

See M Burawoy, The politics of production, Verso-NLB, 1985, especially the "Introduction" for a more extended discussion on this point.

- 6 The best summary of this argument is to be found in the GWU's position on the UDF. See "GWU on the UDF", SALB 9.2, Nov, 1983
- 7 The demand for full franchise/vote does not necessarily represent a bourgeois or liberal demand. The securing of the vote is an important victory for all classes in South Africa, including the black working class for whom it would open up new and important ground. The vote, as a form of formal parliamentary democracy reflects no necessary class content. But, it is precisely because of this, that the vote as a form of parliamentary democracy is not only a potential gain for the working class, but also a potential problem. In this connection see S Gelb, "Some sociological perspectives on race, class and democracy in South Africa", ASSA conference 1984, p11
- 8 The best known example of this is FOSATU's 1984 campaign against the tricameral parliamentary elections
- 9 J Naidoo, "The significance of COSATU", SALB 11.5, 1986
- 10 COSATU resolutions 1986, p2

(Keith Browne, November 1987)

## Comrade Mutandare of the ZCTU

Below we publish an interview with Comrade Mutandare, President of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, conducted on July 8 1986.

SALB: Mr Mutandare, can you tell us about your own personal history and how you came to be involved in the labour movement?

Mr Mutandare: I used to work for Anglo American in Bindura for 13 years, on the mines there. I became involved in the union because of the very poor working conditions prevailing at the time. There were wildcat strikes, and in the normal course of events management would call in the police and army, arrest the ringleaders, imprison us... We saw our salvation in the unions - at that time it was a white-led union. It was a very, very difficult time for us - we were labelled as communists, and terrorists; our mine was on the

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North-eastern border where people were infiltrating from; and at that time you had to be very courageous to voice grievances, make demands. I myself was arrested several times, and held without any charges. There was a law in Smith's time that would allow you to be detained for 90 days without any trial at all.

SALB: And how did you come to be the head of the ZCTU?

Mr Mutandare: Well, I became active in the mineworkers, and we became involved in the national federation. At that stage the ZCTU was not exactly throbbing, there were a lot of opportunists within the trade unions, and a lot of people there who didn't have the workers' interests at heart. I, and a number of people thought the we should go in there and change that, and that's what we did. And I was elected President of the ZCTU in July, 1985.

SALB: Could you tell us something about the structure of the ZCTU

Mr Mutandare: Yes, well the ZCTU has 29 affiliated unions. On the presidential side, there's a President, a Vice-President - who's responsible for education and planning, and another Vice-President responsible for political affairs and co-operatives. And, on the Secretary-General side, we have a Secretary-General, a Deputy Secretary-General for administration, and a Deputy Secretary-General for finance. We also have a Treasury Department, and then we have a large number of committees, eleven I think. These deal with education, international affairs, legal affairs, health and safety labour relations, labour relations tribunals, resolutions and constitutional amendments, retrenchments, the University of Zimbabwe, labour relations board, prices control board, the credentials committee, the Women's Committee; we have a May Day Committee, and we also have a Labour College Committee; we plan to - at some stage in the future - build a labour college.

Now these committees submit their reports to the General Council of the ZCTU every 3 months. The General Council is our principal governing body, and is comprised of representatives of each of the affiliated unions. In fact, the larger unions tend to have more than one representative therefore they tend to have numbers of people who hold office ex-officio, me for example: I'm not counted as a mineworkers' delegate, but I'm part of the Mineworkers' Union

SALB: Can you tell us about the principal affiliates of the ZCTU?

Mr Mutandare: Yes, well the Mineworkers' Union is the largest - we have 27,000 members. Building and construction has about 17,000; railways 11,000; textiles 10,000; clothing 10,000; agricultural labourers 15,000; domestic workers 13-14,000. Our total membership of the ZCTU is about 200,000, out of a potential of 1.1 million.

SALB: That seems like a rather small percentage, can you explain why there hasn't been more widespread unionisation?

Mr Mutandare: I think we must put that down to the fact that it was extremely difficult, if not impossible, to organise in Smith's day. Workers were scared to identify themselves with the labour movement. They, labour, were labelled as agitators, terrorists; people were very scared at the time, it was very difficult to do any organising whatsoever. It is only really since 1980 that we've been able to organise more openly, and we are at the moment on a major recruitment drive, and I think we are likely to see a large number of new members joining our affiliated unions.

SALB: Can you comment on the Labour Relations Act, that seems to be the principal piece of legislation governing labour relations in Zimbabwe. In your view is it a good piece of legislation?

SALB: Yes, it is, but we have reservations, and we have geared ourselves to press for changes. Some clauses need to be amended, and others need to be changed altogether, scrapped.

SALB: What are some of the principal problems as you see them in this piece of legislation?

Mr Mutandare: Well, firstly, I think it conflicts with certain ILO conventions; the large majority of unions are classified as being in "essential services", and so are not allowed to strike. There's too much Ministerial influence, too much Ministerial interference: the Minister hears from one of his blue-eyed boys that such and such a union is not so good, for whatever reason, and he can over-rule any constitutional decisions that they've taken. More than this, the Minister has control of assets, and salaries of union leaders; the Ministerial sanction is needed for any wage agreement that we reach; the Minister can direct that employers not send dues straight to the union but that these dues be placed in a trust fund. So, all in all, the Minister has got very draconian powers, powers to throttle the unions if he so wishes. And who is the Minister to control all these aspects, what is this to do with him? It's the concern of the workers, and the workers alone! So

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we're looking for changes in all these things.

SALB: Now in Zimbabwe, Mr Mutandare, there have been a large number of wildcat strikes, particularly immediately after independence. What has been the attitude of the ZCTU to these strikes?

Mr Mutandare: Hell, let me say that there has never been a legal strike in this country! The law is too cumbersome, so that by the time you get out there and have the legal capacity to declare a strike, no one would remember what the strike was about.

SALB: Mr Mutandare, in your view has the position of the workers, improved substantially since independence?

Mr Mutandare: To a degree, yes. Wages are somewhat higher; the Masters and Servants Act has been abolished; there is provision now for maternity leave; conditions of service in domestic service and agriculture have been improved. So there have been some changes - not to exaggerate what these changes have been - they have been important, but they are not dramatic changes.

SALB: Can you tell us something about the controversy over wages in the agro-industry that rocked Zimbabwe some while ago?

Mr Mutandare: The trouble was that the government, in their own wisdom, decreed that workers had to be paid an industrial wage. They said that these workers working in the sheds, on the plantations, were industrial workers and that the provisions and wages in respect of industrial workers should apply to them.

The employers, of course, then got up in arms, and said that they would not be competitive on the international market, that they would have to close down, etc., etc., And the state succumbed to employer pressure and stipulated a lower wage.

Now the whole thing was very messy. You had a chap cutting and carrying getting half the wage of the guy in the processing shed, for example, because the one was classified as an industrial worker. So that you had all sorts of things that didn't fit together. I think what is showed ultimately is that the government is susceptible to employer pressure, and employers are very powerful in this country.

SALB: Mr Mutandare, before you became the ZCTU President the so-

called "Gang of Four" were very much in power in the ZCTU. Can you explain why they were able to keep power for so long?

Mr Mutandare: Yes, well that's very simple: they were contriving with certain unscrupulous politicians. They were stealing, they were corrupt, and the government knew this but they felt that they would rather keep them, because they had a compliant group there and they felt that they wanted a compliant group there in control of the unions. And until there was a change in the Ministry, when we had a change in policy, and of course, once the policy changed - once they lost governmental support - then they lost their power, the government ditched them. And here is the problem of being an appendage of the government. Some of these people were even fired by their own unions, they were a group of people simply concerned to curry favour with the government, and not in any way to represent the interests of their members.

SALB: Can you tell me something about your education campaigns, and their objectives?

Mr Mutandare: Yes, well we attach great importance to the whole question of education. The only way in which we can deliver the goods is through sharper negotiations. We have to provide our membership, our frontline people and also our rank-and-file, with the necessary tools to negotiate on behalf of the members. We have to be seen to be delivering the goods, and enlightening our frontline officers, and our rank-and-file as to what they can achieve in negotiations, allowing them to get the best possible deal for the membership.

It is no use having the blind leading the blind. You have to have people knowing what they are doing in terms of negotiations, and these things are very complicated and they require considerable education programmes.

SALB: Mr Mutandare, can you comment on the whole question of so-called socialism in Zimbabwe. Do you see this as a socialist society, and how does the ZCTU view the question of socialism?

Mr Mutandare: Well we don't have any socialism here in Zimbabwe, I think we'd be deceiving ourselves if we claimed to have socialism here. 85% of the economy is controlled from London, Zurich and New York; we are tied to the international system, we are attached to the Western economies; when it booms overseas, it will boom

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here. We cannot socialise what we don't even control, you have to own the productive assets in order to nationalise, to socialise. Its simply not a practical policy for Zimbabwe at the moment.

Here the government people talk about socialism. Of course, they talk about socialism in the day, and they're socialists in the day time, and they're capitalists at night. But we know that there are real limitations on what we can achieve at this point in time. We believe in socialism, we think that we should gravitate slowly towards socialism, not rapidly, otherwise we get a disaster like in Tanzania. We do support it; workers get a better deal under socialism than under a capitalist economy. But we have to work within the practicalities of things. And the practicality of it is, that we are at this point in time, not able to control many of the productive assets in our society, and it would be a disaster to attempt to do so.

I don't want to be considered a reactionary. Let me say that I do believe in socialism, I think we have to start right away. But I don't think we can do it rapidly. We are particularly alive in Zimbabwe to the disasters of other countries that have tried to move too rapidly on the path of socialism. We do support the concept, but we have to move towards socialism systematically.

SALB: Could you tell us something about your factory- or plant-level organisation?

Mr Mutandare: Yes, well we have functioning workers committees and all local matters are taken up here, by the workers committees. It's only when there's no agreement here, that we take it up at the more national scale. As far as possible things must be sorted out at the workplace.

SALB: Do you have a system of shopstewards?

Mr Mutandare: Yes, we do. We have a Shopstewards' Council, with a Chairman and a Secretary, with the shopstewards being responsible for decisions taken. The shopstewards are all elected and this varies, but in the mineworkers - which is the one that I know best because I'm a miner myself - this happens once every year in March.

SALB: Is the ZCTU affiliated to any international organisations?

Mr Mutandare: No, the ZCTU is not affiliated to any international

organisations. Our affiliated unions are affiliated to their international secretariats, but we are no part of the ICFTU etc.

SALB: Do you see a special role for women, in the unions? Is it especially important to organise women, and how do you go about it?

Mr Mutandare: Well, we have a special department for the organisation of women, headed by a woman, and we have women predominantly in certain sectors in our economy, like textiles and clothing. We are trying to galvanize and organise women. We are not going to appoint a woman just because she is a woman. We are not discriminating against them, this must be understood. We believe that women must be directly, actively participating in union affairs, but we would not appoint a woman to office just because she is a woman - that would be discrimination in reverse. But all in all, I would say that the number of women members that we have is very small, I don't know the exact figure.

SALB: The official "ideology" for negotiations in Zimbabwe is that there should be a tripartite arrangement with the government on the one side, and unions and employers. Do you think that's a good system?

Mr Mutandare: Yes, it's a good system, if all parties negotiate in good faith.

SALB: Are there any major labour organisations which exist outside of the ZCTU?

Mr Mutandare: Not really, except for teachers and government services, and there are particular problems with that, the public sector - but at the moment they are outside the ZCTU.

SALB: Have things improved with the new Labour Minister? Do you have a better working relationship with him?

Mr Mutandare: You know, this is a very dangerous thing to say, I don't want to be seen to be crossing swords with the Minister, you know we have to get along, and I'd rather not comment on the various Ministers of Labour that we have had.