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Striking for wages and democracy: the changing role of public sector unions between 1994 and 2004: the case of the Communications and Allied Services Workers Union of Zimbabwe (CASWUZ)

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STRIKING FOR WAGES AND DEMOCRACY; THE CHANGING ROLE OF PUBLIC SECTOR UNIONS BETWEEN 1994 AND 2004: The Case of the Communications and Allied Services Workers Union of Zimbabwe (CASWUZ)

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A research report submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts Labour Policy and Globalisation (by Coursework and Research Report).

Johannesburg, February 2010

Abstract

The onslaught of neoliberal globalisation has transformed the role of trade unions in society as they, in collaboration with other civil society groups, take a leading role in issues affecting them at work as well as in society. Labour movements unlike other social movements easily assume the leading position as they have politically conscious structures in every part of the country and a high capacity for mobilisation across the country. Public sector strikes have recently hit the headlines in Zimbabwe and this study uses Communications and Allied Services Workers Union of Zimbabwe (CASWUZ) as a case study in view of the militant strike wave between 1994 and 2004 which were stealthily tied to democratic reforms. The concept of social movement unionism (SMU) was explored by adopting qualitative research approach through in depth interviews and documentary analysis. The findings vindicate CASWUZ transformed into a social movement union as the union's demands incorporated wages and democracy. CASWUZ managed to assume the leadership position among public sector unions by challenging the state's policies that were not favourable to the working class and the poor through strike action during the period under review under a highly politicised work environment. There is evidence however, that the workers voice did not varnish in 2004 as the adoption of new sources of power such as symbolic power and logistical power can take back the union to its original position of fighting for decent work, social justice and a democratic society.

Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in Labour Policy and Globalisation at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other University.

Signed this.....day of.....2010 Taurai Mereki

Dedication

To the four people who matter most in my life, my two daughters Charity Chipo and Chengetai Bridget, my only son Tadiwanashe and my wife Zvisinei – for a better future.

Acknowledgements

This research would not have been possible without the invaluable supervision and mentorship of Dr Noor Nieftagodien. I greatly appreciate his support and encouragement throughout the research process. I extend my gratitude to the following people Professor Edward Webster, Dr. Leo Zeilig, Dr. Mitchell Williams and Dr. Seeraj Mohamed for showing me the way and giving me the confidence. I am also thankful to all my friends who provided some useful criticism. Many thanks to the funders of this programme the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the other Global Labour University (GLU) partners to whom I owe the realisation of this dream. To the three pillars of the family; my late mother Chipo, my father Jacob and uncle Turikai – your dream has surely come true. I greatly thank the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) for all the assistance, and I specially mention the General Secretary, Mr Wellington Chibebe and the President, Mr Lovemore Matombo.

I also thank all my colleagues at the Communications and Allied Services Workers Union of Zimbabwe (CASWUZ), for all the support and for believing in me. Special mention goes to Comrade James Gondo for sending me data from Harare and also my friends Marvellous Mapangire–Mangezi and Nyarai Sandinga for gathering and emailing information from Mutare. To them and the workers in the communications industry I salute you and urge you to carry on with the struggle. *"Shinga Mushandi Shinga" "Qina Msebenzi Qina"* "Worker Be Resolute Fight On"

Finally, I have no words to thank my wife Zvisinei and our three children Charity Chipo, Chengetai Bridget and Tadiwanashe who have endured my absence back home in Zimbabwe, uncomplaining, for the whole of 2009. To them all, it is nice to be home again.

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For almost a decade PTC workers have been going on strike over issues affecting them at their workplace. Although as early as 1994, PTC management accused striking workers of pursuing a political agenda (The Worker, March 1994), this is not so because then there was no labour backed opposition party. Also as early as 1995 the public media sought to portray the ZCTU as having political ambitions and "preparing to enter the political arena for the 1995 general elections" (Schiphorst, 427). While this prediction might have been partially correct for ZCTU led strikes, ZPTWU strikes were merely to do with bread and butter. However, after 1999 some of its strikes were of a political nature especially those that were ZCTU led. This section tries to analyse the strikes that PTC workers undertook between 1995 and 2003 in order that their nature might be revealed as it seems CASWUZ played a dual role of striking for wages and democracy as explained by its president who said during this period unions had become 'silent assailants'. What this suggests is that because of the repressive nature of the ZANU PF government it had become difficult to speak out hence they covertly discussed economic and political issues at the workplace. In sum it had become difficult to express anti-ZANU PF sentiments at the workplace whether by speaking against or striking over whatever issue. What this means therefore is that the period 1995 to 2003 became a learning curve whereby it came out clearly that public sector strikes will always inherently be political as they are directly against the state or calls for its action. The next section tries to clarify this point by analyzing the changing causes of strikes over nearly a decade.....91

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
ATUC	African Trade Union Congress
CASWUZ	Communications and Allied Services Workers Union of Zimbabwe
COSATU	Confederation of South African Trade Unions
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
ILO	International Labour Organisation
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MMD	Movement for Multiparty Democracy
NCA	National Constitutional Association
NEC	National Executive Council
PTC	Posts and Telecommunication Corporation
RPTWA	Rhodesia Posts and Telecommunication Workers Association
RPTWU	Rhodesia Posts and Telecommunication Workers Union
SACP	South African Communist Party
SMU	Social Movement Union
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front
ZANU	Zimbabwe African Peoples Union
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African Peoples Union
ZCTU	Zambia Congress of Trade Union
ZCTU	Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Union
ZPTWU	Zimbabwe Posts and Telecommunication Workers Union
ZUM	Zimbabwe Unity Movement

Chapter One

Introduction and Research Methodology

Introduction

It is argued that Trade Unions in Zimbabwe were relatively weak and divided before independence. During the pre – independence era they arguably posed only intermittent challenges to the status quo, such as in the General Strikes of 1948 when workers demanded not only economic improvements but also social and political reforms (Gwisai, 2002). The 1948 general strike was followed by others in 1964 and in 1979 which exhibited more or less the same characteristics.

In post independent Zimbabwe, there was a wave of industrial action between 1980 and 1981. However, this did not last as the new government which various scholars have defined as socialist promulgated a raft of legislation that sought simultaneously to curtail as well as strengthen the labour movement (Gwisai, 2002; Saunders, 2005, Zeilig, 2002). This is supported by the fact that government had a personal interest of stable industrial relations when it formed the ZCTU (Sachikonye, 1987). Despite the fact that five trade unions had merged to form the African Trade Union Congress (ATUC), government went ahead to give a directive for the formation of the ZCTU since the ATUC was anti-ZANU-PF. On a positive note, the amalgamation strengthened the union movement given that government followed up in 1985 with the pro-worker Labour Relations Act (Madhuku, 2001). The most prominent feature was the principle of one industry one union retained from the 1934 Industrial Conciliation Act which worked in favour of strong trade unions. Strong trade union rights were also a way of thanking the workers' support during the liberation struggle (Madhuku, 2001). However, the introduction

of ESAP in 1991 wiped away these labour rights as the labour market was deregulated. The major arguments were that the principle of one industry one union contravened ILO Conventions 87 and 98 and also that it infringed on section 21 of the national constitution which guarantees the constitutional right of freedom of association (Madhuku, 2001).

The hardships caused by ESAP led to the opposition of government polices by the labour unions starting the early 1990s. Most prominently was the 1994 PTC workers' strike which sparked more strikes in the public sector. Repeated actions were witnessed in the second half of the 1990s. Although most of the strikes were industrial, it can be argued that most public sector strikes are inherently political as they are directed at the government. The notable contribution by public sector unions is testified by the fact that prominent figures from the public sector such as Gibson Sibanda and Gift Chimanikire were among the top five when an opposition party was incepted in 1999. Despite the fact that Zimbabwe has captured global news for more than a decade now, much attention has been focused on the political and economic crisis as compared to the struggles of trade unions.

Aims of the study

The aim of this study is to analyze the shifts in the strategies of the Communications and Allied Services Workers Union of Zimbabwe (CASWUZ) in the period 1994 – 2004 which was a time of high political volatility. Faced with a fast changing political landscape and ensuing challenges the labour movement was challenged to review its strategies. Existing in a harsh political and economic environment, the CASWUZ has attempted to remain relevant to the interests of the rank-and-file members by adopting varied strategies to cope with the rapidly shifting and unpredictable environment. It has arguably been the strongest and most militant affiliate of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions as reflected in the fact that it led more strikes than any

other affiliates during this period. This study aims to analyze the reasons behind the union's central role in the aforementioned strike wave.

Bond and Manyanya (2002:87) have noted that "in 1994 industrial action was revived by postal and telecommunication workers…" Since then public sector workers have continued to play a leading role in the reinvigoration and politicization of union activities Moreover, CASWUZ's participation in strikes and 'stay-aways' called by the ZCTU was overwhelmingly endorsed by the union's rank-and-file membership. James Gondo (a long standing union leader in the post and telecommunications sector) argues that the workers and CASWUZ members supported these strikes because they assisted to fight a common enemy (the state) believed to be responsible for their suffering.[1] Even non unionized workers within the communications industry participated in the strikes (Raftopoulos and Sachikonye, 2001: 279).

This was a landmark shift in strategy by public sector unions in Zimbabwe which had enjoyed state alliance post 1980. Despite the union's prominence in the struggles during the period under review its role has not been fully explored as most scholars give attention to the MDC, the ZCTU and the student intelligentsia (Kraus, 2007). Although CASWUZ had embarked on successful strikes before 1994, most notably in the 1980s and in 1992, the 1994 strike against low wages first raised them to prominence and consequently assumed a leadership position. Soon thereafter the union also entrenched its leading role in broader industrial and political struggles. It is therefore one of the aims of this study to analyze the role played by the CASWUZ in the fight for wages and democratic reforms in view of their overwhelming participation in general strikes and stay-aways.

[1] Interview: James Gondo, Johannesburg, 06 September 2009. He is one of the founding members of ZPTWU (1971) and was midlands Provincial Chairman in 1971. He became one of the leading figures in CASWUZ in post colonial Zimbabwe before becoming a full time Education Officer in 1999 when he took a voluntary exit package from Zimbabwe Posts where he was working.

A key question considered here is whether the struggles waged by CASWUZ may be categorized as striking for wages and democracy? In other words, what was the relationship and balance struck between industrial and political struggles in overall the strategy of the union? Over the years, there has been some debate, especially in working class circles about whether the union's involvement in the agitation against the war veterans' levy, the hiking of sales tax, human rights abuses, police brutality, pushing for the adoption of a new national constitution, government corruption and general economic decay has changed its character.

Given the above, one cannot have a fair understanding of CASWUZ's character without looking at its involvement in matters affecting them in society as well as at the workplace. This study therefore aims to analyze the union's changing character.

The adoption of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) in 1991 by Zimbabwe subjected the country to the ideological prescriptions of the Breton Woods Institutions, including labour market liberalization, privatization/commercialization of state enterprises and downsizing, all of which negatively affected labour. The study discusses the links between strikes and the adoption of ESAP, which weakened labour's demands for minimum standards (Madhuku, 2001).

CASWUZ represents workers in the public sector which places it in a very sensitive and strategic position in relation to the state. This is of particular significance considering that from Zimbabwe's independence in 1980 the unions were pro government. However, in the post 1990 era the voice of the trade unions became assertive in challenging government decisions. The study will analyze how this shift in political allegiance affected the role and strategies of CASWUZ. The study seeks to explore if these strategies were intended to benefit the rank-and-file and how they perceived this.

Research Question: How did the CASWUZ's role and strategies change during the strike wave between 1994 and 2004 in the context of political upheavals and the implementation of neo-liberal policies?

In answering the research question, the study will examine the following sub questions

1. How did the CASWUZ respond to the changes in the communications industry brought about by the implementation of the ESAP and other neo liberal policies?
2. What were the reasons behind the wave of strikes between 1994 and 2004?
3. Why did the CASWUZ play a leading role in the ZCTU's decision to break its alliance with the ZANU-PF government and then in the decision to form the MDC?

Rationale

The 1994 strike by the CASWUZ marked the beginning of a new era in the Zimbabwean industrial relations climate yet significant research on the causes and significance of these strikes is virtually non - existent. Central to this study is to find out the factors that made it possible for the CASWUZ to confront the employer more regularly on issues affecting them at the workplace and in society.

This research is important as it draws attention to the relationship between labour and government as the employer between 1994 and 2004. Rather than studying all the thirty-six affiliates of the ZCTU, this research focuses on CASWUZ because of its leading role of the unions' views and position at the time. It is important to examine the causes of strikes in the communications industry as they marked the beginning of the nascent social movement unionism (SMU) in Zimbabwe. These strikes triggered other strikes in the airways, construction, banks,

and the health sectors which called for improved working conditions and, critically, covertly tied to democratic reforms. On ZCTU led strikes the study seeks to expose the role played by CASWUZ and whether it was the central character.

In the period under study, it is the communication sector workers led by the CASWUZ that participated repeatedly in strikes and yet managed to emerge from this bruising confrontation with the state more or less intact, something that was rare with other ZCTU affiliates. The study will discuss the union's strategies during this period and what made them effective.

Prior to 1994 the CASWUZ and the ZCTU had close ties with the ruling ZANU-PF party. This is clearly exposed by the fact that in disputes (some protracted) involving collective bargaining, the union would invariably seek guidance from the parent Ministry of Information Posts and Telecommunication and ZANU PF. This mostly worked to the benefit of the union as the government would instruct managements to accede to the workers' demands. The 1994 strike unlike that of 1992 in which the ministry managed to call off after five hours is critical because it marked a turning point in CASWUZ's relationship with the ruling party as the ministry failed to get back the workers to work. The ZANU PF dominated parliament and cabinet had to intervene in 1994 and made a decision to award salaries for Communication sector workers.

In contrast, the 2004 strike was widely condemned by the parent ministry and the ruling ZANU-PF party as a political strike. This was because the CASWUZ as an affiliate of the ZCTU was then considered an appendage of the opposition MDC (Matombo and Sachikonye, 2010). CASWUZ had fallen out with the ZANU-PF led government because of its alliance with the opposition MDC and the CASWUZ President Lovemore Matombo has recently asked Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai to intervene since the workers were dismissed for allegedly

supporting his party (http://www.thezimbabwean.co.uk). Despite the striking workers having followed the necessary procedures of going on industrial action in terms of the labour legislations, the employers made a unilateral decision to dismiss them. More than fifty percent of the workers who did not return to work as per the employer's directive were unilaterally dismissed. Although the union leaders approached parliamentarians for the reversal of the decision (CASWUZ, documents) the unionists were shocked to learn that a political decision had been taken to "discipline it". Strikes would no longer to be tolerated in political circles. The 2004 strike marked the end of the usually protracted and regular strikes in the communication sector. The study will consider the impact of this outcome on the character of the union.

The CASWUZ leadership played a prominent role in the formation of the MDC as evidenced by the fact that the union's General Secretary (GS) became a leading member of the new party. This highlights the contentious issue of the relationship between unions and political parties as subsequent events revealed that the state did not tolerate trade union autonomy and involvement in opposition politics. This represents a shift from a union that was once pro government to one that had become autonomous and critical of the government. It is important to acknowledge that a trade union is a heterogeneous group consisting of people with differing political views. There are some elements within the union who may prefer economism / workerism while others might want to follow social movement unionism. Workerists are those workers who believe that workers should have nothing to do with things beyond bread and butter issues such as politics and democracy.

Other trade unions could also learn from this study since it considers the relationship between employers and a trade union supporting an opposition party and the trajectory it follows. The study will explore the trajectory of a trade union supporting a ruling party and one supporting an

opposition party. This adds to a body of knowledge for future trade union decisions on tactics and strategies as they reflect on past events.

Currently there is no in-depth study on the causes of strikes led by the CASWUZ although these strikes have been mentioned in passing by some scholars like Bond and Manyanya (2002) and Raftopoulos and Sachikonye (2001). The CASWUZ strikes have however, enjoyed coverage in cyberspace for example (http://wsws.org, http://www.union-network.org/telecom, new Zimbabwe.com, SABC, and http://www.zimbabwesituation.com). This study aims to fill this gap by building on the thin literature that currently exists.

Methodology

This section discusses the methods used in the research. The study made use of qualitative research methods. The qualitative research methods, selection of research sites, access and ethical consideration, strength, weaknesses and problems in the field as well as limitations of the study are discussed below.

Selection of research sites

The study mainly focused on CASWUZ leadership from three provinces, mainly those residing in three of the major cities: Harare, Masvingo and Mutare. The initial intention was to cover western province (Bulawayo), but this was dropped due to financial constraints. Purposive sampling was used to select the research sites as well as the respondents and in-depth interviews were carried out. According to Neuman (2000: 198) purposive sampling "uses the judgment of an expert in selecting cases or it selects cases with a specific purpose in mind." It was necessary to use purposive sampling in order to select unique informants who in this case were informative (Neuman, 2000).

Heterogeneity is one of the key factors that were considered when selecting the research sites. The three regions and provinces have unique varied characteristics which justified their selection in this study. The Eastern province (Mutare) had the most successful strikes as indicated by a very high level of militancy. South province (Masvingo) and north province (Harare) on the other hand were reported to have a low and moderate level of militancy.

An attempt was made to be gender sensitive in selecting the interviewees. However, it proved to be difficult to find female shop stewards as the union is traditionally male dominated. One of the few female shop stewards from Masvingo who had initially agreed to participate in the research later declined citing time constraints. Nevertheless, the researcher still managed to interview four females out of the sixteen interviews conducted. The study managed to interview workers from different generations (between 33 and 59years). This helped the researcher to capture the varied experiences of the pre and post independence industrial relations. Only those leaders who were in employment during the period under review were interviewed because they offered firsthand experience of the period under review.

Semi-structured In-depth Interviews

The primary research method was the semi-structured in-depth interviews. The researcher managed to conduct sixteen in-depth interviews with trade unionists from different structures in the organization: shop stewards, provincial executive committee members and national executive council members. The President of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions who is also the President of CASWUZ was also interviewed.

The sixteen semi-structured in-depth interviews were as follows: four union national executive council (NEC) members, four provincial executive members, and eight rank-and-file representatives (shop stewards). Most of the Harare interviews were conducted at the CASWUZ offices. In Masvingo and Mutare the interviews were conducted at the respondents' working places. Only two interviews were carried out at the interviewees' homes because this was more convenient for them. In doing research sometimes it's important to be flexible and acquiesce to the needs of informants.

There was no restriction on the way the interviews were conducted. Rather interviews were aimed at giving the interviewees an opportunity to articulate their experience from their own perspectives. All interviews were recorded with the consent of the interviewees, except one interview where the respondent feared for her personal security should the recorder land in the hands of state security agents. In addition to recording the interviews the researcher also compiled some notes. Comprehensive notes were taken for the one interviewee who declined to be recorded thereafter the researcher compiled a detailed report of the interview.

The central advantage of this technique (in depth interviews) lies in the use of open ended questions which permit a variety of responses and "can use extensive probes" (Neuman, 2000:273). This strategy gives informants an opportunity to develop their answers outside a structured format. It also allows the researcher to discover unanticipated findings and it permits adequate answers to complex questions.

However, this method has its own disadvantages. Different respondents give different degrees of detail in answers. Some responses were buried in details which were not always relevant to this study. The major disadvantage of in-depth interviews is that a greater amount of the respondents' time, thought and effort is necessary and also it is costly.

Qualitative Research Methods

The study primarily used qualitative research method for data gathering. This is because the method offers the researcher some flexibility and facilitates the relationship of trust and thus can uncover in-depth information. The methods also focus upon the way participants interpret their experiences and construct reality. As argued by Burgess 1984, the ultimate aim of qualitative research is to study situations from the participant's point of view and search meaning (Burgess, 1984: 3). The use of qualitative research methods helps to gain a rich and detailed description of the individual understanding of a group's social worlds (Neuman, 2000). Lemmer (1992) argues that qualitative research methods assist the researcher to understand the life of individuals or groups studied in their own frame of reference, and offer an opportunity to make an interpretation which reflects the interviewee's account. The aim of this study is to gain an intimate understanding of the beliefs, understanding, ideas and experiences of the shop stewards and the NEC members of CASWUZ and how these relate to the shifting strategies of the union. Interviews were used as the main research instrument, supplemented by documentary analysis. Also qualitative methods were supplemented by quantitative methods to ascertain the sociological characteristics of the respondents.

Documentary Analysis

In order to gain a broader understanding of the changing strategies of CASWUZ in the strikes, this study also examined documentary sources. The study focused on documents accessed from the union archives in particular covering the 1990s to 2004. Access to these documents was not a problem as the researcher is an executive official of the union and had access to files containing strike notices, congress resolutions, reports, memoranda, collective bargaining agreements and minutes of meetings with management. Only documents with relevance to the study were analyzed. However, it proved difficult to access some documents from ZCTU.

According to Neuman (1997) in historical comparative approach data is gathered from four forms of archival and documentary sources. The first are primary sources which consist of letters, diaries, newspapers, movies, and novels, articles of clothing, photos, and so forth of those who lived in the past and have survived into the present. Secondly, secondary sources which consist of the writings of specialist historians who have spent some years studying primary sources. Third, there are running records, which include files on existing statistical documents maintained by organizations. Last, recollections, which consist of words of writings of individuals about their past lives or experiences based on memory. This study limited itself to the use of primary sources, secondary sources, and recollections, and examined the following:

- Policy documents, minutes of union meetings, collective bargaining agreements (CBA), and
- Media coverage of CASWUZ's role in strikes including ZCTU newsletters.

The disadvantage of documentary analysis is that it offers a static view of history and provides little sense of the process through which that document came into being. To counter this problem

the study analyzed documents in relation to the information gathered through semi structured in-depth interviews. Most documents are characterized by silences which might even be difficult to discover. This is where in-depth interviews come in. By use of extensive probes, one can get sense of these informal activities (Neuman, 1997).

Access and Ethical Consideration

Participation in this study was on a voluntary basis and the participants were advised of their right to refuse to take part in the study or not to answer certain questions if they so wish (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). This research was guided by Burton's (2000) argument that in any research co-operation must be voluntary and the respondents must be advised in advance that it is within their rights to refuse to answer certain questions or not to take part if they feel so. Some of the interviewees were particularly afraid of victimisation by the employer (state) despite having volunteered to take part. The researcher guaranteed the protection of their identities through the use of pseudonyms. The researcher also gave assurance that all the information will be collected in confidence and used for scholarly purpose only. All the participants were briefed on the rationale of the study and the procedures to be followed and the researcher volunteered to answer any queries regarding the study and any of the procedures to be used. Access to all the sites and persons was not a problem since the researcher had sought permission from the employers, the ZCTU and the CASWUZ. Some of the stakeholders acknowledged the importance of the research to the communication sector and the labour movement and assured to give the researcher maximum support where possible.

Strengths, Weaknesses and Problems in the Field

The study acknowledges that the different research instruments used in this study had some limitations. These include silences characteristic of documents and also bias of respondents.

However, the research instruments (documentary analysis and interviews) complemented each other thereby minimizing their respective weaknesses. Also, the fact that the researcher was a participant observer of most of the ZCTU and CASWUZ led strikes allowed the extension of the strengths of each instrument and limited the weaknesses.

The literacy level of some of the interviewees was very low, and this proved to be a challenge for the study as some of the interviewees had a very limited command of the English language. The researcher's proficiency in Shona proved to be very essential and critical during some of the interviews. The research was conducted with a very limited budget and as a result the researcher faced some financial constraints.

The research was conducted between July and December 2009 with an initial target of 20 interviews in Harare and Bulawayo. Time and financial limitations forced the researcher to select three provinces and conduct a total of sixteen interviews. Despite all the confidentiality assurance the polarization of relations between labour and state security became an issue as one of the respondents doubted the security guarantee despite a letter from the university indicating that this was an academic research.

Limitations of the Study

Although this study makes a contribution on the discourse on CASWUZ's and trade union shifting strategies, it also has some limitations. There are five provinces in which CASWUZ organizes in Zimbabwe and focusing on only three provinces limits the scope of the study. However, the methodology used in the study ensures that a representative sample was selected. The researcher is one of the leading members of CASWUZ and as such, it is not always easy to

research one's own organization. Mindful of this, the researcher maintained a critical position which then helped to come up with an objective report. Also, being an insider made it easy for the researcher to access critical union documents and officials.

Conclusion

The chapter highlighted the importance of unions in social transformation. In doing this, CASWUZ was taken as an example because of the leadership role it played during 1994 to 2004. The aims, rationale and research methodology were also touched on. The chapter ended with a discussion on the strengths, weaknesses and limitations of the study.

Chapter Two

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter highlights the literature pertaining to the role of trade unions in the fight for wages and for social justice. According to Peta et al (1993:9) "history teaches us that oppressed masses will mobilize and organize themselves into mass movements whether the law allows it or not." The chapter argues on Social Movement Union (SMU) as it is relates to CASWUZ. This theoretical framework will help to ascertain the research findings as to whether the character of

CASWUZ meets the features of SMU or not. The rest of the chapter will review literature on strikes and the quest for democracy in Africa and Zimbabwe highlighting on CASWUZ's shifting strategies.

Political Unionism or Social Movement Union (SMU)

Burawoy and Wolpe cited by Pillay (2006:170) have argued that the engagement of workers on economic issues with their employers (politics of production) and the contestation over political demands by citizens (politics of the state) is popular democratic politics. Pillay (2006) argues that Webster (1994) uses the terms social movement unionism and political unionism interchangeably to refer to political and economic struggle by workers. This is supported by Lambert and Webster (1988) who define political and social movement unionism as an attempt to link production to wider political issues by engaging factory based production politics as well as community and state politics. Webster (1994) prefers social movement unionism to political unionism because it arises as a direct response to political and economic conditions facing unions. Siedman (1994) has however separated political unionism from SMU by arguing that SMU is much broader than political unionism. Political unionism is "expressed through support for political parties" (Siedman, 1994: 2). This analysis helps us differentiate between social movement unions and political unions especially when assessing the activities of CASWUZ between 1994 and 2004.

When trade unions move away from state – market embeddedness (business unionism) to being autonomous institutions embedded in society, they can be termed social movement unions. As Webster and Lambert (forthcoming) argue, the "emphasis is on cooperation between the workplace and society." Lopez (2004:9) argues that "…the common denominator is reliance on

creative pressure strategies including, but not limited to, direct action, community alliances, and political intervention."

A much broader definition is given by Devinatz, (2008: 205) who argues that:

> Social movement unionism is a trend in contemporary unionism in which workers and trade unions are united in larger coalitions with an array of community organizations for achieving mutual goals in furthering of economic and social justice.

The authors concur that SMU can only exist if there is a community and trade union alliance in pursuance of common economic and political goals and this is the path followed by CASWUZ.

Clawson, (2008) asserts that because of the global dominance of neo-liberalism, trade unions will be forced to adopt strategies consistent with SMU in order to survive and prosper in the coming years and 'neo-liberalism guarantees a vibrant future for social movement unionism.' This as Clawson (2008:207) puts it, is because workers only understand the need for collective organization when the boss humiliates them and 'deny them their dignity, when the company cuts their wages and benefits, when work hours are arbitrary and unfair, when conditions are unsafe and health is endangered.' Whilst this is true, the argument leaves out the most important aspects of trade union and community alliance in defence of their common interests. This argument might however be applicable to the global north, but not to the south. A number of scholars have argued that SMU started in South Africa as early as the 1970s in fighting against apartheid, yet Clawson argues that it is the fight against neo- liberalism that guarantees SMU. However, as Von Holdt (2002: 285) argues SMU is

> a highly mobilized form of unionism which emerges in opposition to authoritarian regimes and repressive workplaces in newly industrializing countries of the developing world, and which is based in a significant expansion of semi-skilled manufacturing work.

This definition is feasible as it agrees with Webster (forthcoming, 2010) who postulates that SMU emerged in the Global South in the 1970s and 1980s. Grey (2006) argues that it is the social movements of the global South that are taken as key examples of social movement unionism. Von Holdt (2002:285) adds to the debate by arguing that, "SMU is embedded in a network of community and political alliances, and demonstrates a commitment both to internal democratic and socialist transformation of authoritarian societies." Von Holdt's argument concurs with that of Webster (forthcoming, 2010) in that labour is seen as a social and political force other than just a commodity to be bargained for. As Polanyi (1944) predicted, society will take measures to protect itself from the disruption caused by commoditization. Polanyi refers to this counter movement as the double movement, and in this context labour is the counter movement. Counter movements are the "usual backswing of the political pendulum toward a state of affairs that had been violently disturbed" (Polanyi, 1944: 248). They may a spontaneous expression of public feeling, or front for interest groups.

In the United States of America, the focus on social movement unionism is directed at organizing campaigns around contract renewals and attempts to pass legislation among other issues (Clawson, 2008). Almost all labour issues are concerned with the environment, gender, ethnicity or the community and those linkages make it much easier to generate movement support (). While Clawson's argument is quite convincing, he does not make a distinction on the issues that affect the north and those that affect the south. This is clarified by Fairbrother (2008: 213) who argues that "northern forms of unionism are often characterized as economistic, with narrowly focused and limited views of emancipatory politics, a feature of "business unionism".' Fairbrother continues quoting Fantasia and Voss (2004), that such unionism is limited and self defeating.

Clawson (2008) argues that social movements can take three forms all of which are likely to be important in the coming years; they are global, state directed and community. There may however, be combinations of these. The most common form of social movement is the coalition between unions and community groups. Fairbrother (2008:214) maintains that "in social movement unionism neither the unions nor their members are passive in any sense" as they take the active lead in the streets as well as in politics. This argument concurs with most arguments advanced by South African scholars who tie social movement unionism to the anti – apartheid campaign by COSATU (Von Holdt, 2002; Bezuidenhout, 2000; Webster, 1988). Webster's (1988: 194) argument that social movement unionism emerges 'in authoritarian countries such as Philippines, Brazil and South Africa, where workers are excluded from the central decision making process' is convincing. This reinforces the anti – apartheid stance adopted by the COSATU during the apartheid era.

Lambert (1998:73) has argued that the South African form of unionism is global social movement unionism, which "arises when unions are conscious of the linkage between workplace, civil society, the state and global forces and develop a strategy to resist the damaging pressures of globalization through creating a movement linking these spheres" and he is referring to the role played by labour in the 1970s and 1980s against apartheid. Webster cited in Fairbrother (2008:216) argues that the essence of social movement unionism is an appeal to workers that goes beyond the employment relationship to the totality of their lives, as consumers, citizens, family members and women.

Causes of strikes in the communications sector between 1994 and 2004

The concept of SMU can be looked at in view of strike action and its causes. Liberalization of the labour market by the Zimbabwe government in the early 1990s which replaced the wage

setting system put in place by the state of the 1980s led to an upsurge of strikes by workers to press for demands around collective bargaining and labour rights (Saunders, 2001). The rise in militant strikes from 1994 onwards was triggered by the worsening socio – economic situation which made the resolution of workers demands urgent (Saunders, 2001). This was especially common in the health, telecommunications, transport and education because of unsolved grievances (Saunders, 2001). This is confirmed by an article carried by UNI global union which argues that '5,000 workers in TelOne (Zimbabwe) embarked on an indefinite strike on 17 May 2004, after the company failed to implement an arbitrator's award for a cost of living adjustment (COLA)' (http://www.union-network.org/telecom). CASWUZ is a member of UNI and at certain times during the strikes, UNI communicates with the employers on the importance of respecting labour rights.

Mobilization theory also provides helpful guide when considering the factors that prompted industrial action in the communications sector between 1994 and 2004. According Tilly (1978, as cited by Kelly, 1998) a useful theory of collective action must address five components: interests, organization, mobilization, opportunity and forms of action. The theory basically summarizes "how and why people acquire a sense of injustice or grievance" and how it develops into a collective grievance (Kelly, 1998: 27). The mobilization theory shares some common ground with SMU since the feeling of unfair treatment compels individuals to act as collectives to fight the injustice. This confirms PTC workers went on strike because they felt a sense of economic and political injustice as postulated by mobilization theory.

It is important to also articulate the issue of power when it comes to tirade union activities. What are the sources of power for trade unions? According to Silver (2003:13) associational power is defined as "the various forms of power that result from the formation of collective organizations

of workers" (most importantly trade unions and political parties – social movements). Structural power is the power that accrues to workers simply as a result of their location in the economic system. Wright (2000:962) as cited in Webster et al (2008) distinguishes two subtypes of structural power: market bargaining power which results directly from tight labour markets and workplace bargaining power resulting from the strategic location of a particular group of workers within a key industrial sector. Silver (2003) argues that workplace bargaining power accrues to workers who are enmeshed in tightly integrated production processes where a localized work stoppage in a key node can disrupt the system more widely. It can be argued that the CASWUZ possessed both associational power and structural power because of the strategic importance of the sector at the time. The adoption of new sources of power represents a shift in strategy by the union.

Kraus (2007) has recently argued that there has been a boom in research on a variety of topics related to post colonial African studies, including on 'ethnic groups, women's groups, students, market women, and many other local social groups.' He however, laments the dearth of research on trade unions over the past few years. This is despite the fact that workers and trade unions have been among the most crucial groups demanding and forcing authoritarian regimes to liberalize political life across the continent (Kraus 2007:1).

Since independence Zimbabwe drifted from being a democratic state to an authoritarian regime that repressed the trade union movement and any dissenting voices. Raftopoulos (1992:57) argues that "this authoritarian process appeared to be culminating in a formal one-party presidentialist state, *de facto* one-party rule having being achieved in the late 1980s." The trade union movement was targeted as it posed the most formidable challenge to the regime. Authoritarianism led to the rise of defective institutions and a negative economic climate which

had a negative impact on workers. Workers in the communication industry have consistently expressed their frustration concerning these defective structures through various actions, including strikes.

Asserting the trade union federation's independence from the government the then president of the ZCTU, Gibson Sibanda, expressed unequivocally labour's desire to have effectively functioning democratic institutions at trade union and national governance level at a May Day rally in 1991, a view that was shared by many workers at the shop floor.

Trade unions and democracy in Africa

> "The existence of strong trade unions has historically been central to the creation of a democratic order. Labour in Africa, as was the case in Europe and North America, has been at the forefront of the struggle to create and maintain democratic institutions and democratic rule" (Webster, 2009:432).

History has proved that vibrant militant independent trade unions are the most important and formidable force against despotism. The role of trade unions in the struggle for democracy since the colonial era has been a source of debate amongst many scholars (Webster, 2009).

In his compelling book titled "*Trade Unions and the coming of democracy in Africa*" Kraus (2007) looks at seven different countries, Senegal, Niger, Ghana, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Zambia, and South Africa and identifies three different models of trade union involvement in the democratization process. In Niger, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe 'union strikes and mobilization directly prompted political liberalization while in Ghana and Senegal trade unions pattern of struggles created the "political space" that induced political liberalization.' In Namibia white minority rule was resisted through labour strikes, thus helping the democratic struggle

(Kraus 2007:256-7). Although the three dimensions of the role of trade unions highlighted by Kraus are significant in the process of democratization, this study will draw on the trajectories of South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe whose experiences in union strikes and mobilization led to political liberalization or played a significant role.

In Nigeria, the labour movement and the first nationalist party the National Congress of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) worked together to fight colonial injustice. Viiniika (2008:128) argues that the NCNC "was the first political organization to try to bring together nationalism and the nascent working class movement, even giving its support of the 1945 general strike." This relationship ended prematurely two years later in 1947 when political mobilization along the previously politically impotent lines of ethnicity was drafted in the British Richards Constitution.

Since then the labour movement has remained independent of the state and has confronted it on bread and butter issues and also on democracy issues. The Joint Action Committee (JAC) called the first general strike in post colonial Nigeria on the 1st of June 1964 to press for higher wages. The strike pulled many who traditionally were not inclined to take industrial action such as domestic servants and the unemployed (Viiniika, 2008). This is confirmed by Cohen (1974) who postulates that the strike involved more than 75 000 workers, most of them whom were not unionists. This reveals that social injustice can unite workers whether they belong to a trade union or not. As Clawson (2008) would argue, "the boss is the best organizer." Viiniika (2008) argues that the Babangida administration refused to implement the International Monetary Fund Structural Adjustment Programme (IMF SAP) as neocolonialism only to implement the same packages in the guise of being Nigerian. These had far reaching effects on the poor and working class. It would seem like African governments take on board these SAPs without any due consideration for the working class and the poor given the common hymn in Africa is, "you should tighten your belts." Nigeria experienced seven military coups d'état between 1965

and 1999 when civilian rule and democracy was attained. The labour movement played a pivotal role during this period to bring democracy to Nigeria.

Zambia is an interesting case study whose experiences parallel the post independence history of Zimbabwe's labour movement. According to Akwetey and Kraus (2007: 125), "the expansion of unionized labour in Zambia was the direct result of the labor and development policies of the United Independence Party (UNIP) regime." Gwisai (2008) argues that the ZANU – PF government played a leading role in the formation of the ZCTU in 1981. This explains why labour in the two countries was loyal to the ruling party in the first decade or so of independence. The Zambian Mine Workers Union was however, unwilling to be in alliance with the state. Kaunda, as indicated by Larmer (2008:162), argued for union loyalty to the party when he said, "we want loyal party leaders also to control the...labour movements. We cannot afford the luxury of calling this undemocratic." To confirm this, many union leaders were incorporated into UNIP as Members of Parliament or cabinet ministers who further strengthened their loyalty to the party.

Despite the loyalty of the trade union leadership to UNIP, 'unconstitutional' strikes continued to occur with little or no justification and with monotonous frequency (Larmer, 2008). This is supported by Kraus and Akwetey (2007:126-7) who argues that "in the post-independence flush of high worker expectations, the strikes persisted, and the ZCTU appeared unable either to control or deter their spread." UNIP's desire to subordinate labour can be further demonstrated after this wave of strikes when the labour minister summoned union leaders and asked them "Why have you tolerated…wildcat strikes? Have you no control over your members? Have your members no respect for you...if so you shouldn't be where you are" (Larmer, 2008:164). This goes on to show that despite the state's desire to control the union leadership, it cannot control the rank and file as long as it is dissatisfied.

The coming in of new leadership of the ZCTU in the form of Newstead Zimba and Frederick Chiluba in 1971 and 1974 respectively marked the beginning of the breaking of the ZCTU – UNIP alliance. The same thing happened in Zimbabwe with the coming in of Morgan Tsvangirai and Jeffrey Mutandare in 1988. This demonstrates how new leadership can influence an ideological shifts as indicated by the decision to form a political party. The lack of democracy in Zambia (one party state) and the continued deterioration of the economy and implementation of neo-liberal policies led to the severing of relations and the subsequent formation of the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD) in July 1990. The labour movement in Zambia was responsible for the removal of UNIP and it was also instrumental in the formation of the MMD which assumed power in 1991. The ZCTU has continued to fight for wages and democracy to this day.

South Africa got its independence in April 1994. The South African labour movement deserves special mention because it kept the mass democratic movement's torch alive during the absence of the nationalist movements. Trade unions asserted their power in the fight against apartheid in the mid to late 1980s through mass stay-aways leading to loss of many working days between 1986 and 1990 (Dwyer, 2008). Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) alliance dates back to the struggle against apartheid. Dwyer (2008:189) argues that the triple alliance "epitomizes the development of the independent labour movement that carried on the fight against apartheid." This is because the COSATU continued to fight for wages and democracy in the face of a ban on political parties. Despite being elected on RDP policy framework in 1994, which was pro-Keynesian based on redistribution; the ANC dumped it in favour of neo liberal GEAR policy framework a neo – liberal economic policy which was imposed unilaterally. It is interesting to

note that RDP was crafted by the COSATU and refined by the ANC. Despite the domination of the alliance by the ANC, the COSATU has recently demonstrated that they are not a junior partner in the alliance as evidenced by their ability to endorse Jacob Zuma as party president and the subsequent removal of Thabo Mbeki from office. The labour body recently endorsed Jacob Zuma as the ANC candidate in the polls because they feel he understands the plight of the workers. The "hegemonic" role of trade union shows that labour is never a spent force and at times it rises to the occasion to assert society's views. As argued by von Holdt (1994:303) "resistance was the terrain they knew best" and it produces results.

Drawing from the above discussion, it can be argued that labour movements in Africa were fighting the same cause as nationalist movements. Labour movements are however not static organizations as witnessed in Nigeria, Zambia and South Africa were they intermittently clashed with their national governments when they felt their interests were under threat.

Zimbabwe

The first attempts at regulating black labour in colonial Zimbabwe was as early as 1895 when the provincial labour bureau was founded, followed by the establishment of the Labour Board of Southern Rhodesia, and the Rhodesia Native Labour Bureau (RNLB) in 1899 (Sachikonye, 1987). These institutions were supported by legislation such as the Master and Servant Ordinance of 1901; the Pass Law of 1902; the Private Locations Ordinance of 1910; the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1934; the Native Registration Act of 1936; and the Compulsory Native Labour Act of 1943. This collection of legislation was meant to repress unionisation and tone down political activity (Sachikonye, 1987).

According to Sachikonye (1987:250) "harsh and dismal working conditions" provoked organized strikes as early as 1895 and through the 1920s at mines such as Shamva and Wankie and others.

However, the first black trade union, the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU) was found in 1927 by migrant workers from South Africa who soon organized strikes against poor wages (Orr, 1966; Gwisai, 2008). Gwisai (2008) argues that the ICU floundered during the great depression in the 1930s mainly due to state repression and the intermittent nature of work performed by semi- skilled workers who would occasionally go back to their rural home in and outside Southern Rhodesia. This meant that the only section of the workforce that could challenge the status quo at the time was the white working class. They had formed the Rhodesia Railway Workers Union (1916), while the Rhodesia Mine and General Workers association (RMGWA) was formed in 1919. They led successful strikes demanding pay increases and a forty-eight hour week and these conditions were applicable to the white workers only (Gwisai, 2008).

The 1945 Railway workers' strike led by Joshua Nkomo and the 1948 general strike led by Benjamin Burombo were precursors to the formation of the first viable black workers organization, the Southern Rhodesia Trade Union Congress (SRTUC) in 1954. The basis of the 1948 general strike by black workers was to protest against poor wages and to demand a living wage nationally as well as adequate accommodation and health facilities. The involvement of the black non working class in the 1948 strike strongly suggests a nascent social movement unionism in the early trade union movement in Zimbabwe. This however, failed to take off because of lack of leadership. Gwisai (2002: 228) indicates that 'the "Zhii" strike movement of 1960-61 saw massive strikes in Harare and Bulawayo and combined economic and political demands.' The rise of the working class was only stopped by the brutal colonial state under Ian Smith who took over power in 1962 and declared the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) from Britain in 1965.

After the UDI in 1965, all politically inclined unions became victims of the repressive legislation such as the Law and Order Maintenance Act (LOMA) and the Emergency Powers Act. Hundreds of trade unionists were arrested and jailed under these laws for going on illegal strike and associating with nationalist parties or the World Federation of Trade Unions, which had been outlawed (Gwisai, 2002). These repressive laws led to the division of the working class with some unions preferring the workerist / economism route as they felt challenging the status quo might affect their economic gains. Strikes also fell from 138 in 1965 to nineteen in 1971. Sachikonye (1987) asserts that it is therefore not accidental nor is it surprising that at independence the labour movement was weak as it had been subjected to internal fractions and external harassment.

The labour movement in Zimbabwe faced challenges such as weak organizational structure and lack of unity prior to independence and the implementation of neoliberal policies by the state in the 1990s (Saunders, 2007). Zimbabwe gained its independence from British colonial rule on 18 April 1980. Prime Minister-elect Mugabe told the nation in 1980: "We are socialist…basic wages and working conditions of black and white must be based on an equal footing" (Saunders, 2007: 161-2). But the promise of achieving equality between black and white workers did not materialize, triggering an upsurge in strike action by black workers. Gwisai (2008) estimates that there were two hundred strikes, in nearly every sector of the economy. Most of the strikes took place independently and beyond the control of existing union structures. In many ways these strikes concerned long standing grievances such as low wages, racist managers and discrimination against trade union representation (Zeilig, 2007). This shows that if the union leadership does not push for a strike, then the rank and file can go on unofficial strikes as seen in Nigeria and Zambia. In order to contain the upsurge of strikes, the state in 1981 created the

ZCTU, which was dominated by staunch supporters of the ZANU-PF government, who included its president, Alfred Makwarimba, and general secretary, Albert Mugabe (Gwisai, 2008). This meant that the ZCTU was subordinate to the state.

In 1985, the Labour Relations Act (LRA) was introduced with the aim of addressing colonial wage and working conditions imbalances as well as to curb industrial unrest. However, "the LRA severely undercut labour rights by banning strikes in "essential services," which the government defined so broadly that the vast majority of workers were included" (Saunders, 2007: 163-4). Because of the need to fulfill their mandate from the workers, trade unions always adopted other strategies and also defied the provisions of the LRA by going on unauthorized strikes. The 1988 ZCTU congress brought in new leaders, Jeffrey Mutandare and Morgan Tsvangirai. These leaders adopted a workerist approach and advocated for independence from the state hence adopting a more confrontational approach.

In 1991 a full package of neoliberal reforms, the Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP), was announced and was launched with the backing of the World Bank and IMF as well as Western donor countries (Saunders, 2007). The ESAP failed to foster growth, and the short term shocks turned quickly into a chronic and worsening social crisis. The impacts of the ESAP on the working class were far reaching as many people in the public sector lost their jobs. In view of these changes trade unions had to adopt new strategies to suit the changing environment.

In 1992 Government pushed LRA amendments through parliament against the combined voices of workers and employers and at the same time using state controlled media to allege the ZCTU's political ambitions. By 1993 it was becoming clear that the ZCTU and the ZANU PF government could no longer work together. According to *The Worker* of June 1993, when asked

why he refused to go and address the workers on May Day, President Mugabe was quoted as saying "I cannot come to address an organization that is going to form a political party. I cannot go to be a subject of ridicule. We cannot go to be laughed at. We have some dignity to protect." Saunders (2007) argues that new waves of large scale, high profile industrial actions in public and private sectors in 1996 and 1997 were witnessed and these were the largest since the 1948 general strike. The significance of these strikes reveals the shift in strategy of the labour movement as they take issues beyond the workplace to involve issues that affect society. In February 1999 the ZCTU convened a National Working People's Convention, which led to the formation of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) on 11 September 1999, almost six years after Mugabe predicted the formation of an opposition political party by the labour body. In June 2000, the MDC came close to defeating ZANU-PF in the parliamentary elections (Gwisai, 2008). The formation of the MDC by the workers reflected a shift from business unionism to social movement unionism as other civil society groups became involved in this autonomous organization free from the state's control. Despite the role played by unions and the CASWUZ in particular, there has been a dearth in terms of literature pertaining to its role. CASWUZ is an important player in the formation of the MDC for three reasons. Firstly, its General Secretary (GS) became one of the top five founding members of the MDC and one of the first parliamentarians on an MDC ticket. Secondly, the ZCTU Presidency was taken over by CASWUZ when MDC was formed. Lastly, its lawyer Tendai Biti was also among the top five of the MDC. This meant that CASWUZ had more than forty percent stake in the MDC top five and had a lot of work to do for the new party to succeed.

The impact of ESAP and neo – liberal policies in the communications sector

The Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) was launched in Zimbabwe in 1991 at the behest of the IMF (Kanyenze, 2003). According to Saunders (1996:1) ESAP "was meant to herald a new era of modernized, competitive export led industrialization." This was a fundamental shift from a welfare state to one driven by market forces. The expectation was that the ESAP would raise investment levels thereby facilitating higher growth rate and employment creation, and uplifting the standard of living of the majority of the people. The SAP was implemented with the intention of healing an ailing economy and reaping benefits for workers. However, as Saunders (1996:30) observes, the result 'was a sharp decline in average real wages.' By the mid 1990s, the average real wages had fallen to their lowest since the early 1970s hence bringing the working class to near destitution. Kanyenze (2003) observes that in most sectors of the economy the average minimum wage (excluding parastatals and domestic services) was around Z$2500 which amounted to 30 percent of the Poverty Datum Line (Z$8310) as at June of 2000. In August of the same year, workers in the communication sector experienced their worst nightmare when the employers reversed a 300 percent increment it had awarded its workers by more than half citing operational constraints.

It should be highlighted that the Government of Zimbabwe did not consult civil society in the design of ESAP. Kanyenze (2003) and Saunders (1996) both indicate that public sector associations were concerned by the imposition of World Bank and IMF plans without "regard to the views or suggestions of those who actually work in the system." The same applies to the communications sector where most of the operations were commercialized without the consent of the labour union, much to the detriment of worker morale and productivity. As part of the

SAP the companies in the communication sector also embarked on a downsizing exercise in 1999 – 2000.

Studies conducted by the Poverty Assessment Study Survey (PASS) of the ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare in 1995 revealed that 61 percent of families lived in poverty and 45 percent in extreme poverty with the major cause of poverty being identified as structural (Kanyenze, 2003). As early as 1993 the country experienced its first "IMF" riots when the lifting of subsidies and decontrol of market prices sent the prices soaring 30 per cent with a 'bread boycott' lasting two weeks (Saunders, 1996:30). These riots were the forerunner of the communications sector strike of 1994. Most workers participated in these riots although without union sanction.

Shifting policy of the union: the endorsement of the MDC

ZANU-PF's strategy of penetrating, encircling, and undermining the ZCTU's senior ranks led to growing tensions and mismanagement within the organization (Saunders, 2007). This would trigger a shift in strategy by the unions at the end of the 1980s as they began advocates for autonomy.

During the first decade of independence, however, most trade unions were pro government including the Zimbabwe Posts and Telecommunication Workers Union (now CASWUZ). "In the 1990 election, the growing autonomy of the ZCTU was demonstrated by its refusal to endorse ZANU-PF, while many workers tacitly supported a new break away party, Edgar Tekere's Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM)" (Gwisai, 2008: 233) This represents a growing shift in strategy from below.

Conclusion

Labour movements in Africa have played a crucial role in social transformation. Undoubtedly, sometimes they are used by politicians to achieve political ends. It is the aim of this research to unearth the developments in public sector strikes in Zimbabwe between 1994 and 2004 and their contribution to the debate on Social Movement Unionism/Political Unionism.

Chapter Three

Historical Perspective

Introduction

The post 1980 industrial relations can be viewed from two schools of thought. Firstly there was an urgent need to control the upsurge in industrial action which was a direct response to the political changeover. Workers were expecting the colonial inequalities to be addressed. Secondly the government responded by compelling the existing six labour bodies to amalgamate and form one body which was expected to be subordinate to the state. This was in line with the principle of one industry one union which the new government had adopted from the Industrial Conciliation Act (ICA) in force during the colonial era. This was a positive development for previously marginalized unions and this chapter will highlight the development of unions specifically in the public sector. The chapter is set to explore the relations between Zimbabwe Posts and Telecommunication Workers Union (ZPTWU) and the state/employer in the 1980s and the unfolding antagonism. The ensuing confrontation with the state led the ZPTWU to be accused of pursuing a political agenda. This is not surprising though because public sector strikes are inherently political as they are directed at the state.

Post Independence Industrial Relations

In a bid to address colonial inequalities on wages and working conditions the government promulgated legislation on minimum wages as from 1 July 1980. Madhuku (2001) has argued that this was some form of payback to the workers for their support during the liberation struggle. This legislation had a positive effect on the lowly paid workers especially in agriculture and the domestics. Nonetheless, concerns were raised that the set minimum wage was below the poverty datum line (PDL) and thus only had a minimal impact on the general levels of poverty. Although the Labour Relations Act (LRA) of 1985 was an important development in post independent Zimbabwe especially given that the fundamental rights of workers were incorporated into the new legislation, it was criticized for inheriting some provisions of the colonial Industrial Conciliation Act most prominently the one industry one union requirement. However, the LRA of 1985 classified most public sector jobs as essential service and sectors covered included the transport and communication sector. According to Sachikonye (1987:261) "the very broad scope of the essential services sector underscored the deterrent aspect of the Labour Relations Act with regard to industrial action." In order to deter industrial action, embarking on an unsanctioned industrial action was criminalized according to the LRA section 109(1) which states that "…shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a fine not exceeding level fourteen or imprisonment for a period not exceeding five years, or both such fine and imprisonment.". This meant that the activities of CASWUZ were affected in terms of going on strike.

By appointing the ZCTU inaugural leadership in February 1981, the government made sure it controlled labour as indicated in the introduction to chapter one. Ironically, the LRA strengthened the ZCTU through the one industry one union law but weakened the rank and file

through the ban on strikes and use of union funds for political purposes (Gwisai, 2002). More so those elected were ruling party apologists and its first president in line with government policy of anti-strike, made a scathing attack on striking workers saying strikes were not good for development no matter how genuine the grievance was (Gwisai, 2002). In 1981 Prime Minister Mugabe attacked striking nurses as un-revolutionary and the government reintroduced the Emergency Powers Act and the Law and Order Maintenance Act to arrest, detain and beat the working class as was the case during the colonial era (Gwisai, 2002). This created a rift between the leadership and government on the one hand and the workers on the other such that the new ZCTU leadership elected in 1988 started to move away from state corporatism to workerism in the late 1980s to early 1990s. The new leadership saw the need to create strong rank-and-file as the basis of achieving their goal of independence from the state and by the 1991 May Day celebrations, agitation against the government policy had already started. The substantive issues mainly centred on social, economic and political effects brought about by the introduction of ESAP in 1991 (Kondo, 2000). As a precursor to the 1999 National Working Peoples Convention (NWPC), the ZCTU consulted widely with all sections of civil society and most prominently public servants, church organizations and non governmental organizations starting 1996 (Kondo, 2000). The ZCTU had already indicated its opposition to ESAP when it published an alternative economic policy (Beyond ESAP) in 1996. It indicated that its ideas were not being taken on board satisfactorily hence the need for wider consultation with civil society through a NWPC. During the wider consultations pertinent issues affecting labour especially unemployment, corruption, one party politics, unbudgeted government expenditure nepotism and deregulation of the labour market were noted of which government was evasive (Kondo, 2000). As a way forward, the NWPC resolved in February 1999 that an opposition party be formed hence the

Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) was formed on 11 September 1999. The MDC election manifesto of 2000 clearly states that the party stands for the "working people, that is the workers and peasants" by subscribing to the principles of a participatory, accountable and honest government, sustainable and human centred development and investing in the people for development (Kondo, 2000: 157-185). Unlike ZANU PF, the MDC was organically linked to the union movement and have pursued objectives to effect meaningful changes in the lives of ordinary citizens. MDC became the first ever opposition party to seriously challenge ZANU PF at the polls in 2000 when it got 57 out of the 120 contested seats and its impact was felt again in the 2008 harmonized (elections for the presidency members of parliament, senators and local government councilors all in one) elections in which ZANU PF failed to get its traditional two thirds majority prompting the formation of a government of national unity (GNU). The combined opposition garnered 110 votes of the 210 contested seats.

Despite the ZCTU's support for the opposition, the labour centre has continued to maintain its independence from the opposition by continuously saying that it has no permanent friends but permanent issues. Recently the Secretary General of the ZCTU threatened that the ZCTU might pull out of its alliance with the MDC if it continues to be insensitive to the workers plight. At the inception of the MDC, members within the ZCTU general council identified CASWUZ as union in a sector of the economy that can be of use when it comes to industrial action on socio-economic issues. Matombo would comment "yes CASWUZ was a reliable partner in the national centre when it came to job action".[2] The CASWUZ which inaugurated industrial action in 1994 was equal to the task and played this leadership role for a number of years. The CASWUZ leadership failed to realize that they were playing into the ZANU PF ball game as these strikes

[2] Interview with Lovemore Matombo, the CASWUZ and ZCTU President, Harare, 06 July 2009.

led to the dismissal of more than fifty percent of communication workers which it represents (in 2004) for participating in industrial action. The once strong union had internal leadership squabbles before the 2004 strike which not only divided the leadership in terms of going on strike, but the workers as well. The dismissals were a carefully planned exercise by the government to retrench workers at no cost that had been mooted in early 2004 according to revelations by a TelOne company executive at a workshop held in Kadoma in May 2009. The company had been instructed to lay off almost half of its workforce by the government but it did not have enough resources to do so hence strike action became an opportune time.[3] Despite winning the case against dismissal in the lower courts, the Supreme Court overturned the decisions that were in favour of workers and sanctioned management's decision to dismiss workers using the wrong legal apparatus, the PTC sector employment code of conduct which is inferior to the Labour Act when dealing with collective disputes. All the Supreme Court cases were presided over by Chief Justice Chidyausiku whom the unions perceive to be biased in favour of the state.[4] The current CASWUZ executive has continued to fight for the return to work by the dismissed workers and is now pursuing it at a political level where they have recently handed in a petition to the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Information and Communication Technology in the hope that the state might intervene and return the workers to work or pay them damages (The Herald, 24 August 2009).

History of the Posts and Telecommunications in Zimbabwe

The history of the posts and telecommunication is tied to colonialism in Zimbabwe. It dates back to the pioneer's period when Reverend J.S. Moffat started a letter delivery services between

[3] Interview, James Gondo (CASWUZ Education Officer), Johannesburg, 06 September 2009.

[4] Interview, James Gondo (CASWUZ Education Officer), Johannesburg, 06 September 2009.

Mafikeng (in north-west of South Africa) and Gubulawayo (Bulawayo - in south – west of colonial Zimbabwe) on the 21st of August 1888. Bechuanaland (Botswana) postage stamps were used, but the British South Africa Company (BSAC) introduced its own stamps on the 2nd of January 1892 (Smith, 1967:13). In 1890 (11th July) the pioneer column crossed river Shashi to Fort Tuli and huts were erected every forty miles to serve as postal relay stations. A regular horse postal service was established and operated by the British South Africa Police (BSAP) led by Colonel Pennefather. Postal routes and telegraph lines followed the pioneer routes and often preceded the mining and agricultural settlements. Smith (1967) points out that the Post Office was originally administered under the Cape of Good Hope Post Office Act Number 4 of 1882 and the Electric and Telegraph Act Number 20 of 1861. Rhodesia only passed its own post and telegraph legislation in 1901 (Smith, 1967:13). The first Postmaster General (PMG) of the General Post Office (GPO) as the Posts and Telecommunications was then known was Mr. A.F.C. Duncan (Smith, 1967:14).

British colonialism placed a high premium on communications. Cecil John Rhodes regarded the posts and telegraph service as an integral part of the development of the interior as this was the only means of distant communication at the time. Telegraph was a faster means of communication compared to mail which could take anything up to six months to reach its destination. Salisbury (now Harare) only became connected to Mafeking and Cape Town in 1892, four years after Bulawayo was connected. Copper wires (for telephone transmission) were initially introduced in 1904 when a line of six copper conductors from Bulawayo to Heaney Junction (about 30 kilometres outside Bulawayo) was erected in 1898 (Smith, 1967).

According to Smith (1967: 151), the police were the first to install telephones in (Southern) Rhodesia when they connected police camps at Salisbury, Bulawayo and Gwelo with surrounding Forts. The first public Telephone Exchange switchboard in Salisbury was installed on 15th August 1898. It consisted of a 50 line Erricsons Magneto Switchboard and 37 subscribers connected to it. A new 300 line Exchange was installed in 1914 which doubled to 600 in 1915 (Smith, 1967:150; 155). The telephone service was only introduced to the public on an experimental basis on 2 November 1914 and it was well received. The service was later extended to the rural white farming and mining communities and to some extent even in African administrative centres such that by 1965 there were over 10000 rural telephone subscribers.

After the breakup of the federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in 1963[5], the new thinking by the colonial government was to divorce the postal services from the telecommunications services. This subsequently led to the announcement of a proposal by the Minister of Posts on 10 December 1966 of a statutory body to be formed to take over the Telecommunication services in Rhodesia on 1 July, 1968. However, the Postal service was to continue to operate as a Government Department under the Ministry Of Posts. When the actual Act of parliament was passed in 1970 the telecommunication and communication services remained as one entity.

The Posts and Telecommunications Corporation (PTC) therefore started operating as a state owned enterprises (SOE) or parastatal on the 1st of July 1970 according to the Posts and Telecommunications Act of 1970 (Government of Zimbabwe, 1970). The enterprise was created by Acts of parliament and was governed by the Posts and Telecommunications Services Act

[5] Between 1953 and 1963 Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland were amalgamated into a federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. The federation broke up when Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) and Nyasaland (now Malawi) got their independence.

(Chapter 250) and the Posts and Telecommunications Corporation Act (Chapter 251). The designation of the Chief Executive Officer remained as Postmaster General (PMG) although this position was mostly occupied by an engineer. The PMG was responsible for both postal and telecommunication services as well as the people's savings bank. Its board comprised mainly engineers and it reported to a ministry with several areas of administration which included roads, information and mass media. The civil servants manning these ministries did not have specialist education. The PTC management and control was bureaucratic with the Minister having the final decision.

Before independence in 1980 certain jobs such as telecommunication technicians, engineers and top management were almost exclusively the preserve for the whites. After independence the black led government adopted a policy of black advancement in the public service as well as state owned enterprises. This policy had unintended effects on the PTC's operations and efficiency (Bond and Manyanya, 2002). High levels of resignation and emigration by experienced white technicians, posed a challenge to the maintenance of service delivery, a fact that was lamented by the then PTC Director of Personnel Kenneth Manyonda (*TelePost* December 1998). These developments saw nearly all the technicians, engineers, and top management levels in PTC being filled by black Zimbabweans by 1990. It is significant to note that there were no reports of racial tension amongst the employees in the PTC throughout the period of black advancement.

According to the Postal and Telecommunication Services Act of 1996 the PTC has enjoyed monopoly starting 1st of April 1973 and it clearly spelt out that only the PTC was mandated "to regulate and control the provision of postal and telecommunication services within, into and from Zimbabwe; and to provide for matters incidental to or connected with the foregoing." For

this reason the PTC has been the sole provider and backbone of plain old telephone service (POTS) and it own the public switched telephone network (PSTN) commonly referred to as fixed network telephones. Private suppliers of radio communication and private automatic booking exchanges (PABXs) have up to now be licenced by TelOne one of the successor companies to PTC.

For slightly over half a decade the PTC monopoly was challenged in the courts by Econet leading to the opening up of the sector to the operators of mobile phones. However, PTC managed to use its monopoly to set up the first mobile phone operator NetOne in 1996 which became one of the successor companies in 2000 when the PTC was restructured. Restructuring of the PTC was a response to the outcome of the PTC - Enhanced Communications Network (Econet) court case which allowed other players to operate mobile phones. Econet had sought to be PTC's cell-phone partner as early as the 1990s but PTC officials were against the idea. In 1993 Retrofit requested from the PTC as the sole regulator of telecommunication services to be licenced to operate a private cellular network in Zimbabwe but the PTC refused arguing that the governing Act did not allow them to do so (*Newsweek*, July 29, 1996; http://www.btimes.co.za/98/1018/world/world03.htm). In January 1994 Retrofit (Econet) approached the High Court on the case and PTC was ordered to consider Retrofit's case within two months. The PTC appealed to the Supreme Court and won, leaving Retrofit to again challenge the constitutionality of the PTC monopoly in the High Court and subsequently in the Supreme Court (*Newsweek*, July 29, 1996). Econet wireless was established by Retrofit in 1994 with a view of starting cellular business and had already started buying and installing cellular network equipment when its challenge to the PTC monopoly was being heard in the courts. The

ensuing court battle is clear testimony that government was unwilling to open up the telecommunication industry.

In the Supreme Court case heard in June 1995, Econet wireless challenged the PTC monopoly with reference to the Bill of rights as enshrined in the National Constitution of Zimbabwe (S.I. 1979/1600 of the United Kingdom) section 20 subsection 1 which guarantees every Zimbabwean citizen the right to free access to information and means of information. Telephony was defined as such means of information hence the courts concluded (Judgment Number *S.C 238/95* delivered on 18 December 1995) the PTC monopoly was a violation of the constitution (http://www.btimes.co.za/98/1018/world/world03.htm). The government could not therefore deny private business entry into the telecommunication industry if PTC was unable to meet the legitimate demands of mobile phones as a means of information by its citizens. Mr. J. Chideme, the deputy PMG (cellular mobile telephone services) made a comment on the high court ruling to deregulate the industry: "it's now up to the government to set up instruments which would allow another operator to compete with PTC"(*TelePost*, January 1997).

The opening up of the sector to private players was in line with the government adoption of a ESAP according to the PTC Director of Corporate Planning Mr. I.T Chaza (*TelePost* January 1997) a point which was supported by the then minister of Information Posts and Telecommunication Mrs. Oppah Rushesha (*TelePost*, September 1997) when she urged PTC to support government's second phase of liberalization – ZIMPREST. It might also have been a capitulation to the Econet case in the court.

It is alleged that the PTC was privately negotiating with Vodacom (Private) Limited of South Africa for a cellular business partnership well before the Supreme Court ruling an indication that

government was not sincere on deregulation. The court ruling on the deregulation of the industry led government to speed up its tender process in search of a contractor for the setting up of its own cellular network. The tender for Cellular Mobile Telephone Services (CMTS) was awarded to Siemens (Private) Limited South Africa with government tender board approval on the 2nd of September 1996 (*TelePost*, January 1997). The contract was valued at US$24,204,928 and an initial capacity of 20,000 lines was installed in Harare alone and expanded to 70,000 lines within five months to cover major cities, tourist resort centres and the Harare – Bulawayo highway. The new mobile network, NetOne, was launched during the World Solar Summit in Harare in September 1996 and in Bulawayo at the International Trade Fair in April 1997. Telecel (Private) Limited was awarded a second cellular licence and also started operations in 1996 while Econet wireless (third cellular licence) was only allowed to start operating in1998.

The opening up of the mobile telecommunication business to private players compelled the government to commercialise the operations of PTC in order that it could compete on an equal footing with them. This is evidenced by the fact that despite having been spared restructuring in the first phase of ESAP government was calling on the PTC to support ZIMPREST as early as 1996 immediately after the passing of the Supreme Court judgment against PTC monopoly.

In line with the demands of the ESAP, the PTC was commercialized in 1996. According to the then PTC Director of Corporate planning Mr. I.T. Chaza, the objective was "to improve the quality of service of Postal and Telecommunications services" (*TelePost*, January 1997). In the year 1999 the PTC was unbundled and the following year, the Posts and Telecommunications Act was passed by parliament thereby repealing PTC monopoly and allowing other players into the posts and telecommunication industry. The Act paved way for the commercialization of PTC in the same year. The unbundling of the PTC led to the birth of four strategic business units

(SBUs) namely TelOne (fixed landline telephone operator), NetOne (mobile telephone operator), Zimbabwe Posts (Courier / Postal Services Company) and People's Own Savings Bank (people's bank). The fixed phone company, TelOne was registered under the companies Act in 2000 and launched on 12 July 2001. NetOne created as a subsidiary of the PTC in 1996 also became a stand alone company under the companies Act in 2000. To date these companies are operating commercially and the state is the sole shareholder of these companies. The control of the POSB, which was created by an Act of Parliament on 1 April 2001, was transferred from the PTC ministry to the ministry of Finance which regulates banks.

The aims of the restructuring project in the PTC according to the *TelePost* of December 1998 were among other things to:

a. Generate business growth by increasing telecommunication traffic and postal volumes

b. Improving productivity

c. Controlling and freezing of expenditure as necessary.

On unbundling, TelOne was directed by Government to inherit most of the debt from the then PTC because at the time, TelOne had the capacity. The Postal SBU (ZimPost) then had very little debt and NetOne was hardly five years old. Worsening of exchange losses over the years ballooned the foreign debt position.

There was a massive digitalisation programme for the entire network but this failed due to lack of funding and a general stagflation. Hitherto, TelOne's source of forex had been foreign financial institutions like African Development Bank (ADB), World Bank and Oganisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries. These have pulled out of

Zimbabwe altogether because of the current sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe since the late 1990s. This has contributed to the inadequacy of existing network capacity, network obsolescence and compromised the quality of Service (TelOne, unpublished paper, November 2007).

As part of the commercialization process, the PTC embarked on a business processes reengineering (BPR) process in 1999 to 2000 which was aimed at streamlining service delivery by reducing bureaucracy and adopting technological advancement. This was going to make it possible for the companies to do more with less staff. The BPR team comprising managers and staff members trained by consultant Coopers and Lybrand analysed all jobs to see which jobs were to be eliminated after which a voluntary exit package was availed to staff. ZPTWU the only union then participated in the process. Almost 20% of the workers took up the packages which saw the staffing level being reduced from almost 10,000 to about 8000. Among those who took up the severance packages were key union figures at different levels. This affected the union in a negative way as inexperienced members remained who at times made costly decisions for example the 2004 strike (Interview: Gondo, 03 July 2009). Participants at a recent work on restructuring of state enterprises in Kadoma were shocked to hear that the restructuring never achieved its intended objectives mainly because it was a ministerial directive not based on any scientific study. The result was a decline in union – management relations and a decline in service delivery and worker morale (TelOne unpublished document, August 2009).

Trade Unionism in the Posts and Telecommunication Corporation in Zimbabwe

Before 1970 the telecommunication sector was part of the civil service and hence the formation of trade unions was restricted in line with public service Act. During the early days of the

General Post Office (GPO) the black workers had unregistered workers association like most industries at the time. The colonial government of Southern Rhodesia passed the industrial and conciliation Act in 1934 which provided provision that regulated the formation and operations of trade unions in the country. The ICA however, only allowed the formation of trade unions by white workers. The Rhodesia Posts and Telecommunication Corporation Workers Union (RPTCWU) was founded in 1970 with the assistance of the Postal Telegraph and Telephone International (PTTI) (ZPTWU Education Manual). PTTI was an affiliate of the International Confederation of Free Trade unions (ICFTU). The RPTCWU was black led and operated underground as it had no offices due to the repressive colonial regulations at the time in the form of the industrial conciliation Act (ICA) which only recognized white led workers organizations and was meant 'to emasculate black trade unionism' (Sachikonye, 1987: 250). The union was not officially recognised hence its grievances were not officially acceptable thus it engaged in other forms of resistance such as the recruitment of freedom fighters as a means of fighting the colonial injustice. The hope then was that if a new government comes in, it will recognize their trade union rights. The amendment of the ICA in 1959 legalized black led trade unions which saw other sectors like the railways having a recognized union. However, in sectors such as the post and telecommunication the dominant union was the white led Rhodesia Post and Telecommunication Workers Association (RPTWA). Since the ICA operated on one industry one union basis, it followed that the black led RPTCWU was not recognized at law.

The politics of ethnicity dominated the war of liberation in Zimbabwe. Quite noticeably, the Ndebeles were in support of ZAPU while the Shonas were in support of ZANU throughout the liberation struggle. Even the voting pattern at independence in 1980 testifies this as Matebeleland was dominated by ZAPU where as the rest of the country was ZANU. Ethnicity politics created

serious divisions along those lines in society and in the union movement which made unity difficult.

In 1973 the underground precursor union (RPTCWU) to CASWUZ split along political party and tribal lines as those from Matebeleland rallied behind Josephat Sibanda while those outside Matebeleland were led by Lovemore Matombo[6]. This argument is supported by Raftopoulos (1992) who also argues that divisions along regional and political lines made it difficult for trade unions to merge after independence. The Shona speaking workers were in support of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) while the Ndebele speaking workers were in support of Zimbabwe African Peoples Union (ZAPU).The union was split into Posts and Telecommunication Corporation Union of Rhodesia (PTCUR) based in Bulawayo and ZPTCWU based in Harare. The two factions however, reconciled in 1982 at the directive of the Deputy Minister of Information Posts and Telecommunication Dr. Naomi Nhiwatiwa who gave the unions an ultimatum to merger or risk a government installed union (*TelePost*, December 1982). The two unions agreed to merge and form the Zimbabwe Posts and Telecommunication Workers Union (ZPTWU) in line with the government directive of one union in PTC a policy that had been adopted for all industries.

An interim committee was elected which guided the union to its inaugural congress held at the Monomotapa Hotel Harare on 02 March 1983. At this congress Lovemore Matombo and Dobba Gonye were elected as president and general secretary respectively. With the formal registration of the new union in that year all employees in the PTC were represented by a single union.

[6] Interview with Mr. James Gondo (CASWUZ Education Officer). He is a founder member of the first trade union in the PTC.

The ZPTWU was the sole trade union for the PTC workers until the year 2000. The changes in the communication sector brought about by the implementation of ESAP and the commercialisation and split of PTC into four companies led some within management to advocate for the split of the union as they felt ZPTWU had become irrelevant (although this was not true) hence there was need for company specific unions. They deceived workers into believing that company specific negotiations would mean more wages and benefits to workers as those companies that would afford would offer favourable wages and conditions of service than others a utopian thinking as it later emerged. This advocacy for splinterism would only work in favour of management rather than workers for united we stand, divided we fall. Discussions in the Union pointed to the need for the union to cast its net wider and recruit membership in sectors outside the former PTC companies as long as they are in the communications and allied sectors. The targeted companies were cellular companies, internet service providers, transport and courier companies among others. This obviously meant a name change as well as change of the union's constitution.

At the union's 7th quadrennial congress held on the 4th of October 2002, the delegates to the congress adopted a name change from Zimbabwe Posts and Telecommunication Workers Union to Communications and Allied Services Workers Union of Zimbabwe (CASWUZ) in line with a November 2000 supreme council (the governing body of the union in between congress) proposal to that effect. The congress delegates also adopted a number of amendments to the union constitution in line with the new dispensation. The name change meant the union could have membership from outside the former PTC companies but the union has unfortunately failed to do so.

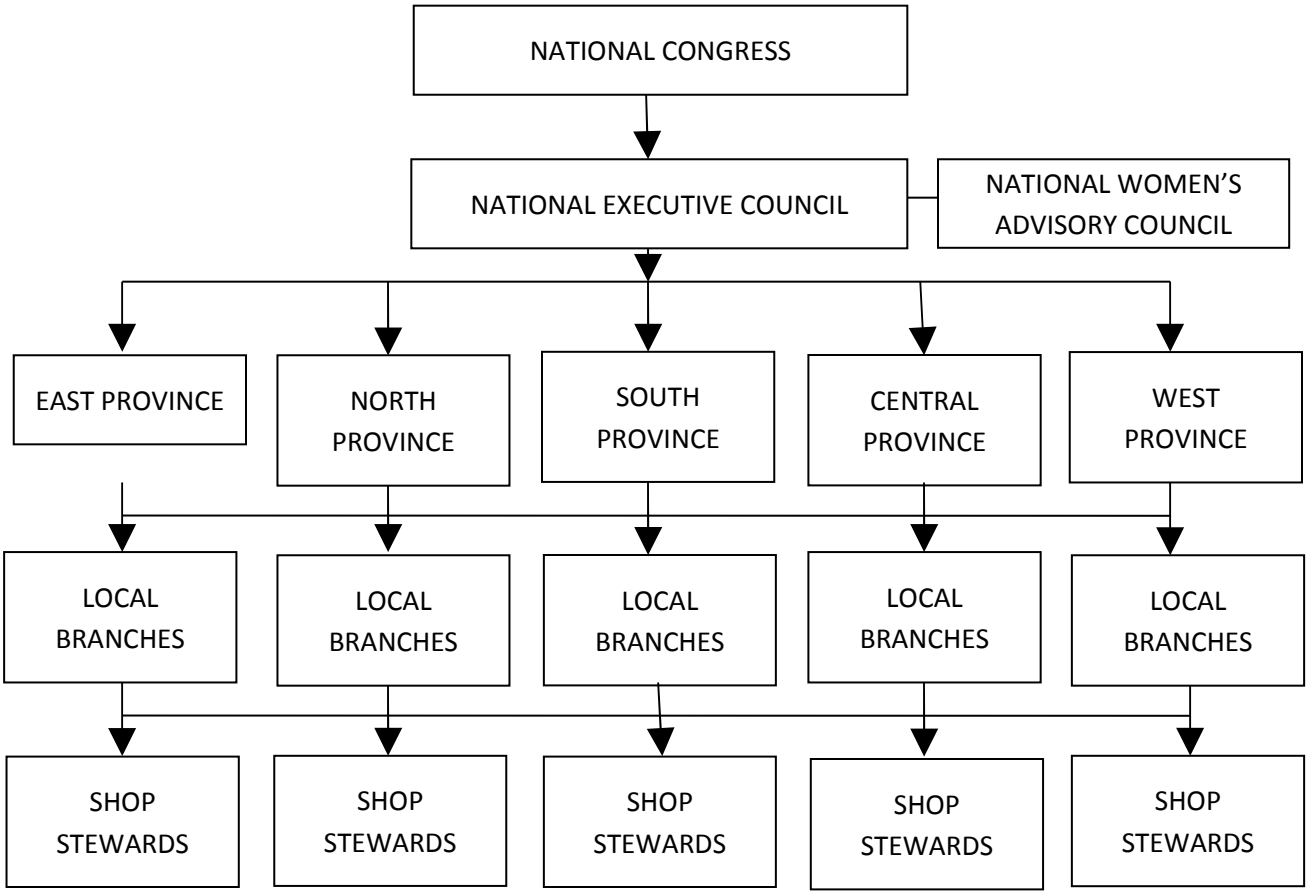
The name change was a response to management's call for splinterism following the adoption of neo-liberal ESAP by the government and the scraping of the one – industry one – union policy which led to the emergence of splinter unions in the communication industry. ESAP liberalized the labour market hence the emergence of the Telecommunications Workers Union of Zimbabwe (TWUZ) and the Zimbabwe Postal Workers Union (ZPWU) which were management backed as evidenced by the fact that they used company resources such as vehicles and accommodation to carryout union business a favour that had never been extended to CASWUZ. The rise of these splinter unions was viewed by the main stream trade union, CASWUZ as a strategy to weaken it. CASWUZ allege that management covertly sponsored the splinter unions. However, management denied the allegations before the Ministry of Labour - (labour officer hearing) in Harare on 6 June 2001. Despite the attempts at weakening CASWUZ, its popularity did not go down as it maintained its membership at around 70% in all the three companies. The anti-CASWUZ stance by management was witnessed at NetOne were the employer simply refused to negotiate with the union, preferring instead to negotiate with the workers committee. However, this did not mean the union was not in charge as section 23(1b) of the Labour Act (Chapter 28:01) stipulates that

> If a trade union is registered to represent the interests of not less than fifty *per centum* of the employees at the workplace where the workers committee is to be established, every member of the workers committee shall be the member of the trade union concerned

Efforts to divide and weaken the union did not succeed because union structures are spread across the country as reflected in figure 3.1. It became too difficult for the splinter unions to have the same structure and attract the membership as their objectives were narrow (representing a

handful of workers as compared to the majority) as compared to CASWUZ which represented a wide spectrum of employees nationally.

Fig 3.1 THE ADMINISTRATION STRUCTURE OF CASWUZ



Source: ZPTWU Education Manual

Table 3.1: Past and Present Leaders (CASWUZ)

From	To	President	General Secretary
1970	1980	Chanayiwa (Senior) Lovemore Matombo	Josphat Sibanda Dobba Gonye
1980	1983	Lovemore Matombo	Dobba Gonye
1983	1987	Lovemore Matombo	Dobba Gonye
1987	1992	Bonface Chaka	Reginald Bamhare
		Abisha	

1992	1996	Nyanguwo Wilfred Chanayiwa	Gift Chimanikire
1996	2002	Abisha Nyanguwo	Gift Chimanikire
2002	2006	Lovemore Matombo	Gift Chimanikire
2007	2011	Lovemore Matombo	Ronald. S. Musiwokuwaya

Source: CASWUZ

What has made CASWUZ such a strong union is the fact that it has been in existence for many years and it thrives on a wealth of experience as far back as the 1970s as compared to the splinter unions. Table 3.1 shows that the union's current President Lovemore Matombo has been in the union leadership since its formation hence this has been a competence for CASWUZ. The longest serving members of the CASWUZ are its current President Lovemore Matombo and its former General Secretary Gift Chimanikire which explains why they have been influential in union politics and national politics. TWUZ's secretary general Makore and ZPWU's president Mberi were the proponents of division along professional lines with TWUZ representing mainly technicians and their assistants while ZPWU represented all postal workers. Despite management refusing that it had a hand in the splinterism project, some high ranking members of these unions confessed it was a ministerial project. Despite this wealth of experience, the Union educator Gondo argues that the loss of experienced unionists through the 1999 restructuring exercise had a negative impact on the union's decision making as the inexperienced mostly young leaders miscalculated in going on strike in 2004.

Table 3.2: Union Members as a Proportion of the Total Workforce

Year	Company Name	No. of workers	RPTWU/ Members	ZPTWU/ Members	CASWUZ Members	NON MEMBERS	% RPTWU	% ZPTWU	% CASWUZ

1970	PTC	3000	525			2475	17.5		
1975	PTC	4200	800			3400	19.04		
1979	PTC	7500	2425			5075	32.33		
1980	PTC	10000		4250		5750		42.5	
1994	PTC	10000		5280		4720		52.8	
1995	PTC	10000		5628		4372		56.28	
1996	PTC	10000		5998		4002		59.98	
1997	PTC	10000		6305		3695		63.05	
1998	PTC	10000		6498		3502		64.98	
1999	PTC	10000		6500		3500		65	
2000	TelOne	3982		2300		1682		72.07	
	ZimPost	-	-						
	NetOne	-	-						
	POSB	2400		2300		100			
2001	TelOne	2750		2062		688		70.41	
	ZimPost	2400		1531		869			
	NetOne	281		135		146			
	POSB	500		448		52			
2002	TelOne	2750			2071	679			73.86
	ZimPost	2002			1500	502			
	NetOne	290			153	137			
2003	TelOne	2750			2065	685			73.37
	ZimPost	2000			1481	519			
	NetOne	290			152	138			
2004	TelOne	2750			1100	1650			48.5
	ZimPost	729			639	90			

	NetOne	251			70	181			

Source: CASWUZ Reports

The oldest union in the communication sector has passed through different phases. The RPTCWU was established in 1970 and it had a membership of about 17.5% which rose to about 32.5% by the end of the decade. The union was structurally weak during its first phase of existence due to the fact that it was not recognized at law and also the inherent ethnic politics of the time. The union adopted a name at independence to ZPTCWU and all unions in the sector amalgamated to form one thus the membership started at 42.5%. Despite this, the union was weak as government policy at the time was paternalistic and there was not much engagement with the employer on issues to do with wages and conditions of service. By the end of the decade, the membership had risen to 65% and the union was now growing in strength especially after the 1994 strike. Although the 2000s started with a restructuring that reduced the number of workers the union members as a percentage had risen to over 70%. This shows how CASWUZ then had become strong over the years. A major drop in membership was in 2004. This was because of two reasons, firstly due to the dismissal of strikers and secondly due to threats of dismissal for those who continued to maintain their CASWUZ membership. This is reflected in figure 3.2.

Conclusion

The chapter discussed the industrial relations system in the pre and post colonial state as well as the development of the communications industry from the colonial days. Trade unions in Zimbabwe have undergone a metamorphosis over the past four decades. During the colonial era of the 1970s the unions were structurally weak due to colonial regulations as well as the ethnic

politics by the liberation political parties which promoted divisions within the union movement which went on till independence in 1980. The control of unions went on after independence as the state created one labour federation out of the existing six and further adopted the colonial one industry one union policy a situation that prevailed until 1990 when ESAP was adopted. ESAP allowed for the deregulation of the labour market which meant many unions in one industry. In a way the resistance that came about as a result of ESAP created strong unions such as CASWUZ. Despite being a public sector union, CASWUZ along other unions opposed state policies and became unpopular along ruling ZANU PF party circles as they were accused of pushing an opposition party agenda. Most prominently, the restructuring of the PTC in the year 2000 affected ZPTWU's organizing strategies as other unions came into the sector. However, as the union changed its name to CASWUZ it proved to be the strongest union in the sector than others as it managed to maintain its membership above 70%.

Chapter Four

Political Economy 1980 – 2004

Introduction

Zimbabwe inherited a dual economy at independence in 1980 due to the inequality between blacks and whites. The country had been under international isolation (economic sanctions) since 1965 when Ian Smith proclaimed the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI). The sanctions were however lifted at independence but the duality remained in place and the modern economy continued to exist in parallel to the rural economy (Kanyenze, 2003). The 1980s were characterized by government controls and budget deficits. State control of the economy was deemed critical in order to address past inequalities. Most prominent were the areas of education, agriculture and healthcare. Primary education enrolments rose from 1.2 million children in 1980 to 2.2 million in 1989 and secondary enrolments rose from 74.000 to 671.000 in the same period (Government of Zimbabwe, 1991: 1). Significant improvements were also noted in the areas of small holder farmers whose share improved from 0% in 1980 to 70% in 1989. (ibid: 1). Health care also improved significantly. Trying to address social inequality had problems of its own as in the same period the budget deficit was in excess of 10%, inflation averaged around 15% while unemployment reached 26% by 1989 (ibid). At the beginning of ESAP in 1991 inflation was around 12.4% and by end of 1995 it had short up to 25.81 a situation that prompted action from civil society. The very peak of inflation during this period was 2003 which had a high of 598.74% while the GDP surged from 7% in 1990 to -2.4 in 2004 (Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe; Central Statistical Office, 2004). This chapter examines the changing political economy as from 1980, how it impacted society and the character of the labour movement. The discussion will begin by discussing the political economy of the 1980s (pre-ESAP) before moving to the 1990s (ESAP) and finally 2000 – 2004 (post-ESAP) especially as it affected society and labour. This

discussion helps in the analysis of the research questions as to the cause of the unfolding events given the political economy that CASWUZ finds itself in.

Zimbabwe in the 1980s

The advent of black – majority rule in Zimbabwe marked the beginning of a new chapter in the history of Southern Africa. Kanyenze (2003) has argued that Zimbabwe inherited an economy which had the contradictory social characteristics as the rich and the poor lived side by side. In view of this the government in 1981 adopted the policy of Growth with Equity whose aim was to address colonial imbalances.

Primary production formed the backbone of the economy with agriculture being the key sector of the economy followed by mining and manufacturing. The importance of agriculture, manufacturing and mining sectors is highlighted by the fact that these sectors contributed approximately 50% of the GDP and employed about 55% of formal sector workers (Kanyenze, 2003). The importance of Agriculture is highlighted by the fact that in 1984 it accounted for the highest export earnings of 41% followed by manufacturing and mining with 32% and 27% respectively (Kanyenze, 2003). The majority of Zimbabweans lived in agricultural communities / rural areas (Sylvester, 1991) either as workers on farms or practicing subsistence farming. Its importance can not therefore be overemphasized to society. Madhuku (2001) has argued that the state used to set minimum wages in order to ensure the viability of the economy and at the same time protecting the vulnerable workers. The state owned such entities as the Grain Marketing Board, the Cotton Marketing Board and the Dairy Marketing Board which were critical in Zimbabwe's agro-based economy as a means of controlling agricultural output. Between 1982 and 1985 the Transnational National Development Plan was launched with the aim of among

other things to improve food security in the entire southern African region. Sylvester (1991) argues that the objectives were the same as those pursued during the UDI period. The only differences being that in the same policies, government also pledged a land resettlement program in order to address the land imbalances created during the colonial period and also that at independence policies were implemented to benefit the majority.

Government adopted a mass education policy for all which saw its expenditure on education increase from Z$227.6 million to Z$628.0 million between 1979 and 1990 (Brett, 2005). For the first decade primary education was free, with fees being introduced in 1991 as part of the ESAP prescriptions. The introduction of free education saw school enrolments rise from 819,000 in 1979 to 2,26 million by 1985 (Sylvester, 1991). Zimbabwe made great strides in the area of education and was ranked number two in Africa after Tunisia. Healthcare expenditure trebled from Z$66.4 million to Z$188.6 million during the 1980s (Brett, 2005). This increase in expenditure saw about 450 projects of rural health centres being completed out of a targeted projection of 681 (Sylvester, 1991). This had positive implications on labour as more jobs were created and more workers and their families could access healthcare. Central government expenditure trebled and increased its share of GDP from 32.5 percent in 1979 to 44.6% in 1989, while tax revenue increased from 24.4 percent of GDP in 1980–83 to 28.8 percent in 1988–91 (Brett, 2006: 96). This squeeze on the fiscus created fertile ground for economic crises. The 1980s were thus characterized by skyrocketing public spending particularly in the areas of civil service employment, spending on social services, drought relief, and subsidies for government owned companies which increased “from Z$155.9 million to Z$205.7 million in the 1980s (Brett

,2006: 96). The result of this was a chronic budget deficit, a high tax regime, and a rapid increase in public debt which had a negative impact on the economy (Jenkins, 1997.

It is apparent from Brett's (2006) argument that the economy was mismanaged in the name of pursuing what Jenkins (1997) termed Marxist-Leninist policies. Bond (1998) however, argues that the Zimbabwean government was never socialist as the alliance between the rural classes and the guerilla movement was a convergence of interests against colonialism. While the Mugabe regime might have been genuine in trying to address the colonial inequalities the majority of chefs were also busy amassing wealth for themselves as evidenced by the many scandal of corruption highlighted in the 1980s and 1990s. In order to rescue the economy from further collapse neoliberal ESAP was adopted in 1991.

The 1980s were regarded as the best when we compare the pre-ESAP, ESAP and post-ESAP periods as it offered much for the worker and society. As much as 81.25% of the respondents said they joined the PTC because it offered better wages, better working conditions, career advancement and job security. This agrees with what was stated earlier in the literature review when Prime Minister elect Mugabe stated that "basic wages and working conditions of black and white must be based on an equal footing" (Saunders, 2007: 161-162). The new government had adopted policies aimed at addressing colonial inequalities which saw it embarking on a massive recruitment exercise which saw the staff compliment in PTC increasing by 25% in 1980 alone (see table 3.2). This was necessary to expand postal and telecommunication services to the previously marginalized black communities. Good salaries were meant to attract and retain skilled workers as this was critical for the development of this sector as indicated earlier in chapter three that experienced white personnel were leaving for greener pastures (Kenneth

Manyonda, *TelePost* December 1998) . PTC was well paying as 56.25% of those interviewed said they had previously worked in the private sector while 25% had joined in from other public sector department and they all said they were happy to identify with PTC. More evidence of a stable economy and good wages was revealed from those employed in the pre-ESAP period (69% of the sample) of whom 81.8% said they owned hoses in the city. However, government policy of the 1980s was with its implications as the budget deficit had gone beyond 10% by end of 1989 (Government of Zimbabwe, 1991) prompting the state to implement ESAP in 1991. The next section is going to discuss the political economy during the 1990s.

ESAP and beyond

The Zimbabwean government adopted the free market economy with the hope that it would raise investment levels, thereby facilitating attainment of higher growth rates and employment creation, and uplifting the standard of living of the majority of the people (Kanyenze, 2003). ESAP abolished subsidies, exchange controls and import licensing. However economic growth remained low hovering around 1.2% during 1991 to 1995, compared to the 2.7% growth during 1980 to 1989 (Government of Zimbabwe, 1991). Bond and Manyanya (2003) argue that ESAP failed to reduce the budget deficits which remained above 10%, while inflation and the trade deficit skyrocketed.

ESAP cost the society in terms of social service cut backs and lost employment opportunities, something that the government later admitted and sought to legitimize its actions by blaming it on the International Financial Institutions (Saunders, 2005). ESAP led to rapid de-industrialisation (textiles -64%, metals -35%, transport equipment -31% and clothing went down to -28% of production capacity between the late 1980s and 1994) (Bond and Manyanya 2003).

The drop in production capacity can be partly a result of persistent droughts coupled with misuse of SAP funds. Zimbabwe experienced food riots in 1993 and 1995 as ESAP induced poverty deepened. Fifty percent of the respondents to this study emphasised that ESAP was bound to be resisted as no one was consulted at its inception. More so, all the respondents agreed that ESAP had caused suffering to the working class and the poor. It was during this period that key organizations emerged with the deepening crisis in economic production to challenge the hegemony of ZANU PF (Saunders, 2005). The student movement and the labour movement were the two key organizations that came out in opposition to government policies. As early as 1989, the students union had started opposing the government's shift to neoliberalism when they denounced the Investment Code which facilitated foreign investment in Zimbabwe (Zeilig, 2007). When ESAP was implemented in 1991, workers and students denounced it as they felt it had liberated employers and sacrificed workers; hence they coined 1991 the year of the people's misery (ibid). This came out clearly in the interviews as well were 62.5 percent of the respondents vociferously accused ESAP of causing suffering to the people through retrenchments and privatization. Gwisai (2002) argues that the three groups that pioneered demonstrations against the failures of ESAP were the middle and working class along side university and college students. The point being emphasized by the respondents is that they wanted to be involved in decisions affecting them socially, economically and politically however, government was not prepared to listen at the time. This is evidenced by the fact that ZCTU went on to draft an alternative to ESAP, *Beyond ESAP*. Further to that, the ZCTU together with civil society went further to survey peoples views on social, economic and political issues in 1998 (Kondo, 2000).

The same year a body advocating for constitutional reform the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) was formed. The NCA comprised of civil society which included labour, women's, faith based, student and youth posed yet another challenge to the ZANU PF government. These individuals and groups formed the NCA to campaign for constitutional reform because in their perspective the political, social and economic problems bedeviling Zimbabwe were mainly a result of the defective Lancaster House Constitution. Hence they demanded a new and democratic constitution (NCA website). This issue came out clearly in the interviews as 62.5% of the respondents unequivocally stated that their activism in the NCA was because they felt that President Mugabe has overstayed and therefore constitutional reforms were necessary to limit his term of office. A year later in February 1999 the National Working Peoples Convention was convened by ZCTU in collaboration with civil society and agreed to form an opposition party which was launched in September 1999 (Kondo, 2000).

In response, the state became hostile to civil society such that by the mid 1990s it only engaged this sector if it could determine the agenda on its own terms (Saunders, 2005 and Zeilig, 2007). The state amended the Private Voluntary Organisations Act in 1995 which gave it the authority to seize assets of any voluntary organization, to remove its executive from office and replacing it with one of its choice and even setting the new salary levels of the new executive (Saunders, 2005). The first victim of this callous piece of legislation was the Association of Women's Clubs (AWC), targeted for its political outspokenness. However, the AWC successfully challenged the constitutionality of the legislation in the Supreme Court much to the chagrin of ZANU PF (Saunders, 2005).

Government also responded to this movement by heavy militarization of the state and its organs. President Mugabe unleashed the army, war veterans, the CIO and national youth service

graduands against his opponents and simultaneously also enforced discipline in his own party. "This militarization soon extended to the state, with several security personnel strategically slotted into senior bureaucratic and political posts" (Saunders, 2005: 141). Sachikonye (2009:2) argues that the "Office of the President extends from the cabinet to uniformed services, from ministries, to provinces and districts, from embassies, college campuses to villages." PTC as a strategic state entity used by the state to spy on its opponents is one such organization which was militarized. Strikingly, Sachikonye (2009) argues that a recent estimate shows that one out of every five Zimbabweans has some connections to the notorious Office of the President[7]. This had serious implications on the organizing strategies of CASWUZ and was especially reflected during the 2004 strike.

As indicated earlier, the ZCTU had adopted an oppositional stance as early as 1991 when government implemented ESAP without consulting it but a decision to form a political party was only mooted at its 1996 General Congress (ZCTU, 1996). Although the respondents to the interviews argued that it was CASWUZ that mooted the idea of an opposition political party, the truth of the matter is that they played a leading role before and after the formation of the party. Labour again played a leadership role in propelling the civil society to form a political party as it was the only effective civic organization with grassroots structures country wide outside the ruling party. This is in line with the argument by Valenzuela (1989:447) as the labour movement occupies a special place among the forces of civil society as it has a greater capacity for extensive and effective mobilization at critical moments. The labour movement has effective network through its union structures and can disrupt the economy directly through work stoppage unlike other civic organization. As a result the ZCTU General Secretary, Morgan Tsvangirai became the Movement for Democratic Change's founding President.

[7] The office of the President controls the state repressive machinery and intelligence.

The fact that the ZCTU members saw the need to confront the class compromises caused by corporatism of the 1980s gave it organizational strength as most previously docile unions especially in the public sector became active. According to Saunders (2005) this culminated in the wildcat, later organized political strikes of 1995 to 1998 which played a catalytic role to the formation of the MDC in 1999. The formation of the MDC was a result of government's unwillingness to engage seriously in its own offers of tripartism. In Zimbabwe, there are two negotiating forums at national level – the National Economic Consultative Forum (NCEF) and the Tripartite Negotiating Forum (TNF) which were launched in 1997 and in 1999 respectively. These bodies differ with South Africa's NEDLAC in the sense that they do not have the backing of the law hence decisions made are not legally binding.

There are many hypotheses as to the cause of the crisis in Zimbabwe. Other scholars have argued that this was a direct result of the 1997 compensation and gratuities of Z$50,000 and a further Z$2,000 monthly payment given to former freedom fighters (war veterans) as compensation for their role in the war of liberation without going through the budgetary process (Makumbe, 2000; Saunders, 2005; Addison and Laakso, 2003). Initially the government had refused to accede to the demand but the war veterans under Chenjerai Hunzvi were like a tsunami. Raftopoulos (2000) argues that by acceding to war veterans demands caused the Zimbabwean dollar to crumble against the world's major currencies. The government however used this to gain patronage from the war veterans who later become strategic for the survival of ZANU PF.The government tried to push the burden to labour but was resisted after a stay away.

It is also further argued that the current economic malaise was exacerbated by Zimbabwe's participation in the DRC war which was sanctioned by President Mugabe without cabinet approval in August 1998 (Addison and Laakso, 2003: 462). Labour was generally opposed to the government involvement in this war (Interview Nhanhanga).In August 2000 that the government had spent US$200 million on the DRC war since 1998 which was viewed by the government as unsustainable. (Addison and Laakso, 2003). It is evident that the failure of government policy especially in the second half of the 1990s was due to unbudgeted spending such as spending in the DRC war which could have created the 44 000 jobs per year targeted under the Zimbabwe Programme for Economic and Social Transformation (ZIMPREST) also known as ESAP 2.

ZANU PF changed its ideology in the early 1990's.This can be linked to the fall of the socialist bloc in 1989. It is however, debatable whether ZANU PF ever really turned socialist given that socialist rhetoric lived side by side with capitalism up until 1989. According to Saunders (2005: 136 -7) this paradigm shift first manifested itself on the 1989 independence day (18 April), when President Mugabe for the first time did not talk of the Marxist-Leninist principles in his address to the nation but focused on "trade liberalization policies for the sake of resuscitating employment prospects." This rhetoric came into being in 1991 when the government implemented the ESAP. "Government with its left-leaning ideology had taken power when, world-wide, ideology was moving rightwards. This at least made the shift in strategy at the end of the I980s possible, even if it does not explain it" (Jenkins, 1997: 586). Davies and Rattso (1999) argue that the key year is 1992, which saw the trade account fundamentally being fully liberalized. "Output and investment contracted by about 8-10 %, the inflation rate doubled to above 40%, a consumption boom increased imports, and the trade balance moved into serious

deficit" (Davies and Rattso, 1999: 2). They further argued that the drought of the 1991 to 1992 farming season also contributed to contraction.

In 2002 new repressive laws limiting the freedoms of the media, access to information and persons in general were put in place. Coltart (2005) argues that the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) adversely affected the opposition's ability to organize campaign meetings during the 2002 election. The Access to Information and protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) was also used to intimidate the independent print media, making it possible for the state to close down those media critical of its policies. Thus the independent paper, the *Daily News* was shut down in 2003 (Coltart, 2005). Trade unions were similarly subjected to state harassment. The next section is going to discuss the changes in the communication industry and how the changes shaped the character of the union

Changes in the Telecom Industry post 1980

The telecommunication industry has been described as a strategic industry by both the colonial and post colonial governments. More prominently, as reported in the *Herald* of 12 November 1982 and also in the *TelePost* of December 1982, the then Deputy Minister of Information, Posts and Telecommunication (MoI) Dr Naomi Nhiwatiwa explicitly said "PTC is one of the major concerns of the government. It is the nerve centre of its activities" (*The* Herald, 12 November 1982 and *TelePost*,12 November 1982). She went on to explain that the efficiency and effectiveness of PTC was essential for social, economic and cultural development and stressed therefore that workers in PTC have a serious responsibility (ibid). The government therefore did everything in its capacity to make sure the employees in PTC were happy and they enjoyed good

wages and working conditions than other civil servants. This is explained by the fact that 62.5% of the respondents said they joined the PTC because it offered good wages and working conditions. More interesting is the fact that 25% of the respondents moved from other public sector departments to join PTC. The PTC pension fund also continued to make funds available for staff who wanted to purchase houses on loan without discrimination on the grounds of position in company. As indicated in the *TelePost* of April 1989, all eligible members were permitted to borrow money to construct or purchase a house in residential areas of their choice (*TelePost*, April 1989). It is therefore not surprising why 81.8% of the respondents who joined PTC in the pre-ESAP period said they owned a house. True as the MoI had stated at a union conference in November 1992 that "the union of this corporation must have as its basic philosophy, the general development of the nation, the improvement of the workers/management relations for better productivity" *(TelePost*, December, 1982) the union maintained this philosophy till the implementation of ESAP in 1991.

The PTC witnessed its first industrial action in the ESAP period in 1992 over a wage dispute. This was a sign that the honeymoon of the 1980s was over as the labour market had been deregulated and they were now supposed to negotiate for their salary increments and conditions of service. As this was not a sector specific problem, this section will concentrate on two major changes that affected union/management relations during ESAP/ZIMPREST and beyond. In the aftermath to the management seminar on Corporate planning held in July 1994 there was talk of the need "to steer the PTC into a commercially run, customer oriented business concern" (*TelePost*, Volume One 1995). In the following year Phase 1 of the Mashonaland/Manicaland digitalisation programme (MMDP) was launched by President Mugabe (ibid). Also in 1996 PTC added another strategic business unit (SBU) which became the first cellular company in

Zimbabwe. The new SBU was named NetOne and it operated under PTC until the unbundling of the companies in 2000. Digitalisation meant that the company was going to need less staff across the board and this paved way for the restructuring process in 1999. A PTC official in 1997 said commercialization was inline wit ESAP's aim of Public Enterprise reform (*TelePost*, January 1997). The interviews as well as CASWUZ reports (Table 3.2) revealed that the restructuring led to the shedding of about 25% of staff at its implementation in 2000. This impacted on the union in terms of reduced membership by 29.2% (Table 3.2). At the same time experienced union members were also shed leading to the weakening of the union's organizing capacity as the union organizer/educator Gondo said (Interview, Gondo, 06 September 2009). The other obvious consequence to the union was financial loss as union subscriptions were reduced.

The main conclusions of this section are that at independence the union/management relations were good because the sector was favoured by the state as it was considered of strategic national importance. This explains why it was designated as an essential service and therefore prohibited from embarking on job action. While the changes that were made might have been essential, they weakened the union movement by reducing its membership. The next section therefore is going to trace the union state relations post 1980.

Changing relations between the state and trade unions 1980 -2004

Sylvester (1991: 61) has argued that the terrain of political rhetoric of the 1980s was "pro-worker and pro-peasant."The State President would announce salary increments every May Day while conditions of service were worked out by the Minister of Labour. This meant that some the fundamental tasks of unions were being performed by the state and unions relegated just to police the state declarations. Employers' common law right to unilaterally dismiss workers was

curtailed with the promulgation of the Employment Act of 1980 and minimum wages were introduced through the Minimum Wage Act of 1980 (Kanyenze, 2003; Sylvester, 1991). A comprehensive Labour Relations Act was put in place in 1985 thereby allowing collective bargaining, dispute settlement and the registration of unions among other changes to the industrial relations regimes.

At independence, the trade union movement in Zimbabwe was characterized by deep seated divisions and was weak and this gave ZANU PF enough ground to control the union movement. This is evidenced by the fact that there were many splinter unions at independence and that the unions could not seriously challenge the government and employers on policy issues they did not agree with. There were six national labour federations and in the telecom sector unions were divided along tribal and political party lines. There were two black trade unions in PTC at independence: the Zimbabwe Posts and Telecommunication Corporation Workers Union (ZPTCWU) which was mainly in support of ZANU and the Posts and Telecommunication Corporation Union of Zimbabwe (PTCUZ), which was mainly in support of ZAPU. Likewise the trade union movement in the sector was split along tribal and political lines with the Bulawayo faction supporting ZAPU and the Harare faction supporting ZANU. The Harare faction was led by incumbent CASWUZ President Matombo and Dobba Gonye as secretary general up until 1982 when government intervened. According to a report carried in *The Herald* of 12 November 1982 the two unions agreed on the merger under a government-appointed chairman and a congress was to be held within six months. Speaking at the official opening of the National Council of the Posts and Telecommunication of Zimbabwe the then Minister of Information Posts and Telecommunication Dr. Naomi Nhiwatiwa hinted that if the unions did not merger as per government directive the state will be left with no option but to install one.

These entrenched divisions were detrimental to the creation of a progressive trade union movement, an issue which the new government gave utmost attention. This was summarized by one of the respondents:

> We reunited again because of the government proclamation of one industry one union. The minister of labour at the time Comrade Kumbirai Kangai gave that directive to all unions (Interview: Gondo, 03 July 2009 and 06 September 2009).

Union state relations were cordial as trade unions were viewed as state appendages and Schiphorst (2009: 413) has argued that "until 1989, the ZCTU was in varying degrees of subservient to the ruling party." The events that prevailed in Zimbabwe in the 1980s parallel what happened in Zambia after its independence as indicated in literature review that the trade union leadership was loyal to the ruling party (Larmer, 2008). This is mainly caused by the crisis of expectation as the workers would be expecting much from the new regime. Most of the respondents said they were happy with the industrial relations of the 1980s as the state was there to play the mediator's role in many industrial relations matters. They particularly mentioned the state's role in wage setting as good as well as the fact that the government will almost at all times listen to their wage and working conditions demands. However, things did not remain the same when ESAP was implemented in 1991 which they described with differing adjectives.

Changing relations

By 1989, the Government of Zimbabwe was already pondering following neoliberal ideology (Saunders, 2001: 142). The state shift was announced in April 1989, when during the state of the nation address the President of Zimbabwe announced a paradigm shift from a command economy to free market economy (Saunders, 2001). Full neo – liberal ESAP was only

implemented in 1991 albeit with much resistance from the workers. The ZCTU and CASWUZ President gave an insight on this as he explained that the shift was caused by a failing economy hence government had to adopt ESAP.

> ESAP was introduced into Zimbabwe with total disagreement from the ZCTU. In fact they also preached the fact that it was going to create more employment but none of those did the trick and in fact what we observed until now was the reverse of what ESAP intended to achieve (Interview: Matombo, 06 July 2009).

Matombo's argument is supported by Gwisai (2002: 233) who argues that "between 1988 and 1992, there was a radical leftward shift in key sections of the labour bureaucracy", reflecting a tension created by the adoption of neoliberal policies by the government. This radicalization saw the 1991 May Day celebrations being organized under the themes (and placards) which lamented that "Employers Liberated, workers sacrificed" and "Are we going to make 1991 the year of the World Bank storm?" Gwisai (2002) further argues that the growing autonomy of the workers was demonstrated in the 1990 elections when they refused to endorse ZANU PF and as they instead tacitly supported a breakaway party, the Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM).

According to *The Worker* of March 1993 the effects of ESAP, such as the skyrocketing prices of basic commodities, increasing unemployment, and high inflation began to be felt by workers as early as 1992 to 1993. This is also confirmed by the fact that the first ZCTU led anti-ESAP demonstrations were carried out on the 13th of June 1992 and once again police broke up the demonstration (Saunders' 2001: 143). The use of force by police represents a shift in the way state dealt with strikers post 1990 and also represented the changing relationship. However the interviews reveal that it was the PTC worker's strike of March 1992 which opened the flood gates of industrial action in the neoliberal era in Zimbabwe. Most of those interviewed confirmed

that this was the beginning of a long journey. ESAP also gave the ZCTU and its affiliates a chance to organize due to the fact that government, in a bid to protect its new agenda became so evasive and refused to listen to the labour movement.

> We resorted to strike action because we said this government is not listening to us, let us push it to the wall or even form an administration which will listen to us the workers (Interview: Munandi, 02 July 2009).

Munandi's sentiments were shared by all the respondents to this study who felt that by imposing ESAP on the workers the government had shown that it does not care for the workers and the peasantry moreso given that it had caused unemployment and poverty. The former Secretary General of the ZCTU, Morgan Tsvangirai had this to say in January 1993; "The ZCTU will this year embark on massive campaign to mobilize workers to transform itself from a largely vociferous organization that no one seems to listen to into a viable political force to be reckoned with" (*The Worker*, March 1993). This statement by a high ranking trade union official represented a shift from the leadership of the 1980s who were shy to be critical of government policy.

The implementation of ESAP generated considerable debate in the union movement especially in the public sector because state employees arguably bore the brunt of this turn to neoliberalism. CASWUZ developed a strong political critique of ESAP. In September 1994, the ZPTWU Supreme Council held a meeting to adopt a position following PTC management seminar on commercialization of the state owned company. Those present unanimously agreed that they will resist any efforts to privatise the company if that will be harmful to the workers (CASWUZ Supreme Council minutes, September 1994) According to the union's President Lovemore Matombo Structural adjustment followed the neoliberal ideology espoused by conservative

politicians such as Margaret Thatcher (British Prime Minister) and Ronald Reagan (US President). In his view the main elements in this neoliberal programme were to give business a more central role on the economy (in other words, limiting the role of the state) and thus to allow market forces to operate without hindrance. Also, trade unions came under severe attack. From the union perspective ESAP was designed to benefit the Western powers at the expense of the poor in the developing countries. Matombo argued that ESAP has created poverty to the working class and to nations in the developing world. He criticized African governments for implementing SAPs without due consideration of the suffering it causes to workers and to society. For this reason, he believes Breton Woods Institution debts should never be paid back as this is tantamount to a waste of resources.

From the interviews conducted in this study most workers demonstrated some basic knowledge of ESAP and often had first hand experience of the negative effects thereof such as unemployment and crime. Most viewed the current political economy of the country as a direct result of ESAP.

The 1993 ZCTU May Day banner carried a message which confirms CASWUZ's paradigm shift and further vindicates the fact that the ZCTU was not confined to shop floor issues but broader societal issues:

> ESAP is a ploy by International capital using ZANU PF to kill workers, peasants and Povo. No to price increases retrenchment and the CIO (*The Worker*, May 1993).

The message on the banner reflected the growing militancy in the workforce. ESAP also affected the day to day operation of trade union as summarized by former General Secretary of CASWUZ Gift Chimanikire:

> ESAP has also affected us as a union. The cost of facilities like hotels, transport, and stationary that we use for seminars, has increased drastically (*The Worker*, November – December 1994)

The workers responded by embarking on a wave of strikes and worker militancy. This can be viewed as a response by the workers to protect their rights from the negative impact of ESAP. This was summarized by the ZCTU and CASWUZ President[8]

> It is well known that before ESAP, there were very few strikes and as from 1994 as I stated earlier on, when the PTC strike started, there also followed civil servants strikes. This was followed by ZCTU job action during the 1990s and subsequently in 2000 up to 2007.The strikes turned into mass action. The reason being that of poverty levels that were brought about by ESAP, affected workers and society and therefore motivated workers to mass action (Interview: Matombo, 06 July 2009).

From the documentary evidence and interviews conducted it is clear that CASWUZ was embedded in society as they would consult other influential civic groups such as the ZCTU and the community residence associations. As emerged at one of the Supreme Council meetings in 1996 where councilor Nhanhanga said as a union we have a duty to protect our brothers and sisters against harmful government policies…as we are the ones who will take care of them if the economy continues to melt down (CASWUZ Supreme Council minutes, March 1996). The concern about the unemployed brothers and sisters show there were some elements of SMU in CASWUZ as early as 1996.

Despite successfully resisting the first phase of ESAP through lobbying with the parent ministry and negotiations with their managements, the second phase of ESAP (1996 – 2000)

[8] Mr. Matombo is the President of CASWUZ and the ZCTU.

reduced the workforce by about twenty five percent from 10.000 workers to about 7.500 workers (see Table 3.2). At plant level it affected the morale of employees as workers were overburdened by workload. Other visible changes in management union relations as espoused by Matombo were summarized as

> The relationship between the immediate superiors and the workers at plant level could somehow be regarded as autocratic and that did of course affect the morale of workers (Interview: Matombo, 06 July 2009).

Union-state relations continued to deteriorate in the 1990s, although, there were accusations of harbouring political agendas for example during the 1994 PTC workers' strike these accusations did not carry any weight as there was no labour backed political party at the time.

A Turning Point for the Communications Industry

In the 1990s the trade union movement in the telecommunication sector was one of the strongest in the country because of its militancy and ability to win concessions through bargaining, strike or the courts according to a majority of respondents in this study. The trade union was mature and effective in handling such issues. The Zimbabwe Posts and Telecommunication Workers Union (ZPTWU) is remembered for successfully carrying out one of the most effective strikes in post independent Zimbabwe (*The Worker*, November-December 1994). According to the Assistant General Secretary Lillian Mboto, the 1994 strike marked a turning point in the communication industry as the union for the first time embarked on a three week strike. Also speaking on the 1994 strike former ZPTWU Secretary General Gift Chimanikire has argued that the union managed for the first time to force the ministry of Labour and management to the

negotiating table despite them having vowed not to do so (*The Worker*, November-December 1994).

According to the LRA parties to a negotiation have to try their best to reach a settlement without resorting to industrial action. It provides channels for dispute resolution such as conciliation, mediation, voluntary and or compulsory arbitration before engaging in a strike action. Despite these provisions, PTC workers were not allowed to go on strike as they are classified essential service. Chimanikire brags that the union managed to hold their first ever successful strike in the face of this draconian labour law. He explains that intimidation; arrest and threats that all the workers had been dismissed because the strike was illegal did not deter them from going ahead with the strike action (*The Worker* November-December 1994). According to a resolution passed after this historic strike during which the General Secretary and other NEC members were arrested for going on an illegal strike, the battles would continue to be fought on the streets and in the court if the employer continues with his unfair practices (CASWUZ National Executive Council minutes, June 1994)

The 1994 PTC strike was caused by management's refusal to honour a 1992 wage dispute referred to the labour relations tribunal wage award in favour of the workers according to the majority of respondents and also as carried in union documents. Management wanted to appeal to the ruling. This arrogance and failure to fulfill its part of the bargain and its concerted effort to cripple the union forced the workers to go on strike (*The Worker*, March 1994). The whole strike issue was politicized as the PTC spokesman Daniel Madzimbamuto was quoted in *The Worker* of March 1994 as saying "they [workers] are now fighting a war against the government and I won't be part of it." This implied challenge to the state by the PTC led former General Secretary

of CASWUZ to comment in *The Worker* (March 1994), that PTC management was deriving satisfaction from the suffering of the people (its workforce and customers). The CASWUZ led 1994 strike was vindicated by a ministerial directive that PTC management should honour the Labour Relations Tribunal (now Labour Court) ruling.

The interviews revealed a turn of events whereby workers started to defy repressive state laws that almost embraced every sector as essential. In the 1994 strike, the interviews it emerged there was defiance from below because at one point during the job action the leaders tried to call off the strike with little success. This conforms to Hyman's (1972:100) argument that trade unions can sometimes be used as a form of control as there is a high institutionalization of conflict in the sector. The reasons for the defiance, was that the workers patience had run out given that they were striking for a 1992 dispute which management wanted to appeal. The workers' patience had been stretched too far so they had to make use of their associational and structural power (Silver, 2003: 3) as highlighted in the literature review. This confirms mobilization theory as postulated by Kelly (1998) as the workers had felt that management was being unjust by continuing to appeal against a wage ruling which was in favour of workers.

This section revealed the changing relations of the state and trade unions from the paternalistic state of the 1980s to the authoritarian state of the post ESAP period. Many scholars have argued that the post independent state was pro-labour; however I would argue that this is not true based on my analysis. The state wanted to control labour because it was afraid it would turn into an opposition party hence trying to control at independence. Some sections within the ruling elite however unwittingly advocated for the adoption of neoliberal ESAP leading to the change in relations as revealed by the respondents to this study. The next section is going to discuss the emergence of opposition and the launch of the MDC in 1999.

Emergence of opposition, leading to the launch of the MDC

Starting in 1996, the ZCTU began agitating for social, economic and political change in the country. This position was adopted at its 1996 congress and immediately it began together with civil society massive consultations with different stakeholders nationwide (ZCTU, 1996 and 2000). This position presents a mirror image of what happened in Zambia as indicated in Chapter two where labour broke away from the ruling UNIP to form the opposition MMD. Schiphorst (2009) agues that it was the Unity Accord signed between ZANU PF and ZAPU in 1987 which created some press freedom and political space hence enabling the gradual sever of ties between ZCTU and ZANU PF. ZANU PF had done a preliminary assessment of ZCTU's organizational strength prior to the implementation of ESAP and had found it to be weak. They were right as they managed to implement ESAP and retrench workers with little resistance from ZCTU (ibid). However the ZCTU was meantime creating coalitions of solidarity with other groups such as the student's movement, public sector employees and the rate payers which gave it a stronger voice when criticizing state policies.

The wave of strikes that started in 1996 represented a gradual increase in opposition to the state and a turning point as over 150.000 public sector employees embarked on a three week nationwide general strike (Gwisai, 2002 and Schiphorst, 2009). This was followed by health sector strike a month later in October and in both these strikes the ZCTU played an influential role (Schiphorst, 2009). During the health sector strike, some nurses were dismissed and the ZCTU called for a General Strike from 12 -14 November 1996, which although it flopped strengthened the ZCTU as it showed that it cared for all workers as the nurses were not affiliated to the ZCTU at the time (ibid). The study on the failure of the general strike pointed to the need

for constitutional amendment hence the National Constitutional Assembly was formed with Tsvangirai as its chair to advocate for amendments on labour law, electoral laws and governance which put the ZCTU on a precarious position against the state (ibid). Relations further soured when in 1997 the government introduced a war veteran's levy of 5% on all wages in addition to a 2.5% sales tax and petrol increases that had recently been announced hence the ZCTU called for a national stay away on 9 December 1997. Gwisai (2002) has argued that in 1997 alone there were fifty – five recorded strikes involving over 1.073.000, a figure equivalent to the entire private sector at the time. As prices continued to rise, in January 1998 the country experienced food riots forcing the government to call for a consultative meeting with the ZCTU which it declined but instead called for a national stay away on March 3 and 4 (Schiphorst, 2009). Schiphorst (2009) has argued that the success of the national strikes can be attributed to the deteriorating economic situation and the unbudgeted expenditure of Z$4 billion on war veterans which aggravated poverty as 61 percent of the population was living below the poverty line then. Also the growing membership represented by an increase from 150,581 in 1985 to 219,418 in 2004 led to the success of the strike.

In trying to counter the ZCTU, ZANU PF created and funded a rival national labour federation in 1998 the Zimbabwe Federation of Trade Unions led by Alfred Makwarimba (ousted in 1985 for corruption from ZCTU) and war veteran leader Joseph Chinotimba as vice chairman (ibid). However this did not succeed as ZCTU had become popular with the working class. In 1998 the ZCTU stepped up its efforts to organize public meetings to get views of various stakeholders on its political project mooted on its 1996 Nyanga workshop (ZCTU, 1996, Kondo, 2000). The ZCTU got the mandate to form a political party and a National Working Peoples Convention was convened in February 1999 and an extraordinary congress by the ZCTU to resolve whether or

not to lead the new party (Schiphorst, 2009). The Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) was then launched on 11 September 1999 and in January 2000 Morgan Tsvangirai was elected its leader and gave up his position as ZCTU secretary general in February 2001 (Schiphorst, 1999).

CASWUZ members were especially enthusiastic about the proposal to form a new party. According to Chizura the question of forming a new political party was the focus of discussion at CASWUZ's 1998 quadrennial congress. It is alleged[9] that after some debate the Supreme Council agreed that it was imperative that a labour party be formed. The union members interviewed believe that although there may have been such an idea to form a political party within the ZCTU, it could only have originated from one of the ZCTU affiliates. They argue therefore that it was the CASWUZ (then ZPTWU) which mooted the idea and sold it to the ZCTU general council. Although this may as well be correct, the idea of a new party was first raised in the ZCTU in 1996, two years before the decision taken in CASWUZ. Respondents to the interviews remember that there was so much agitation from workers to form a political party whenever leaders came to report back especially because almost every time the issues of collective bargaining were protracted. They especially thought if a new administration comes in it would be sympathetic to the plight of the working class which was now overburdened by the increase in unemployment and general economic decay as they were now taking care of their unemployed relatives. This appeal to workers that goes beyond the employment relationship to the totality of their lives, as consumers, citizens, family members and women is what Webster cited in Fairbrother (2008) calls social movement unionism. Unlike private sector workers PTC workers directly opposed the state as their employer and by agitating for an opposition party they were fighting two battles at one front unjust and protracted collective bargaining as well as a

[9] Minutes of the 1998 Quadrennial Congress meeting was not availed to this researcher hence this point is not backed by evidence.

worsening economic environment. PTC workers were used to better wages and working conditions of the 1980s as came out in the interviews and also as supported by the fact that the recorded the lowest strike level in the 1980s (only one strike in 1989 against unfair/racist management – Saunders, 2001: 274). Naturally as these were removed, they did everything to protect their territory.

CASWUZ assumed a leadership role also mainly because of the high level of consciousness of its members as a result of the training sessions that were given to their members on trade union matters between 1990 and 1996 according to the CASWUZ organizer/educator Gondo who said they would conduct up to twelve seminars a year. Although these seminars were not political in nature, they enlightened workers on the exploitation that results from the relationship of employment. They therefore were conscious that they are the creators of wealth and as such they became determined to fight for their piece of the cake. This high level of consciousness coupled with the fact that ESAP had brought economic slowdown made the workers politically charged as Nhanhanga observed. Sixty three percent of the respondents to the interviews were of the opinion that the workers formed the MDC because they felt the current government had become so undemocratic and un-sympathetic to their plight and therefore was supposed to be replaced by a democratic party. This explains what was discussed in literature review that social movement unionism emerges "in authoritarian countries…where workers are excluded from central decision making process" (Webster, 1988: 194).

Further, the CASWUZ Supreme Council agreed in October 2002 that it will offer moral support to its members who decide to join the MDC on condition that they relinquish their union position (CASWUZ 7th Quadrennial Congress minutes, October 2002). This decision to be in a political alliance has been defined as social movement unionism by Von Holdt (2002). A number of CASWUZ

members were directly involved in the formation of the MDC and occupied key positions at various levels. These included the former General Secretary Gift Chimanikire, who was one of the founding top five, and the union's lawyer, Tendai Biti. Other unionists such as Chizura, Gondo, and Munandi occupied positions at provincial level. However, there are many more that held other positions in the MDC structures as the union never took stock of who holds which position. Nyandoro argues that this meant CASWUZ became more influential in the MDC than any other union because besides Biti and Chimanikire there were many other of its members in influential positions throughout the country. The launch of the MDC heightened political tensions in the country because for the first time there existed a mass alternative to the rule of the Mugabe regime. The leading role played by trade unions in this new political movement further worsened relations with the ruling party. Currently three former CASWUZ leaders are MDC parliamentarians.

The interviews gave the impression that workers viewed a change of administration as a solution to their socio-economic problems, and the MDC was viewed as the most suitable replacement of ZANU PF party. Besides issues affecting them at work, the workers felt that they were being denied political rights as supporting the MDC was being criminalized and 87.5 percent of the respondents said they covertly supported the opposition for fear of reprisal by the employer as the workplace has been highly politicized. However, the fact that their union adopted a congress resolution in support of the MDC makes it difficult to hide their identity as these resolutions are passed on to the structures for execution (CASWUZ 7th Quadrennial Congress minutes, October 2002). The position adopted easily gets to ZANU PF as it also has its members within the workplace who are CASWUZ members. Despite this fear, CASWUZ's emphasis was on "creative pressure strategies include…direct action, community alliances, and political

intervention" as argued by Lopez (2009: 9) in chapter two. This goes on to show how social movements can push for an alternative as in the case of Zambia where the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) came into power through the combined force of social movements (Larmer, 2002: 175).

Conclusion

The political economy of Zimbabwe has deteriorated to unprecedented levels since independence in 1980. In the 1980s labour enjoyed protection from the state as favourable labour laws were enacted and they enjoyed the state proclaimed minimum wages every May Day. By 1989, the state moved from this system as it adopted neoliberal ESAP. This economic policy affected labour and the poor. As the economic crisis deepened, workers, civil society, and the peasants joined hands in opposition to the state as evidenced by a wave of strike action starting 1996 which led to the formation of the MDC in 1999. CASWUZ played a leadership role at the time as it was the only union that could carry out effective strikes because of the unity that prevailed in the union at the time. CASWUZ therefore proved that it is a social movement union as it worked with political parties, civil society groups (NCA, ZESN among others) to protest the economic decay and authoritarianism.

Chapter Five

Striking for Wages and Democracy?

Introduction

The 1994 strike at PTC marked a shift in the way the union organized because the economic and political order had changed fundamentally as discussed in the previous chapter due to the government's adoption of ESAP. Also, the state had become arrogant and repressive to the extent that trade union input on economic issues was no longer tolerated. The implementation of ESAP led to the deregulation of the labour market which necessitated the changing of organizing strategies by CASWUZ in line with the new order. This change in organizing strategies will be analysed in view of the strikes embarked on by the union between 1995 and 2004 whether they were for wages or for democracy? The discussion also tests whether CASWUZ was transformed into a social movement union or not. The next section therefore starts by discussing the changes in trade union strategy.

Changes in Trade Union Strategy (Trade Union Democracy)

Trade unions are some of the most democratic organizations in society usually embedded in society and driven from below. However, it is not surprising some of the time to find trade union leaders who behave as if the trade union were their personal property. The undemocratic nature of trade unions was revealed at the formation of the ZCTU where out of 52 unions that participated only 32 could be verified if they actually existed (Schiphorst, 2009). Schiphorst argues that decisions on union matters such as affiliation, mergers and breakaways were taken by one person without consulting the membership. The first leadership of the ZCTU which comprised Makwarimba, Kupfuma, Moyo, and Mashavira (commonly refered to as the gang of four) supported by Soko, Njekesa and Ndawana was accused of relegating ZCTU business to party and its government (Schiphorst, 2009). Under this leadership the union federation was highly centralized, with power residing in the national office rather than with the membership. It may be argued that substantive union democracy only came to the ZCTU in 1988 when Morgan Tsvangirai was elected Secretary-General and Jeffrey Mutandare as President. Gwisai (2002) argues that this was so because the new leaders decentralized power by creating regional and district offices which created an organizing platform for the militant rank-and-file. The new leadership also worked hand in hand with university students who also felt betrayed by ZANU PF's adoption of neoliberal policies (Gwisai, 2002). The cooperation of students and labour represented a shift in trade union strategy although, surprising enough, some unions (especially those in the public sector which had stronger ties with the state e.g. Municipality unions) did not adopt democracy when it was institutionalized at the labour centre. CASWUZ managed to assume a leadership position among the ZCTU affiliates as it quickly institutionalized democracy. Starting in 1990, CASWUZ also set up regional offices in all its five administrative regions to encourage participation at local level, a step which acted as a precursor to the success

of the 1994 strike. The 1994 strike therefore heightened the importance of workers democracy as regional inputs were to be considered on decisions affecting the workers such as conditions of service in addition to strike action. This is summed by the union president:

> In all the strikes that we spearheaded we ensured we advised workers of any dispute or any pending dispute. We would take it right straight to the workers and after explaining, they would give us their decision. And once they give us the decision what would then follow are the ballot papers and then we go on strike. (Interview: Matombo, 06 July 2009).

Also, institutionalization of democracy is one resolution that was passed at the National Executive Council meeting held in June 1994 in the aftermath of the first ever successful PTC strike in independent Zimbabwe (CASWUZ National Executive Council minutes, June 1994). This shift in tactic was adopted after the leadership had seen that workers are the owners of the strike not the leadership. This came out clearly during the strike as almost all respondents concurred that efforts to get workers back to work were fruitless during the 1994 strike as they insisted that they would only go back to work when an agreement is signed. This was despite the fact that the leaders had been arrested for inciting strikers. This issue was elaborated by those respondents who were employed during 1994. The collective nature of decision making was also highlighted as workers had to vote for a strike as provided for in its constitution. Articles 21, section37, subsection four of the constitution reads "the Supreme Council shall notify all the members of the Union its intention to hold a ballot not less than forty-eight (48) hours in the case of a strike ballot" (CASWUZ constitution). The notion of democracy is institutionalized as a constitution prescribes how strikes must be conducted. The decision for a strike solely rests on workers' collective decision as they are kept informed of progress with regard to the negotiations with management. Matombo claims the success of strikes was due to the bottom-up approach adopted by the union and argues that other organizations such as the ZCTU and the MDC initially succeeded because they followed the same approach. This concurs with Schiphorst's (2009) argument on democracy as given above.

Literature reveals that the ZPTWU only led two strikes prior to 1994 which were both unsuccessful because of poor tactics (Saunders, 2001). In the first instance (1989) the workers ended up receiving legal threats from the employer as well as from the Minister of Labour, John Nkomo, for breaking essential services regulations. The second strike was also unsuccessful as workers returned to work after five hours empty handed due to a ministerial threat. The union embarked on the 1994 strike without any particular strategy except that it had been agreed that if any of them is arrested no one was supposed to go back to work (ZPTWU Notice of Strike to workers, February 1994). This was aimed at defying the essential services clause of the Labour Relations Act.

ZPTWU shifted their tactic post 1994 to staying away during strikes[10]. The basis of this change in tactics was to avoid confrontation with repressive police as was explained in the notice of strike by the union in 1994 (ZPTWU Notice of Strike to workers, February 1994). This new direction that CASWUZ embarked on brought a new dimension to the industrial relations in the communication sector. The respondents interviewed in this study acknowledged the cohesiveness that existed during the 1994 maiden stay away which was met with remarkable success.

The union as a democratic institution used its structure to disseminate information and make decisions or formulate strategies on strikes as decisions were passed through consensus. Union leaders emphasized the need and significance of unity as captured in the maxim "an injury to one is an injury to all, but did not turn to violence against those who broke ranks with its actions. It won broad support for its diplomatic engagement with non-striking workers as it did not harass them but attempted to diplomatically convince them to join the action. However, those who

[10] Interview with Lovemore Matombo, Harare, 06 July 2009. Matombo is President of the union.

worked during the strike were despised and often labeled as cowards by fellow workmates. But, unlike in the South African labour movement where strike breakers are commonly referred to as *amagundwane* (rodents) and are often dealt with violently, CASWUZ, relations remained cordial even with scab labour.

The adoption of stay-aways represents a shift in tactics by CASWUZ in response to severe state repression towards the labour movement. This corresponds to Valenzuela's (1989: 457) hypothesis on the effects of the authoritarian regimes treatment of labor and its political allies. The Zimbabwean authoritarian regime fits into Valenzuela's typology of syndically harsh and politically closed regimes that is "exclusionary of worker demands and intolerant of all opposition political activity" (Valenzuela, 1989:457). This is because the state's response to demonstrations is captured in the maxim "shoot to kill" and a corresponding repressive labour relations regime. This can be traced as far back as early 1988: Munandi[11] argues that a member of the union was shot dead by police behind the Harare Main Post Office during a demonstration against a LRA amendment. Thus the stay away was adopted to avoid confrontation with the repressive regime as this could cost lives. However, this tactic has its limitations as staying away means that there is no one to police the workplace in case the employer wants to take in scab labour. Such limitations were felt by the union during the 2004 strike when the employer successfully replaced strikers with scab labour, mainly taken from the army. Had the workers been demonstrating outside company premises, they would have taken an informed decision with regards the employer's action. It is however important to note that the adoption of stay away was not by choice but was a defensive tactic meant to minimize damage to members by a violent state.

[11] Interview with Munandi, Masvingo, 02 July 2009

The unions and members used informal communication channels to communicate tactics during the strikes to circumvent the repressive state police. Through these informal channels communication of information on the strike was apparently more effective than formal communication. Chivizhe[12] argues that the tactics were ever changing and he says sometimes they would meet at an agreed venue during the strike to discuss the next tactic after which they would then go home. At times they would use what he coined the spider's web whereby workers used the informal network such as word of mouth and telephones to communicate amongst themselves up to the last worker passing the latest development about the strike. Informal network of communication was made easier by the fact that the majority of workers lived in the same areas. They would only go back to work when convinced that an agreement has been reached. Although this seems positive as the respondents put it, there are always problems associated with being forced to take strike action outside the collective space of the workplace. Firstly, the strike does not receive full media coverage which helps in getting local and international solidarity as reporters cannot visit workers at their homes. Second there are chances that scab labour would be hired. Thirdly you will be taking work related stress home to share it with family and friends when you should share it with workmates. Lastly, the fact that the strike lasted for three weeks is evidence enough that it was stressful to the workers as there are high chances that had it gone beyond this period, they were going to end up divided. This is so because it was the first ever protracted strike and also because the tactic of staying away was being used for the first time.

[12] Interview with Chivizhe, Masvingo, 02 July 2009

In the more remote areas the strategy and advice to workers was to keep in touch with the nearest Post Office or Telephone exchange so that they would know the latest developments. This was confirmed by Matombo:

> Well we would use the telephone basically. We are in the communication industry and we utilized our competences to our advantage. (Interview: Matombo, 06 July 2009).

What this meant therefore was that the telephone system was supposed to be kept working in order that communication would be maintained. The other reason for maintaining the telephone system working was also because the workers usually wanted to see a written and signed copy of the agreement, which would most probably have to be faxed from headquarters to all centres around Zimbabwe.

The union removed the organizing of the workers away from the workplace to the community where the workers lived and made use of social networks to communicate with the workers.
Those workers who reported for duty during the strike had to work or risked being dismissed in terms of the company code of conduct[13]. Munandi argues that this ironically worked in favour of the trade union as most workers would opt to stay away.

The 1994 PTC workers' strike had far reaching consequences on union/management (state) relations as the union for the first time successfully challenged state laws on essential services by enduring arrests and defying threats of dismissals. They served as an example to other state owned enterprises which are mostly classified essential service. For that reason, they were accused of advancing a political agenda by the company spokesman (*The Worker*, March 1994).

[13] In terms of the code of conduct any absence for more than five consecutive days is a dismissible offence

This marked a turning point as relations would almost be protracted from hereon because of lack of trust between the parties as will be discussed in the next section.

Nature of strikes between 1995 and 2003

For almost a decade PTC workers have been going on strike over issues affecting them at their workplace. Although as early as 1994, PTC management accused striking workers of pursuing a political agenda (*The Worker*, March 1994), this is not so because then there was no labour backed opposition party. Also as early as 1995 the public media sought to portray the ZCTU as having political ambitions and "preparing to enter the political arena for the 1995 general elections" (Schiphorst, 427). While this prediction might have been partially correct for ZCTU led strikes, ZPTWU strikes were merely to do with bread and butter. However, after 1999 some of its strikes were of a political nature especially those that were ZCTU led. This section tries to analyse the strikes that PTC workers undertook between 1995 and 2003 in order that their nature might be revealed as it seems CASWUZ played a dual role of striking for wages and democracy as explained by its president who said during this period unions had become 'silent assailants'. What this suggests is that because of the repressive nature of the ZANU PF government it had become difficult to speak out hence they covertly discussed economic and political issues at the workplace. In sum it had become difficult to express anti-ZANU PF sentiments at the workplace whether by speaking against or striking over whatever issue. What this means therefore is that the period 1995 to 2003 became a learning curve whereby it came out clearly that public sector strikes will always inherently be political as they are directly against the state or calls for its action. The next section tries to clarify this point by analyzing the changing causes of strikes over nearly a decade.

The ZPTWU maiden strike of 1994 was the first time the union undertook a three week strike and most probably the first of its type during the decade. What is heartening though is that the issues that caused strikes in 1994 were all addressed. Also from the analysis they also became the causes of subsequent strikes. What therefore differs is the way the causes were addressed by both parties. The discussion that follows is based on information compiled from notices to go on strike by the union between 1994 and 2004.

In 1995, the union went on strike to press for a wage hike and at the same time accusing management of being incompetent. Although the period taken to resolve the issue could not be ascertained by documentary means, the interviews revealed that there was a drastic reduction in the number of days that management took to address the causes of the strikes. This is more visible in the 1997 strike also caused by a wage dispute which only lasted for one week down from the three weeks of 1994. This depicts a massive reduction in management's reaction time. There are three main arguments as to why management became receptive to worker demands after the 1994 strike. Firstly, the parliamentarians had humiliated them in 1994 by directing them to pay workers who had embarked on a three week strike. Secondly the workers had become so united to the extent that management tried by all means to avoid the replication of the 1994 strike. Lastly, the sector was considered an essential service by the government; hence it was imperative that management address the dispute in the shortest possible time. This trend was reversed starting in 2000 as relations with the state tilted in favour of management as opposed to the workers, thus there was an upward shift in the number of days spend on strike. The strike was caused by a government directive to reduce PTC wages by over 50 percent citing financial constraints. The wages had been affected seven months earlier in January 2000. This decision was not popular with workers and it worsened worker/state relation as the

majority of them were left heavily in debt. After a failed industrial action the union shifted its strategy to follow the legal route. The courts took too long to address the matter and an out of court compromise was only reached in 2003. By the year 2000, union demands had somewhat become political in addition to bread and butter issues such as wages. Now demands such as protection against victimization by war veterans in certain parts of the country were also incorporated. Management had also become highly unreceptive as the other cause of strikes in 2001 was management's refusal to negotiate with the union. Most respondents attributed management's negative response to strikes to the politicization of the workplace due to the perceived alliance of workers to the opposition. The ESAP induced split of the PTC into strategic business units (SBUs) might also have impacted on management stance on strikes as they desperately needed results not strikes. The transformation of CASWUZ from an industrial union to a social movement union became rapid. Around 2000 the union urged its members to vote "NO" in the constitutional referendum thus directly opposing the state. In the 2000 elections, the union further urged its members to vote for opposition parliamentarians some of whom were its members. In August 2000, the state cut PTC wages thus further transforming the union's concerns from industrial to social especially given that the employer was unresponsive to the union's request to protect its members from attacks by war veterans (Notice to go on strike, 2001). The delay in solving the 2000 salary cut dispute further worsened relations such that by 2003 a series of strikes were undertaken and workers were calling for the resignation of the entire management team. The union accused the managers of corruption, nepotism and what they called cowboy industrial relations mainly because management had withdrawn from the bipartite negotiating forum the National Employment Council (NEC). The majority of respondents in this study confirmed that some managers retaliated by flashing their

party cards and threatening that if the union continued opposing state policies they will regret their actions.

Calling for the resignation of state appointed managers at the time of heightened political tension like 2003 was tantamount to calling for the resignation of the state itself as these managers carry out state orders. Indirectly therefore the union was pointing at the state's incompetence. The union also adopted the legal route in order to circumvent the essential services clause in the Labour Relations Act. Despite the union being victimized in 2004 and again showing the loophole of the legal route, it had played its role in fighting for the democratization of labour regulations and constitutional amendments. A summary of ZPTWU/CASWUZ led strikes is given below.

Table 4.1 ZPTWU/CASWUZ Led Strikes

Year	No. of Strikes	No. of Workers On Strike	Reasons for Strikes	How Was It Resolved?	Days on Strike
1994	1	10,000	Management's refusal to honour a 1992 wage dispute. The tribunal had awarded the workers 13, 5% back dated to July 1992 which was 3, 5% higher than PTC management was prepared to offer. Management declined to make union deductions of Z$5 instead deducting 50cents.	The workers were only paid their labour relations tribunal award after a cabinet and ministerial intervention. The workers had resisted threats of dismissal and stayed away from work for almost three weeks	<21
1995	1	10,000	To push for a salary increment. Accusing management of incompetence.	An increment was granted.	
1996			*		
1997	1	10,000	Disagreement over wage and benefits hike. To pressure management to accede to a collective bargaining demand	The wages and benefits were hiked	7
1998			*		

1999			*		
2000	2	8,000	Failure to implement agreed position – Management cut workers salaries by more than 50%	Management had agreed to implement the collective bargaining agreement as recorded in S.I 26 of 2000 but did not do so. It was later referred to the courts	>14
2001	4	8,000	Restructuring of 1999 to 2000 and the grading system done in January 2000, which had unfairly graded other workers, victimization by war veterans especially in areas like Guruve in Mashonaland. Against the formation of a splinter union by the CEO. Refusal to negotiate by the CEO citing he is busy. Giving workers a 10% salary increment across the board without union knowledge.		
2002			*		
2003	3	8,000	Failure to implement a high court order to reinstate the salaries cut by 50% in August 2000. Delay in agreeing on the name of an arbitrator for the 2003 salary dispute. Workers wanted top management to resign and new management appointed citing misuse of company property, corruption, and nepotism and cowboy industrial relations as some of the reasons. Workers wanted a substantive board because they felt the acting board was not doing a good job. They also wanted management to enter into a written commitment at the NEC to pay the salaries of 2000 and on the current year	The 2000 salary cut issue was solved as an out of court settlement. The workers lost out though. The 2003 arbitral issue was not resolved and it culminated into a series of other industrial actions in 2004. The other issues were also not resolved	

			since they had withdrawn from the NEC.		
2004	6	4,000	Failure to implement an arbitrator's award for the 2004 1st quarter award preferring to take the matter to the high court by management - which they did. Arrogance during negotiations by management. Reducing their salary offer for example from Z$862,411 for the lowest paid to Z$819,000 without producing documentary proof of inability to pay. Victimisation of trade unionists	The strikes resulted in the sacking of more than 50% of the total workforce. Up to now the workers have not yet been reinstated despite efforts to resolve the issue through the courts and also politically.	>60

Source: ZPTWU/CASWUZ Notices of intent to go on strike 1994 to 2004

The next section therefore deals with ZCTU led strikes and the role that ZPTWU/CASWUZ played in these strikes. The discussion also tries to find out whether they were of a political nature or bread and butter issues.

ZPTWU/CASWUZ's Role in ZCTU led strikes

Starting in 1995, the ZCTU started to be assertive on issues of economic policy most prominently through the beyond ESAP project which sought to explain the dark side of ESAP to the workers and society and "what the ZCTU is proposing as an alternative strategy for development" (Kanyenze, 1996: 11). In the same year, the ZCTU also started working together with sections of civil society on issues of national policy making (ZCTU, 1995). The first real action by the ZCTU was in 1996 when in August and September it supported civil servants who had gone on strike and its General Strike in November in support of civil servants who were not

members of the ZCTU then (Schiphorst, 2009). The strike failed but nevertheless shaped the character of the ZCTU as by 1997 it started agitating for issues to do with democracy (ibid). The ZCTU organized several stay-aways against the deteriorating economic climate and the dearth in democracy since then but as Schiphorst (2009: 434) has argued this was met with "harsh repression, continuous intimidation, arrests and outlawing of meetings." During this period, the ZPTWU/CASWUZ played a central role as its members and non-members pledged a "100 percent" unwavering support of the stay-aways (Saunders, 2001: 279)

The interview with the CASWUZ/ZCTU President Matombo shed more light as to the causes of ZCTU led strikes post 1999 as centering on three main areas namely high taxation, access to antiretroviral drugs and the worsening economic crisis. This issues that CASWUZ partook were not economic ones but rather social ones. Matombo further elaborates the CASWUZ – state relations when he says;

> Look, this is a state owned enterprise and any strike is misconstrued to mean that we are against the state (Interview: Matombo, 06 July 2009).

This statement by the union President seems to suggest that it is difficult to distinguish between pure industrial and political strikes especially in the public sector, and more so in the case of Zimbabwe where the state is ultra-sensitive about criticisms. Therefore, even pure bread and butter strikes are deliberately accused as being political, partly to discredit the workers' actions. Some respondents were ambivalent on the nature of strikes as they highlighted the cause as political and economic mismanagement by the ZANU PF government as the problem during the pre-interview discussions only to argue that the cause was bread and butter issues during the interview session. This can be understood as a cultural tendency of *kusvisa* or *kupota* (being secretive) as most Zimbabweans tend to speak-out in a meandering manner. This tendency

makes it difficult also to put a dividing line between politics and bread and butter issues as most respondents argued. More importantly as Nyamupinga argued;

> It is difficult to demarcate. If I say I want a living wage is it not politics? It is politics, because politics involves the day to day running of my life, that is politics to me. So there is no way I am going to say I am not in politics because politics does not involve being in a party structure but as a worker whenever I open my mouth, I am speaking politics.

This is testimony that the union members were aware of the fact that the organization was being transformed into a social movement union due to the political nature of some of its struggles (Von Holdt, 2002). The clash between the state and the workers is elaborated by Chivizhe who recalls the former provincial governor of Masvingo cautioning public sector workers that;

> …if you are a civil servant and you support ZANU PF you are apolitical but if you are a civil servant and you support MDC, you are being political (Interview: Chivizhe, 02 July 2009).

The effect of this statement is that it had become very difficult for public sector employees to embark on industrial action especially where they were perceived to be anti-ZANU PF as the strike would be used to discredit their cause. This is supported by Gomba[14]'s argument that the politicization of the workplace meant that those who dare went on strike ended up being labeled MDC.

Political struggles

According to Beckman and Sachikonye (2005), by the year 2000, Zimbabwean economy had contracted by as much as 40 percent and the GDP per capita was estimated to be down to the 1953 levels. The Central Statistical Office (CSO, 2007) figures on inflation

[14] Interview, Innocent Gomba, Mutare, 10 July 2009

indicated that the figure was at 1730 percent, the highest in the world at the time meaning that wages were rapidly eroded. Bargaining became very difficult given the rising unemployment figures. The collapse of the economy caused unemployment to soar and in 2000 alone 550,000 jobs were lost because of the crisis. At that point, the official unemployment rate stood at 50%. This had a negative impact on Zimbabwean workers and those in the communication sector were hard hit by the economic crisis.

The poverty datum line (PDL) was Z$700,000 which was way above what most workers were earning (Consumer Council of Zimbabwe (CCZ), 2007), including workers in the communications industry. As a result there were more than six industrial actions pushing for wage hikes. A report carried in the *Zimbabwe Standard* of 12 October 2003 indicated that the ZCTU was organizing to call for nationwide demonstrations ahead of the 2004 National Budget presentation to protest against high taxation, inflation and the general economic decay. Under these conditions, many workers were forced to resort to moonlighting or had to survive from remittances from relatives and friends working abroad or had to engage in other informal sector activities to supplement their meager wage or worse still they had to survive through other illegal means as one respondent Gatya had to say *mbudzi inodya payakasungirirwa*. Literally interpreted it means a goat survives by grazing on the grass around it that is workers survived by using the employers' property like cars, faxes, phones and computers among others for their personal gains.

These economic hardships also worsened worker/state relations as pointed out in the interviews more explicitly by Nhanhanga

> The government would not listen to workers requests for a wage increase and also the request for it to look into price increases so the only solution was for it to be replaced by a labour sensitive regime.

Nhanhanga's comments concur the ZCTU President's commented after a General Strike against the economic strike, high personal taxation and human rights abuses that demonstrations were the only way to force the state to take action (*Zimbabwe Standard*, 12 October 2003). Most respondents interviewed they participated in ZCTU led strikes that were political in nature encompassing such issues as rule of law confirming the comments from the President. Gomba sheds more light when he says;

> ZCTU led strikes were however, political in nature because they included such issues as the rule of law, good governance, the constitution, in fact all issues affecting society and workers (Interview: Gomba, 10 July 2009).

If it is true that organizations are shaped by their leaders, then no doubt the leadership of its President Matombo and General Secretary Chimanikire shaped the organisation's political thinking as they believed that labour has a role to speak for the voiceless in society. This is demonstrated by the fact that respondents were able to demonstrate a high level of consciousness on the limits of management for instance as argued by Gomba;

> I want to reiterate that the state is the major culprit in all our problems because it does not abide by the rules of law – the same laws that it enacts. Government intervention has been our problem because even if we agree on issues with the management the state comes in and reverses the agreements (Interview: Gomba, 10 July 2009).

Under these circumstances, the workers were bound to be in opposition to state policies. According to Chivizhe, the state attempted to undermine the support of union leaders by accusing them of operating underhand.

> I think workers have constitutional right to join politics and to represent people at any level in politics…but like I was explaining that the minister was saying you are workers

> during the day and politicians during the night he was not saying politician of the ruling party but politicians of the opposition party (Interview: Chivizhe, 02 July 2009).

Despite the minister's concern, the workers continued to support political parties of their choice as this is their constitutional right. Within the ZCTU the workers advocated for constitutional amendment starting 1997 according to Schiphorst (2009) first with an interest on labour law amendments which was then expanded to issues of democracy. This reinforces Matombo's argument that

> Thus, ZCTU mooted, various strategies for political consciousness, for example they would then demand for a new constitution, which constitution was supposed to limit the president's term of office to ten years. Because there was a feeling that President Mugabe had over stayed and therefore the National Constitutional Assembly led by Morgan Tsvangirai was formed (Interview: Matombo, 06 July 2009).

PTC workers covertly fought the political battles and by 2004, their employer was tired of the so called bread and butter strikes and as a result more than half the workers were dismissed for going on industrial action. The discussion shall then turn on to this strike.

The 2004 Strike: a turning point?

The sacking of PTC successor companies (TelOne, NetOne and ZimPost) workers by their employer (Government of Zimbabwe) came as a surprise to the working class in Zimbabwe. No one had anticipated such action could ever succeed given the unity that had prevailed among the workers for a period spanning over a decade.

Due to the hyper-inflationary environment which obtained in Zimbabwe, NetOne workers and management signed a Collective Bargaining Agreement on 3 December 2003 to negotiate on quarterly basis. Efforts to do negotiations for the first quarter (January – March) did not succeed

despite efforts by the workers committee to initiate them. During the second quarter on 20 May 2004 the union applied for a fourteen day notice for their intention to go on strike as provided for in the Labour Act (Chapter 28:01). The major reason for taking job action by NetOne employees was that management was refusing to convene meetings for the second quarter CBA as agreed on the CBA of 3 December 2003. Management was also forcing the workers committee to negotiate without the authority of CASWUZ as provided for in the Labour Act to which the workers were objecting. On the lapse of the fourteen day notice on 2 June 2004 the Ministry of Labour did not call the parties to conciliatory meetings as expected. The employer, in a desperate bid to stop the industrial action forced the workers' committee to the negotiating table and threatened them with dismissal if they refused. The workers' committee succumbed to the threats but only found out that they were to negotiate with the Permanent Secretary of the parent Ministry of Transport and Communication. Due to intimidation during collective bargaining, all members of the workers committee resigned which caused all workers to immediately go on strike. Starting 24 June 2004 NetOne management started to issue all strikers with letters of suspension citing that they were absent from work for more than four days which is a dismissible offence according to Statutory instrument 130 of 2004. However since this was an industrial action, it was supposed to be dealt with according to section 106 of the Labour Act which brings both parties before the Ministry of Labour to explain their reasons for their respective actions. Despite wining the case in the lower courts, the Supreme Court overturned these decisions and upheld the dismissal decision. (Case no. SC 89/05).

Like at NetOne, TelOne and ZimPost registered their disputes in the first quarter of year 2004. According to the Managing Director's Circular number 3 of 2004 a dispute at TelOne was registered as early as February 2004 and the matter was referred 'for voluntary arbitration.'

ZimPost and CASWUZ also declared a deadlock on the 12th of March 2004 after five unsuccessful meetings. The case was also referred for arbitration which the workers won on the 21st of May 2004 (CASWUZ Court Papers, 2004). ZimPost and TelOne both refused to implement the arbitration award citing ambiguity but ZimPost later changed the reason to financial incapacity. In the meantime, there had been simmering signs of discontentment within the workforce as evidenced by the fact that there were unsanctioned protests at both ZimPost and TelOne mid 2004 as workers had not been awarded and wage increase because of the pending dispute. Meanwhile according to a 14 day Notice to go on strike issued by CASWUZ soon after deadlocked negotiations with ZimPost management over the issue and dated 7 June 2004 the union was to embark on job action as management had failed to provide documentary proof of financial incapacity. Two months later, on 27 August 2004 CASWUZ also issued another 14 day notice to TelOne management which had applied to the high court to have the arbitration nullified. Management also had refused to heed verbal instructions from the parent ministry to pull the case out of the courts for an out of court settlement according to CASWUZ. Instead on 8 September 2004 TelOne management urged workers "to continue to discharge their duties while we await waiting for the Court process to take its course" (Managing Director Circular No. 15 of 2004).

However, this all seems a well crafted strategy by the employer which the workers walked into and it threatened the existence of the union. A series of meetings initiated by the union were held between 18 June 2004 and 05 October 2004 to try and prevent strike action. These were to no avail as management instead reduced their offer from Z$862,461 to Z$819,000 triggering a strike on the 6th of October 2004. It is clear that the employers were anticipating this action and had prepared responses by utilizing different parts of the labour laws to their advantage. The

company code of conduct stipulates that all collective disputes shall be dealt with according to the provisions of the Labour Act chapter 28:01. However management in TelOne went on to use the code of conduct while the ZimPost and NetOne the employers used statutory instrument 130 0f 2004 where they should have used the Labour Act and dismissed more than fifty percent of the workers through improperly constituted hearings (Judgments SC 89/05, SC 26/06 and SC 23/09). The Labour Act provides for the two parties to present their reason (show cause order – section 106 LRA) for taking their respective actions and where the workers are at fault they are told to go back to work (disposal order – section 107 LRA). The TelOne Managing Director Circular Number 16 of 2004 issued on 11 October and called on all workers to return to work by13 October or face disciplinary action. The same action was initiated at ZimPost. This divided workers as some returned to work and some did not. The union immediately sought meetings with the two managements to call off the strike but the meetings did not bear any fruit. This is when the union discovered that a political solution was needed and they approached the parent ministry to no avail (CASWUZ Letter to the permanent secretary, 28 October 2004). On 12 November 2004, the union wrote to The Speaker of Parliament in respect of the matter who then referred them to the Minister of Policy Implementation. The union was granted audience but this did not help the situation.

The circumstances behind the dismissals are clouded with suspicion as interviews point out that this was a well planned move due to the fact that soldiers were used as scab labour. This report is supported by an article carried in the *Zimbabwe Standard* of November 2004. The use of the army to replace strikers shows how the state was determined not only to end the current strike but to permanently dislodge CASWUZ. The Member of Parliament and CASWUZ member Mr. Samuel Khumalo has recently added his voice on the 2004 strike in parliament were he pointed

out that the PTC workers were dismissed because they were considered to be advancing an MDC agenda (Parliamentary debates, 16 December 2008). The union President recently urged the MDC to initiate a political decision to reinstate 2,135 TelOne and Postal service dismissed workers (http://www.thezimbabwean.co.uk). The voice by the MP and the president was shared by most respondents who said they were dismissed because of their perceived MDC support.

> We used to hold our strikes the same dates as ZCTU called stay-aways…now I think that's why they dismissed workers in 2004 (Interview: Gondo, 06 September 2009)

Most shop stewards interviewed were unhappy with the leadership's lack of foresight as they claimed that they witnessed the training of soldiers who were to take up workers positions in the event of a strike but allowed the strike to continue. They argued that the leaders should have made a tactical withdrawal until such time the environment was conducive. Some respondents, especially shop stewards felt that the union leaders had not been democratic this time around because they were fighting another war with ZimPost management which had earlier in the year suspended four key union executives on grounds of inciting workers and the union President had also been suspended for attending a trade union congress. According to a union circular released on 20 April 2004 the union Supreme Council had made a resolution that if the four are not re-instated "the Union will embark on a nationwide" strike action. Sections within the union leadership who had not been suspended saw this as an opportunity to get to the top. When a decision to embark on strike action was taken there were serious divisions as one of the Vice Presidents from Eastern region was urging workers not to go on strike. According to Jeranyama there were disagreements within the union leadership and as such Eastern region which used to be first to go on strike did not do so. This strike seriously affected the character and strategies of the union as to date there have not been attempts to go on strike. Chivizhe observed that;

> When we went on strike, the soldiers came and took the positions of those who were on strike and they have been working in those positions up until 2007, I think, maybe some positions are still being occupied by the solders up to now (Interview: Chivizhe, 02 July 2009).

The sight of soldiers (clad in military uniforms) on company premises was too terrifying for the poor workers some of whom quickly returned to work and the division that followed gave management an upper hand when dealing with those who had continued with the strike. This conforms to Saunders (2005) observation of the militarization of state enterprises. Several union members were arrested for picketing and threatened with violence because of their known support for the MDC (http://webfusion.ilo.org/). These state agents made sure that CASWUZ would not unionise, as they, working with management intimidated those that remained at work saying if they continue subscribing to CASWUZ they would be dismissed as their union was linked to the opposition. The result was a 21,87% drop in union membership in 2004 as depicted in table 3.2 thus nearly suffocating the union as it ran out of finance. Some more strong union members were unilaterally dismissed even when they had not participated in the job action as argued by Jeranyama that he was victimized because he was an active union member;

> I also did not go on strike but I was victimized by the then Regional Manager for being an active union member. So he did this by way of ordering the security guard not to allow me into my workplace. But I have got all the evidence to show that I was at work, and those I was working with, they are still at work. But the reason that I was an active union member, they victimised me, and they fired me (Interview: Jeranyama, 30 June 2009).

Jeranyama and many others tried to challenge their dismissal individually in the courts but they were told by the court officials this is a hands off case.

> When I tried to confront the courts with the case, I was told that this issue, it's a hot issue, just leave it like that, so I had nowhere to go (Interview: Jeranyama, 30 June 2009).

The interviews have reflected that the workplace has been highly politicized as managements have adopted a pro-ZANU PF stance thus compromising the work relationship. A cloud of fear, mistrust and division has been hovering over CASWUZ members over the past five years. This is captured in the interviews which reflect dismay at the way the Supreme Court overturned the judgments (Judgment No. SC 89/05 - NetOne, Judgment No. SC 26/06 – TelOne and Judgment No. 23/09 - ZimPost) which had been favourable to workers. Jeranyama lamented that;

> We feel there was government intervention in 2004 as a way of neutralizing the union which had become too militant…we read much from the Supreme Court judgments that set aside the rulings of the lower courts which were favourable to us (Interview: Jeranyama, 30 June 2009) .

The interview findings are buttressed by the recent comments by the union's president that the dismissals were a ZANU (PF) grand plan to destroy the workers' union which was perceived as militant and a threat to President Robert Mugabe's autocratic rule (*The Zimbabwean*, 11 September 2009). Do we therefore say the 2004 strike has proved to be a turning point for the communications workers given that since 2004 there hasn't been any CASWUZ led industrial action in the communications sector? In 2006 one Regional Administration Officer had this to say;

> History tells me that there is a former Regional Manager of this region whom workers demonstrated against. We thought the strike (2004) had taken away the stuffs with that kind of behavior but the latest developments have shown that we still have the remnants and TelOne should send a bold message, that of cultural change (Complaint by TelOne Regional Administration Officer, 2007)

Does it mean trade unions are no longer tolerated in these state owned companies? The answer seems to be yes and for now the once militant CASWUZ has returned to its shell. But as Silver

argues, labour is never a spend force; we might very soon see the sleeping giant awakening again if the leaders adopt new organizing strategies. One disturbing thing about the 2004 strike is the lack of solidarity from the ZCTU let alone the MDC for which the workers were dismissed. It remains to be seen whether the GNU is going to consider the plight of the dismissed workers or not as politicians have a tendency to use civic society on their way up the ladder only to abandon them when the struggle is won. It is heartening though that CASWUZ received solidarity messages from global unions such as Union Network International Africa (UNI Africa) and in a latter to the regional secretary the union was grateful for the moral and material support during the NetOne strike. In the same letter the union advised UNI of the pending TelOne/ZimPost strike (CASWUZ Letter to UNI Africa, 29 September 2004). The UNI affiliates send their solidarity messages most notably as they said they will continue to step up support for dismissed CASWUZ members (UNI Postal Global Bulletin, Issue No. 3, 2004).

Conclusion

Stay-aways have been one of the strategies that CASWUZ adopted during the period 1994 to 2004 as a way of minimizing injury to its members from the repressive state police. As the economic crisis worsened in Zimbabwe, the state became more and more repressive as reflected by the essential service labour legislation which made it illegal for communication sector workers to go on strike. Whereas CASWUZ adopted various tactics and adopted the stay away strategy for its own strikes, but on joint demonstrations with civil society they went to the streets. The actions of CASWUZ during the period under study reflect that it was a social movement union as it was fighting both the repressive state and workplace (Von Holdt, 2002).

Chapter Six

Conclusions

The study examined how CASWUZ's role and strategies changed during the strike wave between 1994 and 2004 in the context of neoliberal Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) and consequent economic and political instability. The labour movement has had to play a leading role in advocating for workplace and political democracy. Regardless of this fact, few studies have been carried on the role of labour movements in fighting for wages and democracy and this study was carried out to fill in this gap. The study analyzed how the strikes by public sector unions in particular CASWUZ shaped its character.

The study analysed these issues using in-depth interviews with trade union leaders and shop stewards of CASWUZ in an attempt to get a fuller understanding of the unions' shifting strategies. Documentary evidence was also used to illustrate the shifting strategy.

The study found out that as the Zimbabwean crisis unfolded; the union shifted its strategy from being collaborative to adopting a confrontational stance, especially from 1994. This is reflected in the fact that they played a leading role in challenging the repressive state law of essential services which barred them from going on strike. Thus they were not passive victims of the new economic order as they responded with strike action. CASWUZ was the protagonist in terms of strike action both for wages and for democracy as they participated fully in these strikes. The study suggests that the key phase in Zimbabwean politics is the year or so between 1999 and 2000 as labour, alongside other social movements, was instrumental in the formation of a new political party in September 1999. During this period, relations between management and workers started to shift due to shifting political alliances with government, with management becoming highly political. The politicization of the workplace affected labour relations as well because genuine bread and butter demands by workers were being misconstrued to be political hence the workplace became a battle field. It became difficult to win an increment without resorting to job action. The labour – MDC alliance and the management – ZANU PF alliance made it difficult for CASWUZ to organize effectively given that the state had been syndically harsh and politically closed (trade union demands and political demands are not listened to by the state) in terms of Valenzuela's (1989) framework for analysis. As such CASWUZ adopted the stay away strategy to minimize injury of its members from repressive state police. The strikers used what they coined the spider's web which involved informal strike gatherings and

spread of strike messages by word of mouth or telephone. This strategy/tactic had weaknesses as it removed the strike action from the workplace hence the risk of scab labour was high as evidenced by the 2004 strike.

After 1999 all state owned companies were staffed with ruling party sympathizers as argued by Saunders (2005) and Sachikonye (2009). The CASWUZ and workers also resisted government hegemony and followed a trajectory of institutionalized autonomy something scholars like Waterman, Webster, Pillay and others have called social movement unionism. The transformation of CASWUZ into a social movement union is reflected by the fact that it increased its demands to include other social factors and also its alliance with other global unions such as Union Network International (UNI). Links with political parties such as the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) has also been considered to be SMU by scholars such as Von Holdt (2002).

The success of CASWUZ may be attributed to the fact that starting in 1994 its strikes were driven from below. This accounted for the union's strength until 2004 when divisions within the union leadership split the workers and gave management the opportunity to dismiss the workers who had gone on strike. In summary, the 2004 strike was caused by divisions within the leadership as well as a lack of strategy by the new leadership following the 1999 restructuring of the PTC. Scab labour in the form of soldiers also attributed to the failure of the 2004 strike as most workers were scared by the sight of soldiers.

In conclusion, CASWUZ transformed into a social movement union post 2000 mainly as a result of the 2000 salary despute as they broadened their demands to include social issues such as taxation, access to free anti – retroviral drugs, cash shortages and the adoption of a new

constitution, all of which affect society. The union did not involve itself in the MDC in order to become political but it was a form a protest against the perceived arrogance of the state. In dealing with workplace issues they would say we are not political and when confronting the state under ZCTU or other social movements, they would say we are protecting our constitutional rights. However, it came out very clearly that public sector strikes are inherently political in Zimbabwe as the employer/state would frequently use the strikes to discredit the union's demands. In summary, CASWUZ responded to changes in the communications industry caused by ESAP through strike action. It managed to play a leading role in breaking the union alliance with the ZANUPF government because of the unity among workers and the leadership that prevailed at the time. There are possibilities of revival if they adopt new sources of power such as logistical power.

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LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

My name is Taurai Mereki and I am conducting this research for the purposes of obtaining a Masters Degree at the University of the Witwatersrand.

The focus of my research is on striking for wages and democracy by public sector unions using the Communications and Allied Services Workers Union of Zimbabwe (CASWUZ) as a case study. It is hoped that this research will help us better understand the contribution made by CASWUZ in the fight for wages and democracy under conditions of economic instability and political uncertainty.

I therefore wish to invite you to participate in this study which will entail being interviewed by me. Your participation is entirely voluntary and refusal to participate will not be held against you in any way. If you agree to take part, I shall arrange an interview at a time and place suitable for you. The interview will take about 45 minutes and with your permission I would like to tape record the interview. You may refuse to answer any questions that you feel uncomfortable with answering and you may withdraw from the study at any time.

Please be assured that your personal details and responses will be kept confidential and no information that could identify you will be included in the final report.

Please feel free to ask any questions regarding the study and I will try to answer them to the best of my ability. I may be contacted on my mobile number at +263 912 453 652 or alternatively you can contact my supervisor, Dr. Noor Nieftagodien on +27 11 717 4284.

Thank you for your time

Kind Regards

Taurai Mereki

CONSENT FORM

I_____ hereby consent to participate in an interview for the research project conducted by Taurai Mereki. The purpose and procedures of the study have been explained to me.

I agree to have this interview taped [please tick one] Yes☐ No☐

I agree to have you use my real name [please tick one] Yes☐ No☐

Participant's signature..……

Date.……

Researcher's signature.……

Date…….....

CONSENT FORM FOR TAPE-RECORDING

I_____ hereby consent to the tape-recording of the interview. I understand that all information will be kept confidential and that the tapes will be kept in a locked cabinet and will be destroyed two years after publication of the final report.

Name of participant…….

Signature……..

Date…….