SECOND CARNEGIE INQUIRY INTO POVERTY AND DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Do workers' co-operatives work?

by

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SYNOPSIS

DO WORKERS' CO-OPERATIVES WORK?

Possibilities and constraints for individual, organisational and community development.

Robert Collins and Anne Collins.

In considering whether workers' co-ops work, we begin by framing two questions:

Firstly, do workers co-ops work as a strategy for workers to control their own production?

Secondly, do workers' co-ops work as agents for social change in their community?

We will attempt to answer both questions in terms of the experience of Tiakeni Textiles co-operative in the Northern Transvaal during the first five years of its existence from 1979 - 1983.

In answer to the first question we will show how the Tiakeni Textiles co-operative has succeeded as a strategy for workers to take control of their working lives. In addition, we will contend that this control has not been obtained at the expense of efficiency - on the contrary, it has enhanced productivity. In answer to the second question we will show how Tiakeni has brought about limited technical changes but no significant structural changes in its community.
We came to work at Tiakeni Textiles Co-operative as people interested in rural under-development. Our involvement at Tiakeni started with a request that we received from its steering committee. We were asked to assist in the formation of a self-help group which would provide an income for its workers. When we began work with Tiakeni we identified a workers' co-operative as a possible form of organisation which might give expression to the ideals of participatory democracy in a real-life work situation.

In this paper we would like to share our perceptions about the potentials and constraints of workers co-ops by answering the following major questions:

(1) What are workers co-operatives and how can they be started?

(2) What criteria should we use to evaluate the success of co-operatives?

(3) Does the co-operative working approach bring about changes in individual development, then in organisational development and finally in community development?

At this time we knew little about the theory and practice of workers' co-operatives or of the processes of consciousness-raising that enable people to become aware of the causes of their oppression. The day to day problems of economic survival enveloped us in the inexorable process of getting the cabbages to the market by Friday so that we would eat on Monday. Under these circumstances we allowed our energy to be consumed in solving the immediate problems of developing and maintaining the co-operative in mainly economic terms, even as we sought to preserve its democratic functioning.
The pressure for Tiakeni to succeed firstly as a business venture came from many quarters. Sceptics tended to dismiss the high ideals of industrial democracy as mere dreams that would not result in jobs, while others more hostile were waiting to see what was behind the facade of buildings and technical activities. Most important of all, the workers had no concrete experience of the feasibility of this far-out notion. Nor did we!

Another consideration influenced our decision concerning the area in which we chose to work. Our skills at the time were technically adequate but we knew that our understanding of community organisation and our level of critical awareness was not yet adequate for working in a wider community context. By limiting our involvement to a specific activity, namely the co-operative, we would also limit the extent to which new problems would emerge as an unforeseeable consequence of our involvement. We saw those as problems which could affect our ability to continue to work in other fields in the region. We were aware that too often interventions in the life of a community merely succeeded in raising expectations rather than consciousness, and that the failure to raise consciousness could simply leave people with feelings of not being able to take some measure of control over their lives, and also of suspicion towards each other and others who would want to help them do so.

What we have learnt from our experience so far is that the constraints of our own consciousness and of the structural conditions under which we work are fundamentally limiting factors. Hard work alone cannot redress these factors. We hope that in sharing our experiences and observations others may learn something about the constraints and the potential of workers' co-operatives.

We will begin this paper by giving a brief background about the Tiakeni Textiles Co-op, then by defining a workers' co-op in simple terms. From this definition we illustrate three approaches
to starting work with co-operatives in order to help us develop perspective in this field. We then set out several criteria to judge the effectiveness of Tiakeni Textiles Co-operative. We pose these criteria as questions which provide us with a framework for assessing the internal workings of Tiakeni on the one hand, and the relationship between it and its environment on the other.

The Tiakeni Textiles Co-operative

Tiakeni Textiles Co-operative became the first industrial co-operative in South Africa in July 1980. It traces its roots back to a "self-help group" in the community which was disbanded when the organiser returned overseas. Church workers in the area began the first steps for a new project when they raised R23 000 from a jumble-sale campaign. Development capital for buildings, facilities and salaries amounting to R74 000 was raised from grants during the next three years by a Trust established for the purpose. The co-op rents its premises from the Trust.

Working capital needed for running the co-operative on a day to day basis was raised from share subscriptions by the members and from long-term and short-term loans.

The workers in the co-op who came from the surrounding community all received their training at the co-op. There are now 23 worker-members who produce an annual turnover of approximately R76 000 from printing textiles. The workers control the affairs of the co-operative democratically in the areas of production, personnel, finance and marketing. Printed fabric from Tiakeni which is sold through outlets in South Africa is well known for its quality and original design. The co-op has been financially self-sufficient for the past 4 years.
We will start by asking two initial questions in section A:

WHAT IS A WORKERS' CO-OPERATIVE?

HOW DO WORKERS' CO-OPS START?

Having defined our approach, we then set up our criteria for the working of the co-operative itself in section B:

1. DO THE WORKERS CONTROL THEIR CO-OPERATIVE?
2. DO WORKERS PARTICIPATE IN RUNNING THE CO-OP?
3. DO WORKERS HELP EACH OTHER LEARN?
4. DO WORKERS SELF-CONSCIOUSLY DESIGN THEIR OWN ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE?
5. DO WORKERS CO-OPERATE FOR EFFICIENCY IN PRODUCTION?
6. DO WORKERS CO-OPERATE WITH OTHERS OUTSIDE THEIR CO-OPERATIVE?
7. CAN WORKERS' CO-OPS SURVIVE IN THE MAINSTREAM ECONOMY?

Finally in section C we discuss the relationship of the co-op to its community by asking:

HAS THE CO-OP SUCCEEDED IN BRINGING CHANGES TO ITS COMMUNITY?
A. INITIAL QUESTIONS

WHAT IS A WORKERS' CO-OPERATIVE?

Simply stated, a workers' co-operative is a production or business undertaking which is democratically owned and controlled by those who work in it. It is also participatory in practice which means that the workers take full responsibility for the co-operative, they don't just work there.

HOW DO WORKERS' CO-OPS START?

We can identify three ways in which workers' co-ops are started:

(1) Conversion Approach

A workers' co-op can be started when an existing business is taken over by the workers. Often the business has failed or is not sufficiently profitable for its owners.

(2) Bottom-up Approach

A workers' co-op can be started by people who have already formed their political beliefs and who have come together to live and work by them. This form is characterised by a small cohesive group who follow a "bottom-up" process of development.
(3) Top-down Approach

Workers' co-ops can be started when some people take it upon themselves as "agents of change" to promote and develop a co-operative organisational form not only with, but also for, others. These agents are usually motivated by their social concern, and the people they work with are motivated by the prospects of a job.

Our work clearly fits into the top-down approach. The reason for this is that when we started at Tiakeni Textiles co-op we had a different political perspective from those who would work in and control the co-operative. It was the only option under the circumstances. It began with people who were left without work when their self-help project collapsed because the organiser left to return overseas. Typically, the people who joined the co-op just wanted work and we the outsiders, wanted immediate social change, and all of this at once.

B. CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING CO-OPERATIVES

1. DO THE WORKERS CONTROL THEIR CO-OPERATIVE?

Rights of control are vested in workers as members, not as shareholders.

Each worker at Tiakeni has one vote and there are no non-member workers (employees). They decide their own salaries, conditions of work and work organisation.
The nature of democratic control at Tiakeni finds expression in the fact that membership rights are personal rights and not property rights. In a capitalist undertaking rights are restricted to the owners of property and workers have few rights other than those for which they can bargain. In a co-operative the rights of each individual worker are vested in that person by virtue of his/her working there. A worker either has that role or not, and does not have that role many times over.

Because personal rights are held and not owned, a workers' co-operative is a democratic social institution. And money cannot buy a workers' co-op: it is not a marketable commodity to be bought and sold by speculators.

Surplus earnings must be distributed equally among all workers, or used to finance expansion, or spent in a community project.

At Tiakeni, long and short-term loans have been used to finance the co-operative and surplus earnings have been spent on a day-care centre and toilets for the local school.

Transfer rights are concerned with the rights of the workers as owners to sell the fixed assets of the co-op.

The rights of workers at Tiakeni are restricted in respect of their ability to cash-in the co-op and benefit personally from the sale of its assets. In the event of the co-op closing down, any assets remaining must go to an organisation with similar aims.

Tiakeni's members buy shares to the value of R100 which may be spread over one year. The purpose of this is to
raise working capital from amongst the members. Share subscriptions at Tiakeni are not a device for determining ownership or control; to the members they represent personal financial commitment and a form of membership card. The share value held by each member determines the limit of personal liability in the co-operative.

Figure 1 provides a matrix for comparing rights of control, benefit and transfer in different types of workers' co-ops:

**FIGURE 1**

Framework of ownership and control in workers' cooperatives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE</th>
<th>CONTROL</th>
<th>BENEFIT</th>
<th>TRANSFER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Common ownership</td>
<td>one member one vote Basis of control as worker</td>
<td>Surplus earnings to indivisible reserves. Share equity owned by members.</td>
<td>Transfer rights restricted. Upon dissolution assets go to community organisation or body with similar aims.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communitarian ownership</td>
<td>one member one vote with community representation in minority Basis of control as a worker</td>
<td>Surplus earnings to members' accounts and community fund Share equity owned by members, preferably with separation between roles of workers as workers and as providers of capital</td>
<td>Transfer rights rest with the community organisation or the community of cooperatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social ownership</td>
<td>one member one vote Basis of control as worker</td>
<td>Surplus earnings after capitalisation contribution to external institution Share equity provided and owned by external institution</td>
<td>No transfer rights. Upon dissolution assets go to equity holder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-ownership</td>
<td>One member one vote Basis of control as worker</td>
<td>Surplus earnings allocated to members' shares Equity owned by members</td>
<td>Full transfer rights. Upon dissolution assets distributed among members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual ownership</td>
<td>One member one vote Control as shareholder</td>
<td>Surplus earnings allocated to shares Equity owned by members</td>
<td>Transfer rights unrestricted Assets divided among members upon dissolution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In answer to the question "Do the workers control their co-op?", then, we can answer positively in the case of Tiakeni. To build on this fundamental principle of co-op organisation, we must now apply our second criterion for evaluating co-ops.

2. Do workers participate in running their co-op?

Participation is arguably the most important factor in a workers' co-operative. Participation is difficult to achieve given that:

(1) an underlying programme of our society is to suppress participation and increase unilateral control,

(2) the structure of organisations known to us does not support participation - we have no role models from which to learn, and

(3) individuals have different needs for involvement in organisations which affect the extent to which they are willing to participate.

Full participation and efficient production vie for their places in the organisational life of the co-op, but they need not be mutually exclusive. Ideally by complementing one another, they do double duty in that participation leads to better decisions and a stronger commitment by all to implement those decisions. Experience has shown that if there is inadequate participation in workers co-operatives the long term effectiveness of the organisation is likely to fail.
Mechanisms for participation at Tiakeni are built into the structure of the organisation through representation at three levels:

1. **The General Assembly**

The General Assembly comprises all the workers in the co-operative and meets once a week. It is the final decision making body and decides on policies, salaries, conditions of work, major purchases and marketing strategies. the decisions of other committees as well as individual and departmental initiatives. The chairperson and secretary are elected for one year at a time and may not be re-elected to the same position twice until all other members have taken their turn in office. There are no special privileges for the chairperson or secretary.

2. **Production Committee**

The production committee meets twice a week and manages the day to day business affairs of the co-op. It is made up of representatives of each department who report the proceedings and decisions of the production committee to their departments. Department representatives are elected each year and may be re-elected to the same position twice and receive a nominally higher salary for their responsibility.

3. **Departmental Meetings**

Departmental meetings are held twice a week and comprise all the workers of each department who elect a representative to the production committee. Departmental meetings
are the platform for work organisation. From here initiatives are taken to the production committee or the general assembly.

Figure II represents the organisational structure of Tiakeni.
Given this organisational structure at Tiakeni, we can again answer the question posed - Do workers participate in running their co-op? - in the affirmative. And so to our third criterion:

4. Do workers help each other learn?

At Tiakeni, workers are all involved in the process of helping others to learn.

There is a principle at Tiakeni that no one person must be solely responsible for any particular function. This is ensured by sharing tasks and by asking workers in key positions each to train one other member during the time that they fill that position. In addition, the co-op closes down for two weeks each year for a formal education programme which concentrates on issues of co-operation, problem-solving and group dynamics. The members help each other solve problems in inter-personal relations and in their work tasks. Some members move to other departments in order to gain skills and experience in the different processes, and to learn to work together with different people.

4. Do workers self-consciously design their own organisational structure and processes?

The general assembly at Tiakeni provides the platform for discussion of the constitution which is continuously being written as new policies and procedures are established.
in early days at Tiakeni, there were few enough workers to make it possible for everybody to take part in all decisions. No one person made decisions for another person.

As the ranks grew some members became more involved than others, to the extent that their commitment to, and awareness of, the organisation separated them from other members.

A structure then emerged with more clearly defined sets of responsibilities and lines of authority, although the idea of appointing any individuals as managers was resisted. We believed there were different reasons for this: in the first place those with management skills did not want to be placed in a position of co-ordinating the work of others who they feared might later resent them. Second, there were beliefs about witchcraft in the co-op stemming from the cultural roots of the community. These beliefs inhibited some members from accepting responsibility over others.

The membership of the co-op grew as production expanded and its organisational structure became increasingly complex.

When it was finally accepted that appointing area managers did not subvert the co-op principle that every worker is a manager, departmental heads were tentatively elected.

Later production and marketing managers were elected and recruited from outside the co-op. The danger of having lines of authority in a co-op is that the administrators become the decision-makers, and workers no longer participate in the running of their co-operative. The
risk of this happening is balanced by the structure of the co-op which serves to institutionalise control of the workers over administration.

To conclude this section, then, we can say that the workers at Tiakeni have participated in designing and adapting their own organisational structure. Let us now see whether this design contributes towards or detracts from their co-operation for efficient production.

5. DO WORKERS COOPERATE FOR EFFICIENCY IN PRODUCTION?

When interpersonal difficulties find expression in the disruption of production, the efficiency of the co-operative is at stake. To refuse to co-operate has become the cardinal sin for workers at Tiakeni. A staff relations committee provides the platform for working out interpersonal gripes that cannot be resolved between the individuals concerned.

Through co-operative production, workers at Tiakeni have developed a commitment to each other which transcends the ties of family, church and friends, although the tension that exists between loyalties will always be present.

Work organisation in the co-operative has to be considered according to work specialisation for efficiency and the allocation of responsibilities for democratic control by the workers.

At Tiakeni there is a division of labour along the production line. Some tasks are consciously shared in order to facilitate contact between departments or because
the task does not easily fall into a specific work category that needs a full-time worker. Skills are also spread so that the co-op has some flexibility in production.

While there is a division of labour on the production line, the classical sense of what is meant by a division of labour does not apply at the co-op: there is no separation between work tasks on the one hand and management decisions on the other.

Physical production begins in the design department where designers experiment with ideas for clothing, household linen and micheka - the cultural dress of women in the area. The printers then screen-print cotton on 20 and 30 meter long tables. Next, the seamstresses sew the cloth into finished goods and finally the despatch department distributes completed orders to customers. Thus the organisation of work at Tiakeni gives expression to the goals of co-operation and efficiency by integrating work between departments to complete the manufacturing process.

6. DO WORKERS COOPERATE WITH OTHERS OUTSIDE THEIR COOPERATIVE?

In a limited way, workers at Tiakeni have demonstrated their drive and ability to co-operate with outsiders.

Tiakeni recently assisted Twananani Textiles, a group of 28 women working together in a neighbouring village, to establish themselves as a producer group. This was done over a six month period when Twananani women received their training at the co-op for two days a week. From the
learning gained at Tiakeni, a simple production system has been developed which is less intimidating than the technology used at Tiakeni.

The women of Twananani learnt by example and through discussion with the workers of Tiakeni that it was possible for them to control their own working lives. Tiakeni's role in exploding the myths about who controls production has been important to others. Seeing the members of Tiakeni in control has helped the women of Twananani to take control of their own working lives.

It was different for Tiakeni in the beginning. There were no examples for the workers to see and learn from. They had to learn by discovering for themselves that they could manage their own production. During the first two years, even though the workers were able to say that they were in control, most agreed later that they did not really believe it. They still thought it was someone else's business. These feelings of uncertainty - of themselves and of each other - were overcome in the process of taking control of their co-op.
7. CAN THE WORKERS MAINTAIN THEIR CO-OPERATIVE IN THE MAINSTREAM ECONOMY?

The co-ops' ability to survive within the economic mainstream is determined by its relationships with the private business sector, the existence of a support network - or lack of it, and its relationship with the state bureaucracy.

**Relationship with the business sector**

Internal production is finally controlled from outside by the changing patterns of supply and demand. The workers of Tiakeni interact on unequal terms with suppliers and distributors. This is determined by their position in society, by the behaviour of others towards them, their own negotiating skills, their business and social connections, and the resources they command.

A subtle psychological dependency as well as the obvious financial dependency exists among workers towards the buyers of their goods. This dilutes the extent to which they can develop and maintain a critical perspective of their position in relation to the mainstream. By contrast it is also the racist and paternalistic attitudes of those buyers towards the workers which gives rise to frustration with, and questioning of, the structure of this relationship.

Even in its context in a homeland area, the co-op has limited connections and access to information. The people with trade links in the area belong to the rural elite: they are unlikely candidates for a workers' co-
op. The co-op members are not part of that social network in which business and trading connections are made and maintained, even in their region.

Because the co-op is remote and its members have little access to the marketing and supply channels of mainstream business, its competitors have a trading advantage over the co-op. Tiakeni's private enterprise competitors also have the advantage of being part of the class network that links suppliers, producers, distributors and customers.

**Support Network**

So far we have an inherent contradiction: a workers' self-managed undertaking is trying to survive in the capitalist mainstream. The difficulties they experience here might be alleviated to a certain extent by the existence of a supportive network for co-op development, as enjoyed by some co-ops elsewhere. Until an effective network is established, a black rural workers' co-op will be relegated to the position of struggling on a day to day basis to maintain its niche in the market place.

Tiakeni has managed to survive financially and pay off its loans. This is due in part to the limited support it has received from an alternative marketing network as well as its own effectiveness in production and marketing, albeit that the latter is on unequal terms.

This support comes from a handful of retail outlets and craft exhibitions organised by an alternative marketing organisation, as well as from concerned individuals who have undertaken to sell on behalf of the co-op.
The bulk of its turnover comes from direct dealings with commercial agents and shops, and from curtaining contracts for institutions. Without the limited solidarity support it has received it is even doubtful whether the co-op would have managed to pass its break-even point, let alone repay its loans on time.

The State

Tiakeni has recognised corporate status in the eyes of the mainstream through its registration as a co-operative with limited legal liability. The Registrar of Co-operatives in the Department of Agriculture has final control over co-op to the extent that they can be dissolved at the discretion of the state. Registration gives the workers the protection of limited legal liability. In practice the co-op not been influenced or controlled by such registration.

The co-op has a less convenient relationship with the Department of Co-operation and Development. This is characterised largely by administrative obstruction which may be as much inherent in its nature towards people in general as it is directed towards Tiakeni. Workers at the co-op have learnt to deal with implicit threatening attitudes of officials. Security police have visited the co-op on odd occasions for "friendly" questioning. The friendship remains one-sided.

Despite the drawbacks and thanks to the support mentioned above, the workers at Tiakeni have managed to maintain their co-op in the harsh mainstream economy.

In summary, then, we should say we can say that Tiakeni measures up well as a co-operative effort when judged by the seven criteria discussed in this section. Based on our
limited experience we believe that workers' co-ops can work as a strategy for workers to control their own production. In the process, we have seen considerable individual and organisational development. In the final section, however, we would like to look critically at the role of the co-op in broader community development.

C. THE CO-OP IN RELATION TO ITS COMMUNITY

To the organisational complexity of full participation and efficient production and the need for the co-op to give expression to its social, as well as its economic objectives. Let us now ask to what extent the co-op succeeded in bringing changes to the community in which it is located.

HAS THE CO-OP SUCCEEDED IN BRINGING CHANGES TO ITS COMMUNITY?

The claims made in this section have been tested in informal discussions and meetings; and by observation, although the data has not been quantified. That remains a matter for investigation later.

Before assessing the success of the co-op in community development we need to find out what involvement in production means in a community context. We believe that the opportunity cost of involvement in production means fewer possibilities for involvement in community issues. Thus the frame of reference for action by the workers becomes the production concerns within the co-op and not the political concerns of the community. The co-op cannot
extend the benefits it produces for itself - job satisfaction and a regular income - to the community at large. It is possible that this could set the members apart from their community but this does not seem to have happened in the case of Tiakeni. The co-op is not the only source of employment in the area. Elim Hospital, for example, provides more jobs for the community at salaries similar to those paid at Tiakeni.

Next we need to ask how the workers who make up the co-op stand in relation to their community. The first constraint that they face concerns their position in their community. All but two of the 23 workers are women, many are single and a common characteristic is that they are politically powerless in their community. This stems from the social position of rural women in society, and in their homes. Different kinship ties and religious affiliations are represented in the co-op but in general, the workers of Tiakeni are not from politically or economically dominant sections of the community. This limits their organising ability given the existing power structure in the area.

Since its inception the co-op has resisted efforts by powerful figures in the community to use it to extend their sphere of influence. The order of social and economic status in the community is not reproduced in the co-op. Members of the co-op believe that by having people from different parts of their community the co-op has remained relatively unfettered by the politics of group power in the community. They also believe that an outcome of this is that the co-op has support from those not in positions of social power. This is expressed in terms of the freedom that members of the community feel to visit the co-op to see the work in progress and make use of its facilities. The co-op exists in a helping
relationship towards those sections of the community that have fewer resources - personal or material.

When questioned about their role in organising in their community, some workers referred to previous forms of community organisation in the history of the area which have been discontinued and replaced by resignation and apathy. These initiatives relate to community committees and a consumer co-operative. They talk too, about the possible repercussions if they try out their new ideas of participatory democracy in community action. The resultant tensions, while strengthening the internal resolve of the co-operative, demand time and energy which would affect the operation of the co-op. Here they refer to the difficulties of consulting with a divided and dispersed community about distribution of surplus to community projects, and their powerlessness in organising to resist the imminent resettlement facing the community. We shall give a brief background about this resettlement issue to demonstrate why we see the role of the co-op in the community as being very limited indeed.

In March 1980, the Commissioner of the Department of Co-operation and Development in Louis Trichardt, Northern Transvaal, informed the communities where Tiakeni is located that they were now officially squatters on the land where they had always lived. The farms had now been bought by the State from its previous owner as a part of its plans to consolidate the "homelands".

The next year the people were told that they were not allowed to repair or extend their homes. The officials made one small concession: those who wanted to re-thatch their homes, had to give half of the grass they cut to the Commissioner in Louis Trichardt, Department of Co-
operation and Development officials (blackjacks), saw to it that the people who improved or maintained their homes in any way were fined - some up to R30. Some people claimed that they were instructed not to plant any more crops. In January 1984, the community was told that they would not be allowed to keep any chickens, goats, or cattle once they were moved to a nearby township.

and In the meantime the officials were busying themselves with the new township they had planned for the community. The previous four years had seen efforts at a systematic destruction of the material and psychological security of the community.

The co-op has been powerless to take effective action to resist resettlement. Instead the workers have accepted the inevitability of this with resignation.

As conditions exist now, the co-op would first have to play an organising role in its community in order to achieve any significant community change. If there were a progressive movement in the community then perhaps the co-op would be able to play a supportive role, but the co-op itself is not likely to form the basis of such a progressive movement.

The interventions undertaken by the co-op in its community are best described as technical interventions rather than organisational ones. The co-op built toilets for the community school where 350 children had none. It has started a day-care centre which closed down a year later because of lack of demand. Some co-op members have started "buying clubs" with their neighbours. The telephone at the co-op is the main communication that the community has with those who are working away. A second line has been installed to meet the need and when a caller
is unable to use the telephone him- or herself, a co-op worker is available to help. The co-op supplies water to the school and church and those who live nearby. Workshop facilities are available at the co-op for fixing anything from childrens' toys to tractors. Some of the skills gained by workers at the co-op are applied in the community - sewing, metal and woodworking and building.

From this we can learn two things: the co-op workers have the ability to give expression to the values of cooperation through activities that are largely technical in nature, but they have not intervened in their community at an organisational level.

Are these technical interventions mere favours or are they foundations for change? Given limited critical consciousness of workers at the co-op, their political position in the community, and the demands of production which are on unequal terms with their business environment, we can conclude that at this stage the co-op is unlikely to bring about direct structural changes that affect the broader community. We are not sure to what extent other forms of community organisation under these conditions would have achieved different results.

We will conclude by summarising what we perceive Tiakeni to have achieved at the levels of individual, organisational and community development.
CONCLUSION

1. Individual Development

We believe that any development effort begins with the personal growth of the individuals we work with.

At the level of their individual development the workers of Tiakeni have:

1.1 gained an understanding of their position in relation to the wider society and now this society defines their position in it. Previously the workers at Tiakeni accepted that it was their own personal shortcomings - as blacks, as uneducated people and as women - and not the actions of others that determined their economic and social status.

1.2 discovered that they can act to change the oppressive conditions under which they live - poverty, dependence, on others with more privileges and education, and domination by authority.

1.3 found that by co-operating with others they can strengthen their position to change conditions affecting them. Through helping others meet their needs they are better able to meet their own needs.

1.4 gained new self-confidence indicated by their ability to solve organisational problems and make management decisions in the running of their co-operative.

1.5 developed concern for others outside the co-op indicated by their willingness to share their resources - the surplus produced, telephone facilities, buying facilities, the water supply and their preparedness to explain to others the work
processes and functioning of the co-operative.

1.6 gained new political and inter-personal skills at work through learning from and with each other. The intrinsic feed-back received from applying these skills effectively provides evidence of their capability and their potential to accept new challenges.

1.7 provided for themselves and their families new material security in the income they receive from their work.

2. Organisational Development

Development at an individual level amongst the members of the co-operative through their growth in knowledge, attitudes and skills gives support to and receives support from the organisational development of the co-operative.

At the level of organisational development the co-operative has:

2.1 resisted domination from without from coming influential figures and institutions in the community through group solidarity and the mechanisms of ownership in the co-op.

2.2 resisted domination from within by the more active members in the co-op through the mechanisms of participation, representation and control in the co-op.

2.3 brought people together from different parts of the community in a new form of solidarity indicated by the ability to make decisions as a group and the absence of serious conflict.

2.4 developed a new form of leadership which is shared between different work groups and individuals rather than being reliant on the existence of a single "great" leader.
2.5 achieved an adequate level of productivity which is reinforced by the mechanisms of participation in and control of management functions by the workers.

3. Community development

We would now like to infer that the organizational development of the co-operative has consequences in the development of its community. However we have shown earlier that there are severe constraints concerning the ability of the co-op to bring about structural changes which we would regard as being progressive in its community. Despite the constraints here are some outcomes we can identify.

At the level of community development the co-operative has:

3.1 provided community members with a living example of how ordinary people can control their working lives. The myth that workers need "bosses" to control them has been exploded.

3.2 created a democratic institution in the community which is free of the influences of the community hierarchy. This serves to dilute the psychological control and the monopoly of resources that those in positions of privilege have over the people. The co-op has become an alternative frame of reference to which people can at least turn for assistance and feel welcomed by others who are their equals.

3.3 provided technical interventions which, although limited in extent, have been made within the scope understood to be realistic by the workers. These include establishing a buying club, the now defunct day-care centre, the water supply for the church and school, the toilets built by the co-op for the school and the workshop facilities available to the community.

3.4 given practical support to others involved in efforts to help
themselves by its own example, by sharing its facilities, by providing training and access to raw materials.

Dreams about cooperatives that do not result in jobs and jobs that do not give expression to these dreams have hindered the growth of the cooperative sector ever since the movement began in the 19th century. Charting the course of cooperatives through economic and political waters is taking place every day through the living experience of failures and successes. To prescribe coops as the panacea for industrial ills and to promote them under unrealistic circumstances only creates expectations that can never be met.

Working together at Tiakeni has provided for us a compelling experience in participation and workers' democracy at the interface of economic and social relations. We feel excited by the individual growth of our co-workers and by the gains they have made in organisational development. However, our initial naive hopes for "social change" have been considerably diluted over the years. We now believe that coops should ideally develop in response to progressive initiative in the community, and not attempt to be that progressive initiative unless there is already a strong critical awareness in the group.
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