

Lawrence Xola

Facilitator: This is an interview with Lawrence Xola, we are in East London the date is 18 November 2010 the interview is done by Brown Maaba. Thanks for your time, you can just combine English/Zulu Xhosa. Please give me background about where you were born, family background and how you ended up connecting to the unions?

Respondent: I was actually born in PE, from the area which is called Kwa-Zakhele and I studied at Masakhane Primary school which I then proceeded to the 7th Day Primary school and subsequent to that I did my high school at Ithembelihle. I then went to work. When I started working from the first time I was employed by a factory called Union Spinning Nails that was in 1991, it was a textile cotton mill. At the time the workforce was about 1200 workers. Now at the time I was employed I realised when I received ..., in fact when I filled in the forms I was told that there was a closed shop agreement. You can imagine at that time from school to work you wouldn't understand the terms that they referred to. But eventually it meant to say that I was compelled to become a SACTU member because of the closed shop agreement. So I started then to inquire from the guys who were there, "what is this closed shop"? Nobody was able to explain to me because spinning mills was predominantly females and some females never went to school so somewhere somehow they were not able to grasp the terminology used. I was then referred to a guy whom I was advised that he was the full time shop steward. His name was Wilton Logo. I still remember that guy, by way of curiosity I went to his office at break time, just to introduce myself to him and then ..., fortunately he was a very nice guy, he welcomed me and I asked him what his job was. He told me he was a shop steward. I asked him the

difference between a full time shop steward and ordinary workers. He told me he is not working on the production line, he is full time to this office dealing with worker grievances but he is still an employee of the company because his salary is paid by the company. I asked him further that when I started my employment I was advised by the HR department that I must understand that amongst other statutory deductions, there will be also a deduction of a union fee which was called closed shop. I asked him to explain to me. He then said closed shop is an agreement which SACTU entered into with the company in terms of the labour relations act and its primary purpose is to avoid a number of unions within a confined sector. So that is why there was this closed shop agreement so that we make sure that within the textile you don't have different unions because that creates confusion and then he said in terms of the act, that agreement is very simple, basically who ever is employed you must automatically become a SACTU member. I said to him I am from school, I am not anti-unions but what about the right of an employee, what about the freedom of association, is it not a contradiction of some sort because if it becomes automatic then it waves away our rights. He then said look I understand what you are saying but that is what the labour has negotiated through NEDLAC, that is the unfortunate part. So I'm saying therefore that even if one has got problems with the conduct of SACTU one has got no option but to pay the amount. He gave me a copy of the Act which I read. What is funny there is, when you read it you are being told that the deduction is even without your authorisation as an employee, it's a must.

So because of that I became interested and wanted to know more. During that time you will recall, before 1994 and it was still tense at the time but I recall each and every time when shop stewards have met with management they would call all the workers to the canteen to give a

report and that's where I got to know because you will be told then that they were elected to come and account to us because if you are a leader you must be a leader that takes the mandate and come back and report. That was the first experience. So in between this guy would come and give us a report, we would start to interrogate the report, ask questions. It was fortunate or unfortunate, I was more vocal whenever the guys came to give a report. I think in 1993 it was the time of electing new shop stewards in terms of the constitution of SACTU. Basically the shop stewards are elected for a period of three years and then after three years that is the end of their term of office. Then other democratic elections must be held. During that period I was then elected to be a shop steward.

I started to have more challenges especially in 1994 because it was a well known thing that something was about to happen. In our workplace there were a lot of challenges even from the management because things like Employment Equity were not in place at the time, to address the imbalances of the past. Most positions were held by white faces. During that period that is when I got to know about these are signs of racism and apartheid. It was clear, there were a lot of disciplinary actions that were taking place. I still remember that even in one week, you may find yourself having about three inquiries in terms of the pressure that was there. So I started to represent workers and during that time we were able, collectively because we were working as a team, to win the cases and at that time we used to go to industrial courts before the establishment of CCMA's. Now that is where my interest started to originate and then since then we sort of tried then to make the union strong because we were elected and there were new faces, and I still remember at that time we were a committee of about 21 shop stewards.

Now, and during that time then there was also changes from the top management because there was a guy that was fired, Mr Snyman at the time, so new people with fresh ideas came in. Fortunately at that time I still remember the HR lady called Judy Oosthuizen, unfortunately she is late now. She had a balanced approach, she wanted to work with the unions because she believed if they don't work with the union there will be no co-operation even from the shop floor. So she came with that idea of let's work together as a team so that we can attain our objectives, obviously there were instances where we would agree to disagree but we would always find amicable solutions but without compromising the mandate of the workers.

Since then I continued to be the shop steward, obviously when you are a shop steward, your duties do not end there where you are working, in between you would have to go to union offices to attend structural meetings that SACTU would convene and those meetings will be called by full time staff employed by SACTU at the union offices. For example within the structures of SACTU, you've got a structure that is comprised of shop stewards which is called branch shop steward council, so these were the structures that we would attend. The purpose of the structure is for shop stewards who are organised by SACTU but who are coming from different workplaces, where we would meet at the union offices. The union officials would then table their report, secretariat report to give us an update of what is happening within the workplaces, what are the challenges etc. And also they would update us internally what is happening with SACTU, what is happening with the bargaining councils, where SACTU is sitting to negotiate conditions of employment for the workers from different sectors.

It is important to note that within SACTU there are different sectors because SACTU is a clothing and textile and footwear and leather. Now we've got also different bargaining councils, there's a bargaining council that is unique for clothing, where like you mentioned earlier that your mother was working for Transvaal Clothing, you would have a bargaining councils that falls within textile umbrella which is called the National Textile Bargaining Council (NTBC) and you would have companies that would fall under those sectors. So when we are meeting in such meetings you get different stories because these are shop stewards who are coming from different sectors but who are members of one union. Now, also in those structures I became also very vocal, up to an extent that I was then taken out of the factory, I think it was 2002 to be full time in the union, to be a union official that will now be paid by SACTU and my designation at that time I was Branch Organiser, basically to sort of do similar duties but at an advanced level of a shop steward, where I would go to the factory, meeting with top management from the office, going to the CCMA, representing the workers, convening a meeting like this, branch shop steward council meetings etc. Then from there then we started to build a stronger SACTU because the old guys that were there before us you know they happened to leave SACTU, others for good reasons, to sort of do something different in their lives. We then took over because the union cannot collapse because the other leadership has left. Since then we kept the union vibrant.

I must share with you that there are a lot of challenges in the labour movement and especially if you are hand on, practically involved, particularly in clothing in this instance. It is survival, you don't want to know because this industry from that period of 2003 to about 2007 we had a national job loss of about 70 000. There is no other union within the

affiliates of COSATU that ever experienced such a huge job loss. It has always caused by various reasons but in the main its your Chinese imports, you know the search of imports has compromised the lives of the people of South Africa in this industry in particular and other factors of your strong rand, but in the main the Chinese infiltration that is the main reason. And the union has been always very instrumental to engage all different stakeholders under the leadership of Ibrahim Patel at the time, who was our general secretary who is now the minister of economic development. We've initiated a lot of good proposals with government to try and save the industry. For example we recently were able to have like a China quota in 2007 and then it expired in 2008, where we were able to save a number of jobs. But the Chinese quota agreement is no more there, and jobs continue to be lost to the industry.

So, in the main the struggle is still on, as much as we claim that we are liberated, we don't doubt that, but the struggle and the challenges that confront the workers is very challenging because if I can take Eastern Cape alone, this region used to have about 15 000 workers employed in the Eastern Cape who were members of SACTU from round about 2001, 1999, but to date we've got about 5 000 employed. In Dimbaza alone we had a membership of about 6000 workers. Now all those factories closed down, so if you go there it's like a coast area, there's no factories, there's a lot of weeds and we once suggested to the provincial government to consider what was done in Argentina where workers opened a factory – we have workers that are skilled and they are just sitting there. They have never worked for any other industry other than the clothing industry, their only skill is working in the clothing industry. And the fact that people do not walk naked, people still buy clothes, they still need clothes. It's not an industry that is not needed, an important industry to the country, to the

economy in our own view. I can give a lot of examples, I mean blankets, the work wear, your overalls. For example if you take the correctional services department. The overalls that are worn by prisoners alone and if you dig out where the overalls are made you will find that they are from China. And if the overalls were made by South African companies to promote the local industry you would retain jobs. These are ongoing challenges that we are engaging government in. Some at a national level you will find that there is a slow level of compliance in that regard but it's still not yet there. So if they can just fast track local procurement to say the ..(unclear). So in the main, that is where I became to be interested in the labour movement. There are a number of stories that I can share because we once had a serious problem as SACTU where in one company we lost the membership to a splinter union.

We normally label unions that are not affiliates of COSATU as splinter unions or rival unions which was known as OGAWU, it's the same union that led about 1500 workers of VW to be fired if you recall that dismissal, but they then organised or recruited our members at Union Spinning Mills and contested the closed shop agreement, basically the closed shop agreement stays for three years and after the three years has lapsed like one third of workers called for termination and signed a petition and then the closed shop agreement gets terminated. So they recruited and they were able to prove or satisfy that they do meet the threshold or the requirement and based on that they were able to take our members. It was very challenging at the time, so we had to work very hard, strategise, we would meet during weekends at the union office to say what do we do? Our worry other than losing the members was the agreements that we negotiated with Spin Mills. For example we had an agreement where if a worker is retrenched, a workers gets a severance pay of not less than

three weeks for each competent year of service. Those benefits were taken away since OGAWU came in because the management was able to say to them look now that you are in, we will start afresh, all other conditions of employment that are applicable will now be nullified. And they started that. So we were trying to caution our members that look you must be careful because this has got long term implications that once it starts you will be frustrated. They didn't want to listen, so in the end we lost the benefits. The law in the labour is that if you have entered into a new collective agreement, the employer and the union that agreement becomes valid, legal. So if the previous agreement was unanimously agreed to be nullified, then there's nothing you can do, you cannot even enforce because you will be told that the agreement is no more valid it was replaced by a new agreement. So things like that you know happened as one of our challenges, a period we will never forget. We were able to gain our membership back and OGAWU was then kicked out.

Now we had to work very hard to renegotiate the conditions that were there. It was a very challenging moment up until the period where the company became bankrupt and it closed down as one of the other companies that closed down. That's what I can share with you. Also what is good is that the working class in my own view and experience has done a lot for the workers, it's influence you cannot doubt it. I mean look for an example, what has happened in Polokwane, it was driven in the main by the influence of the working class because we could feel at the time that there was a need for change. So whether one likes it or not, the working class voice can bring more changes in society for the benefit of the poor working class. So such unprecedented stories makes us to sort of continue to be leaders and that is why I really enjoy the life of being a

leader and over and above to be in the movement is more of a sacrifice, sometimes other people may think we get good salaries. We joined the union not because of benefits, we joined the union because it's a principle issue. That is why unions have to be vocal on these issues up until other leaders, second layer leaders who comes in and take off from where we left. The struggle will never die.

Facilitator: So when you left school you didn't think of other alternatives like going to a university or you just simply looked for a job?

Respondent: ja, basically to be honest, I had a vision to go to the university but because of financial predicament at the point, I could not fulfil my dreams. I developed myself whilst I was in the union because the union has got a programme in terms of its programme of action endorsed by the national congress, the leadership for these reasons which I have mentioned. For example I think four years ago I was asked to do a diploma in labour law, which had credits which were an equivalent to an honours degree. So I if I want to proceed with that I will go to any university and do the masters. I am saying therefore that the union does also provide educational opportunities to the leaders, so that when you are in the movement you meet different stakeholders, you meet different people, so you must be able to grapple and engage on a number of issues so that you maintain the credibility of the union. So to answer your question, yes I had a vision to go to university to advance my career, but due to these unforeseen circumstances which were beyond my control I did not have any other option other than after passing my Matric I had to look for employment because at the time my mother was a domestic worker, and my father was late already and I had brothers who were still at school. So I still remember my rate of pay was R5.65 an hour and I was

working a long hour shift, 6 to 6, Saturday and Sunday and during the week you work like 40 hours and have one week off. It was called continental shift. So you can imagine R5.65 multiply by 40 hours. One had no other option. These are the memories.

Facilitator: and your impression of SACTU when you got there was it a militant union or some sweetheart union?

Respondent: Look SACTU is not a sweetheart union, it's a very strong organisation and that has been proven even through the structures of COSATU and it's a very influential organisation particularly on policy matters and its innovation and ideas, how to take the federation forward and as such most of the affiliates have learned a lot from SACTU's working programme. It's a very strategic union, it's very principled, very disciplined with its finances henceforth SACTU is still vibrant given the pressures that the union is confronted is, if it wasn't that disciplined that I am talking about, SACTU today would not be SACTU it would be gone. SACTU is like any other affiliate in terms of running its affairs, we contribute to COSATU with affiliation fees like any other bigger unions. So it's a very responsible organisation, I must say I'm very proud of being part of this family of SACTU, I've learnt a number of things that I was not aware of. How to deal with pressure because working for SACTU is a huge pressure, you get challenges everyday in this industry, liquidations, massive retrenchments. Currently as we speak, there's a big retrenchment here in King Williams Town at Dakama of 761 workers and it's the only largest mill plant in the country, not only in Zwelitsha. Now if you take the assumption of that each employee has got a dependent of not less than 6 or 10, so you talk about an additional job loss of about 15 000 and more, if you get this principle. So I'm saying therefore working for SACTU you must be really

dedicated because the union has very strict rules to all its staff and if you are not disciplined, tough luck you have to face the consequences. But in the same token the union always assists its employees up to the end and say look we had to do unfortunately other processes have to unfold. So as much as it is very strict strategically, it's not a union that dismisses its staff, it's a union that takes issues of the workers to heart and assist its staff. I grew up in this union.

Facilitator: You also mentioned that the older generation had to resign or go, the leaders replaced by the new generation. Did you succeed?

Respondent: Look, I must say that some are still grappling because you know the leadership of that era was a leadership that was very dedicated in the organisation. Now if you recall during that time there were no cars, a union official or an organiser of the union would go to the factories, sometimes you walk, sometimes you hitch hike. The union was still very strong, running smoothly. But at times you will find that, now that things are much better, you still had organisers that are still lazing, they've got cars, they are supposed to be able to make their appointments on time, they are supposed to be able to service the workers to the fullest. But somewhere somehow you do have those challenges, where there are gaps in terms of service delivery, whilst in the past, during the dark days of apartheid you had organisers who were able to keep the membership very happy, the service was very good. I don't imply to say that service is the main problem, but I'm saying one has to sort of draw lessons as to how things were handled during difficult times as opposed to now. Now there are no pressures that if you convene a meeting in a stadium you would have pressure that police can come at any given time and disperse us by shooting us, tear gasses etc. If you convene a meeting now, there will be

no police to come to say why are you calling this meeting, but you will find that .., which were those challenges, where you will find the membership is still unhappy there and there, these are the challenges that we need to address everyday. But what is good, SACTU in its structures, from the national executive committee, the format of the report from the general secretariat, there's always an item about service delivery. They will give a report and an overview of what is happening nationally in all regions of SACTU about service delivery and then we debate those issues and the regions are represented by their leadership in those structures.

So time and again we have robust engagement, these are the challenges, we identify the challenges and then we develop concrete proposals as how do we then overcome those challenges and then we take decisions of NEC filter them down to the structures of the organisation basically to regions and to the branches. It's an ongoing challenge and improvement in the organisation. I am saying that whilst we acknowledge, there are those challenges but you know we try our outmost best. So I'm saying somewhere somehow we were able to take from what the old school has done without failing their work. I am saying we still have the challenges in between.

Facilitator: Also this union is like .., is it a female dominated union, more or less?

Respondent: I would say in a sense that .., what I realised there are family members within SACTU, for an example you would have a company that has got maybe three sisters in one company and all of them are SACTU members and to some instances they are from the same panel. And you would also find that if you go to Cape Town you will find people you know

that are working there that are related to others who are maybe from PE or elsewhere, so you do have such a link that you know boils down to this family aspect that you are asking.

Facilitator: so is it direct or open nepotism?

Respondent: Look I'm referring you to at factory level, I won't say it's nepotism, but I think it's a historical trap. For example I will take one company that I know of, at Industex in PE. That factory remember it's a unique arrangement, it's not a SACTU issues, it's a factory, it's an independent company, where if you were employed there and you left, the policy of the company they not going to employ somebody else, you must bring somebody from your family and I would imagine that is how this thing grew. So many years ago, other people's fathers, were employed in that company when the father left, he would bring his son and when the son left he would bring his brother, something of that nature. So that is why I'm saying it's the policy of the company, whether that would amount to nepotism, I do not know but it's not a deliberate thing where somebody who is misusing powers to employ family members where you would say that's open nepotism. But this was a historical trend.

To come to SACTU as the union, we don't have that kind of family officials that are there, most of the staff of SACTU are not related, it's different from this historical trend of factories, that is why I am making a clear distinction.

Facilitator: women's rights and benefits, issues around maternity leave and so on, how did you deal with that in the 1990s?

Respondent: It was addressed but we then improved the maternity leave, for example now females are entitled to 6 months maternity leave, during that time it was three months and four months is paid and the other two months you claimed at the department of labour. So we are really promoting women's rights. In fact SACTU by virtue of its industry being predominantly females, who are promoting an agenda and also in our internal structures. That is why within SACTU we've got female officials. It was never an issue many years ago, but now it's clear that we have a lot of female staff in the organisation. For example we are coming from the 11th National Congress of SACTU which was held in Cape Town at ICC where for the first time we have elected a female to be in the position of national secretariat and that to us is as a consequence of promoting gender and promote women's rights. So we are gender sensitive.

Facilitator: are there no men who look down upon female leaders or female officials, the chauvinistic attitude?

Respondent: No we respect each other, that is very important

Facilitator: and when you came in there, what were the pressing issues in terms of workers grievances, the early 1990s?

Respondent: there were a number of grievances that would relate to conducive work areas where for an example you would have areas where people are working in very hot conditions, with no windows, at times there are no aircons. And you would have grievances where workers would complain that their salaries are too low, there are no sufficient benefits, things like provident fund because their earnings were very low. So we had to build up the benefits of the workers to start

introducing things like provident fund, and in those days, things like the bonus it was always at the discretion of the employer, based on the performance and the profit that the company would have made. But since we introduced a number of proposals during negotiations and the formation of bargaining councils, we were able to improve the benefits. Now this time around, bonus is no longer a discretion, it's a condition of employment. It is not up to the employer to say whether I've made a profit or not, because it's a negotiated benefit at the bargaining council. So it becomes a condition of employment. So these are benefits that you know that we have improved over the time of period.

Also what is good also in our industry, we have a minimal number of contract employees because we have introduced in all our sectors a clause that contract workers are allowed to be employed for a period of six months, after 6 months they must be made permanent. In the past you had that uncertainty because if you are a contract worker, as an employee you are unable to have proper planning because you do not know when your contract is going to be terminated. So even if a worker is a contract worker, he can plan, for example he wants to buy a stove over 24 months, It was difficult at that time you wouldn't know when your contract will expire. But since we introduced that clause, people would know that let me wait up until my six months is over because I know the agreement is clear I will be made permanent. So such grievances, very challenging at the time, and given the struggle during the 1990s it was very easy for the workers to just embark on illegal work stoppages, the militance was rife at the time. So you had to manage the issues, and at that time it was risky not to sort of follow a mandate of the workers because you are running the risk about your life too, because people

would know where you stay. So you were in a situation you must do what you are expected to do.

So it was never easy, it was a situation that we had to face. The level of militance was also very evident during that period even from us as the leadership. But as time was changing, we were also able to have a strategic approach on issues now. In those days it was easy you would just end a meeting without any consensus, we would swear at each other, management and the union and we couldn't go anywhere. At that time it was good for us because once you display that militance in front of the shop stewards in a meeting, shop stewards would be proud of you, that our official is not a sell out. But this time around we deal with issues very strategically because what is important now is, when you are in a movement, as much you would agree to disagree, the point is you must find solutions to the problem for the benefit of the workers. The militancy this time around for a short term, you will be popular but at the end once the workers get frustrated the popularity would fade. If you bring solutions people will respect you.

Facilitator: The whole question of employment equity has it been addressed now?

Respondent: I must concede that the equity as a consequence of introducing Sitas in different sectors of the labour movement, Sita is a structure that addresses these pertinent issues. There's been changes in different workplaces because one of the pre-conditions to get the benefits from Sita is you must have a workplace programme and a report to say in your organogram as an organisation, what is it that you have done to address the equity imperatives and as a consequence of those

pressures, and from the report that must be submitted to the Department of Labour, all companies now are compelled to sort of address equity. I am saying that 80% of equity is really being addressed, but obviously there are still gaps because in strategic positions we still always find white faces. For example positions like top management, directors, CEO's, out of companies that are listed in the Johannesburg Stock Exchange you know, you will find that there are few CEO's that are there. I am saying that whilst the other issues of equity are being addressed, there are still challenges and I think the inspectors of the Department of Labour they are on a road show particularly on the equity, they are visiting company. The pressure was championed by the unions at NEDLAC, its been taken down now. So there's a rolling programme in that regard.

Facilitator: and the present challenges that are faced by the union today, SACTU?

Respondent: SACTU in particular, in the main our challenge is really the question of the protection of the market, that is the main challenge. Within that government must still do more to protect this industry because we need a lot of investment in this industry. Particularly your Eastern Cape, thousands of factories closed down. There are no programmes from provincial government to come up with a plan to ..(unclear). So in the main that is the main challenge. Whilst I'm saying that there are recent initiatives that government has introduced like the new incentives to assist companies that need working capital, less by 5% prime rate, which is also helpful, we have the production on incentives that have been recently introduced by the DTI, where companies can borrow up to R25 million to buy new machines, to improve their plants etc. So, those initiatives are really welcomed by SACTU in particular you know because

most of the machines in the clothing industry are machines that were used 40 years ago. So if government has got such initiatives they are very helpful. But whilst you will appreciate this new machinery, the new machinery is now too modernised, they've got an element of also promoting job loss in a sense that some of the machines are robot related. You would have a new spinning plant machine that from the old machine would have like ten operators but the new modernised one would only need two as an example because most of the work that used to be done by workers manually is now automatic. So somewhere somehow whilst you need the investment, you must also look also at the consequences. The market needs to be protected.

Facilitator: If this matters are not taken into consideration, what then would be the future of this industry, shut down?

Respondent: If we don't protect the market of this industry, things like promoting local procurement, things like addressing counterfeit of goods that are coming into the country, then you will have massive workers losing their jobs. It is paramount for government to address these concerns.

Facilitator: In 2002 you said you became the branch organiser for SACTU and the challenges that came with that package?

Respondent: There were a lot of challenges because during that period like I said previously, it was the period when we were losing thousands of workers. So I had to run around, sweating, dealing with retrenchments, liquidations, I remember I had to come here in Dimbaza, one of the Chinese companies, I think it was Maygarment. We were told that the

workers did a sleep in at work because they were fearing that the employer was going to sort of take the machines away and that by the next day they will be gone. So we had to work very hard, inform provincial government, at the time Enock Godongwane who is now the deputy minister of economic development was MEC for economic affairs. We've raised those issues and brought them under his attention, so I'm saying a lot of challenges during that period. That is the period we have seen the decline of our membership, it was bad and imagine, you would face thousands of workers where the company has notified the union that the company would be liquidated. During that time, in terms of before, the new insolvency act, workers were on the last list in terms of the top five. When you are dealing with liquidation you first deal with the creditors, the bank, whatever the company owes the bank must pay, then you will find on the list the workers were very at the last, sometimes it would depend on the money that was available and what the companies is worth in terms of its assets, if there's money left it would be distributed equally amongst the workers. So you would face those difficulties, where you had people who worked for many years but at the end each one would get a very minimal amount. So it was a very heartbreaking period at the time, it was a situation which we had to face as an organisation.

Facilitator: so is SACTU still on the decline in terms of membership?

Respondent: currently there's been a very slow pace on the job loss, but whilst I'm saying that the job loss still continues because in the organisation we have a policy where we must report on the 5th of the new month what the job losses are. We report to our office. So you will find that when we go to the National Executive Committee you will get a report that this

month or in this period we have lost so many workers. So this continues, even if at a very slow pace but it is continuing. So the challenge is still there. If you go to NUMSA industry that is unusual, but at SACTU it continues. The earlier example, currently we are busy with Da Gama, 700 ..(unclear), in other regions it may differ, it may be less, it may be 100 it may be 50, whether it's 50 it's a job loss.

Facilitator: you also mentioned the fact that there was a splinter union called AGAWU, are these not the signs that SACTU itself is under threat of extinction or was this just a once off?

Respondent: It was a once off because we never had that challenge in the province, other than the issue of AGAWU at the time. I think it is worth stating that OGAWU was formed by people who were disgruntled because you will find that these people that formed AGAWU were the very same people who were once NUMSA members. But because there's this thing of election of shop stewards, and once other people are not elected because they want to be leaders for life, they start to formulate these splinter unions and then try to sort of be a rival to COSATU unions. So in the main really as SACTU we don't really have rival challenges, to say that there are unions that are contesting us, it's safe to say that in one sector, leather, there are two unions, SACTU and ..(unclear) but the membership is like back to back, but it's not like the union that took our members. That union has been there for a number of years in the leather industry.

Facilitator: post 1994 do you think that unions are now seen as a vehicle to power, considering the quota system that a certain number of union

members must join parliament and then in the provinces you also get the same more or less practice?

Respondent: Some people because we differ from the principle. You would have .., in fact we do have that observation, even at COSATU in our provincial executive meetings, we do analyse it. We have a number of former union leaders who are now in government, who are MEC's, for an example the premier of Eastern Cape was once a COSATU leader, others are there for a good cause, others are there to advance their personal gains. So it's a mixed feeling, you would have those that see the unions as the way to advance their career, you would have a situation where others are deployed by COSATU so that workers voice can be heard there. We had a situation where, in some instances, we deploy people there but then they become against COSATU, it does happen, that is why time and again you will see redeployment reshuffling because we do discuss these issues.

Facilitator: Is there something that you think is important which we did not talk about?

Respondent: I think we have covered a number of issues in my view.

Facilitator: any closing word maybe?

Respondent: In closing I will always believe that challenges will never be over because in the movement you resolve one problem, tomorrow there's another new challenge, that is why earlier I said the struggle goes on. I have never experienced in my life in the labour movement where we say everything is well now. Everyday there's a different challenge. I

am saying therefore that we need leaders that are dedicated for the sake of the workers and that is very fundamental in my own view. Each person have their own character and policy, we join unions for different reasons, but if you listened by my background, how I got into the union and things like that, it was not more of financial related reasons but it was more to learn more about union, what is unionism, the basic principles. I am saying therefore that going forward I will continue to serve the workers to the best of my ability and fortunately I don't have wishes to ever .., to show any interest to leave organisation and go to government in order to advance my personal career, I am happy where I am because my heart is always at the factory because that's where I come from. So I talk from experience, I didn't work for SACTU because of my education, I worked for SACTU because I started at the factory, I became a shop steward, I became an organiser up until I became the provincial secretary of SACTU. So I'm saying it's good to be in the movement for the sake of improving the conditions of employment for workers. Ja.

Facilitator: thanks for your time it was wonderful

Respondent: it's a pleasure.

END

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