

# Structural Adjustment, The State and Workers in Ghana

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**Résumé:** *Par une analyse des rapports entre l'Etat et les travailleurs, cette étude cherche à évaluer les rôles et impacts des politiques d'ajustement structurel de la Banque mondiale et du FMI au Ghana. Elle trouve sa justification dans le fait que depuis les années 1980 ces deux institutions sont devenues les principaux acteurs sur la scène économique africaine. Plusieurs pays africains dont le Ghana dépendent maintenant de ces institutions pour formuler leurs politiques économiques et sociales. Le Ghana occupe la place de leader car, dans les cercles financiers internationaux, il est considéré comme une réussite parmi les pays dont les politiques sont inspirées par la Banque mondiale et le FMI. C'est pourquoi depuis les années 1980, dans les milieux des travailleurs, le cas du Ghana est cité comme exemple pour montrer comment une adhésion stricte à l'efficacité économique complétée par la privatisation telles que recommandées par la Banque mondiale et le FMI ont non seulement éteints les conflits syndicaux mais écrasé l'émergence de la démocratie sur le lieu de travail.*

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*Fellow countrymen and women, I should be the first to admit that the Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) has not provided all the answers to our national problems. In spite of all the international acclaim it has received, the effects of its gains remain to be felt in most households. Many families continue to experience severe constraints on their household budgets. There are many who have found it difficult during the past holidays to manage a modest celebration with a chicken for a meal, a new dress for a child... Meanwhile, we are now thinking of how to meet our rents, the next term's school fees and other routine expenses. These ... make it hard for us to appreciate any significant gains we have made under the ERP.<sup>1</sup>*

*.... available evidence strongly suggest that, despite rising per capita growth, structural adjustment has produced little enduring poverty-*

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1 Ft. Lt. Jerry Rawlings, Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) Chair, National radio and television address marking eighth anniversary of the 'December 31 Revolution' that brought him into power. See 'Rawlings' Eyes Red', *West Africa*, London, January 15-21, 1990:48.

*alleviation, and certain policies have worked against the poor (US House of Representatives 1988).*

*Improving the living standards of the rural populace and the working classes... is in the final analysis, the very essence of ERP and the ultimate standard by which its success will need to be judged.<sup>2</sup>*

*... remedial economic policies which ... include austerity measures cannot successfully be implemented without the cooperation, consent and the goodwill of the working people... The energies and skills of a great number of our able-bodied citizens are being wasted in unemployment. There is no doubt that there are fewer people working today than there were in 1983 when the ERP was launched... The situation is further aggravated by the anxiety of the large numbers of school leavers and university graduates who cannot see any future prospects of employment.<sup>3</sup>*

### **The IMF/World Bank and Their New-Found Influence in Africa**

The unprecedented influence of the International Monetary Fund (IMF or Fund) and the World Bank (The Bank) in Africa is marked by the broadened scope of their programmes and activities. In Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), in the last decade, over thirty countries have adopted versions of these two international financial institutions' economic recovery (ERP) or Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) (Lancaster 1989; Cornia *et al* 1987). Not only are the majority of African countries implementing the tenets of structural adjustment advocated by the two institutions but also: 'It has become the premier comprehensive and long-term development policy supported by international donors. Approximately 35% of World Bank and US bilateral assistance to Africa directly supports structural adjustment and these proportions are growing'.<sup>4</sup> Lancaster and Jeggan Senghor describe these IMF/World Bank inspired programmes as instituting a new wave of socio-economic policy with far reaching repercussions in all areas of African development (Lancaster 1988; Senghor 1991).

The overwhelming influence of the two international financial giants is also depicted by the predominance of the literature on contemporary African political-economy focusing on their activities.<sup>5</sup> Much of this literature

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2 Dr. Kwesi Botchwey, PNDC Secretary (Minister) for Finance, November 1985. Culled from Jonah 1989.

3 Ghana Trades Union Congress (TUC) 'Proposals for Mitigating the Plight of the People of Ghana Under the Impact of Structural Adjustment Programme', Paper submitted to the Government of the PNDC, Accra, July 26, 1990:1-2.

4 US House of Representatives Report:2.

5 For a sample of this bibliography, see the citations in the notes for this paper.

assesses their broader socio-economic and political effects. My goal, however, is to evaluate the labour policy and practical effects of the IMF and World Bank's policy recommendations in Ghana. My objective is to assess how under the auspices of these two institutions, economic policies and positions taken by the PNDC Government have shaped both the course and contents of Ghana's labour relations in the last ten years. In dealing with labour issues, my focus is on relations between the TUC led labour movement and the Rawlings' PNDC which has been in power since December 31, 1981. In evaluating the practical consequences of the PNDC's policies, I will also describe how they have impinged upon the country's overall political atmosphere in which the Ghana Trade Union Congress (TUC) and its seventeen national affiliates have had to operate. Also importantly, the effects of the ERP and SAP on Ghanaian worker's living conditions are assessed.<sup>6</sup>

Ghana has received international acclaim as a SAP success story for several reasons.

Both the local media and several international missions have identified Ghana as a model country favored by the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the World Bank, the IMF and other international donors (World Bank Report 1991, 12). Both the IMF and the Bank plus their supporters have praised Ghana as one of the classic success cases of SAP in the whole world. In the view of the Fund: 'Ranked on the basis of growth, savings, exports and investments, the five most successful adjusting countries were in order: South Korea, Mauritius (dubbed the Korea of Africa), Morocco, Ghana and Thailand' (World Bank 1991, 38). In terms of the flurry of activities involving the Fund and the Bank, Ghana also ranks high. In late 1987 alone, the Bank sent more than forty missions to the country (White 1990, 29).

Relying solely on traditional macro indicators of economic growth may lead to the erroneous conclusion that impressive achievements have been made in Ghana under the PNDC's ERP/SAP. A typical example is the often-cited average economic growth rate of five percent or more since 1985. In fact, members of the government pride themselves in their remarkable economic accomplishments. However, as participants in an international seminar aptly noted: '....there is considerable doubt whether the growth generated is equitable and employment promoting' (ILO 1989). In light of this observation, the participants advocated broadening the adjustment debate in Africa to go beyond governmental concerns about recouping foreign exchange losses to the black market; foreign exchange

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6 ERP was officially launched in April 1983 and then replaced by a more rigorous SAP in 1986.

stabilization and export growth to evolving political-economies in which most citizens contribute to and share in the fruits of their labour. In their view, adjustment policies in Africa have not been the economic panacea its advocates claim it is, and hence they emphasized the need to fundamentally review their real effects in the labour sphere and the further exploration of alternative policies.

Ghana Government-TUC relations, feature prominently in this paper because since the mid-1980s, the PNDC has sought to control the labour movement which it perceives as a real or potential threat to its ERP/SAP whose success is premised on harsh labour policies such as large scale layoffs and wage controls aimed at reducing labour costs. The thrust of my argument is that the success of ERPs/SAPs under IMF/World Bank auspices are contingent on governments including the PNDC imposing austere economic policies which adversely affect workers. Such policies constitute additional pressures on top of the already existing sensitivities of African governments to the political and economic roles of unions. This is especially the case under one-party or military rule where there are no institutionalized mechanisms for expressing public dissent or views on public policies.<sup>7</sup>

The position taken in this paper is that because ERPs/SAPs are inherently anti-labour and thus resisted by workers, they exacerbate government-labour tensions. They have therefore become new sources of strain on state-labour relations (Fashoyin 1990; Olukoshi and Aremu 1998).<sup>8</sup> In addition to the usual government sensitivity to the activities of unions, the adoption of the ERP/SAP by the PNDC has heightened its desire to tightly control workers through the TUC and its seventeen affiliates. The Rawlings-led PNDC's labour position is premised on the need to maintain a 'peaceful labour atmosphere' to facilitate the implementation of its economic programmes. In the perception of this regime, this is crucial in securing the confidence of international financial institutions and donors who prefer to operate in a stable political climate. In political-economy terms, this prerequisite for the success of the ERP/SAP means that law and order has to be maintained and workers discouraged from making wage claims through collective bargaining and backing such claims with strikes and other protest acts.

As demonstrated in this essay, the PNDC's labour policies which are shaped by IMF/World Bank conditionalities have not only contributed

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7 Details of the politically sensitive roles of labour unions in Africa are provided in (Panford 1988:1989).

8 A classic case is that of the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) which on several occasions was branded the 'Unofficial Opposition Party' by the Federal Military Government. Workers' protest-cum-strikes against Nigeria's version of SAP, notoriously, called 'Stomach Adjustment', contributed to the dissolution of the NLC in the late 1980s.

substantially to a deterioration in living conditions for both organized and unorganized labour (especially low income workers) but have also at the national level led to a pollution of the climate in which both the PNDC and the TUC-led labour movement conduct their affairs.

Thus, irrespective of the intent attributed to the PNDC's labour practices, their net effect within the broader ERP/SAP contexts under IMF/World Bank tutelage has been fouling PNDC-worker relations and a substantial erosion in workers' employment and living conditions. An ironical twist to the situation is that workers were some of the groups originally specified as beneficiaries of the ERP when it was first launched in April 1983, and then revamped as SAP in 1986 (Jonah 1989). The current mutually-suspicious relations between the TUC and the PNDC contrast sharply with the expectations shared by the majority of Ghanaian workers on the eve of the coup that brought Rawlings into power for the second time on December 31, 1981.

### **The Dawn of a New Era in State-Workers' Relations: The PNDC and the Workers' Revolution (December 31, 1981-April 1983)**

The tone of expectations surrounding the December 31 coup that launched the 'Second Coming of Rawlings' was set by Rawlings himself. On the eve of the coup, he announced: 'I am asking for nothing less than a revolution — a revolution that would transform the socio-economic structures of the country (Yankah 1986). Assuming responsibility for the coup and assured of its revolutionary nature, he added that he was prepared to be shot dead if what he initiated was not acceptable to Ghanaians (Yankah 1986).

Kojo Yankah (1986) describes the reaction of the residents of Accra on the day of the coup as a 'festival day for the suffering people, the unemployed and exploited. They jumped into the streets without prompting... It was like wild fire.... Civilians rejoiced and danced. According Yankah (1986), there was celebration in Accra because in the words of Rawlings and his colleagues: 'Military action was taken in the early hours of 31st December 1981, to create an opening for real democracy'. The newly created PNDC then furnished its principles for 'democratic struggle' to include placing power in the hands of the people and insuring genuine broad-based participation in decisions. In real terms, this means the adoption of national policies for:

*creating... the material basis for ensuring a democratic and popular education, as well as health schemes, housing, food and transportation to ensure the physical and cultural quality of life... for all Ghanaians, especially the poor and workers (Yankah 1986:90).*

Encouraged by the revolutionary promises made upon Rawlings' seizure of power, the TUC leadership expected the PNDC to revitalize the country's political economy and to guarantee social justice by insuring the material

well being of all citizens (TUC 1991). On the labour front, the labour movement expected not only improved but also cordial government-labour relations since the PNDC declared itself as the champion of workers' causes.

To a large extent, the PNDC, in the first two years of its reign, lived up to its revolutionary promise both in deed and in rhetoric (Hansen 1982; Hutchful 1989; Haynes 1989).<sup>9</sup> In the first two years, the national budget was publicly debated in open fora held at the Kwame Nkrumah Conference Center in Accra. The government also successfully depicted itself as revolutionary/populist by emphasizing 'people power' in addition to its openly expressed anti-colonialism, and hostility towards Western financial institutions, typically the IMF, World Bank and USAID and the development agenda they advocate. On the domestic scene, the PNDC sought to strip the Ghanaian upper and middle classes, especially the propertied and professionals, of the enormous clout they had over the body politic. Workers and ordinary people's empowerment was sought through revolutionary vehicles like 'people's courts/tribunals' which probed and punished the elite for political and economic offenses.

The Ghanaian public including workers may have also perceived the PNDC as a people and pro-worker government because sections of the instrument establishing its legal legitimacy were explicit about the revolutionary intentions of the government. The first section of this instrument called 'Directive Principles of State Policy' which lays out the framework for government policies include:

- a) a basis of social justice and equality of opportunities is to be established, with particular attention being paid to the deprived sections of the community, and to the reconstruction of society in a revolutionary process directed against the previous structures of injustice and exploitation;
- b) respect for fundamental human rights and for the dignity of the human person are to be cultivated among all sections of the society and established as part of the basis of social justice;
- c) the economy of the nation is to be managed in such a manner as to secure the maximum welfare, freedom and happiness of the people of Ghana, and to provide adequate means of livelihood and suitable employment to the members of the society, and public assistance to the needy;

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9 Several authors have commented on this aspect of PNDC rule. Emmanuel Hansen (a premier PNDC Secretary) described this period as having great revolutionary potential.

- d) educational facilities at all levels are to be provided and made available to the greatest extent possible, the paramount responsibility of the State for the provision of such facilities being acknowledged;
- e) the health, safety and welfare of all persons in employment are to be safeguarded and the basis established for the full deployment of the creative potential of all within the society (Haynes 1991, 412).<sup>10</sup>

The PNDC also gained the additional confidence of workers because radical worker leaders like Ebo Tawiah and Amartey Kwei and other elements with labour sympathies were members of the government or closely connected to Rawlings (Amankwah 1990, 74). As a goodwill gesture towards labour, one of the first acts of the Rawlings' government was the reinstatement of 1,000 dismissed the Ghana Industrial Holding Corporation (GIHOC) workers.<sup>11</sup> Besides, during this era, 'a people/workers' struggle' was waged through which pro-worker actions such as rent/price controls were enforced with revolutionary zeal never seen before in the country. According to the proponents of these measures, they were aimed at bringing down the sky rocketing costs of living within the means of workers (Kwakyi 1988).

The PNDC in turn urged workers to reciprocate its pro-labour posture by cooperating to mobilize the people *en masse* for national economic development and refrain from making excessive wage demands. Kwakyi (1988) captures the essence of the newly-found quid pro quo TUC-PNDC relations, the kind that was last seen in Ghana in 1966:

*... government openly acknowledged the crucial role of workers in the development process and expressed its intention to cooperate with them. It seemed then that the years of neglect of the TUC by various governments in decision making was over and a new era of State-Labour cooperation had set in' (Kwakyi 1988).*

### **The PNDC and Spontaneous Worker Revolutionary Organs**

Workers led by the Associations of Local Unions (ALU), a radical faction within the Labour movement<sup>12</sup> and spurred on by the revolutionary

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10 Provisional National Defence Council (Establishment) Proclamation (Supplementary and Consequential Provisions) Law (PNDC Law 42) (Accra, Republic of Ghana, 1982) p.4.

11 These workers were dismissed by the previous People's National Party (PNP) government for their involvement in worker's protest actions. See Yankah 1986.

12 According to Adu Amankwah, 1990:94-95, ALU comprised local and national, mostly Accra-Tema based, elements who were dissatisfied with the TUCs leaders and 'were ready to arouse mass and violent protest' to oust the leaders. They successfully overthrew the union leaders and replaced them with an Interim Management Committee (IMC) in the early days of the revolution, from 1982-83.

atmosphere engendered by the rise of Rawlings, launched spontaneously their own revolutionary organs. These were the Worker's Defence Committee (WDCs) and Interim Management Committees (IMCs) whose creation and activities constituted 'the boldest challenge to the existing social order' and 'the severest breach in the post-colonial state' (Amankwah 1990, 78). The IMCs were given legal backing via PNDC Law 6 of May 20, 1982 which was gazetted on May 28, 1982 (Amankwah 1990). These two organizations were the primary mechanisms through which workers sought to be involved in the management of the public bureaucracy and State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) while their civilian counterparts, the Peoples' Defence Committees (PDC) assured grass roots participation in community affairs and local government administration. At the apex of these revolutionary bodies was the National Defence Committee (NDC) which was closely linked to the PNDC and was responsible for national political mobilization.

From 1982 to 1984, from military and police right through the TUC, the civil service and parastatal organizations, through NDCs and IMCs workers took over management functions or guaranteed themselves high levels of participation. Therefore as Kwakyi correctly observes, in the first two years of the PNDC an environment that was extremely conducive to workers' mass spontaneous actions was created. Unrestrained by the state, they operate in full freedom to insure a wider national democratic movement (Kwakyi 1988).

### **The WDCs, PDCs and the Challenge to Management Prerogatives and Private Property Rights**

Workers' Defence Committees constituted real threats to labour practice predominantly connected to management prerogatives and the perceived inalienable rights of private property owners. For example, some managers in both the private and public sectors were compelled by workers to abandon their positions (Amankwah 1990). Within SOEs, three workers' representatives (two WDCs and one union representative) and regular management personnel took over the roles of the traditional board of directors in determining policies. In some extreme instances, as in the case of Ghana Textile Printing (GTP), workers actually seized control of entire companies and ran them (Graham 1989).

While the WDCs were eroding management's prerogatives in the work place, their community-based counterparts, the PDCs were seriously contesting the previously viewed sacrosanct private property rights of wealthy transport, land and rental property owners and traders through one of the most vigorously enforced price controls. In retailing, for example, through the 'Peoples' Shop' revolutionary cadres literally broke the backs of private business by taking over the distribution of consumer goods (Amankwah 1990).



Not even the most revered civilian institutions were spared revolutionary measures in the first years of the PNDC. As Ninsin noted, the creation of revolutionary legal organs such as 'Public Tribunals' or 'Peoples' Courts' permitted supporters of the PNDC to dish out what they designated 'revolutionary justice'.<sup>13</sup> They were chaired or staffed by members of the W/PDCs.<sup>14</sup>

In the view of several authors it was not a sheer coincidence that the most radical phrase of worker militancy was immediately followed by the abolition of the W/PDCs and the NDC (Amankwah 1990; Ninsin 1989 and Graham 1989). To these authors clamping down on these revolutionary organizations was a prerequisite for the flow of IMF/World Bank aid or perceived by the PNDC as a necessary condition for reassuring these financial institutions of the prevalence of a peaceful atmosphere — both industrially and politically — to permit 'optimum utilization' of their global financial resources.

Graham (1989) explains how the successful harnessing of workers' revolutionary zeal through W/PDC and NDC joint efforts first led to workers' takeover of some State Owned Enterprises (SOE), resist layoffs and then snowballed when the PNDC was made to disband them when they proved too capable of overturning the country's economic and social order (Graham 1989). He, for example, succinctly notes that for the first time in the post independence era, the highly intense level of worker solidarity went beyond specific enterprises. Especially in the Accra-Tema industrial areas, their claims and activities went beyond traditionally narrow collective bargaining demands. As a result of their initial success in taking over some enterprises, the workers began to incorporate in their actions broader socio-political goals. Ninsin (1989) notes specifically instances in which workers sought to enforce their own versions of the nationalization of enterprises previously unknown in Ghana.

Thus as Graham points out, in both rhetoric and in deed, through the W/PDCs a broad based alliance of workers, progressive elements and activists sought to reject the socio-economic and legal context in which capitalist property and management prerogatives were treated as untouchable.<sup>15</sup> To, especially the radical elements in ALU, existing labour and wider social relations were the hallmarks of unadulterated exploitation

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13 Ninsin 'Introduction: Thirty-seven Years of Development Experience' in Hansen and Ninsin (eds), 1989:1-42.

14 These instruments of 'revolutionary justice' have remained one of the sorest points of contention between the PNDC and the legal profession. The Ghana Bar Association (GBA) has sought to disbar attorneys who appear before them.

15 These attempts and demands are remarkably similar to workers' self-management efforts initiated in Algeria at the end of the war of independence with France.

of defenseless workers and poor segments of the Ghanaian society. In addition, spurred on by these new social organizations, the workers demonstrated that capitalism was highly offensive to the dignity of labour and explicitly demonstrated that they were willing to step beyond traditional collective bargaining to back their demands for a radical overhaul of the society.

Based on the developments described above which followed the Second Coming of Rawlings, one may be correct to assert that by the early 1980s, Ghana had a radicalized labour movement that although closely allied with some members of the PNDC, was outside the direct control of the state and the bureaucratic norms of collective bargaining conducted through the TUC. On top of that, emerging trends in the labour area posed real threats to economic and political interests embedded in the social order. For the first time since independence, nationally a new movement capable of ending existing social relations seemed to prevail. Thus the Ghanaian body politic had by 1984 been converted into a terrain over which status quo forces clashed repeatedly with worker-led forces of radical change which received the tacit and at times overt blessings of sections of the PNDC.

#### **The IMF/World Bank and the Abortion of the Peoples' Revolution: From ERP to SAP (1983-1986)**

Several man-made and natural catastrophes coupled with the PNDC's own regime security<sup>16</sup> characterize the circumstances under which it established one of the longest working relationships with the IMF and World Bank.<sup>17</sup> Some of the major problems the PNDC had to grapple with between 1982-1984 included critical food shortages caused by a combination of one of the severest droughts, bush fires and the forced repatriation of more than one million Ghanaians from Nigeria. In addition, the government faced stiff opposition from the professional and business classes and their allies and debilitating and frequent attempted military coups and incursions from Togo-based dissidents.<sup>18</sup>

Confronted with dire economic and political problems in which the regime's own survival was at stake, the Rawlings-led PNDC sought IMF

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16 Regime security refers to the concerns of the PNDC to retain its hegemony over the Ghana body politic.

17 Prior to the PNDC's ERP of April 1983, Ghana had dealt briefly with the two institutions in the latter part of Nkrumah's rule (1965-1966), under the NLC, from 1966-1969 and from 1969-1971 under the Busia-led Progress Party Government. For a history of these relations see Hutchful 1987.

18 For a description of these catastrophes see Donald Rothchild 1991; Ray 1986.

and Bank assistance and began creating a new political atmosphere in which it could pursue 'its rightist economic solutions' to the country's problems.<sup>19</sup> As a condition for meeting the PNDCs perceived desperate need for foreign financial support, these international institutions 'pressed the PNDC to create a political atmosphere conducive to the proper utilization of their resources (Graham 1989, 60-61). As noted earlier, the government's response to these demands in turn set the stage for curbing the militant and mass democratic movement it had unleashed in 1982.

Hutchful (1989) effectively analyses how the PNDC underwent a conversion from revolutionary to propagating mainstream IMF/World Bank policies. He powerfully demonstrates their role in getting the PNDC to slow and then stifle all the revolutionary forces: 'the concentrated fire of the World Bank was reserved for the Workers' Defence Committees' and their alleged 'propensity to engage in disruptive tactics'. Examples of alleged disruptive actions cited by the Bank were the P/WDCs 'harassment of private enterprises'. Furthermore, they demanded the clarification of their roles vis-à-vis private property rights.

Hutchful also adds correctly that the government's announced ERP barely two years after launching the December 31 Revolution, made the Bank and its ally, the IMF gain critical access to the PNDC which was then used to press it to rid itself of the various revolutionary organs. In the view of the Fund and the Bank, these organs were the very antithesis of what they stood for — protecting private property, and the enhancement of private profit through uninhibited market efficiency and free enterprise. As Graham perceptively observed, these in reality meant the PNDC putting an end to 'workers and peoples' power'. Hence the previous concerns of the PNDC became a liability in its new-found relations with the IMF and World Bank. The government through the ERP rejected protecting workers' interests and began to focus intensely on 'Labour discipline and productivity' (Graham 1989, 61).

The PNDCs methodological dissolution of the P/WDC's plus the launching of the ERP in 1984 coincided with three crucial developments in the country. Naturally, because of the programme's anti-worker components — over 100% devaluation,<sup>20</sup> plus the attendant price increases and

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19 Adu Amankwah 1990. This 360 degree turn in policy was marked by one of the most intensive internal conflicts between the 'leftists' and 'rightists' in the regime. See Graham (1989) and Hutchful (1989) for the struggles over the PNDCs policy directions.

20 A prominent PNDC political strategist and advisor revealed in an interview with this writer in Accra, September 1991, that the country's financial problems converted Rawlings, a non-believer in the logic of devaluation to a protagonist. This source also related that prior to 1983 Rawlings had threatened to arrest economic advisors who favored devaluation.

announced labour retrenchment led to organized labour's opposition to the government. Thus for the first time, through policy prerequisites imposed by the IMF and the World Bank, a wedge was driven between workers and the PNDC. Also significantly, the character of the PNDC itself and the new 'revolutionary organs' changed dramatically.

The CDRs that replaced the W/PDCs were not only government controlled through a PNDC appointed Political Counsellor<sup>21</sup> but also open to membership by all Ghanaians — chiefs, propertied classes and professionals included. That diluted their revolutionary fervor and thus were no match to the revolutionary zeal expressed by the P/WDCs. The PNDC also appeased previously discredited old guard/rightist politicians and military officers by appointing them to membership of the PNDC itself and toning down substantially its anti-imperialist, anti-IMF/World Bank and nationalist pronouncements.<sup>22</sup>

The tenuous dominance of the state by the left was formally curtailed in December 1984 when the NDC was put out of commission by the PNDC. That single action ended the three year ascendancy of the left in the Ghanaian political arena — the first time in the country's history. With fundamental personnel and organizational changes in place exactly three years after the launching of the December 31 Revolution, the Rawlings-led PNDC was ready to implement full speed IMF/World Bank funded economic packages which hurt workers severely.

One of the profoundly ironical outcomes of the internationally famous 'liberalization' of the Ghanaian economy first under ERP in 1983 and then in 1986 as full-blown SAP, is that workers have had to endure painful measures under IMF/Bank and government imposed wage restraint through restrictions on collective bargaining and other trade union activities, especially strikes.

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21 The first was Lt. Col. Asase of National Liberation Council (NLC) fame, who announced in 1967 the failure of a military attempt to topple the politically conservative NLC which in 1966 overthrew Nkrumah.

22 The appointment of Justice Annan as PNDC member is an example. Several African academics in personal discussions have pointed out that the changes made by the PNDC were to gain legitimacy domestically and to persuade the West to loosen its stranglehold on the national economy. The consensus was that Western nations, especially the US, UK, Germany and France refused to extend to the PNDC financial assistance because it was perceived as too revolutionary, that is anti-capitalist.

### **Living Conditions Under Economic Recovery**

An issue that often emerges in connection with Ghana's ERP and SAP is their social impact.<sup>23</sup> These consequences may be assessed in terms of their effects on most Ghanaians or specific groups, for example, children, women or low-income workers and peasants (Cornia *et al* 1987, 69). Here, the areas selected are the health, educational and others needs of workers and their dependents.

Jon Kraus (1991) and Ninsin (Hansen and Ninsin 1989, 254) have concluded that the health needs of most Ghanaians, especially low income workers and their families are not being met.<sup>24</sup> The available evidence strongly supports these authors' views. In fulfillment of IMF conditionalities including drastic reductions in state expenditure, the PNDC, under a programme of charging economic rates for social services, has increased fees for medical and other services. The goal of this policy is to reduce the percentage of the national budget allocated to social services which are perceived to be a drain on the country's budget. Within the framework of adjustment, implemented since April 1983, outpatient fees were increased from five to 75 cedis per visit in urban areas while the daily minimum wage was merely increased from 12 to 21.19 cedis. This led to workers and the general public being made to bear large health care costs for the first time in post-independence Ghana.

The effect of new health policies were glaring: 'Some patients .... absconded to avoid payments' (Kraus 1987, 142) after hospitalization, others stayed home ill. The disastrous effects of the new user charges were revealed in the personal correspondence I received from 1983 to 1985. Several ill individuals had died because they could not pay the new fees and thus stayed home. This was especially so in the case of low income earners like labourers, drivers and informal sector employees.

Both Kraus (1991) and the Congressional Mission to Ghana document the poor state of Ghanaians' health resulting from the new fees acting as deterrent to the use of medical services. The former points out that immediately following the new fees, there was as much as a 50% drop in patient visits to some Accra area medical facilities. The latter notes that Ghana Living Standards Survey reported 35% of the population injured or ill resulting in 4.5 days of work lost on the average (Kraus 1987).

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23 The Congressional Staff Mission to Ghana observed that the several officials voiced concerns about these programme's long-term social consequences. See U.S. House of Representatives' Report.

24 Jon Kraus, 1991, Summary of PNDC's Budget Statement and Economic Policy for 1983, April 21, 1983:6 and Hansen and Ninsin eds. 1989:254.

Another adverse health by product-of policies inspired by the IMF and World Bank is the high incidence of diseases like malaria which due to past preventive measures had decreased at least in most urban centers. Under its version of SAP, the PNDC has cut the subvention made to local governments by 50%. This loss in revenue has forced local governments to lay off personnel including sanitation inspectors. The absence of these inspectors has contributed to unsanitary conditions like stagnant water, clogged public private water drains (called 'gutters') and uncut grass which provide breeding places for mosquitos. Instead of preventing malaria, there is now growing dependence on expensive imported anti-malaria drugs.

One area that attracted a lot of controversy under the ERP is education. Policies engendered under the economic recovery contributed to both the quantity and quality of public education deteriorating quickly. As a result, most public schools are attended by children of the poor and working classes. The middle classes and others who can pay higher fees send their children to expensive private, 'special' or international schools. Some charge as much as 3 to 5000 cedis for day students and more for boarders. In Koforidua (an urban center 54 miles from Accra) Madona International, a Catholic elementary school which used to educate low to middle class Catholics now has mostly children of wealthy private contractors, business classes, bank managers and professionals.<sup>25</sup> To remedy the poor quality of the public school system, some working class/poor parents pay relatively high fees ranging from a few hundred to a thousand cedis a month for the services of private tutors who conduct after school tutorials and remedial classes.<sup>26</sup>

The socio-economic implications of high educational fees coupled with declining quality are several and far-reaching. Kojo Vieta (1990) sums up appropriately the dire social consequences: 'In a society where education continues to be the major factor in social mobility, children are condemned to a life of deprivation and underdevelopment'. The new policies are rapidly eroding the gains made under the Nkrumah Government (1957-1966) which resulted in almost equal access for all Ghanaians to good quality education. There is also growing evidence that increasingly only the elite and the wealthy can afford good quality education because it is being priced out of the reach of the poor. Poor parents do not only have to grapple with steeply rising tuition fees, but also the skyrocketing costs of imported school materials. A case in point is the 2 to 6,000 cedis they have to pay for a

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25 Observation during a school activity attended by this writer in August 1991 at Koforidua.

26 These fees supplement the low incomes of teachers from their regular jobs.

single physical science textbook.<sup>27</sup> The net effect is that the current generation of Ghanaians especially ages 9-14 show strong signs of illiteracy (Vieta 1990).

Under one of the most vigorously implemented IMF/World Bank sanctioned cost recovery proposals, Ghanaians have had to contend with high transportation, housing, water and sewage, and electricity costs. By the summer of 1991, on the average the electric and water bills per unit of housing was a thousand to three thousand cedis. Prior to April 1983 when the ERP was inaugurated, the typical bill was at most a few hundred cedis. For the first time since independence, the public was made to bear the full economic cost of basic amenities.

Cost recovery has been pushed to the extent that most public standpipes in urban areas have been shut down. This has resulted in easy access to water being limited to 'high class residential areas and the upper income group (Vieta 1990, 170). The new user fees plus the abolition of rent control have fueled increased tenant-(mostly poor/low income workers) landlord conflict. High water, electric and sewage bills are often the subject of dispute in terms of how much of these bills tenants have to pay.

High fuel prices have also contributed to eroding the material conditions of the working poor. Beginning with the April 1983 budget, petrol prices were repeatedly increased. For example, the 1988 price of 235 was hiked to 275 in 1989, 360 in 1990 and early 1991 to 1.000 and then 900 cedis per gallon. That added substantially to the high rate of inflation partially induced by the exorbitant cost of transportation. Kerosene, the poor's most dependable energy source, was also subject to massive price mark ups. In 1988, it sold for 170 a gallon, then shot to 190 and 270 cedis in 1989 and 1990 (*West Africa* 1989).

The 'hard conditions' of life in Ghana under the PNDCs austerity budgets have hurt mostly the rural poor, urban unemployed and low income. This has resulted from the combination of cost-cutting measures and steeply devaluing the cedi from 2.75 to one U.S. dollar to 30 cedis to the dollar (in 1983) for example, plus the sudden withdrawal of fuel subsidies culminating in over 100% price increases and up to 1.500% and 400% in medical fees and other essential items like meat and other commodities respectively. Wage increases meanwhile lagged far behind these price increases.<sup>28</sup>

The deterioration in the quality of life confirms the Congressional Mission's observation that 'in Ghana, structural adjustment has produced

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27 During the summer of 1991, this author paid between 2 to 6,000 cedis for each textbook purchased from the University of Ghana and Presbyterian Bookstores in Accra.

28 As demonstrated below the failure of wages to catch up with the high cost of living has contributed to tensions between organized labour and the PNDC.

little enduring poverty-alleviation, and in certain policies have worked against the poor'.<sup>29</sup> The PNDC and other international agencies' awareness of the adverse social effects of SAP plus social protests it engendered led to the application of the concept of 'adjustment with a human face' in the form of Programme to Mitigate the Social Cost of Adjustment (PAMSCAD).<sup>30</sup>

### **Labour Burdens Under Adjustment: Retrenchment and Redeployment Equals Unemployment**

A substantial labour burden emanating directly from the ERP and SAP is massive unemployment. For the first time in Ghana, large numbers of both private and public sector employees have been laid off and are without jobs. This pool of unemployed includes several university and secondary school graduates (*West Africa*, 1990). The Congressional Mission to Ghana offers one of the most damaging indictments of the consequences of unemployment due to the policies advocated by the IMF, World Bank and other western donors:

*A significant visible group of largely urban Ghanaians was clearly and dramatically disadvantaged by structural adjustment policies. These included approximately 41,000 to 45,000 'redeployed', that is, fired civil servants (29,000 were dismissed in 1987-88 and the remainder were slated to go in 1989), 20,000 redeployed Cocoa Board employees, 20,000 state enterprise employees threatened with retrenchment over the next two years and at least hundreds of private sector employees who lost textile and other jobs as a result of import liberalization.. It is worth noting that the World Bank (1984) indicated that Ghana has competitive advantage in textile production. A total of approximately 100,000 jobs have been lost.*

The U.S. Mission attributed the worsening job situation to policies that trim public sector employment, suddenly liberalize imports, and devalue local currencies which are 'harsh and ill planned'.<sup>31</sup> Jeggan Senghor (1991) identifies the critical link between Ghana's SAP and the large-scale job losses:

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29 US Representatives' Report 1989:2. Similar comments have been made about Zambia, Nigeria, and Côte d'Ivoire. See White (1990) and Sawyerr (1990).

30 Advocates of Humanizing Development including the ILO, UNICEF, The Organization of African Trade, Union Unity (OATUU) and the Adedeji-led Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) severely criticized the original versions of ERP/SAP.

31 US House of Representatives' Report:2, 1989.



*.... an adjunct to the basic tenet of SAPs is that the size of the overall public sector should be reduced. Here, it should be noted that the fundamental goal is to cut down on budget deficits and redress financial imbalances, which — in the eyes of SAP reformers — are the primary causes of the African crisis.*

### **Divestment from State Owned Enterprises and Economic Liberalization**

With the encouragement of the IMF and the World Bank, the PNDC has sought to liquidate or privatize several publicly owned companies. In addition, under liberalization Ghana has been subjected to a massive wave of imports, mostly consumer goods ranging from milk, sugar, textiles, automobile tires to beverages. Both policy initiatives have culminated in what some authors designate as 'deindustrialization' (Lancaster 1989). Participants in a recent African seminar acknowledged the ill-effects of uninhibited imports: 'The policy of trade liberalization has negative and serious implications for survival and growth of ... indigenous enterprises.'<sup>32</sup>

The devaluation of the cedi and the deflationary policies pursued by the PNDC have also contributed to local industries not being competitive and are collapsing under the crushing weight of imports. Ironically although privatization is a basic requirement under SAP, in Ghana because of the simultaneous devaluation and the restricted supply of money: 'A cost explosion and tight liquidity reduce' (Jonah 1989, 149) the ability of business to contribute to the recovery through job creation.

One of several cases illustrating the demise of Ghanaian industries, especially manufacturing is that Bonsa Tyre Factory (previously Firestone Tyre Co., in the western region). During the 1970s and early 1980s it was the single most efficient enterprise in Ghana after VALCO. However, in recent years, it is no longer viable because it cannot compete with imported tires (*West Africa* 1991a). One glaring outcome is the sacking of workers to cut back its losses. The laid off workers now constitute the youth and middle-aged groups that currently in most urban areas play 'dame' (Ghanaian draft) from morning until evening either waiting to travel overseas in search of 'greener pastures' or for better domestic economic times. This aspect of SAP constitutes a tremendous waste of the country's human resources.

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32 Entrepreneurship Seminar, Cairo, October 1990, African Association of Public Administration and Management (AAPAM) Ethiopia, Newsletter No. 35, January-April 1991:11.

### **PAMSCAD and the Unemployed**

The unprecedented high unemployment in Ghana has had more than anticipated devastation largely due to two inextricably linked factors. First is the limited impact of PAMSCAD as a safety net for laid off workers and the failure of the informal sector to act as a quick absorbing sponge for the unemployed. PAMSCAD has not worked largely due to its being a reactive measure and second is the fact that by 1989 only 40,000 workers had been assisted. It has also been plagued by serious financial and other technical/logistical problems related to job retraining.<sup>33</sup>

### **Redeployment and the Informal Sector**

An economic deficiency that has blunted the effects of the government's redeployment scheme is the mostly lip service paid to the informal sector and its overestimated capacity to generate employment. As some ILO seminar participants noted not only is the job creating capacity of this sector exaggerated but it is typically marked by underemployment and low productivity.<sup>34</sup> Not lacking necessary entrepreneurial motivation but inadequate capital and business opportunities, most laid off workers end up in petty trading ('buying and selling') of small batches of items. The streets of Accra are now literally filled with 'hawkers — a sign of lack of employment opportunities elsewhere — of everything from dog-collars ... apples to sunglasses...' (Haynes 1991, 423). Similarly, in the Jackson Park area of Koforidua in the Eastern Region, a small area less than one square mile, I counted over 10 kiosks (small retail shops) and bars competing excessively in beer retailing.<sup>35</sup> The owners make low profits which cannot replace the relatively high incomes they received from employment in the formal sector prior to SAP. With such low incomes they experience declining material living conditions.

### **The ERP/SAPs Union Strength**

Another devastating effect of the ERP/SAP is the erosion of union strongholds in the economy. Some of the hardest hit unions are those that derive membership from the civil service, state-owned agricultural enterprises and public health. These are the sectors that have undergone the severest job losses. Labour organizations such as the Civil Servants

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33 According to Ghana Labour Department officials calculating the cost and number of employees plus securing funds to support layoffs have enormously strained the government's financial and administrative resources. Information from interviews in Geneva, Switzerland 1985-86 and in Accra, Summer 1991.

34 ILO Symposium, Nairobi, 1989:18.

35 Observation on a field trip in Sept. 1991.

Association, General Agricultural Workers, Local Government Workers and Public Service Workers which have large numbers of public employees face substantial losses in membership and revenue from union dues. In Ghana like in the rest of Africa, these public sector labour organizations constitute the traditional sources of union strength. The affected unions, for example, constitute close to 10% of organized labour in the country.<sup>36</sup> Thus from the standpoint of the entire labour movement, SAP is weakening the core of its membership — the section of the work force that is effectively organized and the most virile in the unions.

For the first time Ghanaian unions have to bargain with employers from a weak position. A paradox that has evolved is that in light of accelerated cost of living, from their weakened positions the unions still need to press the PNDC 'to adopt policies which would improve the scope for employers to offer wage increases'. This has led to the TUC-led unions' unenviable situation of having to focus on direct collective bargaining with private employers simultaneously exerting political pressure to make the government create an atmosphere in which wages can grow to match the spiralling cost of living. That is one of the biggest challenges confronting the TUC under the current SAP.<sup>37</sup>

#### **The Minimum Wages of Rationalization, Consolidation, Productivity and the Ability to Pay**

In less than a decade of adjustment, new conceptions of the legal minimum wage have evolved to depict how contentious the issue of fair wages has become. Recent government pronouncements are replete with varying versions of wage rationalization, consolidation and relation to employers' ability to pay and employee productivity. There is also the concern about restraining wages in an austere economic environment. But in reality from workers' standpoint all this means falling wages which lead to harsh living conditions.

Combined with the normal economic pressures that motivate governments against expanding the minimum wage, the basic thrust of adjustment policies towards compressing public expenditure has contributed immensely to the evolution in Ghana since April 1983 of a vicious cycle of wages lagging behind the cost of living with workers demanding more wages and the government resisting to avoid undercutting SAP with inflated labour budgets. In the case of Ghana, these pressures are more intense

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36 Data from the Ghana TUCs Economic and Research Department, Accra, 1987.

37 The TUCs dilemma is compounded by the fact that if it is not aggressive, some members might accuse the leaders of being soft on the PNDC. On the other hand, if it acts 'too aggressively' in the eyes of the government, it could be accused of constituting the 'Political Opposition' as in the case of the NLC in Nigeria.

because not only is the state the single largest employer but also labour constitutes substantial portions of the national recurrent expenditure.<sup>38</sup> Hutchful (1989) also notes the additional financial constraints the PNDC faces because of the tight money supply resulting from its strict adherence to policy advice from the Fund and the World Bank (Hutchful 1989). With the treatment of labour as an adjustable variable, a situation emerged in which for 1991 the TUC proposed over 1,000 and the PNDC responded with only 460 cedis as the new consolidated national daily wage (*People's Daily Graphic* 1991; US Department of Labour 1991) because it is overtly too sensitive to the inflationary pressures caused by wage increases.

The hardest hit workers are those on the low end of the income scale. Their suffering has recently been aggravated by the introduction of an income policy that deliberately skews income distribution in favour of professional, and management personnel. Because of this policy encouraged by the World Bank and the IMF the difference between low and high income has ballooned substantially (Sawyer 1990, 35-35).

A final note about the wage situation in Ghana. Ironically under a policy hailed as one of the most successful economic liberalization, workers are not permitted to use market forces via collective bargaining to fix wages with employers. Instead state apparatus is increasingly used to fix wages to suit the government's fiscal objectives. This has resulted in the TUC treating the new methods of wage determination, such as pegging wages on productivity as means to bust voluntary collective bargaining and to shift steadily onto the shoulders of workers the burdens of adjustment (Kwakyi 1988).

The issue of productivity if unresolved could pose serious obstacles to Ghana's labour administration. Certain crucial and unresolved aspects of this concept are: Should wages be tied solely to labour or entire enterprise productivity? Looking at a broader concept of productivity, to what extent can workers be liable for management inefficiency, obsolete equipment, insufficient finances and in the era of trade liberalization, the collapse of industries because of imports? Also importantly, in using productivity in wage negotiations that may imply management granting unions access to company accounts to determine the level of productivity. The last issue is applicable especially to the concept of 'ability to pay'. Through the injection of these controversial forms of wage determination, the PNDC may be creating new and difficult to resolve avenues of employer-union friction.

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38 According to Hutchful (1989:113) from 1984-1986 Labour took between 18-36% of the budget.

### **The End of Government-Labour Consultations and Tripartism**

Available evidence supports the contentions of organized labour and its supporters that in order to fully implement ERP/SAP, the PNDC has not adhered to customary labour practices such as consultations with labour in determining economic policies. Additionally, certain measures of the government have violated tripartism directly or undermined its spirit. These trends are counter to previously established labour relations patterns in which through tripartism and consultations workers' interests were integrated into national policies. This was especially the case from 1957-1966 when the Nkrumah government set the precedent of making the welfare of workers the centerpiece of national development.<sup>39</sup>

One of the most recent policy initiatives of the PNDC which the unions rightly perceive as undermining tripartism and also a blatantly a union animus act of state is the creation of 'Private Sector Advisory Group' whose leadership and membership is from the private sector with virtually little or no union involvement. Its functions according to the PNDC Secretary (Minister) for Finance include advising the government on labour policies and laws (*West Africa* 1991b). The reaction of the TUC was expressed by the General Secretary of the Public Services Union:

*.... we wish to remind the Government ... that our national labour laws have been constructively shaped to have their grounding from ILO Conventions ... In attempts to weaken the labour laws and trade unions, the PNDC ... has sought through diverse ways to deregulate the basic fundamentals of such labour laws ...*

He then laid out the labour relations implications of the PNDCs labour posture in the ERP/SAP era:

*.... the Government has granted itself absolute power and this has corrupted them from not taking into account that industrial relations which are not managed through dialogue under the ambit of National Labour Laws... leads to chaos in the workplace and deny workers fairness and justice as well as effective participation in decision making.<sup>40</sup>*

One might add to the General Secretary's comments that the exclusion of workers from such important labour advisory groups is not only a serious

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39 In 1965, for example, The National Labour Advisory Committee was created to institutionalize both tripartism and consultations with labour.

40 K, Opare -Ababio, Address to Third PSWU Quadrennial Conference, Winneba, Sept. 3, 1991:5.

omission on the part of the PNDC but is also an inappropriate precedent which if left uncorrected could contribute to exacerbating the tense relations between the TUC and the Rawlings' regime. This is because such acts of the state may be construed (with much justification) by workers that the PNDC protects only the interests of capital and management. Here too some authors discern the influence of the IMF/World Bank and other donors in shaping the PNDCs labour practices. According to Jonah (1989, 146): 'in 1984, before a Consultative Group Meeting between Ghana and the creditors in Paris, donors stressed the need to enhance management prerogatives'. It may be noted correctly that some of the regime's anti-labour decisions may be partly attributed to attempts to accommodate the conditions of these creditors which require creating atmospheres in which both domestic and foreign capital operate unimpeded by the needs of labour.

On the part of the PNDC, since April 1983 when the ERP was launched, there has been the tendency to interpret labour's opposition to its policies as attempts by the regime's political opponents to capitalize on labour's dissatisfaction. Thus one result of the PNDCs austerity measures has been like in Nigeria where workers' protests are having highly politically sensitive connotations. This in turn has placed the leaders of the Ghana TUC in the uncomfortable situation of adopting hard-line positions on anti-worker public policies or moderate approaches which hinge on dialogue as the means to protect workers. Their dilemma is compounded by the fact that radical labour elements will perceive moderation as a sign of weakness or the leaders being soft with the government. On the other hand, an aggressive stance would be perceived by the PNDC as an attempt to end its reign and therefore labour may deserve the wrath of this regime.<sup>41</sup>

Bearing in mind its delicate situation, the TUC has since 1983, used non-confrontational fora to voice its disagreement over the PNDCs policies. It has repeatedly reminded the government of the promises made in the 'revolutionary days' to protect workers as the true producers of wealth in Ghana. With ongoing efforts at a return to civilian/constitutional rule, the TUC anxiously anticipates a revival of tripartism and consultations.<sup>42</sup>

### **Concluding Observations**

Several conclusions can be drawn from the issues addressed in this paper, however, because of spatial limitations, the key issues are summarized. A point worth emphasizing is that the PNDCs adoption of the ERP/SAP under

41 Similar situations emerged in 1975-1978 when some worker's leaders accused the TUC of abandoning workers. See for example, J. K. Baiden 'Press Conference', GNA, Accra, Sept.6, 1978.

42 TUC 'Paper to the National Commission for Democracy', Accra, 1986 and 'Views on Constitution and Democratic Government of Ghana', Accra, June 20, 1991.

IMF/World Bank auspices has contributed substantially to a deterioration in the country's labour relations, especially in the areas of tripartism and union-state consultations. In addition to the polluted labour climate, largely due to the diversion of national resources and attention into donor relations, labour-relations and human resources development have been neglected. They have been relegated to the back burners of national priorities of massive retrenchment and adjusting to IMF and World Bank conditionalities.

One critical aspect of the preparations towards a return to civilian rule with repercussions for labour-government relations is the incorporation of aspects of the PNDC's economic policies into the new constitution.<sup>43</sup> The TUC contributed to the controversy over this aspect of the proposed constitution by objecting to its adoption when the chair of its Executive Board said political parties should be free to launch their own economic programmes' (*West Africa* 1991c). Such union reactions could fan the flames of acrimony between the PNDC and the TUC. They also imply that if the ERP/SAP are continued under a new administration, they would constitute the basis of continued state-labour conflict which might dim all prospects for improving not only the labour climate but also national human resources and labour management.

In relation to the debates about the appropriateness of ERPs/SAPs in African development, the issues in this paper, especially those dealing with labour's opposition, bring to the forefront the critical need to evaluate alternatives to ERPs/SAPs in terms of their economic and political feasibility. This is because an argument or implicit assumption in the literature is that the PNDC's adoption of SAP is inevitable, and therefore as it were, workers have to bear its painful pangs (Rothchild 1991). The view that IMF/World Bank inspired types of austerity and privatization packages are the only realistic means to building African economies take us exactly where we started with the development debates in the 1950s and 1960s when Africans gained political independence. Importantly, we are back to examining again the roles of the state, labour and external agencies like the IMF and World Bank. A missing ingredient in the current debates, however, is the failure to seriously evaluate the roles of intra-African agencies.

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43 Report of the Committee of Experts on Proposals for a Draft Constitution of Ghana, Presented to the PNDC, July 31, 1991, Chapt. 14, 'Economic and Financial Order' and 'Appendix M'.

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