The Industrial Conciliation Amendment Act is shortly to be enforced. The Government is preparing the necessary machinery to put it into operation as is evident from the appointment of the so-called Industrial Tribunal and similar preliminary measures.

So far the reaction of the Trade Union Movement as a whole to the law, which threatens its very existence, has been purely verbal. There has been a great deal of protestings, of objections, of criticism. Opposition to the Act has been almost unanimous with the isolated exception of the handful of "nasionaal gesinde" trade union bureaucrats in the Mine Workers' Union and the Yster en Staal Werkersvereeniging who support the Government on principle and a few others who have been hoping to be rewarded with suitable jobs for their collaboration. Not counting these professional adherents of the Government it can be safely said that there is not one trade unionist, trade union secretary, shop steward or executive member, who does not fear the implications of the Act, who is not anxious about the future of the Movement and who does not realise that the Act will mean a reversal of some of the most sacred trade union principles upheld by many in South Africa for more than half a century.

E.R. Braverman, in a series of articles in "New Age" during July and August 1956, gave a fairly adequate analysis of the main provisions of the Act and their effect on the Unions. It would, indeed, have been astonishing in the face of these provisions if the reaction of Trade Unionists had been less hostile. Briefly the overt purposes of the Act are:

1) To split up the Trade Unions and to weaken them:
2) To destroy what unity there has been achieved between European and Non-European workers;
3) To divide up the funds of some of the big unions and to deprive the members of full control over the use of their funds:
4) To prevent the Unions from taking political action in defence of their vital interests:
5) To curtail the workers' right to withdraw their labour:
6) To reserve skilled occupations for privileged racial groups.

Less obvious, but implicit in all this the main purpose of the Act to eliminate collective bargaining from the South African scene ant to replace it with State determination of wages and conditions of employment, a basic plank in the Nationalist economic programme.

What is the there left of real Trade Unionism if these principles become law and if this law is accepted? Even the narrow conception of the Trade Union purely as a weapon for economic bargaining (a conception with which we disagree) becomes impossible of achievement under such a law. In the long run the functions of Trade Unionism as effective fighting organisations of the workers will disappear and they will turn more and more into agencies of the Department of Labour and of the Industrial Registrar.

This is the reason for the anxiety expressed by the Movement, and anxiety expressed by progressives and reactionaries alike. Yet the movement has not reacted beyond the utterance of protests. No constructive policy has evolved from conferences and discussions which could usefully counter theplans of the Nationalist Government. In fact, having uttered their protests some trade union leaders have ceased all resistance. Some now say that as the Amenment Act is now the law, there is nothing left to do but to accept it and make the best of a bad job. Some have even gone so far as to anticipate the promulgation of the law and to split up their Unions before it is even compulsory to do so.

The cause of this unseemly collapse of Trade Union opposition is to be sought in the fact that Union leaders believe that they have certain interests vested in the I.C. Act which they do not wish to lose. The ties which hold so many of the Unions bound to the Act are chiefly as follows:

1) The principle underlying the registration of Trade Unions, which carry with it socalled "recognition":

2) The ability to conclude legally binding agreements with employers under the system of industrial councils:

3) The criminal sanctions which accompany any breaches of such agreements:

4) The protection afforded under the Act against victimisation.

5) The priveleged position which the I.C. Act helps the white workers to maintain in relationship to the African workers.

Some trade union leaders also see in the machinery of the Act an easy way to safeguard their own jobs and positions, or secure means of steady revenue for the Union "machine" But although this attitude may have some bearing on the half-hearted opposition to the Act, the major cause is the feeling that the Unions have substantial benefits to lose if they discard the Act holus-bolus. This feeling cannot be ignored as "recognition," collective bargaining agreements and criminal sanctions for breaches of such agreements have been achieved as a result of long and bitter struggles and sacrifices on the part of union members. Some of these benefits arose out of revolt of miners of 1922 and no matter how one might criticise the motives of the 1922 strike, its character as an epic example of trade union struggle cannot be denied. This holding on to fruits of many years of struggle is understandable, although (as in the case of the discrimination against Africans) in some respects totally unjustifiable.

To some extent this adherence to the I.C. Act also frustrates progressive thought in the Trade Union movement. Characteristic is the series of articles by E.R. Braverman in "New Age", Braverman places two alternative courses before the movement.- either to form unregistered industrial multi-racial Trade Unions, outside the framework of the I.C. Act, or to form racial Trade Unions under the Act, cooperating in a Federal organisation. The second alternative is offered, where the first "cannot be carried out." The same hesitation is reflected in the decision of the Textile Workers' Industrial Union to apply for exemption from the racial provisions of the Act.

In any discussion about the possible course open to the Trade Union movement, it is necessary to deal with these inhibitions which prevent a decisive approach to the I.C. Act.

REGISTRATION AND RECOGNITION

Recognition of the Trade Union as the mouthpiece of women in a particular industry is surely a great achievement worth defending. It was not granted to the registered trade unions easily (the African unions have never had it in law, although many African unions enjoy recognition de facto by reason of the militant struggle.) It was included in the old I.C. Act in consequence of the great militant strikes during the decade culminating in the 1922 revolt. But - as is always the case with any concession grated by the employing classes and their state - this recognition was hedged around with all kinds of restrictions. It was condition on registration under the Act, which in turn imposed certain control by the Department of Labour. For many years past, the Trade Unions were complaining about the interference by the Registrar in the manner in which Trade Union constitutions were drawn up. Not only was there frequent, irksome delay in the registration of constitutional amendments unanimously adopted by the rank and file, but often the Registrar would dictate