

SWAPO win frees Namibia

NAMIBIA'S trade unions are well represented in the Constituent Assembly which was set up after the independence elections in Mid-November.

With Swapo winning 41 of the Assembly's 72 seats, the party holds a majority in the Assembly which will draw up a constitution and lead the country to independence.

Among Swapo's representatives in the Tintenpalast building are John ya Otto, Secretary General of the National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW), Ben Ulenga, General Secretary of the Mineworkers Union of Namibia (MUN), and Marco Haushiku, president of the Namibia National Teachers Union (NANTU).

Ulenga was nominated by Swapo to be a candidate for the Constituent Assembly, and by virtue of his position on the list managed to secure a seat.

It is undecided whether Ulenga will remain in the Assembly and go on to participate in government after independence, or

whether he will return to his work as leader of MUN.

He said: "The trade union movement will have to discuss the issue of representation (in government), and, in consultation with Swapo, will have to advise on staying on in government after independence".

"My continued presence at the Tintenpalast depends entirely on how the issue of trade union representation in government is dealt with and resolved" he said.

Ulenga said he did not envisage any major changes in the labour movement after independence.

"However, I do see us struggling under more favourable conditions and having the ability to make our voice heard by sympathetic ears in government. This is something we have never had in the past."

"There will definitely be support and co-operation with the government as far as projects and policies that benefit workers and the people as a whole are concerned", Ulenga added.

A matter for some debate at the moment is whether or not the NUMW, and its six affiliated

unions, should retain its Swapo affiliated status under a Swapo government.

Some observers have expressed the belief that this could lead to conflict of interests between the unions and the government, particularly when union demands are made by workers at government institutions.

Ulenga said, however, "any decision on formal affiliation to the party is a policy requiring the democratic involvement of workers themselves, through their organs and structures."

Mining companies in Namibia, while operating under South African colonial rule, tended to regard the mineworkers union as more of an irritant than anything else. The MUN has fought constantly for recognition agreements and has battled to gain access to mines. With a Swapo government in power, their attitude is bound to change.

Mines must change

Ulenga said, "There has to be a change in policy and approach of the mining companies after independence". In fact, we are demanding that change from them right now, and are not waiting for independence.

He adds, "A Swapo government naturally strengthens the positions of the MUN, or any other progressive union, but this strength also depends to a large extent to on the actual programme of the union itself".

As far as Swapo's policy on labour matters is concerned, Ulenga said: "In its proposed ideas for a constitution for independent Namibia, Swapo talks of the realisation of basic rights for workers. This is largely what the NUMW's struggle has been all about."

"The NUMW and its affiliates will, however, have to see to it that these rights are maintained in the final constitution, and realised and consolidated in a free



Namibians celebrate SWAPO's victory

Namibia".

At the moment there are six unions affiliated to the NUMW. These are the Namibia Food and Allied Workers Union (NAFAU), the Namibia Public Workers Union (NAPWU), the Metal and Allied Namibian Workers Union (MANWU), the Namibia Transport and Allied Union (NATAU), the Namibia National Teachers Union (NANTU) and MUN.

More unions

Ulenga said, "Unionisation of workers should continue until the entire national workforce has been covered. Domestic and farm workers are two important groups which have not yet been unionised.

Trade unionists naturally ex-

pect a Swapo government to deal rapidly and decisively with labour-related matters. Many feel that issues such as the right to strike, improved working conditions and payment of a living wage must be dealt with first.

Ulenga said: "When you study the results of the recent elections, it becomes clear how the organised workforce was a clear factor in achieving a Swapo victory."

"Needless to say, labour matters should be very much a priority for a Swapo government.

The first issue in this regard is, I, think the promulgation of a labour and industrial relations law. This should be a comprehensive piece of legislation covering all aspects of wages, conditions and relations."



Leading the people of Namibia into a new future are: (Left) BEN ULENGA of MUN and (Right) SAM NUJOMA of SWAPO

NUM EDITORIAL COMMENT

Building People's Power

NEVER before has the apartheid regime been in the state of political and economic crisis it is today.

An all round offensive by the oppressed against the apartheid system has caused serious divisions and confusion amongst the ranks of the ruling bloc.

The days of white privilege are fast becoming a thing of the past as mass action moves forward through campaigns such as the Defiance Campaign of 1989.

The oppressed are no longer prepared to be ruled by the

racists who have no mandate to govern. People in their thousands resisted apartheid in hospitals, beaches, parks, swimming pools, residential areas and other amenities reserved for whites.

Workers in the mines, factories and on the farms are revolting against workplace racism as a first step towards ending the whole apartheid system.

Not only are workers fighting apartheid, but students are demanding people's education, women march for equal rights, clergy demand justice and peace,

restrictees defy apartheid chains, more whites are refusing to serve in the apartheid army, banned organisations are unbanned while over a million people staged anti apartheid marches under the ANC and SACP flags.

Even a few policemen are coming forward to condemn the apartheid state for using violence.

All these militant actions must not be seen in isolation from one another. They form a co-ordinated assault on the apartheid regime meant to render it un-

workable. Combined with international pressure the regime is in a bad way. The mass offensive has taken our liberation struggle to new heights.

ANC Leaders released

As internal and international pressure intensifies, the masses scored a resounding victory by forcing the regime to release the most senior leaders and commanders of the ANC after 26 years of captivity.

However, De Klerk has not given up on apartheid. He is desperately trying to save the sinking ship overloaded with crimes committed to protect white supremacy.

While he is talking of talks with the leaders of the oppressed in an attempt to get breathing space to reorganise the crumbling system

of apartheid, repression continues.

Our objective remains the transfer of political power from the white minority to the democratic majority. All our militant actions must advance the realisation of this objective. We can't wait while De Klerk plays with sweet words.

Our task is to wage a relentless struggle to destroy apartheid totally. Wherever it exists, it is our duty to end it ourselves.

Now is the time for all freedom loving people to join and build people's organisations in the rural areas, townships and at the workplace. The people organised are everything and unorganised are nothing. Let us make 1990 the year of united mass action for people's power.