

Andrew Lekwene

Facilitator: This is an interview with Andrew Lekwene, we are in Kimberley, the date is 13 October 2011 interview is done by Brown Maaba. Thanks very much for your time dad. You are welcome to use any language you are comfortable with. Just kindly give me your background, your family background as to where you were born, how you were raised, did you come from a family that is privileged or you came from a poor family, your schooling and how you ended up in the world of unions?

Respondent: In fact I come from a very poor family. My father parted with my mother and my mother had to raise eight of us. I was the fourth child of my mother. I grew up in Kimberley and attended school in Kimberley and completed my Matric at Taung. I went to Taung at the time was because we were involved in school activities and the security forces were after us. Sometimes we were detained for two/three years and so on when I was in Form 4, Standard 9. I then went to Batlhaping High School and completed my Matric. On completion because I didn't have money to go and study at tertiary, I got a job immediately with a company called Premier Metal. I was an assistant to the mechanic. I worked for a year but due to the attitude of the white mechanics I could not stay longer and then whilst I was still working there, the security force were able to trace that I was there. I had become vocal and would encourage other workers to join a union. I think at the time SAMWU was fairly new. Before I could organise the workers to join the union, the security forces started moving around in the area and I had to leave the job. Actually I ran away because I didn't want to be arrested, because the area was so remote they could have done anything to me. I stayed home for a couple of weeks to a month. I was then employed by LTA Construction as a clerk. They were building a mine around Riverlouw. I was a clerk there.

The situation was also very bad because we were called kaffirs and I was having an attitude, there were some senior white guys they called me "mabalane" at the time I

did not know what the word meant. I refused to be called like that until one day when a guy came, before he alighted from the car he told me "hey kaffir jy sit in die donnerse kantoor and die mense hulle werk, gaan maak my foken koffie daarso". I was furious and put in a lot of koffie and a lot of sugar. He just drank it and threw the cup and everything that side. A week thereafter he came and wanted to assault me, fortunately there was a spade next to me. I grabbed the spade and told him you cannot assault me. A coloured guy was close by, he asked me to move away from him. I was not dismissed but he never spoke to me again. I realised that something might happen to me so I quit. Before I quit we were finished with the project and I joined the mines. The mines recruited me because thereafter I was assisting in commissioning the mine. I was the only black person at the time. When the mines opened the mine employed me. That was in 1984 by then. I did not belong to any union at the time but I was a staunch member of the UDF. My politics were based on Black Consciousness and UDF. I then joined the mine. I remember because I was employed full time by the mine in December 1984. In 1985 COSATU was launched and I immediately, early January I joined NUM. By then Manne Dipico was an organiser of NUM in Kimberley. We joined NUM. At the time we were paying R1 out of our own pockets because the companies did not want to recognise the union.

The employer realised that I am the one who is organising the union, they came to me and told me I am working in a nice place why am I joining the union. They pleaded with me. I told them that I did not join the union, they could not prove this because we were doing this underground. Half of the employees joined the union and we called the organiser to pay us a visit. We then started the negotiations with the company started, they took time before they recognised the union.

Facilitator: What was their issue against the union?

Respondent: ja. By then Manne Dipico was arrested. The worst part of that company is that it was a company that was run by Shell, Royal Dutch Shell Company but they were mining zinc and ..(unclear)

Facilitator: what was the name of the company?

Respondent: Shell Perring Mine. By then Shell was under pressure from abroad that they should withdraw from the company and they claimed not to be supporting apartheid and so forth. That is how we managed to clinch a deal with the union.

I remember one time I wrote a letter to Holland to the Head Quarters of Shell complaining about the mining/engineer and the plant superintendent. To my surprise I was called in by the General Manager asking me who do I know at Holland Head Office of NUM, then I said I don't know anybody, I've never been to Holland, I know no one. Then he said but it's strange, somebody wrote a letter to Holland complaining about apartheid here at the mine and so forth. I said I didn't know anything. Then he asked me who could have written this letter. I said I didn't know. The worst scenario was that the letter was written in my own handwriting, at the time typewriters and everything were scarce 1985. He pulled out the letter and asked me "is this not your handwriting", I kept on denying. Then he told me I am in for a high jump. He told me that he was told to dismiss me and that he cannot dismiss you, I told them that I will talk to you and so forth. He then told me again that the Special Branch from Vryburg also complained to him that he must get rid of me because I am influencing people at Riverlouw, I'm holding UDF meetings etc. He was told I am influencing those people very badly, those people were people who didn't care about what is happening. I was making the place ungovernable, the school children are toyi toyi and doing all those things because of me. I was doing that because I was renting a room at Riverlouw location. One night the municipal police came, all the guys who were staying in Riverlouw between the ages of 18 to 20 were running away from their homes because they were afraid to be arrested for lodger's

permit and location pass. I said no those things have been cancelled, I think it was four years later. I asked why was it still happening in Kimberly and told them I am not going to run away. In the morning everybody wanted to know why I was not arrested for lodger's permit. There were white guy who worked for the municipality who controlled the policemen. I challenged him when I found him holding a guy on chains at 3 early in the morning. I said they cannot do that. I challenged the lodger's permit. I then said I am going to call Pricilla Jana who was a Human Rights Lawyer. I told them I am going to call the Human Rights lawyers and so forth. Already I was interacting with other comrades of UDF in Vryburg and the other areas. Then I worked at Perring Mine and became a shop steward, chairperson, I was everything because people were afraid to be nominated or voted in as shop stewards or chairpersons of the branch. If I have to go to a meeting I have to go to a doctor so that the doctor can book me off so that I can go to the meeting. We had lots of struggles around these things. I was elected the branch chairperson. In 2008 I became Regional Health and Safety Deputy Chairperson. Things were getting better after the 1987 Uprisings throughout the country and the mine workers strikes during 1987 and so forth. Shell was pretending to be supporting people and so forth.

The employers were not happy with my involvement because they felt I am in a senior position, why am I doing this. I told them I am training white and black but all of them I am bridge, tomorrow the same guy becomes my supervisor again. I was never promoted for about 10 years. I was fighting with my own supervisor because if I wanted to change a shift he used to rely on the report which I had to write. I would make tricks before I can submit my report. The white guy would never submit the report because I was blackmailing him. He didn't understand the job but he was my supervisor, I did as I pleased. There was a time where coloured guys were saying, particularly in the plant, where they were saying whites are afraid of me. They were saying they cannot wait to see me being dismissed. I was very disciplined, making sure I don't make mistakes at work. I don't drink or sleep at work, I did my job perfectly. The boers realised that they cannot penalise me on anything.

One time in 1989, the time when my uncle passed away, I was knocking off on Wednesday morning. I blocked the computers, the plant was ran on computers. I blocked them and left for Kimberley, Riverlouw is about 200 kilos. I left for Kimberley, at the time my Gods were with me, I don't know what happened. I took a print out and put it in my bag and left with it. I'm sure before I reached Kimberley they experienced a power failure. When they wanted to start the plant they could not start the plant. They didn't know what was faulty. They struggled from Wednesday to Sunday. Monday when I came back the plant was not working. So I asked innocently what is happening. I had left the print out at home. I checked and went through the computers and realised I blocked this thing. I unblocked it and then all the sirens came, the alarms were ringing. I was subjected to interrogation by the boers. They wanted to know how I managed to start the computers. I told them I was the one who commissioned the plant, I was sitting right here, I knew what was happening. They asked me to tell them what I did. I told them that I went to a certain panel and reset it and everything went off. They told me that I was not supposed to enter the room and I told them I knew what was happening. I then pulled out a book which dealt with the blocking of the systems. They told me that they have organised someone from overseas to come and check and their guys are coming and so forth. They were not happy. Everyday I was called in to come and explain how did I manage to do this. In the meantime a guy came to me and told me these guys are investigating me, they had already drafted the charge. It was a sabotage charge. I thought of running away and decided that they won't get anything out of this.

In the meantime some of my colleagues were promised money to go around the veld to check if they can't find pieces of the printouts, unfortunately the print out was in Kimberley. I burnt the paper in Kimberley. I was investigated until left the job in 2000 from 1995. It was tough but I had the support of the workers because I managed to win workers cases at the mines. I was very good with disciplinary hearings. I remember in 1994 immediately after the elections, I was asked whether I wanted to join government or not. I said why should I go and join government. They told me the ANC has won they must be giving me a position and I said no.

Immediately after I left I joined Sanlam. It was early 1995. I had problems with them wanting me to wear a tie. I had a problem with this then I resigned immediately because I felt I cannot be forced to wear a tie. I was very negative because we were thinking we are free now and we can do as we wish. I was home for a couple of months then NUM advertised positions for organisers. I applied because I was a former leader/member. I was given the job and went to work as organiser in Welkom.

I worked there. It was another situation where in the Goldmines where you are faced with workers who are illiterate, some were very militant and different nationalities. It was a bit tough. It was not easy. I was driven by the passion of fighting for the workers because of the experience I had in the mines. This drove me to work for NUM. I met a lot of challenges. We would fight and defend workers and so forth. I can actually write a big book about the experiences there.

NUM was the right home for me. NUM is an organisation that you have to work yourself up or out. If you are a disciplined cadre then definitely you can go far. NUM opened doors for its staff. That is why even today you can see that NUM produced a lot of leaders from all sectors of life, politicians, etc. Furthermore when it comes to education, NUM was passionate about educating its people. I attained a legal diploma from NUM, and a diploma in Labour Law, free of charge. Courses that I have attended through NUM – in fact they are huge on capacity building. It is up to the individual. Furthermore NUM has gone an extra mile of educating employees children through bursary schemes of JB Marks, Old Mutual etc. NUM produced doctors, lawyers, you name it. I just can't remember how many professionals NUM produced but in this region I think we've got more than 20 graduates produced by NUM

Facilitator: really

Respondent: ja. And NUM was paying 100% bursaries but for the employees of NUM we are using study loans. If you enrol with any institution or higher learning institution and you pass the course you don't pay back the loan. You only pay the loan back if you fail. So you can't complain because if you want to do something you cannot simply fail, you are doing something with the intention of achieving.

Furthermore I worked for NUM as an organiser and then I was transferred to Kimberley to come and work as a legal officer. Currently I'm working for NUM as a legal officer. Now, in the legal fraternity there's a lot of challenges and pains because you find that workers are being dismissed unjustly. Some cases you will ask yourself why should the employer become so cruel. Yesterday I was working doing a case whereby the worker is working for a BDM company. BDM is a labour broker. They have put 167 employees in the so called lay off. The reason for that is because the workers went on strike for the wage increase. They worked for two years with no increase. Then they were laid off. We challenged the company and the company said we did not dismiss these guys, we have a contract of employment that they have signed. The contract states that when a client does not need your service anymore you remain my employee but you are going to stay at home without a salary but you are an employee. It's not a joke. If I can just go into my office I can get the documents. If you are in somebody's employment, you apply for a job, you cannot get a job because you are still working for someone. This was brought to my attention. You are on reserve and have to wait for the employer to get you other jobs. The decision lies with the employer. You cannot join a union if you do you are dismissed because you are troublesome. This is happening now in 2011. We are having another labour broker, the name is Workforce Group. As I am talking now I was having CCMA arbitration two weeks back whereby the Workforce Group is refusing to allow its employees to join the union. When they arrived at CCMA their argument was merely to say they are a labour broker, they don't fall under the scope of NUM that is why they are refusing their workers to join NUM and they come up with all this technical nonsense. Secondly, our constitution says our members are in good standing based on 1,2 or 3, therefore those people you cannot claim them

as members because there was no branch where they could have joined the union. I told them these people are prospective members, they are new, they don't have a branch if they want to join the union they apply to join at the union office not at your offices as an employer. Therefore you cannot say they should produce proof as members in good standing. The whole picture changed. These labour brokers, our own people are directors in those companies. We could not believe that at this point in time people are being denied to exercise their rights. People were saying, that former members or members of the union or people who have been in the union for a long time, we were thinking that people wouldn't be having an interest in the union. But now, everybody wants to join the union even white people, those who were negative are joining the union particularly NUM because of the exploitation that is rife, particularly from labour brokers and even other big companies like Petra Mining. You go to Petra Mining right here in Kimberley, management is lily white. For instance today, women are being employed in the mines and the exploitation that is happening there is very bad. The last time I was having an arbitration whereby one woman was dismissed because she could not do the job, for poor performance. Then I was asking why do you say you have been dismissed for poor performance, she said here is the charge I've been discharged for poor performance. I asked her what did the people say, she said they said she must go. The poor lady she was afraid to tell the employer that she is pregnant because she was afraid that she is going to lose her job and she was highly pregnant, about 7 months pregnant. The commissioner who was handling the case couldn't believe what was happening. This woman was given a 5 pound hammer, she had to climb about 10 to 15 metres to go and hit??, that is putting stuff or soil from somewhere, those tubes normally block when the soil is wet. She was given the hammer to go and hit there, she is highly pregnant could not handle the hammer and she was dismissed for that. Sometimes she was forced to push a wheel barrow with wet soil, imagine how heavy that is for a pregnant woman. All those things. All these are women, you can go to any mine now where black women are being employed, they are pushing wheel barrows, they are using shovels. You will never find a white lady amongst those, or a coloured lady or Indian ladies in the whole mining areas in the Northern Cape. So the exploitation is still worse that even before

because by then the exploitation was faced by men during those days. Now things have changed and the exploitation is being faced by women.

I don't know how much truth is there but I think people cannot just make up a story, there's no smoke without fire. Here in the Kimberley Mines, ladies who are working underground are being exploited by the supervisors. They sleep with them at night underground in a hiding spot. You know sometimes some of them are holding their meetings in these particular holes. They brought empty papers of condoms from underground. But management can't do anything because nobody is going to come and say I was sexually harassed and so forth.

Another colleague of mine, Joe Lekgamane was doing a case of a guy who is working for Kimberley underground. He was working with his wife there and this guy was dismissed by this supervisor and the wife was going out with the supervisor. Some people caught the wife having sex with the supervisor underground. Apparently that guy was told and he was afraid to go and tell management, white people. My colleague pushed and spoke to management and he was re-instated. This guy was from Mozambique, he was even exploited by our own people saying "Shangaan" people, those xenophobic things. Those are the incidents happening in Mining Industry. But nonetheless other things that I am experiencing now I experience through the cases I am representing in the mine. In some cases, workers do wrong things like those who are stealing cables and I mean you cannot support a person who is doing such things. Other guys are just being dismissed for things that do not exist. Moreover if you are a vocal shop steward, because before, let's say about 5 or 10 years back, most shop stewards were being promoted by management after being trained, being active and vocal they were given positions just to be silenced. The trend has now changed again, they are being dismissed left and right.

Facilitator: the very same shop stewards?

Respondent: Ja they are no longer. Even our attitude, members attitude has changed also. They are no longer like the past generation. The new generation are doing things without thinking, without weighing up things. Members now are starting to fight members for power struggle, the power struggle that is already in the unions. That is known. That is why today we are having a Regional Conference, we are taking it to Mafikeng, 300 kilos from the Regional Office because of this infighting. In the case of NUM, there are a lot of people who are having an interest in the NUM. The interest is from the employer, politicians, these are BEE guys whatever as well as power struggle. NUM is being regarded as .., they see NUM as a bridge to do something. They reckon that if you are in NUM your doors are open for everything because NUM has produced so many people into the ANC, everybody and so forth. That is why the employers are having an interest in NUM, even with regard to this thing of nationalisation. Employers are also now running into NUM because NUM say of course we support nationalisation but nationalisation should be looked at from this angle. Not in the angle that the ANC Youth League is seeing it. That is why we start to gain support from employers. We were even surprised on the 4th of October. We had a Commemoration March for Health and Safety for people who died in the mines. We had our march in Jo'burg and in Kimberley. In Kimberley we had a lot of white employers attending the march. We asked ourselves what is happening. When we inquired further, before they came here they stopped production in the morning before people started. They were told to march from the shaft to the entrance of the mine thereafter the others were supposed to go and work, others were loaded in the bus to come and join the march in Kimberley. Those are the changes that are there.

Now in terms of death in the mines. Northern Cape is one of the province that is having less deaths in the mines.

Facilitator: Why?

Respondent: the mines are not so dangerous. Maybe where we experience the fatalities is in the small scale mines but they are not as many as in the Gold Mines and the bigger mines. In the bigger mines in the Northern Cape is very rare you can .., once or twice a year you will hear of a person being killed in a mine accident

Facilitator: and in the past before 1990?

Respondent: Before 1990 the accidents were there but they were not as many, we haven't experienced a lot of accidents. In fact if you can get into DME reports to check the statistics they will show that the fatalities were not many. In closing, what I can tell you, NUM in the Northern Cape is growing.

Facilitator: so what has brought about that, the growth part of it?

Respondent: because of the service delivery that it renders to its members, that is the reason it is growing. Other than that there are new mines that are being opened in the province as well.

Facilitator: So mining remains the core business in the Northern Cape?

Respondent: In the Northern Cape mining is the core business that is why you can see Kimberley now is dead. Kimberley economy is being run by the Somalians and the Bangladesh, you don't have to go far you just go around the taxi rank and you go into the main street, Jones street, everywhere you go in a small passages, cellphone shops etc. Kimberley is going down the drain in terms of that because de Beers have closed down its mines and sold its mine in Kimberley. They are left with a

plant which washes tailings. So any time de Beers might leave Kimberley. An area that is growing faster like Rustenburg is Kuruman because of the iron ore and manganese mines that are opening there. You go to Kuruman now the economy is flourishing. If you can go now and book accommodation rest assured you won't get accommodation.

Facilitator: so the town is flourishing?

Respondent: The town is flourishing. If you want to drive into Kuruman the trucks that are moving up and down there its amazing.

Facilitator: why is mining in Kimberley beginning to suffer?

Respondent: Kimberley is suffering, it is not beginning to suffer it is suffering. That is why I'm saying you can just move around, you will ask yourself if the Bangladesh and Somalians go back home what is going to happen with this town, that is the question.

Facilitator: has de Beers done some social investment, it has been running for years?

Respondent: Nothing, their social investment is this big hole behind here that is all. Even the Kumba Mine, that mine is about 260 kms from Kimberley, is the one that was built ..(unclear) that was held now recently in Kimberley, the International Skating, they built it but de Beers was here they didn't do anything. Currently as NUM we are fighting with de Beers. Now mind you de Beers closed down the mines in 2005/6, the time when they were closing the mine, they haven't done anything with the social labour plan. We are fighting them that they must assist.

Facilitator: In terms of health and safety?

Respondent: We are not doing that in the province although one's life is too many. But we are not doing it compared to Carletonville, Welkom and other areas, Northern Cape is not doing that.

Facilitator: and then in the past, in the 1980s, was health and safety an issue in the mines?

Respondent: It was an issue because by then the employers were just chasing productivity not taking health and safety into consideration and it was where NUM was very vocal by then in terms of health and safety.

Facilitator: Was there an improvement?

Respondent: There's a lot of improvement because in the bigger mines the employers go to the extent of dismissing workers who neglect safety regulations. They are being dismissed.

Facilitator: levels of exploitation?

Respondent: It's still rife

Facilitator: and what is NUM doing about it?

Respondent: NUM is fighting and as NUM is fighting poverty also is having its head inside also. You can tell people you don't do this because we want to fight poverty they will just overtake you because that person is hungry, he needs food at the time.

Facilitator: but in terms of health and safety issues, were there workers who once sued de Beers or any mining sector here to say my health has suffered therefore ..?

Respondent: Ja currently we are having one worker, they are many, even .., let me put it this way, the small scale employers they are the one in terms of health and safety are exploiting health workers. If you've got TB they just dismiss you. If you are injured they hide things, they take you and put you somewhere and thereafter they dismiss you. Some other people don't report these things. They only report those things when things become worse for them. Tomorrow I am having a meeting with another small scale employer who dismissed workers for the sake of alleged incapacity as a result of injury that he once experienced from work. The other one last week from a civil engineering, he was also dismissing two workers for incapacity. Those workers were injured at work. I wrote him a letter, after receiving my letter he sent me an email this morning that okay he is going to send those guys for a second medical opinion, he then said he is withdrawing his intention of dismissing them. Those are small employers who are employing 20/30 people.

Facilitator: You also mentioned the fact that women are being exploited. What kind of benefits do they have in the mining sector here, they are working being pregnant and at 7 months pregnant. That means there's a problem

Respondent: What we have negotiated with the big mines, they have their benefit because if these women are pregnant, they are allowed 6 months maternity leave

with four months full salary and the other two months they must utilise their UIF 19. The small mine employers are having problems.

Facilitator: You mentioned that NUM has got its own position about nationalisation?

Respondent: ja

Facilitator: how do you want this to be done?

Respondent: What NUM is saying is, in terms of nationalising the mines, the current Greenfields must be managed by government, must fall under the government, Greenfields must be national meaning that if you're talking about the Greenfields is where there are minerals, unexploited minerals, you go out and explore, do exploration and you find there's some minerals you want to open the mine, those can be nationalised. But the current mines that are operating cannot be nationalised, that's what NUM says.

Facilitator: and then the issue of labour brokers is it a winnable case?

Respondent: the labour brokers currently we are having picketing through COSATU and it is definitely going to be a winnable case because all the workers are fed up with labour brokers because there's no future with labour brokers. Tomorrow you are there, tomorrow you are not there, you don't know actually whether you are working or not and even the exploitation that is happening with labour brokers because you sell your labour to them but they don't pay you – even if a job is tendered on your behalf, for instance I say this person I am paying him R8000 per month, you are going to get only R1500 from that amount the labour brokers get the rest. They are filthy rich through this exploitation, that is why they lobbied the

politicians and the politicians are supporting them. I was surprised to hear the Minister saying he is surprised that COSATU is toyi toying and in the mean time the issue of labour broking is on the table at NEDLAC. It is clear that the politicians have a hand in the labour broking issue. Every capitalist is supporting the labour broker issue because it is one way of making a lot of money by exploiting people. It is also another way of evading the trade unions. All you have to do is make the person sign a month's contract and within that contract there are very bad clauses, for instance you are working from 1 to 30 and this also serves as a notice that your contract has expired. You can work from the 1st and on the 30th and not come back, there's nothing you can say to that person. You cannot say you should have given me a notice in the mean time. In the mean time you were having an expectation that tomorrow you are coming only to find that you are no longer coming. The job is then given to someone else with immediate effect and you cannot challenge that because of the contract you have entered into. There's no way you can go with that.

Facilitator: the fact that our people are now involved as directors in this labour broking system, has it come to the central of COSATU?

Respondent: It's become worse because they are defending this thing left and right and they are coming with all the delaying tactics. Even NEDLAC itself is becoming useless, the platform that is declared now because if everything is being refused at NEDLAC, COSATU might go on a national strike and you cannot take people on a national strike time to time because the national strikes have an economical impact for the employees.

Facilitator: Your stay in Welkom was it worth it?

Respondent: My stay in Welkom was worth it, I learnt a lot, experienced a lot in terms of dealing with different people of different cultures

Facilitator: any downside of the trip to Welkom in the sense of non-achievements or problems or regrets?

Respondent: Definitely none, what I will say is, I'm still saying I achieved a lot in Welkom, I learnt a lot, it was not easy to work there but I learnt a lot from working there. For instance when I went to Welkom I could not speak IsiXhosa, but I learnt IsiXhosa in no time because sometimes I would get five guys who do not know Sotho or English or any other language than IsiXhosa. I had a negative attitude towards Fanagalo that is why I could not speak it. It became a challenge when faced with maybe a raw father from Lesotho and the other thing as a Tswana speaking person it is not easy to understand Sesotho. It was a challenge but I definitely learnt a lot. Today I am able to speak IsiXhosa like any Xhosa.

Facilitator: In terms of recruitment of other nations within NUM, how is it dealt with here in the Northern Cape, there's coloureds for instance?

Respondent: Coloureds are coming in slowly, bit by bit, in particular Kimberley coloureds are having their wound but recruiting them into NUM they are coming in as well as the whites. In this office time and again you will see white people coming in, they phone in, they want to join the union but in the Kuruman area in the mines they are joining the union right, left and centre.

Facilitator: The Mineworkers strike of 1987 did it have an effect here in the Eastern Cape?

Respondent: It did have because de Beers by then, it did have as well as at Black Rock Mine because I remember there were guys who were on an illegal strike at Black Rock, their fight we managed to conclude last year. It did have an effect, as well as de Beers because immediately after that strike there was a lot of retrenchments.

Facilitator: In terms of racism, how rife was racism in the mines?

Respondent: Even today as we are talking, I won't take you very far, just here, not even a kilometre away, in the Kimberley Mines, Petra Mine. Racism is rife. You go to these mines in Kuruman, racism is still rife.

Facilitator: but have you guys as NUM done something about it?

Respondent: we are fighting it

Facilitator: You also mentioned that in the 1980s the employers refused to accept unions, what were their reasons?

Respondent: by then they did not have good reasons because they were just saying people are Communists they cannot come and deal with Communists and so forth. But the pressure that we put on them, that's why that was taken against them, they end up accepting the union. But to date we are still struggling with other employers who don't want unions, particularly small employers.

Facilitator: but were people willing to join unions then in the 1980s or they had their own reasons for not joining?

Respondent: In the 1980s people were afraid to join the unions because they were afraid of the employers, whites in particular, they were easily intimidated, to date even as we are talking people are being called in by white employers that they should not join the unions etc. They are still being intimidated.

Facilitator: How were you introduced to the unions?

Respondent: I was introduced by Manne Dipico because he was a friend to me by then, he was an organiser of NUM when NUM was launched in Kimberley, already we were campaigning around UDF and they were also forming part of UDF.

Facilitator: Is there anything that you think is important maybe which should have been part of this interview?

Respondent: Actually if you had informed me on time that you are going to interview me I could have given you a very good response in this interview, I would have sat and remembered all that has happened and also got some of the supporting documents.

Facilitator: Maybe I will come for a second interview if approved.

Respondent: okay

Facilitator: any closing words maybe?

Respondent: I would like to say that the history of workers needs to be followed up and written down because even today people are thinking that workers are enjoying their rights or benefits or are free but they are still experiencing similar problems which were experienced in the past, like exploitation. Workers are still exploited even though the trade unions are there.

Facilitator: are you saying not much has changed?

Respondent: there are changes, but now you see there are some other hidden areas, if you go there you will think you are still in 1987. My plea with all the trade unionists must start to go all out and with a campaign of recruiting each and every employee to become a union member. Even now what is much more interesting, educated people are starting to join unions in big numbers, they were the people who did not want to join unions because they were thinking they can do it without unions, but to our surprise today they are the ones who are joining the unions in big numbers. Now by them joining unions the illiterates are also becoming concerned because it now becomes an issue of power struggle within the union. They are thinking that the learned people are going to take their leadership role and everything and run with the ball. That is a challenge we are facing.

Facilitator: so they are suspicious of the elite?

Respondent: ja

Facilitator: but do they have tangible reasons, do you think they have a point, ordinary people?

Respondent: I think they do have a point because in trade unionism people come, the elite ones, get into the leadership thinking that by getting into the leadership they will get the luxuries, because if you get into the leadership sometimes you have to sacrifice politically, you have to sacrifice, you have to put yourself into the shoes of the lowest person. If you are not in that position it is going to be tough for you to get into the leadership because sometimes we are telling .., the ladies who are working for the unions like administrators etc., we tell them that guys who is coming in smelling sweat etc., you cannot undermine, he is a member and he is the one bringing in your salary you must respect him.

Facilitator: what were the milestones, you've been in the unions for years now. What do you consider to be milestones in the unions?

Respondent: there's a lot of achievement in terms of .., most unions have copied what the NUM, particularly what NUM is doing by educating their members in terms of academic and so forth, not narrowly teaching them union politics, they have stretched their wings out, also in terms of health etc.

Facilitator: let me set you free, thanks very much.

END

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