



10. LUCY MUMBELO, Chairman, National Union of Clothing Workers (p. 75 August 75.)

535 MvdB: Lucy, we are in the position of trying to work out for ourselves the implications, both the advantageous and disadvantageous ones for the Ciskeian people if they should opt for independence, in relation to the alternative where the status quo is

maintained. Could you give us an indication from the point of view of your members the opportunities for employment, the legal wages, from the point of view of their earnings, how such a step on the part of Ciskei could influence your members who are from the Ciskei?

MBUVELO: Thank you very much for having invited me here. We have members from the Ciskei in East London. In a few weeks I will recruit more members there, because more places have opened there. I would like to feel that, first and foremost, you all know the opinion of blacks with regard to independence, and the hardships and problems that are caused by all independent countries.. We have the experience we live with it every day, and as workers we find that there are so many problems confronting us. To take one instance - now that our new black unions are going to be registered and recognised by law, the people already at this stage, unless they ask for an extension, will be excluded from our membership. These are the people in the independent states like Bophuthatswana. In Pretoria we have workers who live in Garankua, Hammanskraal, and they come to work in the urban areas in white South Africa. Now, if more and more problems should be caused by the Ciskei becoming independent, I don't know what we are going to do. As I see it we have from Johannesburg who are now those areas, in the areas of the Ciskei, and should the Ciskei opt for independence it will mean that they can never belong to a union, in other words nobody would be able to regulate their wages or monitor the work that they do. And at the moment we find that it is very difficult for even the worker who is employed in the Transkei, I mention this because we work under increment(?). Now, there are blacks in the textile industry who make beautiful garments which are sold right through out our markets, and you find that those workers are earning twenty rand a month. And at the end of the year they don't get bonus, like we do, because we have the laws that regulate your conditions of employment, and now that we have the opportunity to be recognised we are able to organise those people, if there is no independence. Now, should the Ciskei become independent we will be bound by law not to enter and organise.

MvdB: If I may interrupt, surely that would be a decision for the new independent government to make whether in fact you would be ..

MVUBELO: Yes, but if I may just explain further, we find that it is the African leaders who praise (?) (550) them for whatever they are. In the world of the worker, ... a country cannot survive without the worker. They are only interested in their own affairs, what happens to the worker is not their indaba. So I believe at the moment - I have recently written to the Minister of Labour in a newspaper, ... where the workers in the mining industry cannot be organised, who have no say in their occupation like their white counterparts. (Indistinct) These are the type of things we find ourselves confronted by. And it causes bitterness amongst Africans. We are becoming bitter, and today we feel that the situation is changing, but the change is slow, and we wish it could be accelerated. We could be able to convince Sebe to accept trade unions in the Ciskei, but if Ciskei becomes independence we have no .. we don't want to interfere in another state because we are in white

age 77 South Africa. Now, I have been in contact with prominent people, no names, but who come from Sada, and you find that that place is poverty-stricken, and if they should opt for independence it should be worse for them. At the moment at least there are some people who come to white South Africa to work, and that there are no difficulties in coming here. We are having difficulties with Matanzima right now. The jobs are here, the place to stay is here, but the difficulty comes in when he has to go back to Matanzima to ask for permission to come here. We really feel it is wrong for people to opt for independence. Why can't a solution be worked out which could embrace all of the Republic of South Africa?

MvdB: You did mention that if the Ciskei becomes independent you would ^{have} problems with the garment workers in Mdantsane. Is that because they would be regarded as commuters, from an independent homeland, although working let's say in a white area like East London, they can have that employment but they may not be a member of a trade union? This is the newest government decision?

MVUBELO: Yes, yes.

MvdB: Lucy, what about the person who comes from an independent homeland, and let us assume that he has paid his R5 to Matanzima, do you think such a person is in any way in an inferior position in relation to your other members who have the right of urban residence here?

MVUBELO: Of course, because even if he can have that type of he cannot belong to a union, and we cannot exclude him from the benefits that we have built up. Even if he is resident and has employment, but because he is not a Republican, he cannot have all the benefits that other people enjoy, except what ..

MvdB: But I had the impression that he cannot become a member of the union, but he can enjoy as much benefit ...

MVUBELO: Where he can enjoy the other benefits regulated by the council but not by the union.

MvdB: Oh, I see, there are certain additional benefits accruing to union members only?

MVUBELO: Our own members.

MvdB: One last question, I am sure my colleagues also have some points they would like to put to you, and this is how in your view does the Riekert and the Wiehahn reports and the extent to which the government has accepted these recommendations, which, as you know, is not one hundred percent, to what extent does that affect the position of your members, both advantageously and disadvantageously?

MVUBELO: Well, I think both reports were accepted by us, because they were giving us more ground to stand on. They were too wonderful. If those recommendations could have been accepted, I know they couldn't have been accepted a hundred percent by the government, but at least some very important ..(indistinct) but some very important issues which blacks were looking upon as being able as being rectified, were left out. That really made me feel that even if I had an opportunity of going to because those things were the cream of our expectations, and we were let down.. At least the scope has so widened if the government can accept our

recommendations, most are them are based on the Riekert report. And I believe that we have sacrificed ourselves to try and cooperate with the requirements of our superiors like Dr Koornhof, who We have our own opponents in the black community, who say all the time that it is just a futile exercise. We are bound to move away from discrimination. We have made ourselves an (580) that we can be assaulted or killed for what we are doing, because we still believe as black South Africans we are to be treated like any other racial group. There shouldn't be a group that is apart. The reference book is such a pest to a black, that we have recommended that we should all be issued with the book of life, and by all I mean all the blacks in the urban areas. And that is also the Riekert recommendation (?)

MvdB: This question .. I don't know whether this is possible, I know have a negative attitude towards the idea of possible independence. Don't you think that there is a chance that an independent government, in the process of taking independence and after having taken independence, would be able to exert more pressure to accomplish for example, exactly this point about the book of life that you have mentioned, that such a government would be able to do, whilst it is non-independent, while it is in its present position of the Ciskeian government, for example?

MVUBELO: As far as the Ciskeian government is concerned ... passports .. which I don't accept at all. There is a young girl in Bophuthatswana, she had an offer to go to (?), the head office of Moral Rearmament, but because she needed a passport from Bophuthatswana, she couldn't go. How would you feel if you had to experience something like that?

MvdB: So you are saying that if you have a Ciskeian passport instead of a book of life you would lose the benefit of your South African passport?

MVUBELO: Yes.

MvdB: Mr Chairman I have no more questions.

AS: About this Wiehahn report, what I am trying to get is a bit more clear in my own mind exactly what the disadvantages are that would flow from independence. Now, as I understand it, correct me if I'm wrong, the Wiehahn commission, by a majority, decided that not only people who lived in the Republic could have trade union rights, but also the blacks resident in the homelands could obtain trade union rights when they were working in the Republic, but that the government said no. Now, therefore am I correct that in this respect the refusal of trade union rights, a country like the Ciskei, which is not independent, is in no worse position than Bophuthatswana or the Transkei, that independence makes no difference to a refusal of trade union rights to the residents and the commuters from a homeland?

MVUBELO: Well, I wouldn't be able to see quite.. but as it is at the moment we have no fear of organising those workers. The Ciskei is their homeland, but at the moment it is not independent, and we have the right of organising the workers there. But I don't know what is going to happen when it becomes independent. The government can say : "No trade unions" and we will be losing everything we have at

age 79 the moment, the workers in Mdantsane who are working in the white sector in East London, and they travel in and out. But they are still ^{not} members until we have applied for an exemption, we have been given an option to apply on their behalf, because they are already organised. We submitted a very strong memorandum to the Minister of Labour in this regard - namely commuter - and it was then that the Minister decided that we could apply for the exemption to include in our union as members. It is very good to accept an exemption. But what if there is a reshuffle in the Cabinet, and the Minister whom we have now is moved from this portfolio? ?

EJM: If I remember correctly, the government did not turn down an extension for these categories completely. My recollection of it is that they are postponing the implementation of that part ..and that as soon as they intend extending it to these people, so that many of your problems may be solved if this is done. The only problems seem to be administrative ones.

MVUBELO: Yes. We had advice that we should present the speakers of the people who accepted, and we wrote a letter to the Registrar in Pretoria, to ask him to advise us how to do it , because it is difficult to find out how, because the P.W.D. has got special...so far we have had discussion, but there is nothing final yet, because even the provisional registration has not been arranged, we were are ready, we want to know how to do it.

EJM: I hope all your problems will be solved.

AS: May I ask on that, if one .. Professor Marais says the government is right and is only taking a little time to sort the matter out .. when it has sorted it out, is it your understanding that it would be sorted out in such a way that people who live in an independent homeland would have the same .. would get the exemption as well as those who live in a non-independent homeland, that Bophuthatswanas will have these trade unions rights as well as, at the moment, Ciskeians?

EJM: That was my understanding generally, this may not be true. The intention was to ultimately implement the Wiehahn report's findings, but that there were administrative problems and that they would try and solve those.

IMRIE: This ^{accepted} was, in the White Paper and the majority recommendation on trade union rights was that it should be extended to everybody, and there was no qualification whatsoever, and that is why it was rejected, and a minority report was accepted whereby trade union rights will be given BY EXEMPTION, AND THIS NOT REALLY GOOD ENOUGH!

EJM: Are you certain that the report .. that what it does not envisage .. extending it to these other categories?

IMRIE: There is a clause whereby the Minister could widen the scope of .. so as to apply to other categories, and it is now already being widened. So he can in fact extend trade union rights to Angolans, Zambians, whatever. The point that you brought up, the implementation of these recommendations, it is not quite certain when they are going to be implemented.

RIR: trade unions rights are not available for Bophuthatswanas, Transkeians, whoever, at the moment, and yet they may obtain these under exemption, and then Ciskeians

though they are commuters?

could, workseekers under the Bill as commuters, but again exempted even / Page 80

MVUBELO: Yes, because they stay in the homelands.

RIR: But even though they are commuters they still can be (614), but those who live in the urban areas and are not commuters, they lose those rights when Ciskei becomes independent?

MVUBELO: Yes.

RIR: So that there is this again? So that they could lose even more than commuters?

AS: ... but permanent residents would have trade union rights, now.

MVUBELO: But I think we should go further than that. At the moment we have registered unions, and the people who are living ... black people, those groups who have had the right up till now, let us look at them. What is going to happen once their country takes independence? I am not yet quite clear about ... whether they are organised or not. As far as I know the garment workers union ... there are no whites left in Babaleki. I will try and find for you what the position of other racial groups is.

(She promises more information)