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# How and why trade unions engage in politics in Southern Africa?: the case of Zambia and Zimbabwe

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# HOW AND WHY TRADE UNIONS ENGAGE IN POLITICS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA? THE CASE OF ZAMBIA AND ZIMBABWE.

**A research report submitted to the Political Studies Department, faculty of Humanities of the University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Masters of Arts (M.A) in Political Studies.**

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**July 2011**

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## ABSTRACT

This research report seeks to present a comparative analysis of how and why trade unions engage in politics. Special reference will be made to the way in which trade unions in Zambia (ZaCTU) and Zimbabwe (ZCTU) influenced the formation of political opposition parties in their respective countries. That is, the way in which these trade unions engaged with political parties either by being part of them, taking a lead in their formation or refusing to join party politics altogether. The core questions addressed in this research report are: What was the nature of the political opportunity structure in these two countries under review? What was the nature of the State/Party-trade union relations? Lastly. What are the factors that contributed to the turn or shift of trade unions to opposition politics?

The main question of the research report is informed by the fact that in both countries the labour movements which were once subordinate to the liberation parties were instrumental in the formation of opposition political parties after independence. The reasons why trade unions were chosen as a focus of research are numerous. Firstly, trade unions usually function as significant collective interest groups whose role is fundamental to the reproduction of the economy. Their role in the economy thus put them in a critical position which explains why they have close relationships with governments. Organizationally trade unions have certain resource capabilities that differentiate them from other civil society organizations. Usually they have a centralized organizational network both at national and local levels, as well as a common history of struggle against political repression. Lastly, trade unions sometimes have the capacity to interrupt the whole economy in a country through industrial action which makes central trade unions an organizational power that is attractive to the political opposition (Hedblom 2005)

The research outlines the political and social context in which trade unionism developed in the colonial and post independence period and sets out the legal and institutional framework within which labour relations were conducted. After a review of the shift in economic policy which led to the adoption of ESAP, it will consider the effects this programme had on trade union, labour relations, living standards and the eventual formation of opposition parties.

**ABBREVIATIONS**

ESAP – Economic Structural Adjustment Programme

IMF – International Monetary Fund

LRA – Labour Relations Act

MDC – Movement for Democratic Change

MMD – Movement for Multi-Party Democracy

UNIP – United National Independence Party

ZaCTU – Zambia Congress for Trade Unions

ZCTU – Zimbabwe Congress for Trade unions

ZANU-PF – Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic

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## CHAPTER ONE

## BACKGROUND

The origins of labour movements in Southern Africa can be traced back to their countries liberation struggle for national independence. In Zambia and Zimbabwe in particular organised workers were one of the most visible and effective social forces advocating for independence and social change (Jauch 2003). The roles played by the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions (ZaCTU) and the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) are instructive in this regard. In these countries under review, after independence, the labour movements that once were close allies of liberation movements found themselves in the forefront of advocating for democracy and thus openly challenged the ruling parties of the day. Due to their relatively large membership base, trade unions in Zambia and Zimbabwe played a key role in forming political opposition parties that overthrew former liberation movements in power as happened in Zambia or presented a serious or formidable political challenge as in Zimbabwe. During a meeting of the Southern African Trade Union Co-ordinating Council in November 1998 Zambian and Zimbabwean unionists pointed out that at some stage they had maintained a close relationship with their respective ruling parties, but came to recognise the need to be independent in order to defend their members' interests, which often ran contrary to government policies (Jauch 1999). However, trade unions in these countries are not homogeneous and vary greatly in terms of organisational capacity, membership base and vision.

Trade Unions' historical involvement in politics in Zambia and Zimbabwe can be broken up into three distinct phases (Webster 2007). The first was identified by a common struggle against colonialism where they developed close ties with national liberation movements. The second phase was associated with the attainment of independence where the trade unions played a subordinate role in politics since they were more of appendages of the ruling parties in relation to which they were preoccupied with articulating the demands and aspirations of their constituency, the workers. The third phase began in the 1990s with the inception of economic liberalisation and democratisation popularly known as "the third wave of democratisation" (Huntington

1991). This period saw the prescription by International Financial Institutions (IFIs) notably the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for Third World countries to adopt neo-liberal policies to curtail state indebtedness in the name of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). This led African governments to reduce their expenditure through privatisation and consequently retrenchments. As such, trade unions sought to disengage from the state which seemed to have lost its capacity to deliver. Thus, trade unions emerged as a significant opponent to the state, as they sought autonomy and the right to influence policy. This challenge to state power became a threat as fas as the state was concerned. According to Matombo and Sachikonye, "unions are viewed as incubators of opposition politicians with strong roots both at workplaces and in the community" (Beckman et al 2010:778). It is against this background that trade unions in Zambia and Zimbabwe eventually formed opposition parties in 1989 and 1999, respectively. Both internal and external factors can be attributed to these developments. Exogenous factors include, *inter-alia*, the fall and demise of the Soviet bloc which resulted in the diffusion of democratic ideals and the pressure from International Financial Institutions (IFIs) such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank insistence on these countries to adopt democratic principles as a conditionality for financial aid. Internally, the disillusionment with the incumbent government economic mismanagement and the need for political reform were key factors.

## RESEARCH QUESTION(S)

It is against this background that the research question for this study is "**How and why Trade Unions engage or influence the formation of opposition political parties in Southern Africa: The case of Zambia and Zimbabwe**". As a follow up to the research question, the under-mentioned sub-questions will also have to be addressed:

- What was the nature of the political opportunity structure in the two countries under review?
- What were the nature of the State/Party-trade union relations?
- What are the factors that contributed to the turn or shift of trade unions to opposition politics?

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study is to bring to the fore a comparative analysis of the similarities and differences of the factors that necessitated the formation of opposition political parties Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD) and Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) by trade union movements in Zambia and Zimbabwe in 1989 and 1999, respectively. As such the study will compare the nature of political opportunities in these countries. In addition the study also seeks to compare the nature of the state and trade unions relations. The key question is whether the trade unions were autonomous or were subordinate to the state or the ruling parties. Further, the study also seeks to present a comprehensive comparative analysis of the factors that acted as an impetus to the formation of opposition political parties in the two countries under review.

## RATIONALE

This study seeks to present a comparative study of how and why trade unions engaged in oppositional politics or influenced the formation of opposition political parties in Zambia and Zimbabwe. The question of the research is informed by the fact that in both countries the labour movements which were once subordinate to the liberation parties were instrumental in the formation of opposition political parties after independence. Both countries have a common colonial background by virtue of being neighbours and that they were both ruled part of the Rhodesian federation in the 1950s. From the literature that the author has gone through regarding state labour relations in the two countries, scholarly contribution have tended to study each country's labour relations in isolation. Comparison is only made in reference to one factor or variable not the whole socio-political system. Thus the purpose of this study is to contribute to the existing body of knowledge regarding the involvement of labour movements in politics by presenting a comparative approach of how and why trade unions engaged in opposition politics in Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The reason why the trade unions were chosen as a focus of the research are numerous. Firstly, trade unions usually function as significant collective interest groups whose role is fundamental to the reproduction of the economy. Their role in the economy thus puts

them in a critical political position which explains why they have close relationships with governments. Secondly, organisationally trade unions generally have certain resource capabilities that differentiate them from other civil society organisations such as churches, students or women's clubs. Usually they have a centralised organisational network both at national and local levels, as well as a common history of struggle against political repression. Lastly, trade unions sometimes have the capacity to interrupt the whole economy in a country through work stoppages, which makes central trade unions an organisational power that is attractive to the political opposition (Hedblom 2005)

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This section examines the literature that has sought to address the question of how and why trade unions engage in politics in Southern African in general and in Zimbabwe and Zambia in particular. This is useful in setting out the conceptual and theoretical framework for the analysis of trade union political engagement in the above mentioned countries. My intention is to draw upon literature that defines key concepts and theories in general and to relate them to the experience of the trade unions. This section will not attempt to provide an exhaustive review but will merely highlight some key contributions and debates that have generated insight into the political engagement of trade unions.

According to Lise Rakner two theoretical perspectives - pluralist and neo-corporatist - have to be considered in order to assess why the trade unions became a central part of the opposition against United National Independence Party (UNIP) regime. From a pluralist perspective, "trade unions ...are seen as autonomous groups, competing for power and resources for the benefit of their members. The goals of trade unions are understood as mainly economic, geared towards improving the economic welfare of its members. However, while the interests of trade unions in pluralist theory are regarded as narrow and economic rather than political, trade unions are assigned an important political role in the process of democratisation" (Rakner 1992:10). Contrary in an authoritarian environment where there are limited political opportunities or political restraint trade unions are seen as vehicles for change in the name of democratisation. Within a corporatist perspective, the end of the alliance between UNIP and ZaCTU in the early

1990s should not necessarily at this point be understood as a quest for autonomy and democracy on the part of the trade union movement. Rather, it must be understood as a response to the economic recession in Zambia (Ranker 1992). This recession was linked to the global recession at that time. The economic decline and the increasingly stronger presence of and pressures from external actors such as the IMF and World Bank towards the transforming the economic policies ruptured the post colonial contract between the state and civil society.

Based on the above mentioned theories Rakner came out with two hypotheses. The first hypothesis is that,

> The trade union movement leadership perceives the organisation in a pluralist framework and sees as its main interest the economic well-being of its members. In other words the trade union movement has no national political objectives. In order to function as an interest group or pressure group for its members, they see autonomy from the political system as essential. The trade union movement took on a national political role as an opposition force against the regime to defend its autonomous position.(Rakner 1992:12)

The second hypothesis is grounded in the corporatist perspective and it states that,

> The trade union has been tied to the state through various institutional agreements since independence. State-union relations in Zambia are therefore best perceived of in a corporatist perspective, where the state through a combination of coercion and lucrative benefits have coopted the trade union movement. The break of the alliance with UNIP regime was in other words not motivated by ideological differences. Rather, their involvement should be understood against the background of the economic collapse and subsequent break of the social contract between labour and state based on redistribution of benefits (Rakner 1992:12)

Similarly, in the Zimbabwean case the autonomy of the ZCTU was extremely limited in the first half of the 1980s. Its subordination to the state was a prominent feature of the relationship and it was described as corporate paternalist or paternalistic state corporatism where the civic groups trade unions included were confined to largely uncritical, complementary role to the state. In Shadur's view,

> The Mugabe government's strategy in relation to trade unions and workers like that in other countries such as Zambia was similar to a patriarchal approach to the family . The aim was to work for the benefit of the family members but in so doing the patriarch sometimes used dictatorial methods. Government emphasis was placed on unity within the family structures and dissent was not tolerated. Efforts were made to meet the immediate needs of members and protect them from external threats. Where possible, the immediate position of the members was improved but sacrifices were required so that in the longer term sustained benefits could be obtained. The goal was to work for the benefit of the children and grandchildren. (Shadur, 1994:233).

However, such a description of state labour relations in Zimbabwe by Shadur was criticised on the basis that he applied the concept too loosely and because there was an absence of a meaningful involvement of organised labour in decision making (Raftopoulos and Sacikonye 2001).

Robin Cohen developed three types of trade union-party relations relationships in Zimbabwe which ranged from integration, partnership to independent as the table below shows.

**Relationship Types.**

From the table it can be observed that the autonomy of ZCTU was extremely limited in the

| | **Type of relationship** | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **Integration** | **Partnership** | **Independent – allied to opposition** |
| Description of relationship | Union integrated into governing party | Some degree of union autonomy but close cooperation | Union in conflict with government |
| Function of union | Increase productivity and national development | Union concerned with welfare issues and consulted on development | Challenge government/alternative foci of power |
| Union/party relations in Zimbabwe; ZCTU's relationship with Zanu-PF | 1980-1985<br>ZCTU created as arm of Zanu- PF in 1980 | 1985-1988<br>Increased autonomy, but close co-operation with government | 1988-to present:<br>1989: Tsvangirai elected General Secretary<br>1990:Economic structural adjustment programmes (ESAP)<br>1999: MDC formed |

*Source:* Robin Cohen in Sakhela Buhlungu (eds), (2006) Trade Unions and Democracy: COSATU workers' political attitudes in South Africa, HSRC, Cape Town

first half of the 1980s. Its subordination to the state was the most prominent feature (Raftopoulos and Sachikonye 2001). In 1988 a new leadership was elected with Morgan Tsvangirai as the General Secretary. The labour movement became more assertive having weaned itself from state patronage in the late 1980s (Sachikonye 1997, 2000). This was due to structural changes in the economy and the adoption of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) resulted in shift in economic and social policy. Thus, "this ruptured an unwritten social contract between the state, organised labour and business and abetted the enrichment of a few elites and the stagnation and worsening conditions of the majority of the working and middle class" ( Beckman et al 2010:109). Eventually this led to the formation of MDC in September 1999.

Political engagement of African trade unions has been shrouded in controversy especially in the post colonial period as, "states have for the most part displayed an antipathy toward strong labour movements. As a result the latter have continuously had to confront the challenge of asserting their agendas and interests in the economic and political arena" (Raftopoulos and Sachikonye 2001:viii). The impetus of civil society opposition has often come from trade unions, as can be seen in South Africa where opposition to certain government policies has been led by the country's leading trade union federation, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), as the country shifted from the apartheid era to neo-liberalism. In Zambia it was against the Kaunda and Chiluba regimes and in Zimbabwe against the ZANU PF government led by Mugabe. In this context, Lynd argues that, "weak states and governments will deal warily with the unions, because they can never be quite sure what response the trade union challenge will evoke or what hostile alliances they may precipitate" (Lynd 1968:12). The governments in turn have gone as far as seeking to disband unions or to sponsor the formation of competitors. For example in Zimbabwe the formation of the Zimbabwe Federation of Trade Unions (ZFTU) to counter ZCTU is a case in point.

Bendix has argued that, "It is a common fallacy to expect of unions that they should be completely apolitical. Unions are necessarily political and that they vary only in the degree of their involvement and according to the society in which they operate" (Bendix 2000:212). Relatedly, as Bill Freund, quoted in Beckman, notes "virtually all African governments have been uncomfortable with strong, radical, independent trade unions. Such organisations violate their own determination to dominate civil society and threaten to function as

independent power bases for ambitious politicians and potentially for the emergence of class-based politics" (Beckman 2010:192).

Webster also argued that, " the formation of a labour party directly linked to the trade union movement is assumed to be the best way by which unions can influence politics"(Webster 2007:1). For example in the European experience, there is a strong link between social democratic and communist parties and the trade unions. In contrast to Africa in general and Zimbabwe and Zambia in particular, trade unions were influential in the formation of the MDC and the MMD opposition parties in Zimbabwe and Zambia, respectively. However, the relationship between the trade unions and the new opposition parties was fragile and short lived partly due first, to the latter's view that a compromise with neo-liberal perspectives was necessary and secondly, to the intolerance of the ruling party and indirectly, the state, to such a relationship.

Concerns for autonomy lie at the heart of the relationship between the state and the labour movement. Raftopoulos and Sachinkonye argued that, "autonomy is an asset to be jealously guarded in the course of a political struggle" (Raftopoulos and Sachikonye 2001:xv). In Zimbabwe the autonomy of the ZCTU was limited in the first half of 1980 and its subordination to the state was the most salient feature of the relationship. In Zambia, UNIP struggled unsuccessfully to transform the Zambia Congress Trade Union (ZaCTU) into UNIP tutelage. Thus, as Beckman and Sachikonye argues "labour movements are politically contested, both by those who identify themselves as labour and by those who are part of a different camp either as employers or as governments that seek to ensure modes of control and regulation in line with strategies of their own" ( Beckman et al 2010:2).

However, Lynd points to a trend that tends to place the leadership of trade unions among the political elite. Thus, "the official embrace of the unions by the parties and the governments often encourages the tendency by union leaders to perceive themselves increasingly as a special category of public servants or the equivalent of political leaders, entitled to all the status that this entails; justifying a car, a high standard of living and a growing detachment from the immediate problems of the constituencies" (Lynd 1968:23). These issues in turn, affect the extent to which the unions can really influence national level policy and the degree to which they can attract and retain members and effectively represent their interests. That is, "any engagement with political parties by unions invariably leads to compromises which may

necessitate unions reigning in rank and file and or grassroots pressures that will contest and potentially break any centralised deals" (Buhlungu, 2008:3).

Buhlungu also argues that, "the discourse and practise of national liberation shaped and continues to shape the different forms of unionism that have emerged on the continent" (Beckman et al 2010:193). Buhlungu goes further to suggest an examination of national liberation in Africa helps one to understand the reasons why unions choose to relate to national liberation movements and other political parties. Yet, since national liberation was a struggle to end colonial rule, independence did not necessarily meant that the struggle for self determination had been achieved. As Beckman points out, "the implication of this is that the end of colonialism does not necessarily lead to an end to the struggle for self determination and independence" (Beckman et al 2010:195). For him the formation of MDC and MMD in Zimbabwe and Zambia respectively is a response by unions to a national movement that has lost its way.

The formation of political opposition parties by labour movements in the two countries under review can be attributed to social movement unionism by the trade unions. This type of unionism, "entailed the embracing of other social groups with respect to their social, economic and political interests and demands" (Matombo and Sacikonye 2010:115). In Zimbabwe this found expression in ZCTU leadership in a constitutional reform movement under the banner of the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) headed by Tsvangirai in 1997 while various civil society organisations constituted the broad membership. The NCA demand for constitutional reform led the government to undertake a nation-wide consultation and presented a draft which was rejected in a referendum in February 2000. This marked a watershed in post colonial Zimbabwean politics with the MDC having been formed in September 1999 on the basis of the groundwork undertaken by the ZCTU and civic organisation such as the NCA (Matombo and Sachikonye 2010). The top leadership of MDC was constituted of former trade unionists and other civil society leaders. Relatedly in December 1989 , Fredrick Chiluba the Chairman–General of the ZaCTU announced that the trade union would work for constitutional reform in order to bring an end to one party rule which had lasted since 1973. As happened in Zimbabwe, "forces from the trade union movement, the churches, parliamentary dissidents, business elites and students formed a coalition movement under the name MMD and Chiluba was elected president (Rakner 1992:1). On 25 0ctober 1991 Chiluba became the new president of Zambia. This social

movement unionism can be closely related to resource mobilisation and the political opportunity theories of social movements to which this study will turn in order to delineate the theoretical framework.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The literature review provides support for two theories of social movements, the political opportunity structure and the resource mobilisation. The former, "emphasizes the opening of political opportunities in explanations of the rise of social movements and social struggle and resource mobilisation theories on the other hand explain the rise of social formations through the focus on resources and their availability to social groups" (Habib 2005:677).

### Political Opportunity Theory

Political opportunity theory sometimes named political opportunity structure theory or a political process perspective has animated a great deal of research on social movements. (Meyers 2004) The main thrust of the theory is that the context in which a movement emerges influences its development and potential impact. This provides a fruitful analytical orientation for addressing the question of why the labour movements have influenced the formation of opposition political parties in Zambia and Zimbabwe. From this perspective, the influence of trade unions in the formation of opposition political parties are context based and include exogenous factors that "enhance or inhibit a social movement's prospect for mobilising, advancing particular claims rather than others, cultivating some alliances rather than others, employing particular political strategies and tactics rather than others and effecting mainstream institutional politics and policy" (Meyers 2004:126). In other words political opportunity is "consistent – but necessarily formal or permanent - dimensions of the political struggle that encourage people to engage in contentious politics" (Tarrow 2002:985).Thus the actions of activists are dependent on a broader context for the existence or lack of a specified political opportunity.

In comparison to the resource mobilisation theory, political opportunity theory stress mobilisation of resources external to the movement. The primary point of the political process approach is that movement activists do not choose their goals, strategies and tactics at random or in a vacuum. Rather, the political context sets the grievances around which activists mobilise prioritising some claims and disadvantaging others. Thus, "the wisdom,

creativity and outcomes of activists' choices - their agency can only be understood and evaluated by looking at the political context and the rules of the games in which those choices are made that is - structure" (Meyers 2004:126).

Tarrow suggests that political opportunity theory has three important components for a movement's formation: insurgent consciousness, organisational strength and political opportunities (Tarrow 2002). Insurgent consciousness refers to the ideas of deprivation and grievances. The idea is that certain members of society feel like they are being mistreated or that somehow the system is unjust. The insurgent consciousness is the collective sense of injustice that movement members feel, and serves as the motivation for movement organisation. Organisational strength falls in line with resource mobilisation theory, arguing that in order for a social movement to organise it must have strong leadership and sufficient resources. Political opportunity refers to the receptivity or vulnerability of the existing political system to challenge.

Political opportunity increases in the context of external or internal factors that weaken the state or by changing social conditions that increase the resources and confidence of popular groups seeking change or some combination of both. This leads to some groups taking action to challenge the state. The latter responds with a combination of concessions and repression, with the objective of trying to roll back the rising opportunity. But the state's weakness or rising popular strength sustain the movement and by taking advantage of the increased political opportunities, the movement succeeds. Thus, "as opportunity expands, action mounts, as opportunity contract, action recedes" (Goldstone and Tilly 2001:180). However this view is misleading as most opportunities need to be perceived and are situational and not structural. In addition, such view is inconsistent with findings that in many situations increased repression leads to protest mobilisation and action. Thus, while authoritarian states systematically repress contention, the absence of regular channels for expressing opinion turns even moderate dissenters into opponents of the regime and forces them to pose the problem of regime overthrow as the condition for reform.

**Resource Mobilisation Theory**

On the other hand, resource mobilisation stresses the ability of movements' members to acquire resources and to mobilise people towards the furtherance of their goals. Noteworthy is that, according to the resource mobilisation theory, "It is a core group of sophisticated

strategists that works towards harnessing the disaffected energies, attracting money and supporters, capturing the media's attention, forging alliances with those in power and creating an organisational structure" (Kendall 2006:591). The theory relies on the assumption that in the absence of such vital resources, social movements cannot be effective and that discontent alone is insufficient to make any meaningful social change.

This theory is based on the assumptions that individuals are rational and view social movements as goal orientated. Thus, it follows rational choice theory where individuals conduct a cost benefit analysis of participation and decide to act only if benefits outweigh costs. The rational choice theory (RCT) basic premises are that human beings base their behaviour on rational calculations, act with rationality when making choices, and their choices are aimed at optimisation of their pleasure or profit. (See my comment above)

**The Concept of Autonomy**

The word autonomy derives from Greek auto(self) and nomy (rule or law). To be autonomous is to act within a framework of rules one sets for oneself, that is, to find authority over oneself as well as power to act on that authority (Oshana 2006:2). That is, to say an individual or organisation is autonomous means that they are self directed. To be autonomous also means to be in actual control of the choices, actions and goals that an organisation or individual make. This is de-facto power to govern oneself or an organisation or institution. In sum, to be autonomous means having authoritative control of ones own choices, actions and goals as an individual or organisation. Oshana goes further, to sugest that political autonomy "depends on the status of the individual in relation to the state and to institutions of public and civic authority" (Oshana 2006:102). In short, it is a matter of the political and legal status of individuals who are members of societies, but subject to the coercive arm of the state. The core idea is that individuals have the right of final authority over themselves in relation to matters of state and political interest. Oshana puts it this way: "This idea is based on a principle of self ownership, that is, on the belief that no person can be in literal possession of any other and on the idea that individuals are by birthright entitled to a certain degree of respect of their personhood. This being the case, whatever legitimacy political establishments garner is at the behest of those subject to its force" (Oshana 2006:173).

## Defining Trade Unionism

The term "Trade Unionism" traditionally ascribes to worker organisations a particular philosophy and function for collective representation to protect and advance the interests of the workers as producers within the economic system (Millen 1963:1). Relatedly, trade or labour unions can be described as " organised groupings of wage and salary earners with the purpose of bringing to bear the economic, social and political interests of their members in labour relations and the political system" (Schillinger 2005:2). The variance of the economic role has differed with countries. In developed countries, for instance, political action is indirect and usually employed only as an extension of the economic function. However, historically European trade unions have developed political parties that purportedly represent the interests of the working class, such as the Labour Party in Britain or the Social Democratic parties on the European Continent. On the contrary, in African countries, political unionism is intense and consistent, to a degree that often seems to obscure the economic basis of their particular work-place concerns (Millen 1963).

## RESEARCH METHODS

The study will employ a historical comparative research method focusing on similar and different variables that have influenced labour movements in Zimbabwe and Zambia to become involved in the formation of opposition parties in their respective countries. Neumann suggests that "historical comparative research is suited to examining the combination of social factors that produce a specific outcome. It is also appropriate for comparing entire social systems to see what is common across societies and what is unique and to study long term societal change" (Neuman 2006:420). In this study, it seems appropriate to employ this method as it recognises that the reading of historical or comparative evidence of Trade Unions in Zambia and Zimbabwe is influenced by the developments of the past and by the processes that unfold in the present. The study will present a comparative analysis of the following three key variables: the nature of the changing political opportunity structure, the nature of the state - trade union relations and thirdly, the factors that necessitated the shift by trade unions to opposition politics in the two countries under review.

The merit of the comparative method for this analysis is that, "it allows one to contextualise knowledge, to improve classification, to formulate and test hypotheses and to make

predictions" (Burnham 2008:80). Thus, the comparative method furthers an expanded holistic awareness of the heterogeneity of the two countries under review and has the potential to improve the classification one uses to impose some sort of order on the diversity of the political world. In addition, in exploring a supposed empirical relationship between two or more variables, a comparative research can test hypothesis through the isolation of one variable or another. This brings up new ideas, possibilities and can also suggest how the hypothesis might be usefully refined or reformulated.

The research method will be mainly qualitative because to study or compare how and why trade unions influenced the formation of opposition political parties in Zambia and Zimbabwe one has to understand situations in their uniqueness as a part of a particular context and the interactions that occur in that context. Thus qualitative research, "emphasizes conducting detailed examination of cases that arise in the natural flow of social life [and] try to present authentic interpretations that are sensitive to specific social-historical contexts" (Neuman 2006:151). According to Burnham (2008:40), "Qualitative research is very attractive in that it involves collecting information in-depth but from a relatively small number of cases". In this case, the study will examine patterns of similarities and differences across the two countries under review and try to come to terms with their diversity. This researcher is alive to the fact that qualitative research usually involves fieldwork. Due to resource constraints in terms of time imposed on completing the research report and lack of financial resources, this study relies on secondary sources and no fieldwork has been undertaken. This is a limitation of the study.

The sources for this study will be mainly secondary literature (see bibliography) obtained through desk study research. Historical and diverse material from different institutional and information sources has been collected. Information was culled from libraries and the internet. The internet, websites of the ZCTU, Zambia Congress of Trade Union, the Zimbabwean and Zambian Governments provided relevant material to draw upon and some of these websites stored verbatim speeches by government, party leaders and trade union leaders. Despite their various biases the press both state and private owned provided valuable sources of political and trade union information. In an effort to bring to the fore the variables that explain how and why trade unions influence the formation of opposition parties in Zimbabwe and Zambia the final product of the research is descriptive, analytical and comparative.

## CHAPTER 2

### Historical overview of the Emergence of Labour movements in Zambia and Zimbabwe

*This chapter presents a comparative analysis of the emergence of labour movements in Zambia and Zimbabwe during the colonial period. In both countries strong trade unions emerged during the 1950s and the roots of the labour movement were laid in those years which witnessed a new, urban, industrial wage earning labour force. Noteworthy is that, the history of the labour movement has usually been subordinated to the struggle of the nationalist movement for liberation from colonial overlorship. Although the labour movement and its leaders have often been acknowledged in the anti-colonial struggle, the complex relationship of the movement to the growth of nationalist parties and nationalist ideology has frequently been simplified to suit the somewhat triumphalist views of nationalist history.*

### Overview of the history of Zambia and Zimbabwe political economies

Prior to independence Zambia and Zimbabwe were British colonies with their political economies dominated by a white minority and both countries were members of the short-lived Federation of Central Africa (1953 - 1964) along with Malawi then called Nyasaland. Mineral exports (copper in the case of Zambia and some gold and coal in the case of Zimbabwe) were and continue to be important in the two countries, for Zambia overwhelmingly so. As a result of the importance of mining and the role of the white settler population, Zambia and Zimbabwe both had labour force characteristics somewhat uncommon in the Sub-Saharan region. In both countries large scale agriculture provided the bulk of commercial production of food crops as well as exports accompanied by a substantial amount of large rural wage employment (Weeks and Mosley 1998:171). One of the salient consequences of white settler commercial agriculture which was inherited by both colonial states was the unequal distribution of land. In both countries formal wage employment was a relatively high percentage of the labour force and of considerable significance. Both countries are landlocked with relatively high transport costs. In Zambia, copper dominated the economy and it had one of the most concentrated and least diversified export sectors. Zambia acquired independence with the demise of the CAF, but as a result of the decline in copper prices during 1970s, coupled with the debt crisis, the Zambian economy was in deep crisis. Zimbabwe, still Rhodesia during this period, and under white minority rule, weathered this

shock with relative success, partly because of the support of South Africa (Weeks and Mosley 1998: 172).

The Zambian economy suffered almost continuously from the 1970s onwards, while Zimbabwe's growth performance was respectable in the Sub-Saharan context until well after its democratic transition in the 1980s. The former suffered negative per capita income growth, severe current account instability, spiral inflation and unmanageable fiscal deficit. Over the same period, Zimbabwe maintained moderate growth and macro-economic balance by regional comparison, a diversified if not a robust export performance.

**Background of the Zimbabwean and Zambia labour movements**

Labour relations in Zambia is anchored on the central position within the economy of the copper mining industry which was the basis of the colonial economy, on which the country remains overwhelmingly dependent and which has had a major influence upon the development of industrial relations. The development of the copper mining turned Zambia from a backward rural territory into one of the more rapidly growing economies of the world. The growth of an urban working class was a direct consequence of the growth of the mining industry. It was the miners who pioneered industrial action and established the militant tradition which characterised the labour movement (Gertzel 1979:307). The mining industry has had a significance influence upon wage movements which have produced the country's high wage economy. Thus, the growth of the industrial sector outside mining was primarily a consequence of and remains largely dependent upon mining and has been centred for most of the part on the copper-belt. The copper-belt is the hub of the country and the nerve centre of her industrial relations, the heart of Zambia's working class and miners form the hard core (Gertzel 1979).

In Zimbabwe during colonialism labour movements played a significant role in the struggles for independence in particular between the 1940s and 1960s when African nationalist parties were banned by the colonial regime. Although trade unions were recognised in 1959, these unions were explicitly forbidden to engage in politics or elect convicted political dissidents, whilst most forms of industrial action were effectively ruled out by various restrictions (Sachikonye 1986). Noteworthy is that, "massive urban unemployment, grinding poverty, the small size of the urban workforce and the partial nature of proletarianisation posed further problems for the development of union size and resources. These difficulties were

compounded by divisions between white dominated and non-racial trade unions, by intense leadership and union factionalism, virtual martial law in the towns during guerrilla war, a wage freeze, and the financial problems caused by erratic and optional check-off system" (van der Walt 1998:108). In response African workers organised themselves into trade unions and carried out the first countrywide strikes in the history of the colony, namely the 1945 railway strike and the 1948 general strike. The 1945 strike started on 20 October 1945 when the railways workers tried to have a meeting with the general manager of the Railways in Bulawayo to express their grievances. The manager refused to meet with the workers, and in the afternoon of that day workers went on strike. By 22 October 3 000 workers were out on strike and three days later it had spread throughout the colony and to railway workers at Broken Hill in Northern Rhodesia. The strike ended on 29 October after government promised to set up a Commission to look into workers grievances.

Relatedly, the roots of the labour movement in Zambia were laid in those years which witnessed the sprouting of a new, urban, industrial wage earning labour force centred on the mines as mentioned above. In Zambia, industrial action among the Africans started with the miners protest against the conditions of squalor, poverty and racial segregation and discrimination first in 1935 and then in 1940. The demonstrations were characterised first by the organised manner of the protest and second by the violence which ensued and in which Africans lost their lives. Thus, "in 1935 the workers struck in support of wage demands; at Roan, six were killed and twenty- two wounded by the colonial police. In 1940, the Africans miners again struck in support of a wage demand; at Rhokana the strikers rioted and the police shot and killed over fifty" (Bates 1971:18). These developments presented a challenge to tribal forms of labour relations and the assertion of class based interests.

On the mines, Since the companies had maintained a system of labour relations based upon tribal elders, a factor ever since colonial regimes adopted their divide and rule strategies of giving salience to the authoritative power of chiefs and elders. Mamdani refered to this a decentralised despotism whilst John Lonsdale refers to it as dual authority.Each tribal group selected its elders, they represented the interest of the workers themselves. Both in 1935 and 1940, however the workers turned against this tribal form of organisation. Equally as the rejection of the tribal representation was the adoption of organisational forms which gave expression to the class interests of the mine workers. As such, "while they predated the establishment of formal labour organisations, both occasions demonstrated the ability of

Africans to organise in defence of their interest in the industrial situation, and made it clear that they were coming to regard themselves as industrial workers" (Gertzel 1979:310).

The leadership emerged from the new urban, industrial situation on both occasions, which sidelined the tribal elders appointed by the mining companies to facilitate dialogue between the latter and workers. This was based on the belief that tribal representation could best provide channels of communication between mine workers and company management. Urban Advisory Councils formed in 1938 and the Boss Boys committees in 1942 of which the latter was subsequently transformed into Workers Committees in 1946, were set up as a means to provide communication between miners and management. However, the government during this era believed that African trade unions were premature, a view that only changed in 1947 with the appointment of a British Trade Union Labour Officer mandated to assist with the organisation of African trade unions. The Trade Union and Trade Disputes Ordinance was passed in 1949 and it legally recognised the right of Africans to form unions. This saw the increased formation of African trade unions and the growth of militant unionism across the copper-belt and the line of rail. This culminated in the formation of the African Mineworkers Union in 1949. This period was also increasing political activity as the African nationalist struggle grew and independence became a central issue. The Central African Federation (CAF), established in 1953 in the face of opposition by the African people in the three territories was the impetus for the creation of the first African national grouping, the African National Congress (ANC).

In Zimbabwe this period was marked by significant strikes and African-led trade union activity which played a leading role in the mobilisation of workers, and provided an alternative to the more elitist African organisations (Dansereau 2003). In the decade of the 1950s trade unionists played an active role in the growth of the nationalist movement through the leadership of trade unionists in the nationalist movements, as well as through the organisational experience that trade unionists brought to the early growth of nationalist structures (Raftopoulos 1997:55). In the early 1960s, because of the close linkages between trade unionism and nationalist politics, the trade unions were to suffer because of the divisions which arose within the nationalist movement itself. There were tensions between the labour leaders and nationalist politicians over the relationship between labour and nationalist politics. Raftopoulos identified the key issues in the tensions with regard to "the autonomy of the labour movement and its strategies with regard to the objectives of the

nationalist parties". He goes on to argue that "This resulted in substantive subordination of the labour movement to nationalist parties, sometimes through coercive mobilisation strategies. The shift of the anti-colonial struggle to a rural liberation war in early 1970s further marginalised urban labour organisations from both the leadership and discourse of the liberation agenda"( Raftopoulos 2001). Van der Walt argued that "the anti-colonial struggle did little to strengthen the unions: almost no attempts were made to build linkages between guerrillas with urban forces, except in cases where unions could provide conduits for logistical support for the peasant fighters" (van der Walt 1998:108). The nationalist parties, "had de-emphasised the role of workers in the liberation struggle, stressing instead the guerrilla struggle in the rural areas to resolve what they considered the primary contradiction in colonial Zimbabwe- the land question" (Buhlungu, Southall and Webster 2006:201).

It should be noted that in Zimbabwe just as in Zambia the Industrial Conciliation Act, passed in 1934 and amended in 1937, protected white workers against competition from blacks for skilled jobs. Section 4 of the Act excluded Africans from the definition of an employee and as a result, from wage bargaining and skilled trades because only 'employees' were allowed to become involved in collective bargaining and to become apprentices. Most workers then continued to fall under the Master and Servants Ordinance 1901 (No.5). In 1953 , the Central African Federation was created comprising Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. The decision to form the Federation was to a great extent based on the interest of the colonial power and white settlers in the economy and Africans for most of the part were not consulted. (Austin 1975) The African nationalists especially in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland protested against the Federation. However it lasted for a decade until 1963. The Industrial Conciliation Act was further amended in 1959, but though it now formally recognised African trade unions, it also presented real problems for trade union development. The Act made it illegal for trade unions to join political parties, or use their funds for political purposes. It also ensured that white workers, referred to as skilled under the law, had more voting power in the unions than black unskilled workers. Union registration was made very difficult and the legislation continued to exclude workers in the agricultural and domestic sectors. When the federation broke up in 1963 as a result of the growing opposition of the African nationalists, the Rhodesian Front which had come to power and in 1962 had declared Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI). This was meant to stop all moves towards black majority rule. However, UDI also meant that the African National Congress believed

that any potential for a peaceful transition to majority rule and independence was foreclosed. So UDI was fateful for Zimbabwe, leading to the launch of the armed struggle.

In Zambia, the party UNIP and the trade union congress were formed at virtually the same time/period. With the prospect of regional Federation in the early 1950s, the leaders of the two organisations determined on closer cooperation and for a time, it appeared that the union would indeed play a pivotal role in the nationalist movement. In 1952 the African National Congress formed a Supreme Action Council to plan and if necessary to order a total withdrawal of labour so as to cripple the colonial government. The president and secretary of the Mineworkers Union held seats on this council. The link between the union and the nationalist movement was further strengthened through the Trade Union Congress. The Congress executive was dominated by unionists who were committed to a politically activist role for the trade union movement. Towards this end, the Congress maintained a political subcommittee which formulated plans for politically supportive action by labour. In both these bodies, leaders of the Mineworker's Union occupied prominent positions. Many of the early leaders of the Mineworker's Union endorsed a conception of trade unionism which affirmed the nationalist cause, and went further to articulate the belief that African advancement formed a major objective of the newly formed union, that the colour bar was a major grievance shared by all Africans and that the whole political issue of the Federation revolved around the relative position of Africans and white men - these principles underlay the belief that the cause of the Mineworkers Union and the nationalist movement were one (Bates 1971:128).

The years 1945-1965 represented the most important period in the history of the trade union movement in Southern Rhodesia. The emergence of such organisation as the Reformed Industrial and Commercial Workers Union in Salisbury (RICU) and similarly in Bulawayo the emergence of the Federation of Bulawayo African Workers Unions (FBAWU) catered for the concerns of urban dwellers. The emergence in the 1950s of the Southern Rhodesia Trade Union Congress (SRTUC) represented an important step in the coordination of trade union organisations at a national level. Prior to the emergence of nationalist intellectual leadership in the mid-1950s, the trade union movement was an important training ground for future nationalist leaders such as Joshua Nkomo, J.Z Moyo and others who learned forms of organisation and mobilisation through the trade union movement, which they developed

further in nationalist organisations (Raftopoulos 1997:88). Trade unions also provided organisational and logistical support to the early organisation of the nationalist movement.

With the emergence of mass nationalist activities in the late 1950s and early 1960s a new leadership elite developed, which took over the leadership role in the national struggle against colonial rule. This leadership introduced a new set of problems for trade unionists as they had to make strategic decisions about their relationship to nationalist politics. This occasionally led to serious areas of disagreement, as unions leaders sought to balance their commitment to nationalist parties with their responsibilities to unions. As a result of close links between leading unionists and the nationalist movements, the unions divided along party lines when ZAPU split in 1963 and ZANU was formed. These divisions within the trade union movement were further complicated by the role of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and other international trade union federations. The political agenda of the ICFTU and its methods of funding caused problems in the union movement and led to the development of undemocratic practises by some union leaders. In light of these challenges the unions demonstrated a solid capacity to organise and mobilise under a hostile environment.

In Zambia, the early structural and ideological affinities between the union and the party ANC failed to last due to their differing attitudes towards the use of strikes for political purposes. Bates provides a useful and succinct explanation and analysis for the falling out of the national movement and the trade union movement in Zambia. The Union according to its president Lawrence Katilungu was of the conviction that the union should not become embroiled in political controversy and that its job was to fight for a better economic position for African employees. Katilungu' perspective was that the union could do more for the economic position of the Africans than the politicians could ever accomplish but that in the political sphere, the union should refrain from annoying the companies and government anymore than was absolutely necessary to achieve its objectives. As a result Katilungu strongly opposed any use of the union's strike weapon for political reasons (Bates 9171:128). The union leader's resistance to political strikes persisted throughout the nationalist period. This resistance created intensely negative attitudes toward the union on the part of political leaders. These attitudes were expressed in varying contexts and in different ways. The central themes, however, were that the leaders of the Mineworkers Union were selfish, politically unreliable and insensitive to appeals for national consciousness (Kasfir 1976). As the

struggles for independence intensified, the political leadership perceived a new implication to the political unreliability of the Mineworkers Union: that the Union would fail to contribute to the development of the new nation. This lent a new sense of urgency among the movement leadership to their conviction that the union must be controlled. These attitudes gave rise to the conviction that party officials should control the union. In the pre-independence period, the primary purpose of exerting such control was to purge the union of perceived 'political enemies' and bring it into the centre of the nationalist struggle. In the post-independence era, this view was altered and the motive was to supplant the trade union leaders with party loyalists who would bolster the nation's economy and the government's ability to implement its development program.

In Southern Rhodesia at the same time in1965, the Rhodesia Front government declared UDI and during these period nationalist parties were banned and many of their members, including trade unionists, were either detained or went into exile. The period after 1965 witnessed the Rhodesia economy growing under conditions of state protection. Despite international sanctions being imposed, the manufacturing industry grew rapidly as a result of import substitution to make up for the loss of imported goods. According to Julie Brittain and Brian Raftopoulos, "this expansion in the economy lasted until about 1975, after which it was affected by increased oil prices, the closure of the border with Zambia, the increasingly heavy financial burden of contesting the liberation struggle, and the limited scope of the international market. By the late 1970s economic growth had slowed down substantially" (Brittain and Raftopoulos 1997:92). Yet growth remained in positive territory.

During this period, the state used security legislation such as the Law and Order Maintenance Act of 1960 and the Emergency Powers Act of 1960 to control labour organisation and strikes. These laws were implemented during the work-to-rule on the Rhodesia Railways in 1969 and the Salisbury bus drivers' strike in 1972. Workers who were convicted under these laws were subjected to a three month prison term or more and prevented from holding union office for seven years. The 1967 Amendment to the Industrial Conciliation Act (1934) made it possible to prevent unions from receiving financial assistance from particular sources and a further amendment in 1971 empowered the state to declare any strike illegal if it was considered to be contrary to the national interest. Many unionists, who often played an additional role of holding positions in African political parties such as ZAPU and ZANU were viewed by government as dangerous and were detained. This period of struggle against

the UDI leadership, witnessed continuing divisions in the labour movement. These divisions reflected those amongst the nationalist parties, and grew out of difficult attempts to balance a commitment to nationalist struggles with the need to build trade union structures.

The majority of workers and trade union leaders took part in the struggle for independence, yet, "labour issues were relegated to secondary importance, along with urban and even women's issues - all subordinated to the broad nationalist struggle, articulated around rural issues" (Dansereau 2003:27). According to ZANU-PF it was only in 1979, that the mobilisation of workers, intellectuals and other patriotic forces was targeted with greater vigour (Raftopoulos 2001:4). When Zimbabwe attained independence in 1980 the labour movement was weak, divided and had played no significant role in the negotiations over the transition to majority rule at Lancaster House in 1979. Thus, "the unions entered independence with perhaps 80 000 African members in 25 trade unions in 5 seperate federations, each aligned to a different political party...perhaps 8 percent of the formal sector workforce was organised (Sachikonye 1996:8).This was because the job colour-bar excluded African workers from most skilled jobs; the 1934 Industrial Conciliation Act excluded them from collective bargaining and union membership, and even the non-racial ones became dominated by white skilled workers after 1950 (Dansereau 2003). As labour prepared to face the new Zimbabwean state, there was no united labour federation. Instead there were six centres of labour unionisation, with negligible labour constituencies and little legitimacy in the eyes of the new ruling party (Raftopoulos 2001:4). Thus, the divisions and organisational problems in the labour movement prevented it from offering a strong front to the new government. This fragmented situation made unions vulnerable to interference both from the state and from opportunists within its own leadership (Brittain and Raftopoulos 1997).

This chapter has presented a comparative analysis of the emergence of labour movements in Zambia and Zimbabwe during the colonial period. In the two countries under review strong trade union emerged during the 1950s and the roots of the labour movement were laid in those years which witnessed a new, urban industrialised wage earning labour force. Contrary to the widely held belief on the history of labour movement which has usually been subordinated to the struggle of the nationalist movement for liberation from colonial overloship. This chapter has attempted to bring to the fore the fact that, although trade unions and its leaders have often been acknowledged in the anti-colonial struggle, the complex relationship of the movement to the growth of nationalists parties and nationalist ideology has

frequently been simplified to suit the somewhat triumphalist views of nationalist history. The chapter futher examined different ways in which black workers organised themselves before the attainment of independence. Noteworthy, is that not all workers were blacks , white workers also organised themselves into trade unions although they were always divided from their fellow black workers by racist ideology and self-serving interest of big business, however, they nonetheless clashed repeatedly with their employers.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Labour Movements in the Post-Colonial Era

*This chapter will look into the labour movement's relations with their respective governments in Zimbabwe and Zambia after the attainment of independence. In Zambia the analysis will first focus on industrial labour relations in the First Republic. That is the period between 1964 and 1972 when Zambia had a multi-party system. In addition it will also look at the period between 1972 and 1990 when the UNIP government introduced a one party system. In Zimbabwe the chapter will focus on labour relations between 1980 and 1999. In both cases it should be noted that with the attainment of independence, the trade union movement was weak and fragmented. As such both governments strove to subordinate them through Acts of Parliament whose aim was to integrate the trade union movement into corporatist structures under the tutelage of the state through the formation of ZaCTU and ZCTU in Zambia and Zimbabwe respectively. Both countries adopted developmental and social justice policies in the name of Africanisation. In Zambia unlike in Zimbabwe under the one party system, ZaCTU participated in the organs of the party. In both countries the adoption of IMF-led Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes (ESAPs) ruptured the once cordial relations between the labour movements and the state due to the consequences of increasing economic hardship that hurt the ordinary citizens. In addition the amendment to the Industrial Relations Act in 1990 and to the Labour Relations Act of 1985 amended in 1992 in Zambia and Zimbabwe respectively also led trade unions to believe that government action aimed at undermining centralised collective bargaining and would lead to the further fragmentation of the union movement.*

### Post- Independence Labour Relations

With the achievement of independence, a distinct shift in orientation can be noted, as unions became focused on the shop floor and issues of production. Thus, "more and more, unions seemed to be converted into instruments for increasing the productivity and production of workers" (Bates 1971:3). Both governments appeared to be intent on inducing the unions into what Bates has called a productionist role. In both countries, through UNIP and ZANU-PF, the two dominant political parties, the governing elite sought to control recruitment to posts within the unions, and thus ensure the unions' cooperation with the government's economic and political policies. In the case of unions, the relationship that was desired was one that

ensured that the activities of workers became congruent with and supportive of the modernisation objectives of the regime. In the case of the nationalist movement, the goal was to turn the unions into an effective instrument for governance and rule. Given their desire for concerted effort to modernise, ruling elites sought to render the major political and economic structures in their countries as a means for controlling and regulating the conduct of the citizenry in conformity with what they perceived were public objectives.

Viewed from the perspective of development theory, "the efforts of the post independence regimes represent attempts to convert organisations which have traditionally functioned as input structures into output structures" (Bates 1971:4). The term output process refers to the flow of policy from the governing elite to the leadership of the major trade unions or what he called para-political groups in their environment and from the leadership of these groups to the rank and file. The term further implies that the policies, once disseminated are enforced with little difficulty. There are three relevant dimensions to the concept of the output process: "first the responsiveness of the organisation's leadership, secondly the transmission of policies through the organisation, and thirdly the enforcement of policies by the leadership" (Bates 1971:5). The primary function of trade unions would be to detect and articulate the demands of their members, and up to the point of independence, union leaders received the enthusiastic support of the aspiring political elite in the performance of this task. The primary function of the nationalist movement was to give voice to the grievances and aspirations of its members and up to the time of independence, the political elite dedicated itself to furthering this objective. Once independence was achieved, however, the aspirant elite became the ruling elite and while seeking political power in terms of governing, the new leaders also sought to utilise power to achieve the rapid modernisation of their nation. While this is not the focus of this research report, the constraints that new political power-brokers faced were enormous, including the lack of an indigenous bourgeoisie to effect the modernisation they aimed at. Thus the political sphere became the driver of economic development – and in this process the new political elites tried to tie the labour movement to its objectives, not always with success.

It is a truism that the study of labour and political relations of power is fraught with value conflicts as suggested above. On one side are those who support the minimal regulation of labour by government, view the role of unions as protecting and advancing the interests of workers and concern themselves with the role of workers as consumers rather than as

producers of national wealth. Ranged against these "free labourites" are those who argue that government must regulate the behaviour of workers to attain rapid development (Bates 1974:6). These scholars regard workers as producers of the national product and unions as collaborators with governmental efforts to attain rapid rates of economic growth. In the case of labour this shift evokes a change in attitudes toward the expression of demands, since the demands of labour for better wages and conditions of service often run counter to the desires of the elites for rapid economic growth. Thus, this results in the recasting of union structures that specialise in the articulation of demands into agencies for regulating and controlling the behaviour of their members.

In Zimbabwe, after independence in the light of the retention of pre-independence repressive and discriminatory labour relations coupled with an accumulation of pent-up emotions and frustrations among the working class, "a series of strikes broke out countrywide between 1980 and 1982. High worker expectations led to a series of 178 strikes and work stoppages between March and October 1980, lasting into 1981, affecting the whole country and all major economic sectors" (Sachikonye 1986:252).Kanyenze argues that the strikes emanated from a crisis of expectations (Kanyenze 2004). Raftopoulos on the other hand suggests that the wildcat strikes arose from the sudden lifting of controls. He said,

> - the harsher the union repression and the more closed the public space, the more explosive will be union protests and strikes once controls are lifted and the more difficult it will be for national union leaders to moderate protests in order to negotiate a role for unions (Raftopolous, 2001:4).

Demands focused mainly on wage increases and changes to the form of control and racial profile of the racist and abusive managers. The bulk of the strikes were spontaneous, leaving union leadership behind as workers demanded to meet directly with the new government. The impact of the strikes revealed the absence of an effective regulatory framework of labour relations, through which the incoming government could begin to construct the category of labour within the discourse of the post-colonial dispensation. This construction was based on a combination of Marxism-Leninism and liberal nationalism in which the role of labour was strictly defined by the state as the sole bearer of the legitimate aspirations of the labour movement (Raftopoulos 2001:5). This discursive construction of the role of labour occurred too within an economic policy which in effect reconciled two somewhat conflicting objectives. On the one hand,

there was the stated aim of gradually overcoming the economic obstacles of the colonial era but on the other hand there was the need to maintain the accumulation model of the settler bourgeoisie. Radical reconstruction was to be achieved through a gradualist strategy of Growth with Equity which in turn translated into a politics that placed some emphasis on the privileges of workers but emphasised the need to deal with the unemployed, in effect the focus was on potential intra-black conflicts, rather than on confronting white privilege (Raftopoulos,2001:5). This planning document also described workers as " a small and privileged urban wage income elite and efforts must be made to avoid perpetuating this situation" (Government of Zimbabwe 1981). Thus, the government declared that "workers' needs were to be subsumed under the national interest and that workers demands should be reasonable and not disrupt production, as this would discourage investment" (Dansereau 2003:26).

The rich-poor gap, or the geni-coefficient, was one of the issues which the ZANU-PF government attempted to bridge in a context in which Zimbabwe had one of the largest income disparities in the world before 1980 due to racially based salary structures (Weiss 1984:173). Thus, "workers ... were seen as participants in post colonial reforms, yet under the protection of the state, which would take a greater role in the economy to alleviate economic exploitation...and the grossly inequitable pattern of income distribution and of predominate foreign ownership of assets" (Government of Zimbabwe 1981). The state's response towards labour between 1980 and 1981 was to support the establishment of ZCTU "under the slogan one country one federation". Buhlungu et al argue that the ZCTU was the outcome of manipulation by the Minister of Labour and ZANU-PF supporters" (Buhlungu,Southall,Webster,2006:202) in order to create one national union federation to overcome the fragmentation of pre independence movement (see also the Government of Zimbabwe 1981). The objective was to pass that legislation for a minimum wage, as in the Minimum Wage Act of 1980, to restrain dismissals and retrenchments in the private sector through the Employment Act of 1980 and to enable the provision of workers committees at shop floor level. However, as Dashwood points out, these workers committees were a means of limiting the effectiveness of trade unions. He says they "had very little connection with the trade unions, they often operated on behalf of the employer rather than the worker, undermining the union locals, and leading to fragmentation" (Dashwood 2000:91). The

Employment Act though aimed at forestalling unwarranted retrenchments in effect led to a situation in which the remuneration of casuals doubled that of permanent employees (Kanyenze 2004). In 1985 the colonial Industrial Conciliation Act was repealed and replaced by the new Labour Relations Act which broadened the scope of labour relations management and advanced the right of workers to join unions and workers committees (Raftopoulos, 2001). Much to the chagrin of workers, it severely restricted the right to strike and concentrated powers in the Minister of Labour just like its predecessor. Both the ZCTU and EMCOZ were unhappy with the LRA, the former because of the ban on strikes and the latter were not pleased with the right of the government to fix wages and the tight provisions /procedures to dismiss unsatisfactory workers (Weiss 1984).

Thus, the government adopted an interventionist approach to the labour market and the control of trade unions. This was done through conferring monopoly representation on a single trade union organisation and to incorporate this body so that it would accept and implement government labour market policy. The strategy had both an economic and a political objective in pursuit of the broader national economic interest and the stifling of potential opposition (Knight 1998:203). Weiss suggests that the ZCTU did not play a pivotal role in drafting the labour law due to its organisational shortcomings. It was in effect beset by internal leadership squabbles which hampered the development of a strong trade union movement (Weiss 1984:175). Most research has shown that the early/ infancy years of the ZCTU were plagued by corruption, embezzlement, maladministration, nepotism and authoritarianism (Buhlungu, Southall, Webster 2006, Dashwood, 2000) resulting from problems arising from total dependence on external funding as well as internal dissension and organisational weakness (Dansereau 2003). These shortcomings translated themselves into dependence on the state for political patronage. Dansereau argues that as early as the ZCTU founding congress, the organisation had become the creature of the government. He says, “at the ZCTU founding congress in 1981, there was a recognition of the need to accept the authority of the ZANU-PF government if they were to be allowed to purse union activities” (Dansereau 2003:28). In 1987 when the Lancaster House constitution was amended to repeal the racially enfranchised parliamentary seats reserved for whites, the ZCTU

lobbied the incumbent government to be included in the new parliament as an interest group within ZANU-PF. However the appeal was met with an unfavourable response.

One of the chief organs for communication of government policies at independence was the Zambian Congress of Trade unions (ZaCTU), which was created by legislative enactment of 1964. It was a powerful agency created for the regulation of trade union affairs and it was empowered to judge the validity of alterations in the constitutions of member unions and no member could strike without first consulting ZaCTU. The government ensured that all major unions fell under the jurisdiction of the congress, for by government decree only unions which were affiliated with the ZaCTU could be authorised to levy union dues from all the employees of the industry which they represented. However, ZaCTu records showed that to a certain extent it failed to play a regulatory role ascribed to it by the government. (Momba 1992) On the other hand it successfully on numerous occasions during 1967 and 1968 assisted union leaders in their efforts to persuade dissident members to abandon wildcat strikes.

The government adopted a corporatist labour policy or paternalist state corporatism (Knight,1998,Raftopolous,2001). That is, "from the start the government's intention was to integrate the trade union movement into corporatist structures under the tutelage of the state" (Dashwood 2000:90). It sought to monopolise political representation especially for black people not only among political parties but also among trade unions (Knight 1998). For instance as can be said of Zimbabwe, ZCTU was created and granted a monopoly of worker representation in dealings with government. With strikes effectively prevented and the government in control of the ZCTU, the trade union movement was now subordinate to government. As Raftopoulos observed, "the autonomy of ZCTU was extremely limited in the first half of the 1980s. Its subordination to the state was the most prominent feature of the relationship" (Raftopoulos, 2001:xvii). Dashwood suggests that the subordination of unions to the state was because, "The government was unwilling to deal with a labour organisation which was independent of the state and whose political allegiance could not be counted upon" (Dashwood 2000:90). The potential autonomy of the labour movement was further undermined by the government's assuming the functions of a trade union. Notably its use of tripartite organisations (ZCTU, EMCOZ and Government) to discuss minimum wages and its legislation against the retrenchment of workers diminished the

unions' bargaining power. The interventionist wage policies reduced the scope for bargaining over both unskilled and skilled labour. Indeed, Pillay suggests that unions were limited by the fact that they were seen as a small and elite proportion of the labouring classes. This is how he put it:

> - where unions represent a tiny faction of the labour force and are seen to be relatively small privileged class of employed urban workers amidst a sea of unemployed masses living on a meagre subsistence, pressures to play a developmental role in the national interest as defined by the ruling party are strong" (Pillay 2006:177).

This paternalistic strategy worked so long as the government was able to speak on behalf of the interests of workers, for instance, through the earlier mentioned minimum wage legislation. By 1985, a new federation leadership, composed of representatives from among the country's now strengthened sectoral affiliates, began distancing itself from the governing party, but it was not until a change in culture in the union movement more generally at the end of the 1980s that it became more clearly independent (Dansereau 2003). Dhlakama and Sachikonye draw attention to the increased tensions between workers and government with the enactment of the new labour law in 1984. Both unions and employers deplored government's increased role in labour relations under the new law. Government argued that workers still needed to be protected. The bill gave it the right to intervene in the administration of trade unions, to fix wages and to alter annual collective bargaining agreements if they were deemed not to be in the national interest. It also removed the right to strike from a broad range of sectors considered essential services. In order to protect the economy in general, all unions would now have to apply to government to obtain the right to strike.

> This coincided with the growth and development of the union movement throughout the 1980s as it increased both in membership and strength so that by the end of the decade it represented at least 33 percent of the active labour force of 1.2 million This was in spite of the absence of the closed shop, requiring individual member union registration and government regulations preventing the 180 000 public sector workers, including nurses and teachers from becoming part of the ZCTU....The ZCTU itself had developed as an organisation, bringing together 35 affiliates who retained their own structures and control over dues collection. (Dhlakama and Sachikonye 1994:160)

From the mid to late 1980s the policies of the government were viewed as being divergent from the interest of the workers. By the end of the 1980s, "unions felt strong enough to stand up to company pressure and began urging government to withdraw from the collective

bargaining process and especially from the establishment of minimum wages, so that they could act as true worker representatives" (Dansereau 2003:30). At the same time, worker dissatisfaction grew as wages failed to keep up with high rates of inflation and unemployment grew. As such, the ZCTU began to assert a more independent stance and this became more pronounced with the implementation of economic reforms in the late 1980s. Before the reforms, there was a conviction among unionists that workers were unwilling to criticise government, seeing it instead as a possible solution to their problems. The increased militancy of the labour movement did not, however, translate into any influence over policy formulation and implementation. There was no consultation by the government with the workers' representatives over the introduction of market based reforms in late 1980s. The ZCTU was concerned that this lack of consultation resulted in worker-unfriendly policies. In addition, ZCTU also questioned the likelihood of the success of market based reforms in the absence of a social consensus over the direction that economic reforms should take.

The one party system was introduced in Zambia in 1972 eight years after independence. The new constitution provided for the existence of only one party, the United National Independence Party, (UNIP). All other political parties were forbidden and it became illegal to form any other political party. All forms of political participation were thereafter to be channelled through the party, UNIP. The party was supreme over the state and as such, all organs of the party became themselves supreme to parallel state organs. The one party system was seen as an answer to all the political problems that had threatened national unity and political stability in the period of multi-party system from 1964-1973. The 1964-1973 period was marked by political violence especially in the run-up to elections. Secondly, opposition parties had signally failed to draw country-wide support and as such they had become regional parties, thus encouraging and fanning ethnicity in the country. One salient feature of the one party system was that, despite the existence of some isolated opposition, it was generally accepted throughout the country by all interest groups and social groups (Momba 1992).

No significant attempts were made to undermine the system, instead various social groups fought for control of positions within the party and government as politics turned into something of a zero-sum game. The labour movement at this time, which came to play a prominent role in the formation of the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy somewhat later, rarely questioned the legitimacy of the one party system although labour consistently

complained against certain policies of the UNIP government. Prior to 1990, the labour movement had pledged its support for the system and for UNIP. For instance, in 1980 Chiluba called on labour leaders to assist the party UNIP to recruit more members. He claimed that failure to recruit would be the responsibility of the unions leaders, who would then be partly to blame if the party membership declined because it was their responsibility to deliver the benefits of the party to the people (*Times of Zambia* 2 July 1980). Interestingly it was only after Kaunda announced that a referendum would be conducted to determine whether to revert to the multi-system or not, that the ZaCTU leadership openly declared its support for the multi-party system. Moreover, the ZaCTU leaders had participated in the organs of the party under the one party system. Chiluba and his secretary general, for example, were members of the National Council. Chiluba was also a member of several committees of the party such as the Legal and Political Committee of the party. Such participation by the ZCTU leadership in some of the party organs helped the one party system acquire greater legitimacy.

Lack of serious opposition to the one party system can be attributed to the successful co-optation of two major opposition parties that existed at the time of the introduction of the system. In addition, free participation of individuals and social groups in the parliamentary election was another factor that resulted in the acceptance of the system. The system practically allowed anybody to contest. The importance of participating in parliamentary elections by the various social groups prompted Chiluba to state that ZaCTU would field its own candidates for the 1978 parliamentary elections (*Times of Zambia* 10 July 1978). In the elections, the ZaCTU General Secretary successfully contested a Copper-belt seat. When Kaunda won his third term in office in 1983, the one party system seemed to have been firmly ingrained and there were no serious threats to his power, to UNIP or even to the legitimacy of the one party system. Most of all there were no signs of political instability. Despite this apparent stability, however, the simmering of dissatisfaction from the various social groups were in fact developing. This was to lead to the serious political instability that engulfed the country towards the end of the 1980s. The former party and state leaders exploited growing rural poverty and the rapid increase in the cost of living for the urban workers, to form alliances that included the ZaCTU leaders, around which all these embittered social groups coalesced (Momba 1992).

In the early 1980s ZaCTU began to be critical of what they called state socialist economic policies. The labour movement, for instance, was very critical of nationalisation policies as well as workers participation in the industry. The labour movement instead urged the government to encourage private investment (*Times of Zambia,*, 19 July 1980). The union leaders were also against the state's strong leanings towards socialist countries, as well as its unwillingness to undertake trade with countries that were not their political friends, especially South Africa and the then white-ruled Rhodesia (Momba 1992). During this period the conflicts between the labour movement and government began to be open and serious. After constantly threatening to call for industrial action due to the state's failure to respond to their demands to improve the workers standard of living and the 1980 administrative reforms, Chiluba and other collegues in the labour movement lost their passports, were suspended from UNIP and detained by the state in mid 1981. However they were finally released in 1982 and regained their positions in both the party and ZaCTU.

**Growth of Resistance in the 1990s and the Emergence of Political Opposition Parties.**

The economic crisis of the 1970s deepened during the 1980s and in the process gave international capital a greater say in Zambian politics and economy. Thus,

> - the sporadic food shortages and other essential commodities that were occurring in the 1970s was the order of the day in the 1980s; so was the growing foreign debt and dwindling foreign reserves. Added to these economic problems, was the growing role of international capital in the running of the Zambian economy and in turn, its growing influence in the political process of the country, (Momba 1992:150

Despite the fact that Zambia had benefited from IMF credit facilities, it was only after 1984 that credit facilities involved insistence on extensive economic readjustment embedded with the ESAP conditionalities. The conditionalities included,

> -a flexible exchange rate policy, an improved foreign exchange budgeting and import licensing system and acceptance that there should be no arrears under debt rescheduling arrangements, together with the reduction in commercial payment areas. In addition there were limits on government personnel emoluments and a freeze on employment levels of ministries other than health, education and agriculture as well as limits on the increase of internal government and non-governmental borrowing and the increase in the money supply. Finally, interest rates should rise, parastatal efficiency should be improved and prices decontrolled. (Wulf 1988:582)

These measures were introduced only after Zambia began to experience severe economic problems . These measures were not taken in isolation and were pre-conditions for the Fund's aid to Zambia as well as other donors. By 1986 there was a general and sharp rise in the price of mealie meal and an end to subsidies on mealie-meal. The decision to cut subsidies sparked food riots after six months that rocked Zambia resulting in 15 deaths. Momba suggests the food riots marked a significant turning point in the history of Zambia and when the 1990 riots occurred they did not come as a surprise. Thus, "the economic difficulties and the IMF imposed austerity measures came to constitute a central issue in the Zambian politics particulary after 1985" ( Momba 1992:152). During this period of economic crisis, the ZaCTU position was unclear, on the one hand they opposed these price increases whilst on the other they carefully avoided making any link between the IMF's austerity measures and the steep rise in the prices of essential commodities. It is in the light of growing dissatisfaction of the property owning social group, the ZaCTU leadership and international capital, that the political crises which culminated in open demands for the multi system should be seen. The trio shared a similar ideology and dislike for Kaunda's socialist policies Thus, the landslide victory by ZaCTU, Chiluba and the MMD was in essence also a decisive victory by international capitalist interests with a stake in Zambia.

Noteworthy is that, even though the June riots were a decisive turning point in the rapid development towards a multi-party system, the demands for the re-introduction of the multi-party system had been there even before the June riots. In part the impetus for these demands arose from the rapid changes in Eastern Europe with a movement towards multi-party system in these countries. In addition, long before the riots Kaunda had conceded to the possibility of a national referendum to decide on the issue of the multi-party system (Momba 1992)) After much campaigning from some former state officials, ZaCTU leaders, religious leaders, Kaunda and UNIP Central Committte gave in to these demands. On May 13, 1990, Kaunda announced that the Central Committee had approved the proposal to hold a national referendum to decide the question of a multi-party system. On June 29, Kaunda announced that the country would decide on the issue of the referendum on October 17, 1990.

Some of the critical events that eventually led to the collapse of the one party system were the food riots followed by an attempted coup. These events shook and to some extent undermined Kaunda and the UNIP government. It was perhaps the first time that it became

clear that the UNIP government was losing control and its grip on the Zambian people and that Kaunda's personal popularity was waning. On July 21, a group of Zambians who came to form the MMD leadership met in Lusaka to form a pressure group to agitate for the re-introduction of the multi-party system and called themselves "Movement for Multi-Party Democracy". It was a loose alliance of all kinds of social groups and individuals. During this time, many UNIP leaders , many of whom had at one time or another lost their positions in the party or had been denied ministerial positions resigned from the party and joined the MMD. (reference here)

The MMD seemed to enjoy widespread support. The demonstrations and rallies that ensued enjoyed huge turnouts in Lusaka and other urban centres. In response to this, Kaunda decided to cancel the referendum and instead recommended to both the UNIP National Council and the National Assembly that the multi-party system be re-introduced without a referendum. The Constitution was then amended to allow for the re-introduction of multi-party politics. Simultaneously, Kaunda announced that multi-party general and presidential elections would be held in August 1991, although these were subsequently changed to October. The legalisation of the multi-party politics through legislation led too, to the reconstitution of the MMD as a political party. Other political parties were formed as well. However, by October all of the small parties had collapsed. Most of them even failed to field candidates in the parliamentary elections. The major contest remained between UNIP and MMD with the latter enjoying the open support of the Law Association of Zambia, students and the tactical support of several institutions such as the church. During the election as was expected UNIP suffered a humiliating defeat. The MMD leader (name) got over 75% of the popular vote and 125 of the 150 contested parliamentary seats.

In addition to continuing conflicts over the industrial relations system, the ZCTU, partly inspired by the trade union's participation in the struggles for democracy in Zambia, also began to confront the state on broad social and political issues. The ZCTU unions also launched legal actions, such as a successful challenge to the Law and Order Maintenance Act provisions against demonstrations, after six trade unionists were detained following a 1992 demonstration against ESAP and amendments to the Labour Relations Act. The year before, in 1991 in spite of the resistance of the labour movement, the the IMF and the World Bank had gone ahead with ESAP which consolidated many of the trends that had begun during the

1980s. The programme required macro-economic adjustment and trade liberalisation aimed at stimulating investment activity and removing existing constraints on growth, while purposefully moving away from the redistributive policies of the early independence period (Government of Zimbabwe 1990). According to the programme, the state was required to shift from a developmental state and large scale public sector investment to activities aimed at encouraging investment in lagging productive capacity by doing away with many economic regulations and allow market forces to operate in directing the pace and course of economic activities (Dansereau 2003:32). The ESAP contained, "government cutbacks , including currency devaluation , reduction in the size of the civil service, and subsidies to parastatals in social services and in food subsidies which reversed many of the social gains made in the early period" (Dansereau 2000). Economic priorities were directed at trade liberalisation, export promotion, economic deregulation and the privatisation of many state assets. Investment promotion and incentives replaced policies aimed at government control of investment, originally instituted as part of government development planning. Monetary policy was directed towards fighting inflation, and financial sector reforms would be geared towards facilitating new entrants into the financial sector (Dansereau 2003)

Workers and the general populace of Zimbabwe were hurt by these economic reforms and in effect they became poorer. Persistent inflation and the elimination of subsidies and social programmes saw the cost of food, medical care, transport and education increasing. By 1995, 62 percent of households could no longer afford all the basic necessities of food, clothing, shelter and transport at any one time (Government of Zimbabwe 1995). This decline was further linked to a fall in real wages, unemployment rose and was exacerbated by the announcement of job losses caused by ESAP with an estimated loss of 30 000 civil service jobs and another 2 000 among parastatals (Government of Zimbabwe: 1990)

To make matters worse, the reforms did not see the concerns of the ZCTU being addressed in amendments to the LRA of 1992. Labour initially welcomed government claims that it would take a hands-off approach to collective bargaining as part of the economic liberalisation and reforms brought to the Labour Act in 1992. Yet the ZCTU noted that government continued to intervene in setting minimum wages while reforms to the Act expanded the sectors now deemed essential and were not allowed to strike. The reforms also abandoned the principle of one union per industry at the same time as government announced its intention to establish union-free export processing zones (Dansereau 2003). Despite being consulted on earlier

proposals to change the LRA, the ZCTU comments were not reflected in the amendments put before parliament. Although some of the aspects of the amendments would work in favour of the unions, the state still attempted to co-opt the labour movement through the formation of shop floor workers' councils. These were accused of undermining unions through their powers to negotiate collective bargaining agreements and to override industry-wide agreements reached by the union controlled employment councils (Dashwood 2000). Moreover, under the new definition of managerial personnel, foremen and supervisors who traditionally led shop-floor negotiations could no longer do so as they were now considered managers. As such, the amended LRA was seen by ZCTU as not genuinely reflecting the interests of its constituency. In addition, as Van der Walt suggests, the ZCTU believed that the LRA, "was amended to undermine centralised bargaining in the National Employment Councils, remove the legal stipulations of one union per industry, and further delimit legal strike action" (van der Walt 1998:106). In protest , the ZCTU declined an invitation to join Zimbabwe's delegation to the 1992 ILO meeting in Geneva, walked out of a meeting with the Minister of Labour to discuss the contentious agreements and organised country wide demonstrations (Van der Walt, 1998)

Unions and the government grew further apart after the adoption of ESAP. The ZCTU was under increased threat of deregistration and was accused by government of inciting members to strike and having partisan political motivations because of its opposition to the SAP. Thus,

> -given the unions increasingly autonomous and adversarial stance, the ZANU PF regime began to harbour suspicions that the ZCTU was planning to combine its economic and political critique to form the basis of an opposition movement and thus took steps to undermine unions: in June 1992, John Nkomo, then Minister of Labour, describing the federation as an organisation of illiterates ominously stated that the "ZCTU is now a political party and we shall deal with it in the way we deal with political political parties' (cited in Schikonye 1996:18).

In 1994 Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) blamed rising unemployment on workers' wage demands and employers also made a similar accusation, stating that they could not fulfil their SAP targets due to workers excessive wage demands. Unions concluded that government objectives since the introduction of the SAP were to break the strength and unity of the labour movement, now using its more developed labour relations apparatus to support management in collective bargaining. This conviction was reinforced by declining real wages and employment levels and growing hardships experienced by large segments of the population as the effects of ESAP deepened. Relatedly, economic liberalization created further tensions,

with unions viewing ESAP as reversing the few material gains of Independence: job security, and subsidies on social services and wage goods. Ironically, "ESAP was also associated with the phasing out of statutory minimum wages and the introduction of freer collective bargaining, which allowed unions to strengthen their position by winning substantial concessions from management, although the Ministry of Labour retained veto powers over agreements in the national interest" (van der Walt 1998:104). A brief stint of cordial relations between the union and government occurred in the run-up to 1995 elections, "when the union movement published a policy document on ESAP and attempted to engage the state and the IFIs in a more constructive debate. The government ... agreed to meet with labour leaders and attended May Day celebrations in 1995 for the first time since 1991" (Raftopoulos 2000:268).

Due to the persistent economic hardships the workers and unions took large industrial actions to recoup wage losses in both the private and private sectors . As these grew in size and intensity, defying existing labour laws, the government urges workers to tighten their belts for the good of the nation. In 1994 a series of strikes took place starting in banking followed by construction and insurance sectors, post and telecommunication workers. The government as an employer dismissed all the workers but nonetheless the government was forced to backdown. Dansereau suggested that , "unions learnt an important lesson from that strike – that in spite of the stiff anti-strike measures in the labour law, the union had forced government to accede to worker demands, including the rehiring of dismissed workers" (Dansereau 2003:35).

Another strike wave occurred in 1996, mostly in the public sector and quickly escalated into a national crisis that reflected the growing politicisation of labour relations as over 160 000 workers walked off the job in key government services. University students and teachers joined in. Government was again forced to compromise through a 20 percent wage increase ending the strike after two weeks. At the time, "this was reportedly, the most wide spread strike and costly labour unrest in the post-colonial period" (Van der Walt 1998:87). Strikes resumed in October in the public health sector, resulting in the paralysing of the hospital system for 49 days . This was the longest strike action by health workers in the post UDI period (van der Walt 1998). Government once again refused to negotiate, dismissing 2000 nurses and 200 junior doctors. The government interpreted the strike as a political challenge rather than an industrial dispute, claiming that it had been fomented by the opposition political parties and was causing unacceptable threats to public safety. In the end the nurses

and doctors had to beat a tactical retreat in the face of increasing public pressure. However negotiations over the reinstatement of the workers prolonged the strike (Dansereau 2003).

These strikes created an atmosphere of defiance in the last month of 1996. The ZCTU called a national strike and public demonstration in support of health workers. Government introduced a ban on demonstrations and the strike never materialised as a few hundred people showed up for a rally. A feature of these actions was that they occurred in alliance with churches, students and human rights groups, bringing together those that would form the crux of the alliance which would become consolidated into a national opposition movement to form the Movement for Democratic Change (Sapa, November 1-15, 1996). The economy continued to deteriorate in 1997 with a 74 percent fall in the value of the currency and rapid rising inflation (Bond, 2000:182). Over 100 industrial actions accompanied by several demonstrations, national stayaways and consumer boycotts took place as the unions widened the scope of their activity to address the general economic decline of members, aiming at government instead of individual employers as the problem was now seen as one of macro-economics. The ZCTU demanded participation in the Tripartite Negotiating Forum, a committee bringing together government and employers in discussions around the social contract and macro-economic issues. Labour was finally invited to join but the engagement was short-lived. The ZCTU withdrew in February 1999 when the government allowed further price increases in basic commodities, despite union opposition. The ZCTU claimed that the government was dithering on crucial matters to arrest *inter-alia* the escalating rate of inflation, the severe national debt , the day to day increases in the prices of basic commodities, the devaluation of the local currency, corruption and the land question. It announced that it would stay away from the tri-partite Negotiating Forum until the government lifted the ban on mass actions that had been imposed in 1998 after a three day stay away (ZCTU, 1999)

The failure and inability to solve workers economic problems coupled with increasing restrictions on strikes and demonstrations, as well as the failure to effect change via tri-partite negotiations at the macro-economic level, acted as the impetus for the labour movement to see the need for change at the political level (Dansereau 2003). In spite of the government's declared commitment to multi-party democracy the unions and citizens groups became convinced that change would not come through the electoral route. This prompted the emergence of an extra-parliamentary opposition as those in opposition felt that the current

context was one of corruption and abuse of power in the context of increasing poverty, hunger and consequent riots. The growing instability and disorder brought the alliance to conclude that the country required constitutional change aimed particularly at limiting the power of the president (Makumbe and Compagnon 2000:318). The alliance brought together 96 organisations which included a wide spectrum of social interests such as labour, the churches, cooperatives, citizen groups, human rights organisation and student groups in a broad coalition organised into the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) in 1998. The ZCTU's Secretary General Morgan Tsvangirai became the president of the new organisation NCA, whose objective was to push for a full representative constitutional review. In response the government set up its own review, appointing 400 people to a Constitutional Assembly which, after holding a national consultation drew up a draft constitution which was put to a referendum in February 2000. It was soundly rejected by a large majority of voters.

Once the ZCTU withdrew from tripartite national discussions in 1999, and in an attempt to go beyond the constitutional debates of the NCA, it convened a broader convention of trade unions and opposition groups. The result was the creation of the National Peoples Convention in May 1999 mandated to map out strategies to protect workers from the economic hardships and put in place a strong, democratic popularly driven and organised movement which represented a broad spectrum of society (Dansereau 2003). At the September 1999 ZCTU Congress, the union gave its support to the NPC to become a fully fledged party. With the participation by 40 popular groups and at an event attended by 20 000 people, the MDC was officially launched, declaring it would contest the 2000 parliamentary elections (*The Worker* September 1999). The MDC entered the election a few months later, with activists and members coming from a diverse set of interest groups. Its initial leadership reflected the MDC's close association with the labour movement. The President, Morgan Tsvangirai and the vice president of the movement the late Gibson Sibanda had been key to distancing the union and the ruling party. A further eight other trade unionists were members of the MDC executive. In addition to trade unions the diverse group of MDC members who went to parliament include educators, entrepreneurs, professionals, ex-civil servants, clergy and former NGO workers.

This chapter has examined how trade unions played a major role in Zambia and Zimbabwe social and economic development. It began by outlining the political and social environment in which trade unionism developed in the post-independence era and set out the legal and

institutional framework within which labour relations were conducted. After a review of the shift in economic policy which led to the adoption of ESAP it considered the effects of this programme had on trade unions, labour relations, living standards and eventually how it acted as an impetus for the formation of opposition political parties

## CHAPTER FOUR

*This chapter presents a comparative analysis of circumstances around the participation of labour movements in the formation of opposition parties in their respective countries with reference to two theories of social movements: political opportunity and resource mobilisation theories. That is, it provides an analysis of the circumstances around ZaCTU and ZCTU participation in the formation of MMD and MDC in Zambia and Zimbabwe respectively. Using political opportunity theory social movements appear to be significantly affected by outside political opportunities whilst resource mobilisation theory stresses the ability of the respective movements' members to acquire resources and to mobilise people towards the furtherance of their goals (Kendall 2006).*

### Political opportunity theory: Empowerment in civil society and the formation of MMD and MDC

Political opportunity theory points to the importance of the context and the possibilities that that presents for the actions of particular political interests. In this context, the success or failure of particular objectives depend upon the political opportunity structure at any given moment in time. What were the possibilities for the two new organisations to influence democratic political outcomes? Where did the two movements consider there to be political opportunity for their political organisation and mobilisation? Did ZaCTU and ZCTU consider there to be political opportunities for meaningful work within the established political system or was it only possible and necessary to work directly in civil society? Or did the labour movements believe that they had to capture political institutions and thereafter facilitate their interests? The first part of the chapter describes the Zambian processes. The year before the parliamentary and presidential elections that took place on 25 October 1991, the MMD contested with nine other registered parties and won 125 out of a total of 150 parliamentary seats. The former chairman General of ZCTU, Fredrick Chiluba, became the President of the Republic of Zambia. In Zimbabwe a year before the parliamentary elections took place in March 2000 and MDC contested the elections and won 55 seats out of 150 seats a major electoral victory by an opposition party formed barely a year before in post independence Zimbabwe. In order to understand what transpired we have to turn back to history.

In Zambia, generally, in the 1980s the ZaCTU had been engaged mostly in participating in government decision making, especially in industrial relations matters. Workers became

increasingly discontented with their lack of influence over the structural adjustment process which affected labour negatively. ZaCTU in turn was criticised by UNIP for not trying hard enough to control the workers that protested (Akwetey 1994). As ZaCTU chose the workers side in the conflict and not UNIP, the latter realised that ZaCTU was a possible threat (Hedblom 2005). Between 1981 and 1989, therefore, the state denied ZaCTU representation in the institutions established to deal with industrial relations matters, or where such representation was guaranteed, the President had the power to choose representatives. The trade union movement reacted to this by putting pressure on UNIP 's economic negotiations with the IMF through strikes in "all essential areas in 1985" (Hedblom 2005). For one year the government resisted, but trade union protests increased. The last straw for the unions occurreed when UNIP officially announced that it intended to deregulate maize prices in December 1986. This resulted in a huge outbreak of protests where 15 people were killed (Rakner 2003). Due to this, several strikes took place and UNIP threatened ZaCTU with dissolution if "it persisted in misguiding its members and associating with suspicious western organisations offering undercover funds" (Rakner 1992). It is clear that the ZaCTU's former institutionalised space within the established political system, created by UNIP, was gradually being curtailed by the very same actor. Interestingly, this did not mean that ZaCTU was not a force to be reckoned with.

Similarily, in Zimbabwe after independence the government adopted an interventionist approach to the labour market and the control of trade unions. This was done through conferring monopoly representation to a single trade union organisation. In effect, the ZCTU became dependent for its existence on the state. This body, as the sole representative of all worker interests, and to remain part of the alliance with the government, was forced to promote and implement government labour market policies. As such the autonomy for independent action on the part of ZCTU was constrained during this time and such weakness translated into dependence on the state for patronage. For instance it was observed that, "at the ZCTU founding congress in 1981, there was a recognition of the need to accept the authority of ZANU-PF government if they were to be allowed to pursue union activities"(Dansereau 2003:28).

In Zambia, the politcal opportunity structure differed, and presented ZaCTU with greater influence over national politics, despite being excluded from decision making and despite threats to workers involved in strike activities. Some scholars argue that Zambia's failure to

implement structural adjustment policies can be explained by the strong resistance coming from trade unions (Akwetey 1994). The riots by the workers led to the cancellation of Zambia's participation in the IMF's SAPs and UNIP decided to do it alone instead through the National Economic Recovery Programme (NERP) in May 1997 (Rakner 2003). The significance of this is that it demonstrates that UNIP was forced to agree with ZaCTU to move away from the IMF, not despite but because of the nature of their conflictual relationship. The co-operation can be explained by the former close ties between UNIP and ZaCTU as well as the fact that ZaCTU was still strong enough to constitute a threat to UNIP's power. However the consensus between UNIP and ZaCTU did not last due to unfavourable results of National Economic Recovery Programme (NERP) . In 1989, UNIP restarted negotiations with the IMF leading to a new economic reform process that resulted in threefold increase in maize prices (Hedblom 2005).

In Zimbabwe, during the 1990s the ZCTU became more assertive, having weaned itself from state patronage in the late 1980s (Sachikonye 1997, 2001). This had as much to do with structural changes in the economy and society as with the new brand of independent labour movement leadership. With the inception of ESAP there was a major shift in economic and social policy. This ruptured an unwritten social contract between the state and organised labour and business and abetted the enrichment of a few elites and the stagnation and worsening of conditions of the majority of the working and middle class (Matombo and Sachikonye, date 112). For the remainder of the 1990s the labour movement under the auspices of ZCTU made a relentless critique of ESAP and related measures of economic liberalisation and campaigned against specific government measures through general strikes euphemistically termed 'stay aways' (Matombo and Sachikonye, 1997)

Can this be analysed in terms of how the ZaCTU read the political opportunity structure? The fact that ZaCTU's strikes and protests had an impact on UNIP's policies and NERP indicates that ZaCTU considered there was a political opportunity for meaningful engagement within the established political system. However the opportunity had limited possibilities, which is supported by the fact that it was only temporary, as UNIP decided to reopen its negotiations with the IMF in 1989. In regard to the political opportunity within civil society, the regulations on strikes due to the 1971 Act and the reprisals against workers, indicate that the political opportunities within civil society were also constrained. Rakner shows that the disappointment of the interest groups shifted from IMF and food prices to President Kaunda

and UNIP's economic policies by the end of the 1980s which was a result of UNIP's continued measures that threatened the power of labour (Rakner 2003). Naturally, this gave the ZaCTU incentives to reconsider how it read and actied within the political opportunity structure.

One example of measures taken by UNIP was the amended Industrial Act of 1990 which prohibited ZaCTU funding and decentralised its formerly centralised structure. ZaCTu saw it as the machinations by UNIP to weaken the trade union movement and stated that it was directed to the total destruction of trade unions in Zambia (Akwetey, 1994). The disenchantment with the regime's policies in general among workers and the public culminated on December 30, 1989 with the General Council meeting of ZaCTU which took the historic decision to introduce a multi-party constitution and abolish the one party state. This was the first time in ZaCTU's history that the movement demanded a formal separation between the party, the state and ZaCTU (Hedblom 2005). After the official demand for the re-introduction of a multi-party system, individuals and organisations with similar interests met at a national conference in Lusaka in June 1990. Those in attendance included business, intellectuals, commercial farmers, unemployed, churches and students and it was at this conference that MMD was formed as a mass organisation. As in Zimbabwe, the amended LRA of 1992 expanded the sectors that were deemed essential and forbidden to strike, with the government continuing to intervene in setting minimum wages. The unions concluded that government objectives since the introduction of the SAP were to break the strength and unity of the labour movement, using its more developed labour relations apparatus to support management in collective bargaining (Tsvangirai 1992). In September 1999, at a ZCTU congress, the union as had happened in Zambia gave its support for it to become a fully-fledged party with a broad based alliance.

In terms of political opportunity structure, ZaCTu and ZCTU's decision to sever ties with the UNIP and ZANU-PF points to the fact that they considered that there was little political opportunity any longer for meaningful engagement within the established political systems. The 1990 Industrial Relations Act and 1992 LRA were the impetus since they produced a series of hostile labour policy decisions in both countires in conjunction with UNIP's and ZANU-PF earlier actions. Furthermore, the introduction of the 1990 Act in Zambia and the 1992 LRA Act in Zimbabwe made ZaCTU and ZCTU fear that an increased number of trade unions in each industry would cause splinter tendencies within the trade union movement

which UNIP and ZANU-PF could take advantage of (Hedblom 2005). ZaCTu and ZCTU were cognisant of the fact that the political opportunities within civil society could decrease and collective bargaining would become more difficult if no action was taken.

In order to maintain collective bargaining as well as to end UNIP's and ZANU-PF economic policies, ZaCTU and ZCTU saw political intervention through the formation of political parties as the most viable way to change the political system and promote pluralism. This indicates that ZaCTU and ZCTU realised that it was only through the formal political system, that is through political parties and the electoral process, that they would be able to exert influence over policy-making for an a macro-economic framework. The strategy ZaCTU and ZCTU used were to co-operate with movements within civil society. ZaCTu and ZCTU the key, but not the only organisations forming MMD and MDC, respectively. However, it can be argued that they initiated the process of change, through the empowering of civil society. Thus, ZaCTU and ZCTU functioned as leading organisations in civil society (Rakner 1992, Sachikonye 2007). This type of politicisation is most conducive to democratisation as different movements operating within the same political space took steps into the established political system by forming political parties. However this would prove to be difficult and indeed not sufficient to change the structural and policy reforms that they required to promote their interests as trade unionists.

**Resource Mobilisation and the Formation of Opposition Parties**

The conclusion, considers how organised interests come together to influence politics. One of the conditions for success, according to Kendall (2006), is the ability of organisations to mobilise members and resources and to develop aims and objectives that speak to the needs of potential supporters. The articulation of goals, even if not clearly ideological, are significant. In the context of the struggles for voice and influence on government policy, the trade unions had come to recognize that these goals would need to draw in a wider constituency that the workers alone, despite the fact that the core of the new parties were trade unions. So while the membership was mostly drawn from the trade unions affiliated to ZaCTU and ZCTU, the concerns that came to be articulated were broader than mere shop-floor issues. Initially, being part of an alliance with nationalist movements had seemed the best way to get trade union interests into state policy. But once it became clear that the ruling parties were less interested in worker issues, and more interested in promoting industrial

policy at the expense of workers, the Unions were faced with a critical dilemma. They no longer influenced state policy, and thus turned to new forms of political participation. These found expression in the development of opposition political parties.

In Zambia, the national trade unions were under close control of ZaCTU and UNIP due to the 1971 Act as the act made it mandatory for member unions to be affiliated to ZaCTU and in order to hold trade union office and to vote, individual members had to be members of UNIP. This indicates that state corporatism was used by UNIP to include ZaCTU from 1971 to 1990. ZaCTU was provided with funds and guaranteed monopoly representation in return for restrictions to strike. ZaCTu had been included in national politics by means of a kind of state corporatism. This situation meant that ZaCTU found itself included in a clientelist type of relationship with the ruling party, in which it received resources to conduct its work. In turn its member unions were themselves treated as 'clients' of the mother body. However, the boundaries between party and union were not always clear-cut (Hedblom 2005). However, Rakner has argued that, "it cannot be said that the trade union movement as a whole was controlled by ZaCTU and UNIP. Even if ZaCTU was considered to be a state-controlled association, the national trade unions maintained some degree of organisational independence" (Rakner 1992:93). The autonomy of trade unions became evident as several conflicts between UNIP and ZaCTU came to the fore throughout the 1980's. Rakner noted that the trade union movement since 1980 had indeed used its funding and organisational structures autonomously and had political and ideological differences compared to those of UNIP (Rakner1992:129). The same can be said of Zimbabwe's national unions that were under close control of ZCTU and ZANU-PF government as a result of the 1981 LRA which established the ZCTU under the slogan 'one country, one federation.

UNIP ended its corporatist relationship with ZaCTU through the 1990 Act which was presented to parliament in December of that year, just after ZaCTU had broken its alliance with UNIP. The 1990 Act had a great impact on how national trade unions were affiliated to ZaCTU . It made it possible for unions to organise themselves without being tied to either the ruling party or to ZaCTU. If a union wanted to use trade union funds in political campaigning or in support of a political party a two thirds majority of the total membership was required. Thus, a union could not automatically use its funding to support a political party. In addition the Act made sure that illegal strike activity could no longer result in detention of workers. , Hedblom argued that "the 1990 Act was seen as punishment from UNIP due to ZaCTU's de-

link from UNIP. The General Council of ZaCTU thought the main aim of the 1990 Act was to weaken the trade union movement and called for a return to the guaranteed monopoly representation as was the case with the 1971 Act" (Hedblom 2005:35).

According to Hedblom, ZaCTU's willingness to return to the corporatist nature of the 1971 Act gives the impression that ZaCTU was an undemocratic organisation with not much support from its affiliated unions. However, as Rakner argues, that ZaCTU being protected from organisational competition does not mean that it did not functioned as a democratic organisation, as organisational democracy was defined in terms of internal decision making procedures and how leadership selection took place (Rakner 1992). Thus, competition between organisations need not necessarily be a reflection of the internal democracy of a movement. From the aforementioned it is not clear whether ZaCTU used integration rather than incorporation at the time of MMD's formation.

As a starting point, the individuals and organisations behind the formation of MMD were united by their common opposition to UNIP and had a relatively strong leader in the person of Chairman-General Chiluba. Since the MMD won the elections with a large majority, the opposition against UNIP was relatively widespread. In one way, Chiluba can therefore be said to have expressed popular feelings and ideas, which would make ZaCTU strategies a case of populism. If populism is the case, the leader should have a position that is, "essential to the stability of adjourning leaders and their ablity to patronise followers" (Tornqist, 1999:156). This is probably not applicable to ZaCTU leadership since ZaCTU was considered to be a well organised and internally democratic organisation. According to resource mobilisation theory, it is a core group of sophisticated strategists that works toward harnessing the disaffected energies, attracting money, supporters, capturing the media's attention, forging alliances with those in power, and creating an organisational structure (Kendall 2006). This theory assumes that without such resources, social movements cannot be effective, and further that dissent alone is not enough to endanger social stability. In the Zambian case according to Rakner's personal interviews with leaders of national unions, there was unanimous support for ZaCTU and MMD in the process of political reform (Rakner 1992). This does not of course exclude populism from being the case. However, with reference to the general support for ZaCTU and MMD in combination with ZaCTU's internally democratic structures, integration through resource mobilisation theory becomes a more convincing way of arguing the case. Resource mobilisation theory seems to apply to

both the case of ZaCTU and ZCTU as their organisational structures were used in order to mobilise both trade unions and other movements to join MMD and MDC, respectively. This is also supported by the fact that both ZaCTU and ZCTU had severed their ties with the coporatist structures of UNIP and ZANU-PF. Furthermore, that the initiative to introduce a multi-party system taken by ZACTU whilst ZCTU initiated the constitutional reform through NCA, shows that there was a clear political ideology. In regard to resource mobilisation theory, the ZaCTU and ZCTU mobilising capacities indicate that the centre was linked to the periphery in a way that sustained the organisation.

In Zimbabwe in spite of the government 's declared commitment to multi party democracy the unions and citizen groups became increasingly convinced of the inability to bring about change via the electoral route. This prompted the emergence of an extra-parliamentary opposition as those in opposition felt that the current context was one of corruption and abuse of power resulting in increasing poverty, hunger, protests and riots and that these required constitutional change (Makumbe and Compagnon, 2000:318). As in Zambia the alliance brought together 96 organisations such as labour, churches, citizens groups, human rights organisations and students into a broad coalition organised into the NCA in 1998. In 1999,the ZCTU convened a broader convention of trade unions and opposition groups . The outcome was the National Working People's Convention in May 1999 with the mandate to map out strategies to protect workers from the hostile economic environment. In September 1999 at a ZCTU congress the union gave its affirmation to become a formal political party. With participation of 40 groups the MDC was officially launched (Dansereau 2003).

This research report has comparatively analysed the role of labour movements in the formation of opposition political parties in Zambia and Zimbabwe in 1991 and 1999, respectively with special reference to the political opportunity structure and resource mobilisation theory. The research analysed Zambia and Zimbabwe industrial relations in both the colonial and post colonial era and cocludes that the trade union movement has remained autonomous from the state despite efforts to incorporate the labour movement into the party/state. The organisational autonomy of the union movement is one of the main reasons why trade union movement spearheaded the formation of oppositional political parties in the two countries under review. As earlier argued, the emergence of opposiyion political parties in the two countries under review can be attributed to demonstration effect of international democracy struggles , popular hardships due to economic crisis and ESAP, donor pressures.

On the other hand the limited impact of these opposition parties can be attributed to the impressive strength, skills and cohesion of the incumbent government in Zimbabwe in particular and the weaknesses and divisions of the opposition.

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