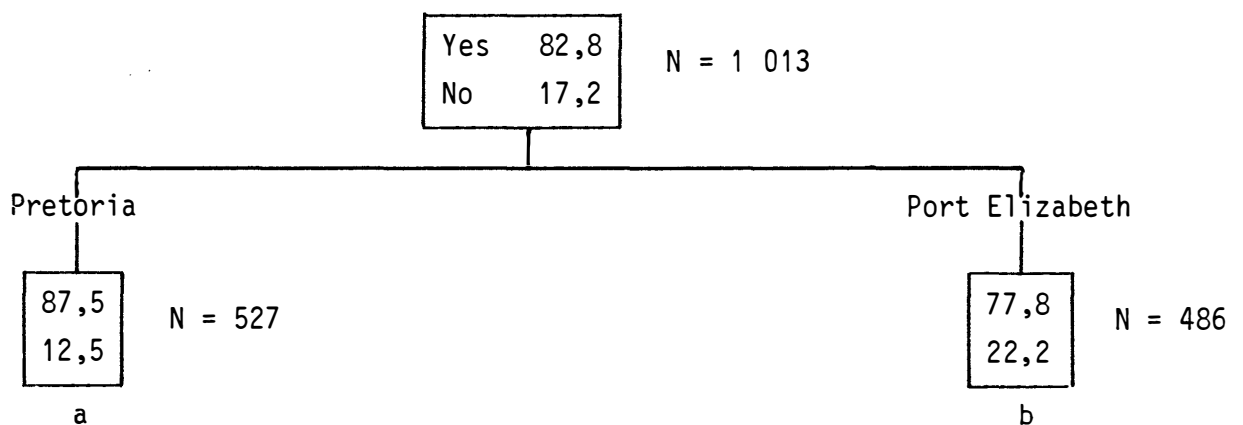
(d) Area: Pretoria, Port Elizabeth.

(e) Trade union membership: Yes, No.

The combination of categories emanates from a preliminary computer analysis that revealed no significant differences between the specific categories.

FIGURE 2.1

DO YOU LIKE THE FIRM FOR WHICH YOU ARE WORKING?



a = No further prediction is possible.

b = Further prediction is not significant.

Figure 2.1 indicates that the area in which workers are employed plays the most important role in their attitude towards the firm for which they are working. Despite the fact that relatively more workers in Pretoria than Port Elizabeth liked their employer, (87,5 % as against 77,8 %), the percentages point to a positive attitude towards their employer among the vast majority of workers in both areas. However,

despite the workers' positive attitude, it can be expected that there will be certain aspects in the work situation with which they are not satisfied. These are dealt with in Paragraph 2.1.1. The fact, that although qualification level, age, occupation and trade union membership were used as explanatory variables, they did not play a significant role in the attitude of workers towards their employer.

The reasons why workers were either satisfied or dissatisfied with their employer are given in Tables 2.1 and 2.2. The classification used is as follows:

A classification of workers' reasons for liking the firm for which they are working

(a) Wages

- 1 A good wage

(b) Working conditions

- 1 In-service training
- 2 Regular hours
- 3 Light work
- 4 Pleasant working conditions
- 5 Freedom in the job

(c) Job satisfaction

- 1 Interest in the job
- 2 Job offers a challenge
- 3 Job satisfaction
- 4 Opportunity for promotion

(d) Job security

- 1 Adequately qualified
- 2 Job security
- 3 Previous experience of this type of work

- (e) Personnel relations
  - 1 Good personnel relations
  - 2 No discrimination based on colour
  - 3 Good channels of communication for resolving grievances
  
- (f) Fringe benefits
  - 1 Leave
  - 2 Pension
  - 3 Transport
  - 4 Medical fund
  
- (g) Personal reasons
  - 1 Near home

A classification of workers' reasons for not liking the firm for which they are working

- (a) Wages
  - 1 Wage unsatisfactory
  
- (b) Working conditions
  - 1 Poor working conditions
  - 2 A demanding job
  - 3 Long working hours
  
- (c) Job satisfaction
  - 1 No job satisfaction
  
- (d) Job security
  - 1 Staff is reduced without warning
  - 2 No job security
  
- (e) Fringe benefits
  - 1 Inadequate fringe benefits
  
- (f) Personnel relations
  - 1 Poor personnel relations
  - 2 Racial discrimination
  - 3 Grievances are not resolved

(g) Personal

1 Live far from work

2.1.1 Aspects of the work situation which workers like

Tables 2.1 and 2.2 show that workers give wages as the most important reason for their positive attitude towards their employer. It is, however, clear that salaries are not the only reason, since many workers indicated working conditions, job satisfaction, job security, personnel relations or fringe benefits as being their main reason for liking their job.

It is interesting to note (but difficult to explain) that according to Table 2.1 considerably more workers in Port Elizabeth than in Pretoria attributed their positive attitude to good fringe benefits. The important role that personnel relations play in job satisfaction is evident from both tables.

TABLE 2.1

REASONS WHY WORKERS LIKE WORKING FOR THEIR SPECIFIC EMPLOYER BY AREA

Reasons	Area				Total	
	Pretoria N	Pretoria %	Port Elizabeth N	Port Elizabeth %	N	%
Wages	221	52,1	117	33,1	338	43,4
Working conditions	66	15,6	50	14,1	116	14,9
Job satisfaction	57	13,4	49	13,8	106	13,6
Job security	24	5,7	19	5,4	43	5,5
Personnel relations	37	8,7	34	9,6	71	9,1
Fringe benefits	15	3,5	83	23,4	98	12,6
Personal reasons	4	0,9	2	0,6	6	0,8
TOTAL	424	100	354	100	778	100
Unspecified:			37	24	61	



## 2.1.2 Aspects of the work situation that workers do not like

TABLE 2.2

REASONS WHY WORKERS DO NOT LIKE WORKING FOR THEIR SPECIFIC EMPLOYER BY AREA

Reasons	Area				Total	
	Pretoria N	%	Port Elizabeth N	%	N	%
Wages	34	54,0	46	45,1	80	48,5
Working conditions	14	22,2	18	17,6	32	19,4
Job satisfaction	2	3,2	3	2,9	5	3,0
Job security	1	1,6	5	4,9	6	3,6
Personnel relations	9	14,3	27	26,5	36	21,8
Fringe benefits	3	4,8	2	1,9	5	3,0
Personal reasons			1	1,0	1	0,6
TOTAL	63	100	102	100	165	100

Unspecified:

3

6

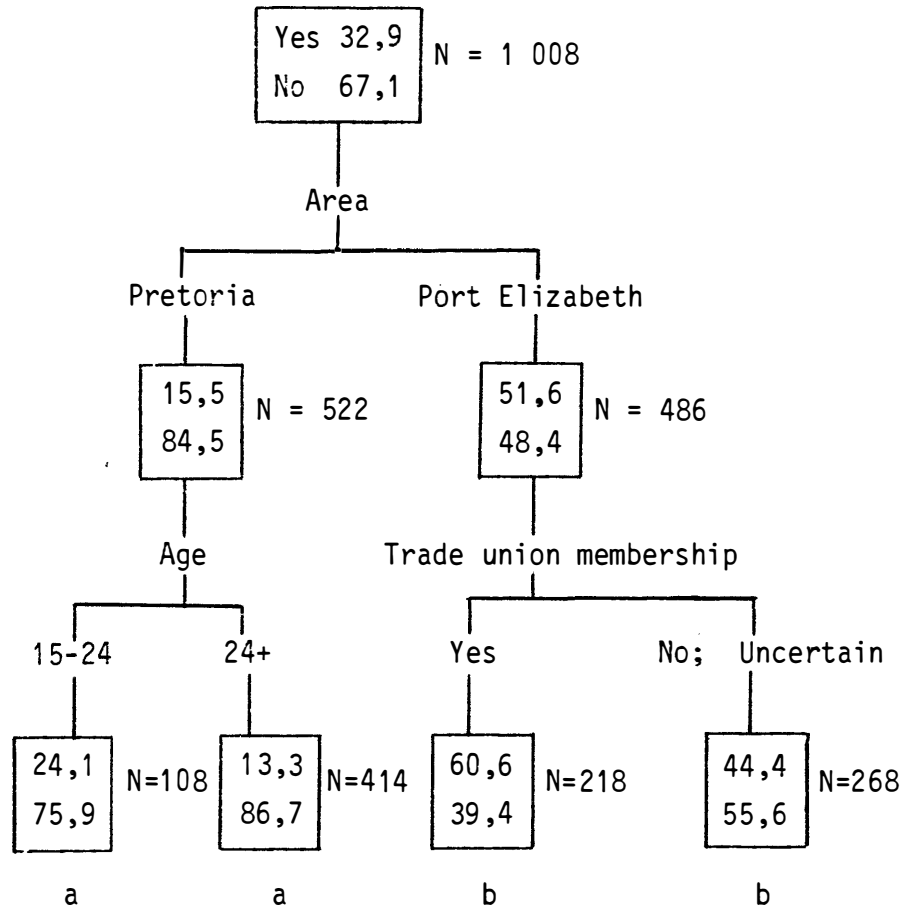
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Despite the positive attitude of the majority of workers in both areas towards the firm for which they work, it can be expected that there will still be unsatisfactory aspects of the work situation which will annoy them. Workers were therefore also requested to indicate if there were any such aspects (see Appendix, Question 8). In Figure 2.2 the response was analyzed as the dependent variable with the already discussed explanatory variables.

As expected, Figure 2.2 shows that approximately a third of all the workers, 32,9 % (332 workers), indicated that there were in fact certain aspects of the work situation that bothered them. According to Figure 2.2 area played the most important role in workers' dissatisfaction with their job situation. More than half of the workers in Port Elizabeth (51,6 %) indicated that there were aspects of the work situation which caused grievances whereas this was the case with only 15,5 % of the Pretoria workers.

FIGURE 2.2

IS THERE ANY ASPECT OF THE WORK SITUATION THAT BOTHERS YOU?



a = No further prediction is possible.

b = Further predictions are not significant.

In the Pretoria area it seemed that older workers were more content with their job situation than younger workers. This can possibly be attributed to the fact that Black youths, according to Slabbert (1982: 42), are in general better qualified than older workers, which results in their having higher job expectations than the older workers.

It is interesting to note that age did not play a role in the job satisfaction of workers in the Port Elizabeth area, whereas trade union membership was an important factor. Relatively more trade

union members than non-members in Port Elizabeth indicated that there were aspects of the work situation that bothered them. If it is taken into account that more workers in Port Elizabeth than in Pretoria also did not like the firm for which they worked (see previous paragraph), it seems that there is a connection between trade union membership and problems experienced by workers in the job situation. The importance of an effective personnel policy is again emphasized. Occupation seems to have no effect on the job satisfaction of workers.

Table 2.3 reflects the matters that bother workers in their work situation. The question that now arises is whether the workers who mentioned problems were not mainly the group of workers who had a negative attitude towards the firm employing them. However, analyses revealed that more than half of the workers who mentioned bothersome aspects were positive in their attitude towards their employer.

Before discussing Table 2.3 a classification of the recorded objections is given for interpretation. The objections are divided into six main categories with an indication of specific problems classified under each heading.

#### A classification of the matters bothering workers in the work situation

(a) Wages

- 1 Wages unsatisfactory
- 2 No increases
- 3 No equal wages for work of equal quality
- 4 No fixed wage
- 5 No pay for over-time work

(b) Working conditions

- 1 Work is demanding
- 2 Long working hours
- 3 Working conditions unsatisfactory
- 4 Working conditions unhygienic
- 5 Working conditions dangerous

(c) Job satisfaction

- 1 Educational level of Black workers is not taken into account at placement, with the result that workers experience little or no job satisfaction
- 2 No job satisfaction

(d) Job security

- 1 No job security
- 2 Staff is reduced without warning

(e) Personnel relations

- 1 Poor personnel relations
- 2 Discrimination
- 3 Senior staff cause disputes among workers
- 4 No co-operation between White and Black workers
- 5 No attention is paid to problems and grievances
- 6 Worker committees are appointed by management and not by the workers themselves

(f) Fringe benefits

- 1 Fringe benefits unsatisfactory
- 2 No medical-aid scheme

Despite the fact that salaries played the most important role in determining the attitude of workers towards the firm, the most important aspect bothering workers in both Port Elizabeth and Pretoria according to Table 2.3 was not salaries but unsatisfactory personnel relations. More than a third of all the workers (36,9 %), who mentioned aspects that bothered them, mentioned this aspect (50,6 % and 32,2 % of these workers in Pretoria and Port Elizabeth, respectively).

TABLE 2.3

## ASPECTS BOTHERING WORKERS BY AREA

Aspects	Area				Total	
	Pretoria		Port Elizabeth		N	%
	N	%	N	%		
Wages	17	21,0	63	26,7	80	25,2
Working conditions	16	19,8	43	18,2	59	18,6
Job satisfaction			4	1,7	4	1,3
Job security	1	1,2	33	14,0	34	10,7
Personnel relations	41	50,6	76	32,2	117	36,9
Fringe benefits	6	7,4	17	7,2	23	7,3
TOTAL	81	100	236	100	317	100

Unspecified:

15

15

Unsatisfactory wages and working conditions were further objections raised by a relatively large number of workers in both areas, whereas job security in Port Elizabeth also worried quite a lot of workers.

## 2.2 WORKERS' VIEW OF AVAILABLE COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

In order to find out what workers thought of the available communication channels and their effectiveness, the group of workers who mentioned that some aspects of communication did bother them were asked to provide the following information:

- (a) Had they discussed the problems bothering them with anyone, and the reason for having done so (see Appendix, Questions 9, 9.1 and 9.3).
- (b) In those instances where the problems were in fact discussed with someone, with whom were they discussed, did it do any good and why were the problems discussed with this particular person (see Appendix, Questions 9.2, 9.4 and 9.5).
- (c) With whom would they prefer to discuss the problems bothering them, and why (see Appendix, Question 11).

Of the 332 workers who indicated that there were aspects of the work situation that bothered them, the majority, that is 214 workers (49 and 165 workers in the Pretoria and Port Elizabeth areas, respectively), discussed their problems with someone. Table 2.4 shows with whom workers discussed their grievances, as well as the reasons why workers discussed their grievances with these specific persons. The reasons of some workers for not discussing grievances with someone, are given in Table 2.5. The abbreviations (Pta) and (PE) for Pretoria and Port Elizabeth are used in Table 2.5 and some subsequent tables.

In accordance with various views in the literature on the subject, namely that supervisors play an important role in the establishment of good labour relations (compare inter alia Coetzee 1982: 24-25 and Bruniquel 1982: 25), Table 2.4 shows that for a variety of reasons the supervisor was the most important person with whom workers in both areas discussed their problems (58,1 % and 31,5 % of those workers who indicated that they discussed their problems, in Pretoria and Port Elizabeth, respectively).

It can be deduced from Table 2.4 that workers in Port Elizabeth were more inclined to discuss their problems and grievances with worker organizations such as the worker committee and trade union than was the case in Pretoria. For example 27,3 % of the workers in Port Elizabeth stated that they discussed their problems with worker organizations, as against only 4,7 % in Pretoria. The most important reasons given in Port Elizabeth for making use of worker organizations were that these organizations were not only an instrument by means of which management could be made aware of the problems of workers, but also a channel through which working conditions could be improved.

The fact that a considerable number of workers in both areas (according to Table 2.4) discussed their problems and grievances with fellow-workers because the latter showed understanding, not only supports various research findings in this regard (compare inter alia Slabbert

TABLE 2.4  
 PERSONS WITH WHOM WORKERS DISCUSSED THEIR PROBLEMS AND THEIR REASONS FOR DOING SO

Reasons	Person with whom they discussed problems										Total				
	Management		Supervisor		Fellow-worker		Worker committee		Trade union (Shop steward)		Pta		PE		
	Pta	PE	Pta	PE	Pta	PE	Pta	PE	Pta	PE	N	%	N	PE	%
Not meaningful			2		1	1					3	7,0	1	0,6	
Person has contact with management			4	22			1	16		12	5	11,6	50	30,3	
Person is responsible and fair			7	9						1	7	16,3	10	6,1	
Person gives good advice	1			4	1	2	1	3			3	7,0	9	5,5	
Person shows understanding	1	1	2	3	6	37		2			9	20,9	43	26,1	
I have no access to higher authority within firm					2	2				1	2	4,7	3	1,8	
Person tries to improve conditions		6		13				9		1			29	17,6	
Person is my superior	4	19	10	1							14	32,6	20	12,1	
TOTAL	N	6	26	25	52	10	42	2	30	15	43	100	165	100	
	%	14,0	15,8	58,1	31,5	23,3	25,5	4,7	18,2	9,1	100		100		

Unspecified:

6

1982: 28; Redelinghuys 1974: 39 and Lotz 1977: 45), but is also reflected in the reasons in Table 2.5 given by some workers for not discussing their problems with anyone. For example the majority of workers in both areas stated that there were either no meaningful communication channels available or that they received no sympathy from supervisors and management. The fact that almost a third of the workers who gave reasons for not discussing their problems with anyone stated that they were afraid of losing their jobs, also points to ineffective communication channels.

TABLE 2.5  
REASONS FOR NOT DISCUSSING PROBLEMS WITH SOMEONE BY AREA

Reasons	Area				Total	
	Pretoria		Port Elizabeth		N	%
	N	%	N	%		
Not meaningful	1	3,3	2	3,2	3	3,2
No meaningful/effective communication channel	8	26,7	17	27,0	25	26,9
Afraid of losing job	8	26,7	23	36,5	31	33,3
Receive no sympathy from supervisor/management	12	40,0	18	28,6	30	32,3
New in the job			2	3,2	2	2,2
Complaining may initiate a strike	1	3,3	1	1,6	2	2,2
TOTAL	30	100	63	100	93	100

Unspecified:

25

Table 2.6 indicates the views of those workers who discussed their problems with someone and whether these discussions did any good.

Despite the numbers (N=184) being low, it would seem, according to Table 2.6 that trade union representatives and fellow-workers were by comparison the persons giving the greatest satisfaction to workers who discussed their problems with someone. However, the majority of



these workers in both areas were of the opinion that it served no purpose discussing their problems with anyone in the firm (75,9 % and 85,2 % of the workers concerned in Pretoria and Port Elizabeth, respectively). Because it was found that there was no difference between the persons with whom workers discussed their problems and the persons with whom workers would prefer to discuss their problems, the information obtained from the question on this latter subject and the reasons for the workers' choice were not reported (see Appendix, Question 11).

TABLE 2.6  
PERSON WITH WHOM PROBLEM WAS DISCUSSED BY RESULT OBTAINED

Person	Result				
	It helped		Did not help		
	Pta	PE	Pta	PE	
Management	1	2	5	19	
Supervisor	3	5	10	45	
Fellow-workers	3	9	5	33	
Worker committee		2	2	26	
Trade union (shop steward)		5		9	
TOTAL	N	7	23	22	132
	%	24,1	14,8	75,9	85,2

The reasons given by workers on the ineffectiveness of discussing problems, are analyzed in Table 2.7.

Table 2.7 reveals that these workers' most important reason for feeling that discussing their problems with someone did not help at all is based on the fact that there was no improvement in the situation after the discussions. Some workers thought that the person with whom they discussed problems was too afraid to inform management about these problems. In such a case this could lead to a communication gap between management and workers, which could result in the problems remaining unresolved because management was not aware of them. In an HSRC investigation into the way in which employers deal with strikes (Lotz 1983: 23) it was not only found that there were in fact communi-

cation gaps between management and workers but that it was vital for these gaps to be bridged.

TABLE 2.7  
REASONS WHY DISCUSSION OF PROBLEMS FAILED

Reasons	N	%
Not meaningful	2	1,3
No improvement after discussions	121	78,6
Afraid of communicating problem to management	21	13,6
White workers are protected	1	0,6
Problem was discussed with fellow-workers only	9	5,8
TOTAL	154	100

In response to the question to the group of workers who did not consider the discussion of problems with another person to be worthwhile, whether they thought that management was aware of their grievances (see Appendix, Question 10), the majority (73,5 %) felt that management was conscious of these problems. Table 2.8 contains an analysis of the reasons why workers held this view.

Table 2.8 indicates that the most important reason why workers considered management to be aware of their problems could be attributed to the fact that the worker had personally (or the person with whom he had discussed the problems) brought these problems to the attention of management. Another important reason was that, according to workers, regular reports containing inter alia an explanation of their problems, were submitted to management. It would therefore seem that workers felt that even though management was aware of their grievances, nothing much was done about the situation. Since workers did not distinguish between their private lives and the work situation (compare Onyemelukwe 1973: 114), it should be borne in mind that some of their problems might have been irrelevant to the work situation. In such cases it would be unlikely that management would pay any attention to the particular problems. The fact that more than half of the workers who reported

TABLE 2.8

## REASONS WHY WORKERS BELIEVE MANAGEMENT TO BE AWARE OF THEIR PROBLEMS

Reasons	N	%
Not meaningful	7	6,1
Workers went on strike	3	2,6
Regular reports are submitted to management	36	31,3
Workers/supervisor/worker committee/trade union informed management of problem	62	53,9
Improvements are only promised	2	1,7
Circulars prove that management is aware of problems	2	1,7
Members of management move around among workers and take notice of their complaints	2	1,7
Management tries to coax workers by giving them insignificant wage increases just to defuse the situation	1	0,9
TOTAL	115	100

problems bothering them (53,6 %) felt that management did not do enough to attend to workers' problems and a further 25,2 % were not sure whether management was doing enough, not only points to ineffective communication between management and workers but could also imply ineffective negotiating opportunities for Black workers. This does not imply that management is an "ogre". One is aware that management is often confronted with totally unrealistic demands and irrational behaviour but it is nevertheless important that workers should know that management is indeed listening to their problems and doing as much as possible to solve them. Table 2.9 gives an indication of what workers would expect management to do.

According to Table 2.9 the most important matters to which management is expected to attend reveal that workers want to communicate with management, regardless of whether they have already discussed their problems with another person. For example, 64,6 % of these workers felt that management should set more time aside to listen to their problems, whereas an additional 5,1 % said that management should arrange more meetings to discuss grievances. Against the background of previously discussed information concerning the effectiveness of

TABLE 2.9  
MATTERS THAT MANAGEMENT SHOULD ATTEND TO

Reasons	N	%
Not meaningful	9	5,1
Should set more time aside to listen to workers' problems	115	64,6
Should hold regular meetings to discuss problems	9	5,1
Should show greater sympathy with the problems experienced by workers	15	8,4
Should change their attitude towards Black workers	10	5,6
Should establish a workers' organization which could communicate problems to management	3	1,7
Workers should receive better feedback from management	3	1,7
Other	14	7,9
TOTAL	178	100

the available communication channels, it would seem that despite the fact that almost two-thirds of the survey group experienced no problems and could consequently not express an opinion on available communication channels, workers who did in fact have problems in the work situation quite possibly did experience a communication gap. When the role of effective communication channels between employer and employee in the successful functioning of a labour relations system is taken into account, the importance of the way in which workers would prefer to communicate is emphasized. This matter is dealt with in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 3

### WORKERS' VIEWS OF AN ORGANIZATION THAT CAN COMMUNICATE THEIR PROBLEMS TO MANAGEMENT

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Judging by the information obtained in the previous chapter there seems to be a possible communication gap in the channels available to workers who experience problems in the work situation. Such a situation may give rise to certain actions by Black workers. Peterson (quoted from Terblanche 1983: 29) mentions the following in this regard: "The urge to combine with others for mutual protection and advancement is an inherent characteristic of human nature. In every form of society persons of similar economic pursuits and needs have tended to unite into associations for promoting their common interests." From this it can be deduced that the organization through which Black workers would like to communicate their problems and grievances to management will most probably be a collective one. However, Terblanche (1983: 29) remarks that though a trade union is precisely such an organization it has certain characteristics which makes it unique.

Therefore workers were not only asked to give their opinion on the necessity of an organization to communicate their problems to management but also to comment on the nature and functioning of such an organization (see Appendix, Questions 13-15).

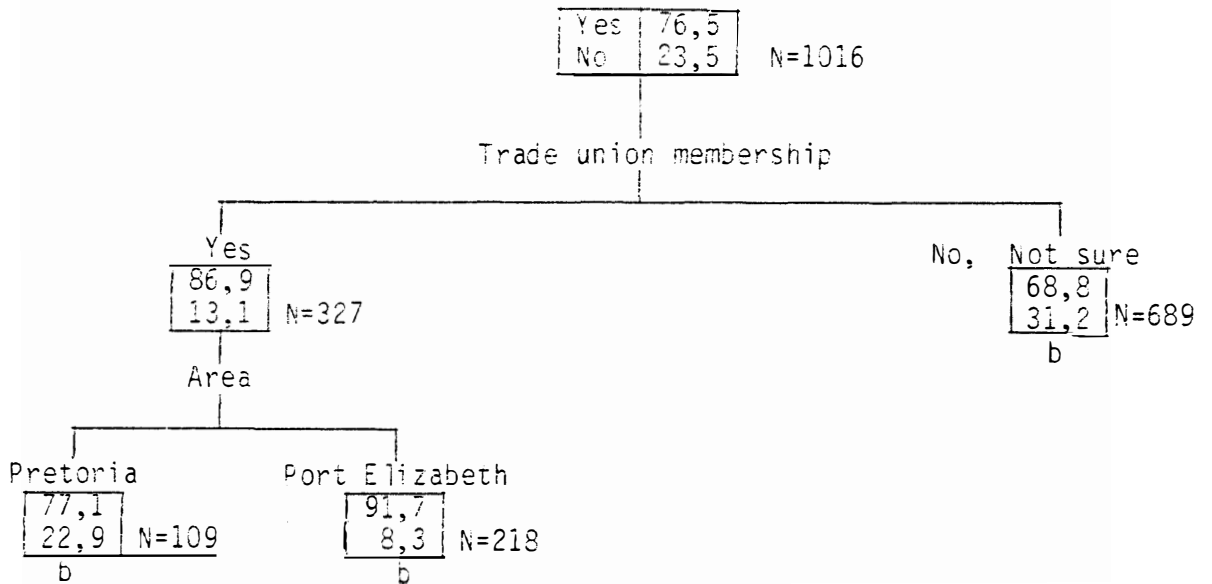
#### 3.2 WORKERS' NEED FOR AN ORGANIZATION

Figure 3.1 shows the responses of workers to the following question: "Do you think it is necessary that workers should get together and establish an organization that can inform management of the workers' problems and grievances?".

The analysis indicates that the vast majority (76,5 %) of the workers were in favour of the establishment of such an organization.

FIGURE 3.1

SHOULD WORKERS ESTABLISH AN ORGANIZATION TO INFORM MANAGEMENT OF THEIR PROBLEMS AND GRIEVANCES?



b = Further predictions are not significant

This finding corresponds with that reached by Terblanche (1983: 29) who also found that the majority of workers in his survey group (63,7 %) admitted a need for an organization that could protect their interests. If it is taken into account that Terblanche's investigation had actually been conducted approximately a year earlier (1981), it is clear that there has been an increasing need for such an organization among workers.

According to Figure 3.1 trade union membership is the independent variable that exercises the most important influence on the attitudes of workers concerning the establishment of an organization. It is interesting to note that the vast majority of workers in both areas who already belonged to a trade union nevertheless admitted a need for an organization that could communicate their grievances to management (77,1 % and 91,7 % of the trade union members in Pretoria and Port Elizabeth respectively).

It would appear that factors such as qualification, age and occupation had no effect on the attitude of workers towards the founding of an organization. The most important reasons for the attitude of workers on this matter are given in Tables 3.1 and 3.2.

Table 3.1 shows that the percentages allocated to the particular reasons differ considerably between Pretoria and Port Elizabeth but that their order of significance remains nearly the same. Workers' most important considerations for the establishment of an organization concerned reasons such as effective problem solving, fighting for the rights of Black workers and calling meetings to discuss problems. The fact that almost a third of all the workers (30,7 %) recorded a need for an organization that could fight for their rights indicates that White workers were probably favoured as far as attending to problems was concerned. To the question on whether they thought that management listened rather to the grievances of White workers than to those of Blacks (see Appendix, Question 18), more than a third of all the workers, 36,3 %, were of the opinion that this was in fact the case.

According to Table 3.1 a considerable number of workers in Port Elizabeth felt that an organization could achieve more than an individual worker could, whereas relatively many workers in Pretoria were of the opinion that an organization could successfully replace supervisors to bring workers into contact with management.

From this information it can thus be deduced that those workers with a positive attitude towards the establishment of an organization considered it mainly as a means by which the position of the Black worker in the work situation could be improved. In contrast to this view the majority of workers in both areas who were not in favour of such an organization, suggested that it would merely be an instrument in the hands of management, with the result that workers' problems would remain unresolved (Table 3.2). Quite a number of workers in both areas were also opposed to the establishment of such an organization because they believed that it would only cause problems and give rise to unnecessary strikes, whereas almost a quarter of all the workers who opposed such an organization (22,3 %) felt that it was the task of management to solve problems and not that of some organization.

TABLE 3.1

## WORKERS' REASONS FOR WANTING TO ESTABLISH AN ORGANIZATION BY AREA

Reasons	Area				Total	
	Pretoria		Port Elizabeth			
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Not meaningful	5	1,3	15	3,8	20	2,6
Management listens rather to an organization than to an individual worker	31	8,2	57	14,4	88	11,4
To bring about effective problem solving	131	34,7	71	17,9	202	26,1
To promote co-operation between management and workers	16	4,2	20	5,0	36	4,6
Wages may improve	8	2,1	3	0,8	11	1,4
To have someone fighting for the rights of Black workers	91	24,1	147	37,0	238	30,7
To improve working conditions			3	0,8	3	0,4
To hold meetings to discuss problems	49	13,0	57	14,4	106	13,7
Job security may improve	3	0,8	5	1,3	8	1,0
Supervisor does not communicate workers' problems to management	44	11,6	19	4,8	63	8,1
TOTAL	378	100	397	100	775	100
Unspecified	1		1		2	

## 3.3 NATURE OF THE ORGANIZATION

Certain statements concerning the establishment, leadership and communication methods of a workers' organization were made in order to find out what workers believed the nature of such an organization to be. It should be noted that all the respondents did not react to all the statements and consequently for some statements the total number of respondents (N) will differ from that of the total survey group.



TABLE 3.2

## WORKERS' REASONS FOR NOT WANTING TO ESTABLISH AN ORGANIZATION BY AREA

Reasons	Area				Total	
	Pretoria		Port Elizabeth		N	%
	N	%	N	%		
Not meaningful	10	7,0	6	7,7	16	7,3
May be dismissed if I try to start such an organization	4	2,8	7	9,0	11	5,0
Organization causes too much trouble/may cause unnecessary strikes	24	16,9	9	11,5	33	15,0
Such an organization is prohibited	11	7,7	8	10,3	19	8,6
No problems experienced at work	14	9,9	5	6,4	19	8,6
Not familiar with such an organization			3	3,8	3	1,4
Management should solve workers' problems	36	25,4	13	16,7	49	22,3
Organization will be merely a tool in the hands of management/will not be able to help workers	43	30,3	27	34,6	70	31,8
TOTAL	142	100	78	100	220	100
Unspecified	12		7		19	

3.3.1 Establishment of the organization

Two statements were made in this regard:

Management should establish the organization.

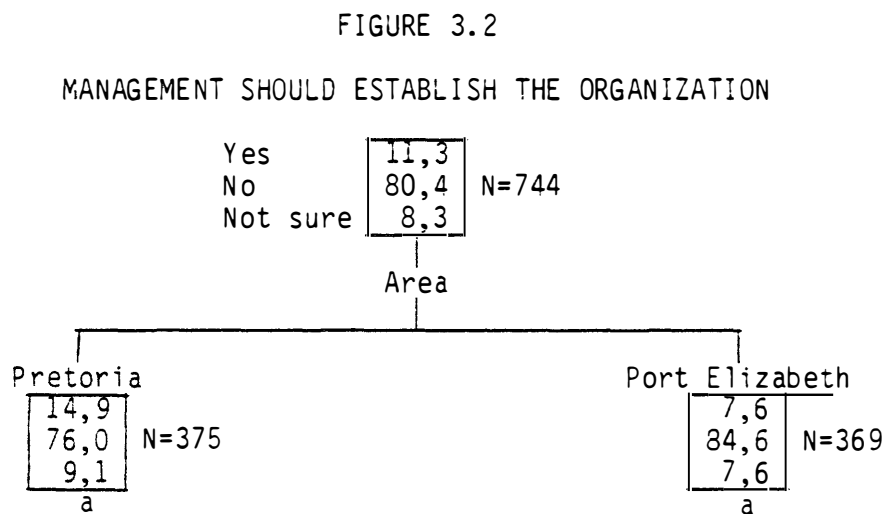
Workers themselves should establish the organization.

These statements correspond with similar statements that Terblanche (1983: 72) included in his questionnaire. The same statements were included again in order to determine whether there had been any change in the attitude of Black workers towards the establishment of such an organization during the year that had elapsed between the two investigations.

The responses to the two statements are analyzed in Figures 3.2 and 3.3.

In accordance with the finding of Terblanche (1983: 32-34), Figures 3.2 and 3.3 show that the large majority of workers in both areas believed that the workers, and not management, should establish the organization. However a relatively higher percentage of the workers in Port Elizabeth than in Pretoria were, according to Figures 3.2 and 3.3, in favour of the workers starting the organization. Figure 3.3 furthermore reveals that younger workers in Port Elizabeth (15-44) were more in favour of workers taking the initiative than was the case with older workers.

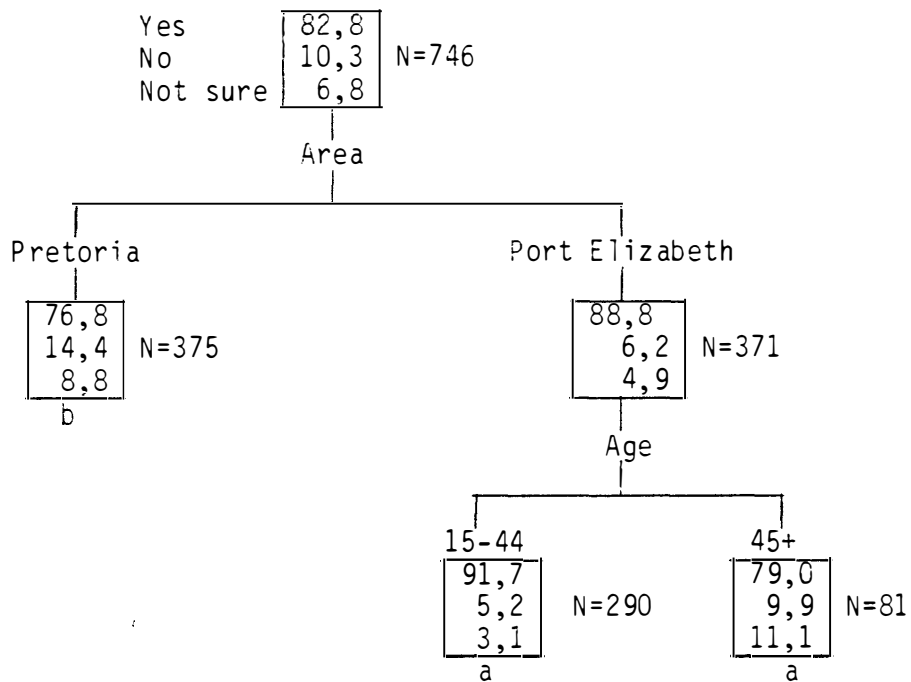
The group of workers who believed that management should establish the organization most probably did not have a trade union in mind.



a = No further prediction is possible

FIGURE 3.3

WORKERS SHOULD ESTABLISH THE ORGANIZATION



a = No further prediction is possible  
 b = Further predictions are not significant

3.3.2 Organization leadership

Regardless of who starts an organization, it is generally accepted that no organization can function effectively without leaders. The vast majority of workers - 697 or 92,8 % of the 751 workers - who reacted to the statement "No organization can function without a leader", gave a positive answer to this statement.

Election of leader

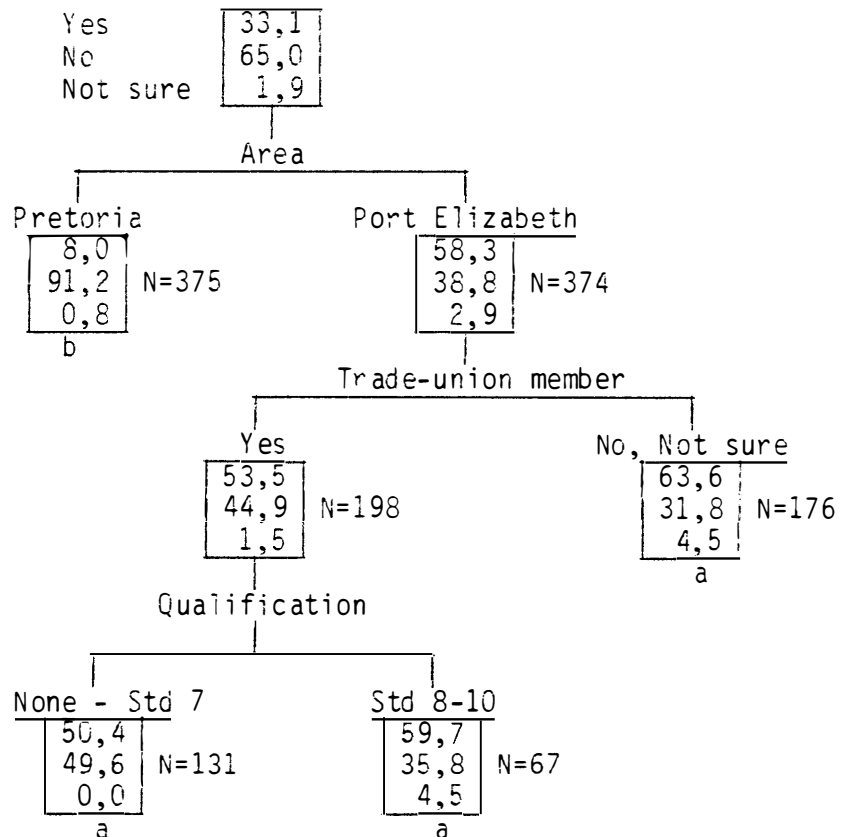
The following statements concerning the election of leaders were included in the questionnaire:

- (a) The leader must be elected in such a way that one member of the organization will not know how another member voted.
- (b) Different leaders should be nominated by members, followed by a session during which members should openly vote for the respective nominees so that everybody can see which leader gets the majority of votes.

- (c) Management should be present when the leader is elected.
- (d) The re-election of a leader(s) should occur on a regular basis.

The responses to these statements are analyzed in Figures 3.4-3.7.

FIGURE 3.4  
THE LEADER SHOULD BE ELECTED BY BALLOT



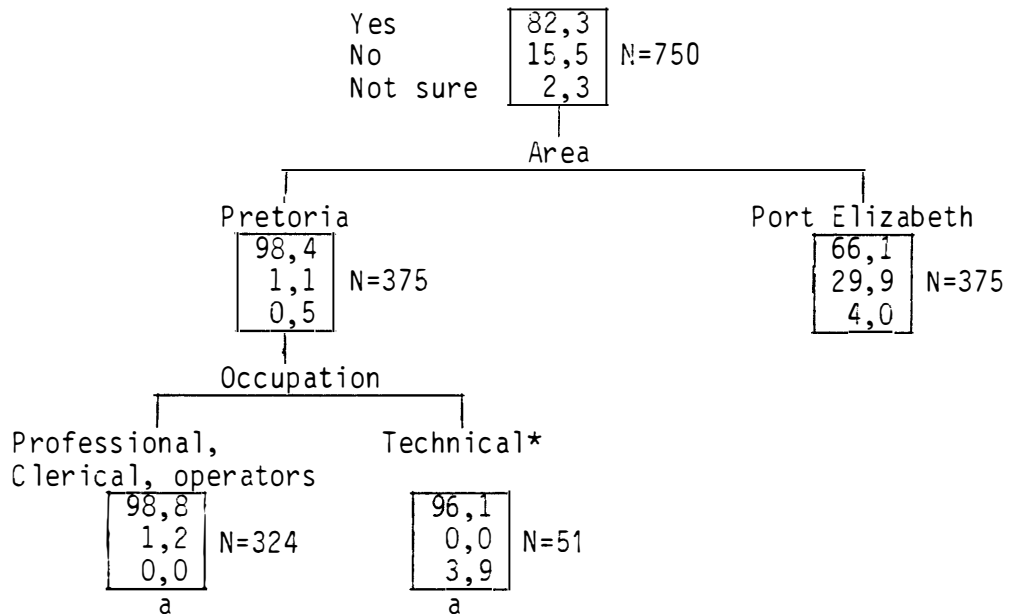
a = No prediction is possible  
b = Further prediction is not significant

It appears from Figure 3.4 that approximately only a third of all the respondents involved were in favour of voting by ballot when electing a leader for the organization. Compared with Pretoria where only 8,0 % of the respondents supported secret voting, 53,8 % of the respondents in Port Elizabeth favoured voting by secret ballot when electing leaders. However, non-members and respondents who were not sure whether they belonged to a trade union were more in favour of secret voting than

trade union members in Port Elizabeth. Figure 3.4 also reveals that better qualified trade union members were again more positive than semi-skilled and unskilled union members about electing leaders in secrecy.

FIGURE 3.5

LEADERS SHOULD BE NOMINATED AND VOTED FOR OPENLY



\*For practical purposes only the first occupation in each occupational category is quoted (see Chapter 2).

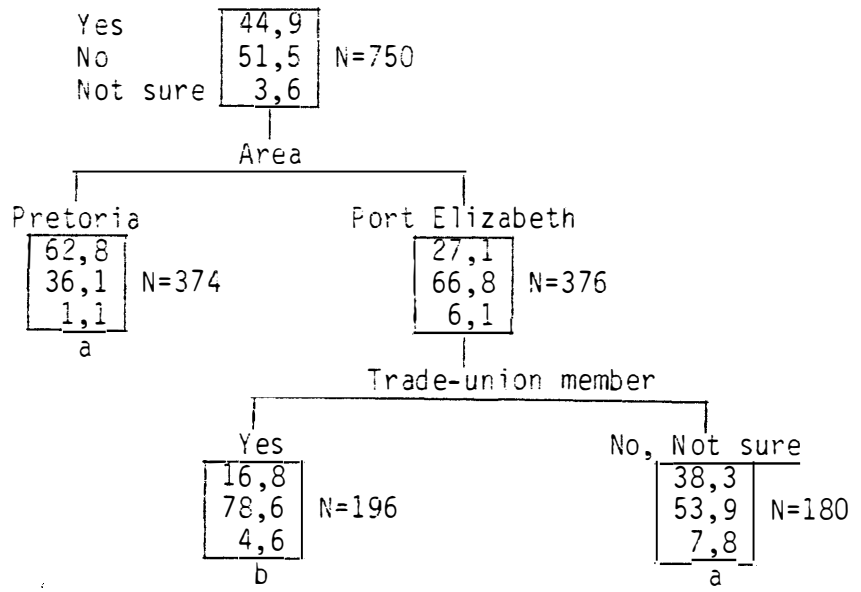
a = No prediction is possible.

As can be expected, Figure 3.5 shows that despite the fact that the large majority of workers (82,3 %) believed that a leader should be elected by means of open voting, a considerably higher percentage of the Pretoria workers than those in Port Elizabeth supported this view (98,4 % as opposed to 66,1 %). According to Figure 3.5 it would appear that the occupation of the workers in the Pretoria area also had a bearing on their opinion regarding the choice of a leader.

As opposed to the reasonable degree of consensus between the workers in Pretoria and Port Elizabeth on electing a leader, Figure 3.6 shows that workers in these two areas differed radically on the matter of the presence of management when electing a leader. For example almost

FIGURE 3.6

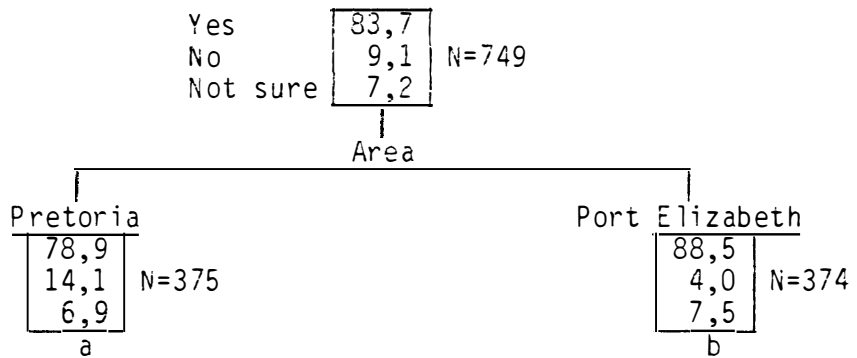
MANAGEMENT SHOULD BE PRESENT WHEN LEADER IS ELECTED



a = No prediction is possible  
 b = The prediction is not significant

FIGURE 3.7

LEADER(S) SHOULD BE RE-ELECTED REGULARLY



a = No prediction is possible  
 b = The prediction is not significant

two-thirds of the Pretoria workers concerned were in favour of management's presence at the election of a leader, whereas 66,8 % of the Port Elizabeth workers were against it. However, non-trade union members in Port Elizabeth were more in favour of management being present at such elections than was the case with trade union members. It therefore seems that trade union members in Port Elizabeth were more inclined to see the organization as a typical trade union than was the case with the other workers.

According to figure 3.7 area is the most important factor affecting the attitude of workers towards the regular election of a leader(s). Though relatively more workers in Port Elizabeth than in Pretoria were in favour of regular elections to find a leader (88,5 % as opposed to 78,9 %), the percentages indicate that the vast majority of the workers concerned in both areas felt that the leader(s) of the organization should be re-elected on a regular basis.

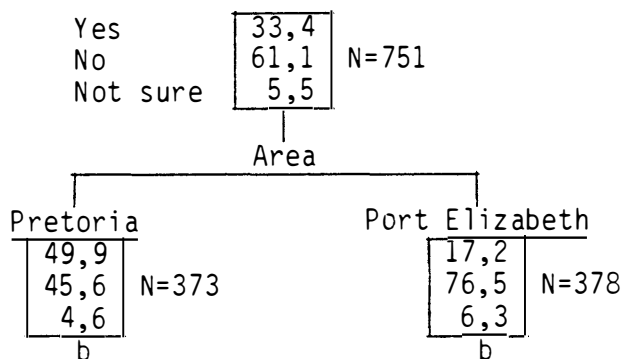
### 3.3.3 Communication between the leader of the organization and management

One of the ways in which closer contact can be established between workers and their leader is by making a place available where members of the organization can meet to discuss problems. The large majority of all the workers (87,5 %) confirmed that "Management should make a place available where members can meet to discuss problems".

The question that now arises is what the workers' attitude was towards the possible presence of management at such a meeting. This information is analyzed in Figure 3.8.

FIGURE 3.8

MANAGEMENT SHOULD BE PRESENT WHEN PROBLEMS ARE DISCUSSED



b = Further predictions are not significant.

According to Figure 3.8 the majority of workers concerned (61,1 %) were opposed to management being present at meetings where problems are discussed, whereas an additional 5,5 % were not sure. Despite the fact that this figure reveals that the workers in the Pretoria area were more in favour of management attending such meetings than was the case with Port Elizabeth workers (49,9 % as against 17,2 %), it would seem that the former workers preferred discussing their problems with their leader before communicating them to management.

Three statements were used to test the way in which workers preferred their problems to be communicated to management:

- (a) Management should allow the leader that was elected to talk to them from time to time about the workers' problems.
- (b) Management cannot listen to all the members of the organization at the same time, therefore only the elected leader should discuss the workers' problems with management.
- (c) Workers should be present when the leader talks to management about their grievances to ensure that he represents them correctly.

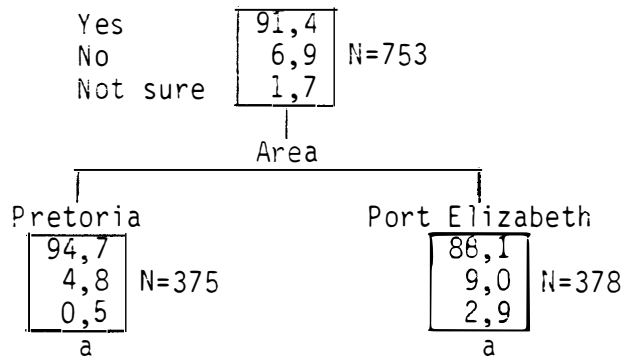
The analysis of statement (a) by means of the previously mentioned independent variables reveals that none of these variables had any effect on the view of workers towards periodic talks between the leader and management on workers' problems. The vast majority of workers, 93,9 %, were in favour of such talks being held on a regular basis. The reactions to the last two statements (b and c) are analyzed in Figures 3.9 and 3.10.

Figure 3.9 indicates that despite relatively more of the workers concerned in Pretoria than Port Elizabeth being in favour of the leader alone discussing workers' problems with management (94,7 % as against 88,1 %), the overall percentages show clearly that the vast majority of workers concerned in both areas supported this view.



FIGURE 3.9

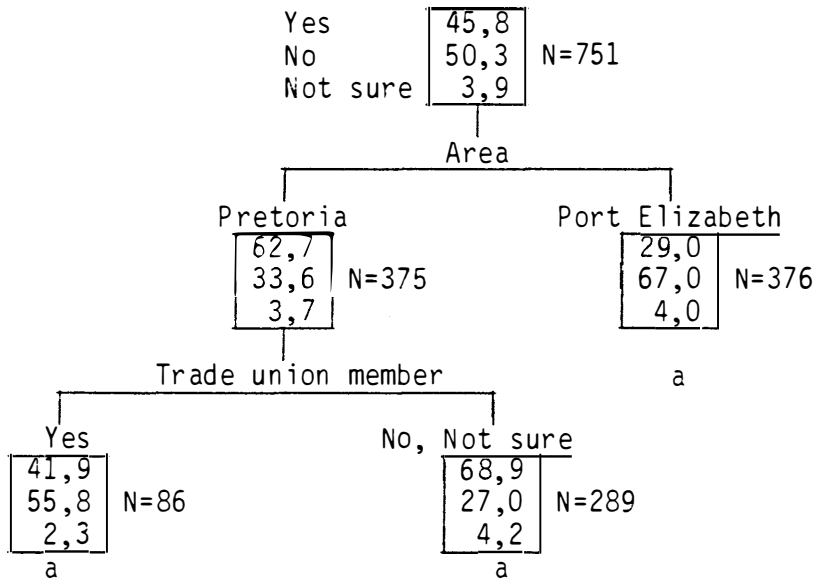
THE LEADER ALONE SHOULD DISCUSS WORKERS' PROBLEMS WITH MANAGEMENT



a = No further prediction is possible

FIGURE 3.10

WORKERS SHOULD BE PRESENT WHEN THE LEADER DISCUSSES THEIR PROBLEMS WITH MANAGEMENT



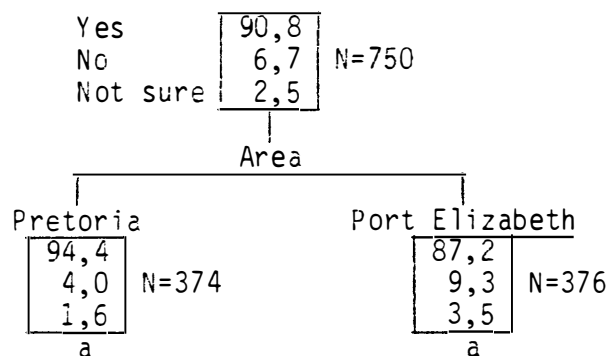
a = No further prediction is possible

According to Figure 3.10, almost two-thirds of the workers in the Pretoria area were in favour of members being present when their leader negotiated with management about their grievances, whereas the majority of workers in the Port Elizabeth area held exactly the opposite view. It would, however, appear that non-trade union members in Pretoria are more in favour of members being present at a discussion than is the case with union members.

Regardless of the way in which workers prefer their problems to be communicated to management, it is important to note that they realize that management cannot always comply with all the requests made through the leaders of the organization. Figure 3.11 gives an analysis of workers' reactions to the statement "Management cannot always solve all the workers' problems, therefore workers should also listen to management to find out why management cannot solve all the problems".

FIGURE 3.11

WORKERS SHOULD ALSO LISTEN TO MANAGEMENT'S PROBLEMS



a = No further prediction is possible

Figure 3.11 indicates that although a relatively greater number of the workers in Pretoria than in Port Elizabeth were prepared to see the matter from management's point of view as well, the large majority of all the workers in both areas were in favour of mutual communication between workers and management concerning the problems experienced by

workers. The vast majority of all the workers in both areas, namely 80,7 % (88,8 % and 72,6 % in Pretoria and Port Elizabeth, respectively), also were of the opinion that management should be allowed a reasonable amount of time to solve their problems.

It is important that workers should feel that management listens to their problems, regardless of whether this feeling is based on rational or irrational grounds (see Chapter 2). A number of statements in this regard were therefore also included in the questionnaire:

- (a) Workers should be informed which problems have been solved and which not.
- (b) If problems have not been solved or could not be solved, management should explain the reasons for this to the workers.

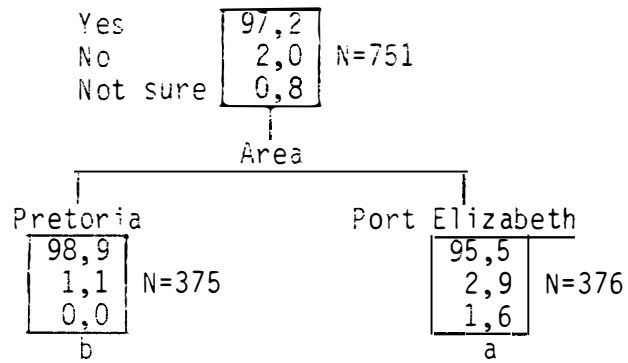
The reactions to these two statements are analyzed in Figures 3.12 and 3.13.

It appears from Figure 3.12 that 97,2 % of all the workers concerned were of the opinion that management should inform the workers which problems could and which could not be solved. This was the view of relatively more workers in Pretoria than in Port Elizabeth. According to Figure 3.13 the large majority of all the workers concerned (94,6 %) also believed that it was the duty of management to explain to workers why certain problems were not and could not be solved. However, non-trade union members in Pretoria were more inclined to support this view than non-members in Port Elizabeth.

The way in which management should inform workers of the reasons for problems not being solved is analyzed in Table 3.3. The majority of workers concerned in both areas preferred management to inform them through the leader of the organization of the reasons why their problems

FIGURE 3.12

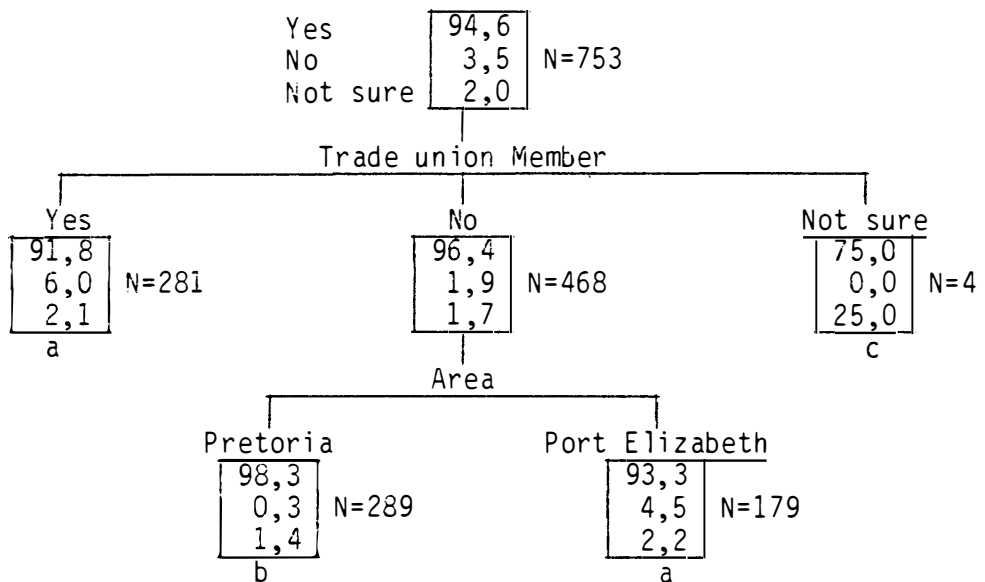
MEMBERS SHOULD BE INFORMED ON PROBLEM SOLVING



a = No further prediction is possible  
 b = Further predictions are not significant

FIGURE 3.13

MANAGEMENT SHOULD EXPLAIN TO MEMBERS WHY PROBLEMS ARE NOT SOLVED



a = No further predictions are possible  
 b = Further predictions are not significant  
 c = N too small for further division

had not yet been solved (61,0 % and 55,4 % in the Pretoria and Port Elizabeth areas respectively). The fact that approximately a third of all the workers concerned preferred management to inform them in a meeting of the reasons why their problems were not solved, indicates that these workers might also prefer to be present when management states its case to the leader of the organization. Figure 3.14 gives an analysis of the responses of workers to a statement in this regard: "Management should explain its problems to the chosen leaders when all the workers are present". It is of course realized that such a system would be impractical in most cases. The question was asked to gauge the feeling or attitude of the worker

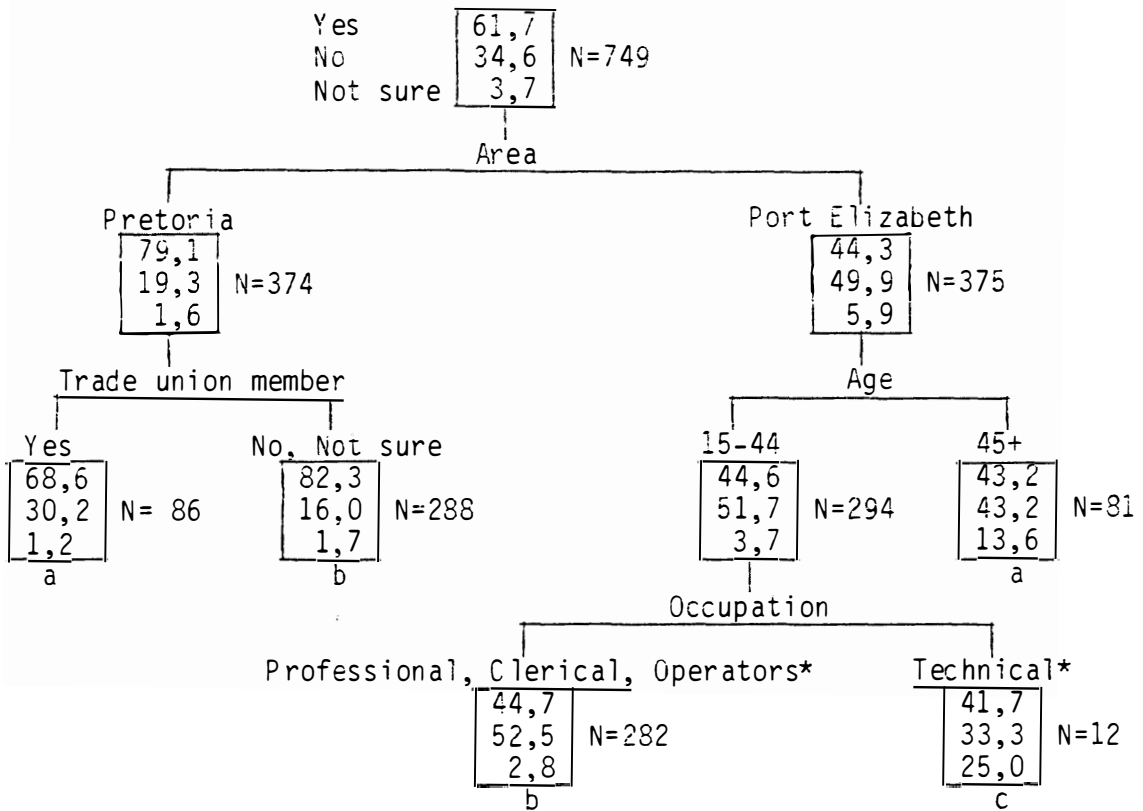
TABLE 3.3  
WAY IN WHICH MANAGEMENT SHOULD INFORM WORKERS BY AREA

Reasons	Area				Total	
	Pretoria		Port Elizabeth			
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Not meaningful	3	0,8	2	0,6	5	0,7
By means of the leader	221	61,0	194	55,4	415	58,3
At a meeting	113	31,2	137	39,1	250	35,1
By means of the supervisor	24	6,6	3	0,9	27	3,8
In a letter to each worker	1	0,3	14	4,0	15	2,1
TOTAL	362	100	350	100	712	100

Figure 3.14 indicates that despite the fact that the large majority of workers concerned in the Pretoria area (79,1 %) were in favour of management informing the leader of its problems in the presence of all the members of the organization, only 44,3 % of the Port Elizabeth workers held this view. Nearly half the workers concerned in Port Elizabeth, 49,9 %, were also opposed to the idea of members being present at talks between the leader(s) and management to solve problems. In Pretoria non-trade union members were more in favour of the presence of members than those workers who were trade-union members, whereas in Port Elizabeth age and occupation has an effect on workers' opinion in this regard.

FIGURE 3.14

MANAGEMENT SHOULD EXPLAIN ITS PROBLEMS TO THE LEADERS WHEN ALL THE MEMBERS ARE PRESENT



\*Because of practical considerations only the first occupation in each occupational category is indicated (see Chapter 2).

- a = No further prediction is possible.
- b = Further predictions are not significant.
- c = N too small for further division.

To summarize it can therefore be said that despite differences between the views of workers in Pretoria and Port Elizabeth regarding the presence of members at negotiations conducted between their leader and management, the large majority of workers in both groups were in favour of mutual communication as a means of problem solving. This attitude implies that going on strike in order to try to solve problems apparently does not enjoy the general support of the workers.

A question on this subject was put to workers and they were required to choose between three statements (see Appendix, Question 15):

- (a) When workers have problems, workers and management should put matters right by means of group discussions.

- (b) When workers have problems, workers and management should talk about them only once and if management cannot put the matter right, the workers should strike.
- (c) It is useless for workers to discuss their problems with management. Workers have to strike first before management will pay any attention.

As expected, the vast majority of all the workers concerned, 94,3 %, supported the view stated in (a). In agreement with Terblanche (1983: 54) who found that just over half the workers in his survey group (53,5 %) were not in favour of striking, it would therefore appear that workers in general are nowadays opposed to going on strike as a way of solving problems. It should be kept in mind that the two investigations were conducted at different times. In contrast to Terblanche who conducted his investigation during a period of economic growth, the investigation concerning Black workers' perception of problem solving was carried out during an economic recession. Because Black workers would be more seriously affected by a strike during the recession than during the growth period two years ago, it was to be expected that they would be more negatively inclined to go on strike. Furthermore 94,9 % of all the workers were also convinced that there would be fewer strikes if management and workers understood each others' problems better (see Appendix, Question 14.14). Their most important reasons for such an argument are analyzed in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4 reveals that the most important reasons why talks with management can reduce strikes (according to the workers), are that co-operation between management and workers is improved, problems can be solved and a greater degree of understanding is established between workers and management. Although the numbers (N) were small, some workers believed that strikes, as opposed to talks, did not solve problems.

TABLE 3.4  
REASONS WHY MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING CAN REDUCE STRIKES BY AREA

Reasons	Area				Total	
	Pretoria		Port Elizabeth			
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Not meaningful	1	0,3	3	0,8	4	0,6
Problems are solved in this way	110	31,4	98	26,9	208	29,1
Strikes do not solve problems	2	0,6	10	2,7	12	1,7
Co-operation between management and workers is improved	98	28,0	120	33,0	218	30,5
Racial discrimination is eliminated			3	0,8	3	0,4
Management does nothing about workers' problems where there is a lack of mutual understanding			3	0,8	3	0,4
Better understanding between management and workers	139	39,7	127	34,9	266	37,3
TOTAL	350	100	364	100	714	100



## CHAPTER 4

### TRADE UNION MEMBERSHIP AND WORKERS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS A TRADE UNION

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Black workers do not seem to consider the Industrial Council as an effective system for solving their problems. For example, from information analyzed in the previous chapter it is clear that the vast majority of workers acknowledged a need for an organization that could communicate their problems to management, despite the fact that they could legally belong to a trade union that could negotiate on their behalf. However, trade union membership, second only to the factor of area, played an important role in the workers' view of such an organization. In Port Elizabeth for example, union members were more inclined to regard such an organization as a typical trade union than was the case with other workers. This chapter deals with trade union membership and the attitude of non-members towards a trade union.

#### 4.2 TRADE UNION MEMBERSHIP

Table 4.1 shows the number of workers who claimed to be trade union members, not only in proportion to the total survey group, but also to Terblanche's survey group (1983: 46). In Table 4.2 there is an analysis of members' knowledge of the name of their trade union, according to area.

Table 4.1 confirms the generally accepted view in literature that trade union membership is steadily increasing among Black workers (compare inter alia Volkshandel, May 1983: 88 and 64). Trade union membership has for example increased from about 20% to about 30% in the year that elapsed between the two investigations.

From Table 4.1 it appears that considerably more workers in Port Elizabeth than in Pretoria belonged to a trade union (44,0% as opposed to 20,7%). There was also a marked increase between the

TABLE 4.1

## TRADE UNION MEMBERSHIP

Membership	Area				Total		Terblanche's total	
	Pretoria		Port Elizabeth		N	%	N	%
Yes	112	20,7	222	44,0	334	32,0	245	20,2
No	418	77,4	280	55,4	698	66,8	970	79,8
Not sure	10	1,9	3	0,6	13	1,2		
TOTAL	540	100	505	100	1 045	100	1 215	100

Unspecified:                    4                    25                    29

TABLE 4.2

## KNOWLEDGE OF TRADE UNION'S NAME

Knows name of trade union	Area				Total	
	Pretoria		Port Elizabeth		N	%
Yes	45	41,3	135	73,8	180	61,6
No	64	58,7	48	26,2	112	38,4
TOTAL	109	100	183	100	292	100

Unspecified:                    3                    39                    42

two surveys: 20,2 % in 1981 to 32,0 % in 1982. The majority of union members in Port Elizabeth (according to Table 4.2) knew the name of their trade union (73,8 %), whereas less than half the members in Pretoria (41,3 %) were familiar with the name of their union.

Although the majority of all the workers concerned (66,8 %) did not belong to a trade union, according to Table 4.1, it should be borne in mind that the power of Black trade unions will in future not only depend on their present membership but also on the number of workers

who experience a need to belong to a union. This matter is dealt with in the next paragraph.

#### 4.3 WORKERS' NEED TO BELONG TO A TRADE UNION

Workers who were not members of a trade union at the time of the investigation were requested to indicate whether they would like to become members of a union (see Appendix, Question 17). The information obtained is analyzed in Table 4.3.

TABLE 4.3

#### DESIRE TO JOIN TRADE UNION

Would like to be a member of a trade union	Area				Total	
	Pretoria		Port Elizabeth		N	%
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	103	25,2	91	32,9	194	28,3
No	267	65,5	121	43,7	388	56,6
Not sure	38	9,3	65	23,5	103	15,0
TOTAL	408	100	277	100	685	100

Unspecified: 10 3 13

According to Table 4.3 more than a quarter of the non-trade union members (28,3 %) indicated that they would like to have trade union membership. However the percentage of non-members who did not want to become trade union members, or who were not sure whether they were interested in becoming members (56,6 % and 15,0 %, respectively), is unexpectedly high. This implies that Black trade unions cannot afford to be at all irresponsible if they want to keep or increase Black membership. Another matter that should be taken into account, as previously mentioned, is that the survey was carried out during an economic recession, which might probably have influenced the attitude of Black workers towards trade union membership.

It is also interesting to note that considerably more workers in Pretoria than in Port Elizabeth were negative in their attitude towards trade union membership. This corresponds with earlier deductions, namely that workers in Port Elizabeth are more inclined to consider the organization for communicating their problems to management as being a typical trade union than is the case with workers in the Pretoria area (see Chapter 3).

The most important reasons for wanting or not wanting to be a member of a trade union are analyzed in Tables 4.4 and 4.5 respectively, whereas Table 4.6 reflects the reasons why the group of workers who would like to belong to a trade union were not yet members at the time of the investigation.

TABLE 4.4

WORKERS' REASONS FOR WANTING TO BELONG TO A TRADE UNION

Reasons	Area				Total	
	Pretoria		Port Elizabeth		N	%
	N	%	N	%		
Not meaningful	2	2,0	1	1,1	3	1,6
To obtain job security	14	13,7	15	17,2	29	15,3
To resolve grievances	32	31,4	28	32,2	60	31,7
To protect workers' rights	33	32,4	22	25,3	55	29,1
To improve salaries	1	1,0	1	1,1	2	1,1
To add strength to the bargaining power of workers	16	15,7	17	19,5	33	17,5
To improve co-operation between management and workers	4	3,9	1	1,1	5	2,6
To improve working conditions	-	-	2	2,3	2	1,1
TOTAL	102	100	87	100	189	100

Unspecified:

1

4

5

TABLE 4.5

## WORKERS' REASONS FOR NOT YET BELONGING TO A TRADE UNION

Reasons	Area				Total	
	Pretoria		Port Elizabeth		N	%
	N	%	N	%		
Not meaningful	1	1,0	5	5,9	6	3,3
Do not know where to join	19	19,2	4	4,7	23	12,5
Do not have any knowledge of trade unions	22	22,2	5	5,9	27	14,7
Want to be a member of a legal trade union only	33	33,3	44	51,8	77	41,8
Still somewhat suspicious of trade unions	21	21,2	13	15,3	34	18,5
Afraid of losing job	-	-	10	11,8	10	5,4
Have not really experienced big problems	1	1,0	2	2,4	3	1,6
Do not have time for attending union meetings	2	2,0	2	2,4	4	2,2
TOTAL	99	100	85	100	184	100

Unspecified:

4

6

10

Table 4.4 indicates that there is a marked similarity between the workers' reasons for wanting to belong to a trade union and their reasons for wanting to establish an organization to communicate their problems to management (see Chapter 3). For example, reasons such as effective problem solving, fighting for the rights of Black workers and greater bargaining power are not only motives for establishing an organization that can inform management of their problems, but also for the workers to join a trade union.

From this it can be deduced that workers consider the trade union (and the proposed organization) mainly as an instrument by means of which the position of Black workers in the work situation can be improved.

TABLE 4.6

## WORKERS' REASONS FOR NOT WANTING TO BELONG TO A TRADE UNION

Reasons	Area				Total	
	Pretoria		Port Elizabeth		N	%
	N	%	N	%		
Not meaningful	6	2,2	2	1,9	8	2,1
Trade unions are no good/ Do not solve problems	90	33,7	26	24,1	116	30,9
Do not want to be dismissed	9	3,4	11	10,2	20	5,3
Do not want to get involved in politics	8	3,0	4	3,4	12	3,2
Not interested	121	45,3	44	40,7	165	44,0
Trade unions cause too many strikes	3	1,1	12	11,1	15	4,0
Trade union leaders do not keep their promises	7	2,6	2	1,9	9	2,4
Trade unions are forbidden in firms	23	8,6	7	6,5	30	8,0
TOTAL	267	100	108	100	375	100

Unspecified:

13

13

According to Table 4.5 the most important reason why workers who would like to be members of a trade union did not yet belong to one at the time of the survey was because they wanted to join a legal trade union. In addition some workers mentioned that they did not yet trust trade unions unconditionally. Both reasons implied that workers were careful not to be too hasty about joining a trade union, a phenomenon that might probably be related to the economic recession at the time of the investigation. Workers were most probably afraid of losing their jobs as a result of the recession. Although the numbers (N) were small, some workers in Port Elizabeth also stated that they were afraid of losing their jobs if they joined a trade union.

As could be expected, some of the reasons given by workers for not wanting to belong to a trade union (Table 4.6), indicated that they probably considered their job security would be threatened if they joined one. Reasons such as not wanting to be dismissed, not wanting to become involved in politics, trade unions causing too many strikes and their prohibition by some firms were mentioned by quite a number of workers. According to Table 4.6 a considerable percentage of all the workers concerned (44,0 %) stated that they were not interested in a trade union, whereas an additional 30,9 % felt that trade unions were ineffective and not able to solve workers' problems.

Because workers felt that management did not do much about their problems (whether they were aware of them or not) (see Chapter 2), the question arose whether this ineffectiveness could be attributed to inadequate co-operation and communication between trade union and management. Asked if they believed that management paid any attention to trade unions (see Appendix, Question 16), approximately two-thirds of trade union members (64,2 %) stated that the contrary was true. Their reasons for holding this view are analyzed in Table 4.7

TABLE 4.7

WORKERS' REASONS FOR MANAGEMENT PAYING NO ATTENTION TO TRADE UNIONS

Reasons	N	%*
Not meaningful	2	0,9
Management does not solve workers' problems / No improvement in conditions	113	52,8
Dismissal without prior notice still occurs	41	19,2
Dismissed workers have not yet been re-appointed	12	5,6
Management does not attend meetings / is not actively involved in worker affairs	24	11,2
No feedback is received from management	8	3,7
If trade union leaders want to have talks with management they are accused of merely wanting to cause strikes	2	0,9
Other	12	5,6
TOTAL	214	100

\* Expressed as a percentage of the number of trade union members (N=214) who thought that management paid no attention to trade unions.

"No improvement in working conditions" constituted the most important reason for trade union members believing that their unions were being ignored by management (compare Table 4.7). Many workers also based their argument on the fact that management had not yet re-appointed the workers it had previously dismissed.

To summarize it can thus be said that despite the fact that more than half of all the workers were or would like to become members of a trade union, the number of workers who were not and who also had no desire to become a member, was contrary to expectation, quite high. Though job security most probably played an important role in the negative attitude of workers as a result of the economic recession when the investigation was carried out, the scepticism of workers towards trade unions emphasized the importance of responsible Black trade unions. Only through responsible behaviour will trade unions succeed in maintaining and promoting membership of Black workers. This view is particularly valid if it is taken into account that workers' reasons for not belonging to a trade union or not being interested in joining one centred around arguments such as "still somewhat suspicious of trade unions", "trade unions cause too many strikes" and "trade-union leaders do not keep their promises". It would also seem that communication and co-operation between trade unions and management will have to improve.

The reasons for the positive attitude of the workers who were positive in their attitude towards trade union membership imply that they saw trade unions as an instrument for improving the position of the Black worker in the work situation.



CHAPTER 5  
SYNOPSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

It has been argued in the introductory chapter that the power of the Black worker is increasing steadily due to vertical occupational mobility which makes them more difficult and expensive to replace.

The large number of wild cat strikes which seem to be easily organized, points towards the necessity for effective two-way communication between worker and management. This does not mean that the very difficult position of management is not recognized. One is well aware that management sometimes has to deal with unrealistic and even absurd demands, but this does not make an effective system of communication less important.

Although some conflict between management and workers can be regarded as normal, disruptive conflict such as a strike should be avoided as it is detrimental to the organization. Conflict points towards unsolved problems in the organization, which like the poor, we shall always have with us. Any group or individual will develop new needs once others are satisfied. The aim of this research is to determine how the Black worker perceives the problem solving process and whether their "ideal" system of problem solving procedures would differ from the industrial council system.

In operational firms the aim of the investigation was to determine:

- (1) the problem solving procedures available to the worker,
- (2) the attitude of workers towards the establishment of an organization that helps to solve problems, and
- (3) the role of the union in this regard.

Structured interviews were conducted after working hours with 1075 male workers living permanently in the townships near Pretoria (545) and Port Elizabeth (530) during July to October 1982.

## 5.2 FINDINGS

### 5.2.1 The attitude of workers towards the handling of their problems and grievances

The vast majority of workers in both areas displayed a positive attitude towards their employer. Wages were given as the main reason for this positive attitude and also the main reason why some workers did not like their employer. Workers also attributed their attitude to factors such as working conditions, job satisfaction, job security, personnel relations and fringe benefits.

Almost a third of all the workers in the survey group said that certain aspects of the work situation bothered them. However workers in Pretoria were more content with their work situation than was the case with workers in the Port Elizabeth area. In contrast to Pretoria where older workers were more satisfied than younger workers, age did not play a role in the general attitude of Port Elizabeth workers, but trade union membership did. Relatively more trade union members than non-members in Port Elizabeth than in Pretoria also indicated that there were aspects in the work situation that bothered them.

The most important objection raised by workers in both areas was unsatisfactory personnel relations. Unsatisfactory wages and working conditions also bothered a considerable number of workers in both areas, whereas many workers in Port Elizabeth mentioned job security as a cause for grievance.

Of the 332 workers who indicated that there were matters in the work situation that bothered them, a total of 214 workers (i.e. 49 and 165 workers in the Pretoria and Port Elizabeth areas respectively), discussed these grievances with other persons. In both areas the supervisor was the most important person with whom workers discussed

their problems. Furthermore, workers in Port Elizabeth were more inclined to approach worker organizations such as trade unions and worker committees with their problems than was the case with workers in Pretoria.

The Pretoria and Port Elizabeth workers differ quite markedly in their attitudes toward their work situation.

Terblanche (1983) has shown that wages in Pretoria and Port Elizabeth do not differ to any great extent and it is doubtful whether working conditions in similar factories are so different that these differences can account for the more negative attitude of the Port Elizabeth workers. Whatever the cause may be, the labour climate in Pretoria is much healthier than in Port Elizabeth. The reasons given for like or dislike are basically the same - but the perceptions are different. PE workers mention personnel relations and fear of job loss more often than Pretoria workers. It is clear that labour unions have an influence on attitudes and from the employers' viewpoint the influence is negative.

#### 5.2.2 Workers' view of an organization that can communicate their problems to management

A large majority of all the workers concerned (76,5 %) reported a need for an organization that could communicate their grievances to management. Regarding the characteristics of such an organization the following views emerged:

##### (i) Establishing the organization

Though a large majority of workers in both areas who indicated that they needed an organization to communicate their problems to management, felt that workers and not management should establish such an organization, a relatively higher percentage of those workers in Port Elizabeth than in Pretoria supported this view (88,9 % as opposed to 76,8 % of the workers concerned).

(ii) Leadership of the organization

The vast majority of workers, 92,8 % of the 751 workers, responded affirmatively to the statement "No organization can function without a leader".

Despite the fact that a considerably higher percentage of the workers in Pretoria than in Port Elizabeth were in favour of open voting when choosing a leader (98,4 % as opposed to 66,1 % of the workers concerned, respectively), the percentages in both areas imply that the majority of workers were more in favour of open voting than voting by ballot to elect a leader.

In contrast to the relative degree of consensus between Pretoria and Port Elizabeth workers on choosing a leader, the two groups of workers differed on whether management should be present during the election of a leader or not. For example, 62,3 % of the workers in Pretoria were in favour of the presence of management, whereas 66,8 % of the workers in Port Elizabeth were opposed to management's presence. However, non-trade union members in Port Elizabeth were more in favour of the presence of management at the election of a leader than trade union members.

The majority of the 749 workers in both areas were in favour of regular re-elections of a leader (88,5 % and 78,9 % of the workers concerned in the Pretoria and Port Elizabeth areas respectively).

(iii) Communication between management and the leader of the organization

The vast majority of the workers in both areas (87,5 % of those who wanted an organization) supported the view that management should make a place available where the members of this organization could gather with their leader in order to discuss their problems. Though workers in Pretoria were more in favour of the presence of management at such meetings than the Port Elizabeth workers, it would appear that workers first wanted to discuss their problems with their leader before commissioning him to communicate these problems to management. However a large majority of workers in both areas (94,7 % and 88,1 % in Pretoria and Port Elizabeth respectively) felt that, after talks with the leader of their organization, only the leader should communicate the workers' problems to management.

Workers were generally realistic in their view of problem solving in the work situation. For example the vast majority of workers concerned (90,8 %) felt that workers should try to understand the reasons why management had not yet been able to solve certain problems. Furthermore, the majority of workers in both areas (80,8 % and 72,6 % in Pretoria and Port Elizabeth respectively) felt that management should be given a reasonable period of time to solve problems.

Workers attached much significance to feedback from management regarding problem solving. Besides the fact that 97,2 % of the workers concerned were of the opinion that management should inform workers on which problems had been solved and which not, 94,6 % of all the workers indicated that management should also explain to workers why certain problems were not or could not be solved. The majority of workers in both areas preferred feedback from management to occur through the leader of the organization (61,0 % and 55,4 % of the workers concerned in the Pretoria and Port Elizabeth areas respectively). Approximately another third of all the workers concerned indicated that they preferred management to inform them in a meeting why their problems had not been solved.

In contrast to the fact that workers in both areas preferred not to be present when the leader of their organization was communicating their grievances to management, workers in Pretoria and Port Elizabeth differ considerably on the matter of the presence of workers when management explained its problems to the leader of the organization. In Pretoria 79,1 % of the workers were in favour of management informing their leader of its problems in the presence of all the members of the organization, while only 44,3 % of the workers in Port Elizabeth were in favour of workers being present. The independent variables that had the most significant effect on the opinions of workers in the respective areas, were trade union membership in Pretoria, and age and occupation in Port Elizabeth.

From the above information it can therefore be deduced that despite differences between the views of workers in Pretoria and Port Elizabeth concerning the presence of members at negotiations between the leader of their organization and management, the vast majority of workers in both areas were in favour of mutual communication as a means of

problem solving. The greater number of workers concerned (94,3 %) also believed that workers' problems should be resolved by means of group discussion. A total of 94,9 % of the workers in both areas also believed that fewer strikes would occur if workers and management had a better understanding of each other's problems. The workers' most important reason for believing this was that talks between management and workers would promote co-operation between these two groups, establish a greater degree of mutual understanding and result in better problem solving.

### 5.2.3 Trade union membership and workers' attitude towards a trade union

#### (a) Trade union membership

Despite the fact that the majority of all the workers (66,8 %) were not members of a trade union, a considerably higher percentage of the workers in Port Elizabeth than in Pretoria belonged to a trade union (44,0 % as opposed to 20,7 % respectively).

#### (b) Workers' need for trade union membership

More than a quarter of all the workers (28,3 %) who were not yet members of a trade union at the time of the investigation indicated that they would like to join one. The percentage of workers who did not belong to a trade union and who did not want to become trade union members or were not sure whether they would like to become members (46,6 % and 15,0 % respectively) was nevertheless much higher than was expected. Considerably more workers in Pretoria than in Port Elizabeth displayed a negative attitude towards trade union membership. The most important reasons put forward by workers for wanting to belong to a trade union, corresponded to a large degree with their reasons for wanting an organization that could communicate their problems to management. Therefore reasons such as effective problem solving, fighting for the rights of Black workers and greater bargaining power were not only important considerations for workers wanting to establish an organization that could communicate their problems to management, but also for them wanting to become members of trade unions.

The main reason why those workers who would like to join a trade union did not yet belong to one at the time of the investigation, was because they wanted to be members of a legal trade union only. Some workers also mentioned that they did not yet fully trust trade unions.

Certain reasons put forward by workers for not wanting to belong to a trade union imply that they thought they might be jeopardizing their job security if they joined one. For example, quite a number of workers forwarded arguments such as not wanting to be dismissed, not wanting to become involved in politics, trade unions causing too many strikes or being forbidden by their employer. A considerable percentage of all the workers (44,0 %) also stated that they were not interested in a trade union, whereas another 30,9 % considered trade unions ineffective and useless and not able to solve workers' problems. This ineffectiveness of trade unions may probably be attributed to inadequate communication and co-operation between management and these bodies, particularly if it is taken into account that approximately two-thirds of all the trade union members in the survey (64,2 %) were of the opinion that management paid no attention to trade unions. Their argument was based on the fact that even after talks between management and trade unions no improvement could be discerned in working conditions. Some workers also argued that management did not re-appoint those workers who had been dismissed during the strike.

## 5.3 CONCLUSIONS

### 5.3.1 Problem solving

It can be accepted that the current procedures for problem solving do not make adequate provision for effectively solving the problems experienced by Black workers at plant level.

The majority of workers in both areas who experienced problems in the labour situation and discussed these problems with other persons, were of the opinion that it served no purpose since such discussions

did not lead to any improvement in the situation. Furthermore, research shows that the majority of workers who experience problems said that management was aware of their problems as the person with whom they discussed them, communicated with management and also that regular reports were sent to management. However it would appear that workers believed that management did not do much about their problems, despite the fact that it was well aware of them. Irrespective of whether this opinion was based on rational or irrational grounds, the mere fact that such a feeling exists among workers points to ineffective communication between management and workers.

The majority of workers in both areas were

- (a) prepared to listen to management's side of the matter;
- (b) prepared to give management a reasonable period of time to solve problems, and
- (c) agreed that management should inform workers which problems were and which were not solved, as well as why certain problems remained unresolved.

It can thus be deduced that although workers have a desire to discuss their problems with management at plant level they are (in cooler moments) nevertheless realistic about the matter of problem solving. It is therefore important to convince the workers that management really listens to their problems and tries to solve them. This will not be easy and will need a visible two-way communication system.



### 5.3.2 Worker organization

Despite the fact that workers in Port Elizabeth were more inclined than workers in Pretoria to see the organization that had to communicate their problems to management as a typical trade union, it was clear from the view held by the majority of workers in both areas that they most probably had a trade union in mind. For example, research revealed that the majority of workers in both areas who wanted such an organization, were of the opinion that

- (a) workers, and not management, should establish the organization;
- (b) the organization should have a leader(s) who could negotiate with management on behalf of the workers, and that
- (c) periodic talks concerning problem solving should be held between management and the leader(s) of the organization.

Furthermore, if it is taken into account that research revealed that the matters bothering workers related mostly to their immediate work situation, it can be accepted that the organization would have to be a plant based union in order to resolve the needs of the Black worker. Owing to closer contact with its members, such a trade union would be better informed of their problems in the work situation and be more concerned with such problems than would an industrial trade union. Research also showed that the majority of workers in both areas who were already members of a trade union, still wanted an organization that could communicate their problems to management. Concerning the conclusion that workers want to negotiate with management on the plant level, it would thus appear that there should be a movement away from the present industrial council system which is too far removed from the work place to be a perceivable and effective organization at plant level.

### 5.3.3 Strikes

It does not seem as if shortcomings in the present communication process have caused Black workers to consider going on strike as an alternative means of problem solving.

If this is true then the large number of strikes point towards strong intimidation. Previous research (Terblancke 1983) has shown that once a worker goes on strike, whether by choice or coercion, he likes all the other workers of the firm to be in the same boat. Most of the strikes are of short duration.

#### 5.4 FINAL REMARK

The Black worker in industry forms part of the overall labour relations system. As far as is known, the research conducted in this study has been the first attempt to gauge directly the Black workers' perception of problem solving, which is an important component in this system.

An industrial council system is at present in operation in South Africa. However the general impression obtained from the research shows that the Black worker does not see in this system an effective mechanism that can satisfy his needs for meaningful communication with management. The type of worker organization that Black workers prefer for communicating their problems to management displays many of the characteristics of a worker council, with the difference being that this organization must have bargaining power also in the sensitive areas of wages and working conditions. Whatever the scope and size of the organization it needs to be seen as an effective instrument and it will probably be a union with a strong power base within individual plants or companies.

APPENDIX: QUESTIONNAIRE

HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL

INSTITUTE FOR MANPOWER RESEARCH

(PROJECT MM-174)

THE BLACK WORKER'S PERCEPTION OF THE PROBLEM SOLVING PROCESS

Area	
Group	
Fieldworker No.	
Questionnaire No.	

- 1 How old are you?..... years
- 2 Highest school qualification: Std.....
- 3 Any post-school qualification? Yes  1 No  2
- If YES, what qualification? .....
- 4 What type of work do you do?.....
- 5 Which firm do you work for?.....
- 6 Approximately how many Black employees do you think there are in your firm?

Do you like working for this firm? Yes  1 No  2

Why do you say that? (Give three reasons)

- 7.1 .....
- 7.2 .....
- 7.3 .....
- 7.4 Which reason is the most important? ... ..

8 Are there problems at work that bother you?

Yes  1 No  2

(IF NO, PROCEED TO QUESTION 13)

8.1 If YES, which problems?.....

9 You have now listed the problems bothering you. Have you discussed them with anybody?

Yes  1 No  2

- 9.1 If NO, why not? .....
- 9.2 If YES, with whom did you discuss them? .....
- 9.3 Why did you discuss the problems that bothered you with this person/  
these persons?.....
- 9.4 Did your discussing your problem(s) with this person/these persons  
do any good? Yes  1 No  2
- 9.5 Why do you say that? .....
- 10 Do you think that the management of your firm is aware of the problems  
that bother the workers?  
Yes  1 No  2 Don't know  3
- 10.1 Why do you say that?.....
- 11 With whom would you prefer to discuss the problems that bother you at  
work? .....
- 11.1 Why? .....
- 12 Do you think management takes enough trouble to listen to the workers  
problems and the things that bother them?  
Yes  1 No  2 Don't know  3
- 12.1 If NO, what should management do about it?  
.....
- 13 Do you think it is necessary that workers should get together and  
establish an organisation that can tell management of the workers  
problems and grievances?  
Yes  1 No  2 Don't know  3
- 13.1 Why do you say that? .....
- (IF NO, PROCEED TO QUESTION 15)
- 14 If YES, (at 13): You said that workers should establish an organisa-  
tion which can tell management about problems and things that bother  
workers. Say whether you agree with the following statements. If you  
are not sure or if you have no opinion, then say you are uncertain.
- 14.1 Management should start the organization.  
Yes  1 No  2 Not sure  3

- 14.2 Workers should start the organization themselves.  
 Yes   1 No   2 Not sure   3
- 14.3 Management should make a place available where members of the organization can meet to discuss problems.  
 Yes   1 No   2 Not sure   3
- 14.4 Management should be present when problems are discussed at such a meeting of members.  
 Yes   1 No   2 Not sure   3
- 14.5 An organization cannot function without a leader or leaders.  
 Yes   1 No   2 Not sure   3
- 14.6 How do you think the leader should be elected?
- 14.6.1 The leader should be elected in such a way that other workers will not know who a member has voted for.  
 Yes   1 No   2 Not sure   3
- 14.6.2 Workers should propose different leaders and then vote openly so that everybody can see which proposed leader gets the most votes.  
 Yes   1 No   2 Not sure   3
- 14.7 Management should be present when the leader is elected.  
 Yes   1 No   2 Not sure   3
- 14.8 Management cannot listen to all the workers at the same time concerning their problems, therefore only the leader(s) should talk to management about the workers' problems.  
 Yes   1 No   2 Not sure   3
- 14.9 Workers/members should be present when the leader(s) who have been elected by the workers, talk to management so that the workers can know when the leader(s) say wrong things.  
 Yes   1 No   2 Not sure   3
- 14.10 Management should allow the leader to talk to it from time to time about the workers problems.  
 Yes   1 No   2 Not sure   3
- 14.11 The leader(s) of the organization should be re-elected regularly (for instance once a year).  
 Yes   1 No   2 Not sure   3

14.12 Management cannot always solve all the workers' problems, therefore workers should also listen to management to find out why it cannot solve all the problems.

Yes   1 No   2 Not sure   3

14.13 Management should tell its problems to the leader(s) when all the workers are present.

Yes   1 No   2 Not sure   3

14.14 If management and workers understand each others problems better, there will be fewer strikes.

Yes   1 No   2 Not sure   3

14.14.1 Why do you say that? .....

14.15 When the leader has told management about the workers' problems, management should be given a reasonable time (for instance two months) to try and solve the problems.

Yes   1 No   2 Not sure   3

14.16 Workers should know which problems have been solved and which problems could not be solved.

Yes   1 No   2 Not sure   3

14.17 If problems have not been solved, management should explain it to the workers.

Yes   1 No   2 Not sure   3

14.17.1 If YES, how should management explain it to the workers?

.....

15 Which one of the following statements is most acceptable to you?

15.1 When workers have problems, management and workers should put matters right by having a good discussion with one another.

Yes   1 No   2 Not sure   3

15.2 When workers have problems, workers and management should talk only once and if management cannot put the matter right, the workers should strike.

Yes   1 No   2 Not sure   3

15.3 It is no use for workers to discuss problems with management. Workers must first strike before management will listen.

Yes   1 No   2 Not sure   3

- 16 Do you belong to a trade union?  
 Yes  1 No  2 Not sure  3
- 16.1 If YES (at 16), what is the name of the trade union?  
 .....
- 16.2 If YES (at 16), do you think management pays attention to what trade union leaders tell it?  
 Yes  1 No  2 Not sure  3
- 16.3 Why do you say that? .....
- 17 If NO (at 16), would you like to belong to a trade union?  
 Yes  1 No  2 Not sure  3
- 17.1 If YES (at 17), please give the reasons why you would like to belong to a trade union?  
 .....
- 17.2 If YES (at 17), why don't you belong to one yet?  
 .....
- 17.3 If NO (at 17), why not? .....
- 18 Do you think management would rather listen to White worker's problems than to those of Black workers?  
 Yes  1 No  2 Not sure  3
- 18.1 Why do you say that?.....

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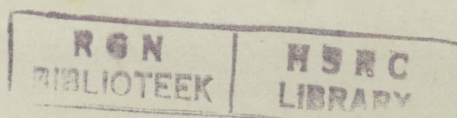
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