

## **Michael Coetzee**

Facilitator: This is an interview with Michael Coetzee we are in parliament, the date is 3 September 2010, the interview is done by Brown Maaba. Comrade thanks very much for your time, I now you have a busy schedule, I'm glad that you accommodated me. Just kindly give me a background of where you come from, the family, schooling and how eventually got connected to the world of labour, or labour activism

Respondent: Thanks brown, my name is Michael Coetzee I'm currently the deputy secretary to Parliament. I was born in Port Elizabeth but grew up and did my primary schooling outside of Port Elizabeth in a small village called Luri. My father was a teacher, my mother was also a teacher in the adjoining village. I went to high school in Uitenhage, completed high school in 1977 and I came to the University of the Western Cape in 1978. At high school I became politically conscious. My father was also a person of political consciousness. Both of my parents were supporters of Teachers Legal South Africa in the 1950s and 1960s, before they moved out of the city to go to the rural areas. At that time in the 1970s there was a lot of labour party activity, especially in the coloured community, in the Eastern Cape, Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage and these things rubbed off on us. At school I became active in a bit of student activity, and a little bit of participation in the 1976 uprisings. We formed the first SRC at school, that fizzled out wasn't very successful, it was not sustainable. We also had interactions with the young students from Langa township and Kwa-Nobuhle who were members of South African Students Movement (SASM) and that was after 1976.

Then at the University of the Western Cape I became active in student organisation, especially late 1979/80, sub structures of the student representative council, the various associations and became a more dedicated political activist, doing community work with the other comrades who were part of the student movement, who set up little structures in various communities, Zanepark, Manneburg, Mitchell's Plein, Elisie's River, Kewtown, Bonteor, Silvertown, Facticton Kensington, and all those places and all those places, and civic organisation became drawn into all the processes of organisation, at activist level, at leadership, those particular processes, keenly followed all the political developments.

We were politically trained and orientated towards the ANC from late 1979/80 and for us the first public display of this ANC allegiance and orientation was in 1979 if I'm not mistaken, with the funeral of Hennie Ferris, I can't remember the exact date, who was an old ANC activist in Worster. And from there I subsequently joined the ANC in the underground in Lesotho. I was arrested in 1983, went to trial, I was sentenced for perjury and the trial of the person who was accused who was the commander of our underground cell. I spent some time in prison in Paarl and then was released in 1984. I went to work in a pharmaceutical factory. I assisted with the unionisation of the factory and in 1985, the State of Emergency, spent some time in prison, rather detention because that was just after the killing and death of Matthew Goniwe. Matthew Goniwe left my house, that's the last place where we saw them and when they went home they were killed. Matthew Sparrow fought and Mhla??, that was 1985 and after that first bout of the State of Emergency went back to work and then had to leave work again because there was more security police, hounding and harassment, 1985 and then I became involved in various forms of trade union work. Even as a student I had attended and

interacted with trade unionist in Media Workers Association (MWASA) and that stage in the leadership was people like Zwelakhe Sisulu, Charles Nxakula, Tyron August, in the Western Cape it as people like Lucy Abrahams, those type of people, that was student years, 1981/82, I did some small work for them in the Eastern Cape, which brought me in touch with people in the Commercial Catering Allied Workers Union, and Transport and General Workers Union, in PE in particular. And then I became more full time or regular activist at organisation special education process or education activities in those unions, in and out with the State of Emergency detentions activities in the northern areas of PE and the youth structures, UDF after its formation in 1983. I was active in the first interim structures of setting up the UDF in Port Elizabeth until I joined the Chemical Workers Industrial Union full time as an organiser in PE. With people in the leadership, the branch secretary then was Wes Phillips who was a former shop steward at Firestone and then we had in the leadership people like Demon Nkosi Mkhali, who was a shop steward at Plascon Paints, Melvin Manenza and a whole range of people also a lady with a name of Violet, I can't remember her name. She is also from Plascon Paints. My first assignment was to go and organise and strengthen the Chemical Workers Industrial Union local in East London. I spent over a year close to 18 months in East London, building the local, the number of factories. The biggest achievement or organisational success we had was by getting the workers of Johnson and Johnson to join the Chemical Workers Industrial Union because this was a very strong South African Allied Workers Union stronghold. There were a whole range of issues about the merger and the integration of various sectoral parts or sectoral components of the General Workers Union which SAWU wants into the COSATU Industrial Unions and at that factory at that stage was the president of SAWU, Robert Gxweta, Thozamile Gxweta's brother and

eventually we succeeded in persuading them to join and once that success happened a lot of other factories in the chemical sector came over into Chemical Workers Industrial Union based on COSATU's slogan One Industry One Union policy.

I worked there until I think it was 1988, early 1989 then I asked for a transfer to Cape Town, to come and work at the Chemical Workers Industrial Union in Cape Town and the branch. While I was in the Eastern Cape I was also at some stage a branch secretary of the union and we strengthened the local, set up the structures and employed a full time organiser and reasonable success. Also one of the people to emerge as a strong leader in the East London local was Maxolo Kieviet, who is currently the premier of the Eastern Cape and people like Isaac Gaai, I think he is currently the COSATU education person in the Eastern Cape if I'm not mistaken, don't know what his current role is.

Then came to the Western Cape, and worked as a union organiser in particular sectors, primary first the pharmaceutical sector which was a sub sector of the overall chemical industry and then get assigned the plastics sector, and eventually in the end I also had a role in the petroleum sector, co-ordinator. I also had the responsibility of co-ordinating the move from a pension fund to a provident fund for the industry in the union and I worked there until roughly about 1992 and then I joined Western Cable Workers College as a co-ordinator after it was set up by Greggs Govender who was the national education officer initially of the South African Clothing Textile Workers Union, and we had in the leadership, in the board of trustees of the Workers College, we had people like Ibrahim Patel who is currently the Minister of Economic Development, John Erenson who was Public Service Commissioner, Prof. Colin Bandi, the historian was also,

subsequently became the deputy vice chancellor of UWC and the vice chancellor of Wits. We had Joe Foster who was the first general secretary of FOSATU and he was also National Leader in NUMSA, serving on the board and a whole range of other worker leaders. We also at one stage had Dusty Mesop??, who was the COSATU Western Cape education officer. And I worked in the Workers College from 1992 to end of 1994 and then I became a personnel officer at the University of the Western Cape recruited by Prof. Colin Bundy, he was the deputy vice chancellor responsible for labour relations at the university and from then onwards after 1994, I went into to HR management, 1994 to 1996 I worked at Western Cape University, 1996 to 1998 I worked at HR manager at parliament, set up a HR. And then I went to Gauteng as the secretary of the legislature from 1998 to 2002. From 2002 to date 2010, I'm the deputy secretary to parliament. So that is the walk through my life.

Facilitator: You spoke so well. Just to go back, I'm drafting a few questions here. You said earlier that you were involved in student politics in the 1970s, I mean that was the height of the BCM, I'm not sure how far your links are extended to the BCM movement at that particular time. You talked about SASM as well, I'm not sure if you were a SASM member or you were just exploring that as a ..?

Respondent: We were very young, the SASM experience came post 1976/77, I think I was 18 or 17, so it was contact because of the 1976 uprisings, our high school participated in a couple of incidents, we had short boycotts for 2 or 3 days, over that particular period. There wasn't a sustained political community based activity of student protest and it was more organised formations or leadership of organised formations, in schools, in the African townships that made contacts and roped us in and

there was a form of interaction. A number of them got arrested and subsequently they were, I think they went to Robben Island, and we lost with that category of people. And we, the dominant political philosophies and ideology then was BCM, and we were BCM supporters. I'm not fully comprehending the extend of the ideology and the theory behind it, but as a bit of radical high school kids we supported it. And that is how we interacted with, we sat, we had a constitution, and we set up a small grouping and we called ourselves a branch of SASM, whether we formally were affiliated to SASM or not I don't even know, I cant even remember even to this day. But we had documentation to that effect and this is 1977 I'm speaking of.

Facilitator: The links with the ANC, you mentioned that most of you were ANC aligned, but at that time the ANC was of course a banned organisation. How did you create those particular links?

Respondent: ANC process, our orientation started, let me explain to you how the political propaganda and recruitment at university worked at that stage. People like Trevor Manuel, Johnny Easo, Cheryl Caroulus and the people just after them, Hedley King and those type of individuals, just emigrated or exited Unity Movement influence in the Western Cape, some of them had a SASO influence because I think Johnny Easel and Cheryl Caroulus came out of a SASO political training. They had been influenced and orientated towards an ANC political thinking especially from national student processes emanating from the revival or the re-establishment of congress politics in KZN, in the non-African townships like the NIC, also there was the correctional, the Civic Movement, the Western Cape, the Cape Areas Housing action committee and out of that particular process came the ANC orientation amongst those people and

at university, there was this small discussion group process of recruitment and drawing in and working through reading material and whether it was classical, Marxist economics theory or philosophy, whether it was dialectical materialism, whatever. The political process started from there as students, especially for us that started out living at the student's hostel in the beginning and out of that process grew the hostel committees and we were part of that process, the student organisation. You must remember the representative council was banned after 1976 at the University of the Western Cape and we re-established it as part of the group in 1980, there was also a student's boycott and uprising in 1980 at the University of the Western Cape. And then I was recruited, I officially joined the ANC in Lesotho. I went out there with two members of my underground cell. We joined, they were already members, they had recruited me into the cell structure and I went through the formal process of joining the ANC, I think it was October 1982. I was formally admitted by the regional command of the ANC at that stage.

Our role and participation and understanding was a political one, not necessarily that of a military one. But we received training in small arms, and codes those type of things.

Facilitator: and the nature of underground activities, what did they involve?

Respondent: it was political, it was recruitment of people to go out of the country for training but also the crash course training because most of the people whom we had sent out were conscious individuals, politically aware, conscious politically trained people and they were ANC orientated people already by then. It's not that they were apolitical or

uninformed people. The intention was to set up networks of influence and direction in mass organisation, student organisation, youth organisation civics and also facilitating the work of people that came to the country. And later years it proved useful especially in the Eastern Cape, in the UDF, when I started with people like Stone Sizane and Andre Fazi, Matthew Goniwe, Cusavi Jack, those people of the UDF, Derrick Swarts, all the UDF structures. And all of use or all of use were included in the broad term, where ANC connected, people had their own links and they were not necessarily all MK people you know. I don't know whether I've put it into context

Facilitator: You have, you were arrested, the charges that you were charged with did they stick, or were you just put on detention?

Respondent: I was arrested and put on detention, I spent a long time in solitary confinement and then the person who was our commander in our unit made a confession, I was a state witness, I chose to be state witness and then committed perjury. And perhaps to put it in context, I don't know if you're familiar with legislation at the time, because we were all held under Section 29 of the Internal Security Act which allowed for In Communicado Detention. I spent seven months here at Milnerton Police Station and the state wanted to build a case against number 1 accused, Ed Licky??, I had an option of either refusing to give evidence which, the minimum or maximum sentence then for refusing to be a state witness was five years. And the fact is the evidence, nothing can be used against the accused, the other alternative was to commit perjury where you agree to be a state witness but you get discredited in court, your evidence gets thrown out and the maximum sentence for that was three years. So from my perspective and what we had understood and agreed to, at that



stage that was the best option, but with the same consequence and the same effect.

And I was sentenced to two years in prison of which one year was suspended. I had to serve one year, and if you serve a sufficient amount of time you are released on parole. That was the context of how it ended up.

Facilitator: and after 1983 or when you were released you seemed to be drifting into the world of unions?

Respondent: It was conscious political process because in our political collective in the Eastern Cape, we had signed various roles to each other and I worked in the youth formations and also the labour formations and a person like Derrick Swartz who I worked with very closely worked in education, a student organisation with students in high school Dawa College, teachers organisation because he was a teacher at the stage. When UDF came around he became the provincial regional secretary of UDF, so it was out of that particular process that we were signed – so I wouldn't call it, you can classify it as drifting but it's more a conscious political decision as to who should do what

Facilitator: and personally yourself how did you find the world of unions, what was it to you, what did it represent at that time?

Respondent: It was relative, okay from the security point of view it was safer in that area because I don't think we had all the labour reforms post-1979, labour legislation allowing for the growth of the independent trade union movement as well as the registration of .., and the organisation of

black workers, African workers in particular. So there was this process, the significant process of growth organisationally. So for me it was a significant part to contribute to that particular organisational growth because in terms of our political training and revolutionary ..(unclear), the working class were the mode of force in this revolution of change and we didn't just see the South African situation as a matter of race and apartheid, it was also a matter of class and trade unions was fertile ground for this political process and this political education process in terms of what we intended doing and what we were doing towards politicisation.

We had great battles in the beginning, just after the formation of UDF, as to whether FOSATU unions would come into the political process. I remember we spent a long time especially bringing people like Terror Lekota who was UDF Publicity Secretary and Allen Boesak to PE to play that role of persuading and influencing the FOSATU trade unions, the campaign and work with the UDF structures. It wasn't very successful but eventually the leadership might have done one thing but effectively the workers were members of community organisation whether it was PEPKOR which was this black civic organisation or PEKOR, the Youth Congress, or the UDF area committees that we had set up in the Eastern Cape and members became part of that political process and I became part of those protest and challenges and mass struggles that occurred in the Eastern Cape at the time, PE in particular.

Facilitator: In the context of PE, as being the context of Johannesburg and to some extent KZN, was the presence of AZAPO in these areas, did you experience a situation whereby workers used to be associated with UDF mainly because it is ANC oriented and then BC oriented following

AZAPO, that kind of tension. African workers were very clear about their allegiance and the ANC, UDF structures had a overwhelming presence, but you must also not forget AZAPO at that stage was controlled by an individual, or the AZAPO formations were controlled by an individual called Rev. Maxina, who had a very reactionary background in PE, he ran some form of NGO in PE which had an alignment and the security forces used those individuals to become like a quasi vigilante force. There were genuine AZAPO activists, non aligned ANC people, some of them in the trade unions but the mass formation was led by a person who had a very reactionary and they were used by becoming some form of a vigilante force especially in the New Brighton Kwa-Zakhele area. So ideologically AZAPO was never, it was confined to individuals and small groupings, it never really had a mass presence in an organised form, it had a propogandistic presence up and now and then because of the nature of Maxina's work and those type of things, and they were prominent individuals, but it didn't have any mass organisational presence.

Facilitator: You also mentioned that you were able to recruit Johnson and Johnson workers to be part of chemical. What were the general challenges of recruiting workers in those days? That was apartheid era.

Respondent: There was the issue of resources, because I remember when I was deployed to East London I didn't have a car, I had to, I went by plane, the union bought me a plane ticket. I will tell you off the record how that thing happened, I don't think we must put it on the record. They bought me a plane ticket, unfortunately there were comrades of mine who I was at university with, I didn't have a place to stay. I went to the ..(unclear) and some union propaganda material, and we shared an office in the same space as NUMSA because NUMSA was the biggest

union because of the motor industry in East London. You had the big Mercedes Benz factory and you had all the component industry, whether it was a battery place and all the components. NUMSA was the biggest union. And then also it was at the time where the merger of the clothing textile. (unclear) because there was also the textile industry, whether it was Waverley blankets, part of the Frain?? Group and there was also a strong presence of the Food and Allied Workers Union, these were the lead unions at that time, and we shared some office space with them. It was difficult, I couldn't speak a word of Xhosa and it's predominantly a Xhosa speaking area, workers are Xhosa speaking, they not ..., their levels of literacy and education was very low, but fortunately we had some dismissed shop stewards out of the period of the strikes for the struggles for recognition because we had very backward employees in that region, in our industry, very bad for the employees. So whenever the union made a demand for recognition it led to a strike and a dismissal. And fortunately for our organisational process, some of these dismissed shop stewards managed to act as translators. And we also had access for some of the battles that we fought, because we had to fight in an organisational level, in terms of power, when you go on strike or that normally would invite a more repressive security process or we had to go the legal route. At that stage it was all the conciliation boards, the industrial court, and we had a lot of support from the Legal Resources Centre which had its main office in Grahamstown and had an office in East London. But the key challenge was resources. The union had little, had nothing, I don't think we even had a typewriters, we had office space, a filing cabinet, a desk, and we have to share chairs with the chemical paper wood, and then we had NUMSA, FAWA was in a different building and NFW was in a different building. And I think CAWUSA was in a different building. Some floors we were sharing and we used to share a lot of resources because we also

had Sached because the people in the Sached had a lot educational material and they used to run and assist with the education and workshop process. We all interacted. It's not like other regions where these formations were all separated because they were run by different ideological discourses. If you look at the Sached people, the activists that were involved in that area, they were not necessarily all ANC orientated. While in the Eastern Cape, the East London area, these were all people with a history, either as through their families and their orientation. It wasn't easy, under severe security police, the repression, observation. We were infiltrated, we were intimidated, even the building, the offices burnt down during that period, it's not like. It was a real commitment and a real test, its not like where you have unionist today which is a career process. It was very different but it was better to be those formations than to be in the civic formations. From a security point of view. Unions, because they were organised and they had membership fees and subscriptions, they also had a little bit of money, where a civic organisation or youth formation had nothing. People there didn't even earn a salary

Facilitator: so it was worse. In that particular area of PE and East London, the role of women in the union structures, how would you evaluate it, where would you place women?

Respondent: In a community organisation in the African township we had a strong women's organisation called PE Women's Organisation (PEWO) and then we had also not to the same level of strength in Uitenhage, UKO, Uitenhage Women's Organisation, and then especially during the UDF led protest and campaigns, the mothers' unions in the churches and those social formations were very prominent, and especially when it came to the Consumer Boycott. And a lot of the community based leadership,

organisation leadership, because the Eastern Cape experienced some of the most severest repression and thousands and thousands of people, predominantly males, overwhelmingly males, probably 99.9% were in the leadership and detained. In the trade unions we had the emergence of strong leadership especially in some of the Food and Allied aligned factories, there was one sector in particular in PE, called Lenin, it is now called Aspin Pharmaceuticals, where there's a large female workforce. We had strong women emerging in CAWUSA factories, Commercial Catering and Allied Workers Union especially from the Pick n Pay women and their leadership. They were prominent in the leadership. The motor industry didn't have a lot of women, the most prominent woman was the person that became regional secretary, Gloria Berry, she's now called, she's the MEC for Public Works in the Eastern Cape. She worked with Vits Falls and Les Katledose and MAWU and NUMSA. But you had a strong women's presence in the trade union movement in NUTW, CAWUSA, Food and Allied Workers Union, those were big industries of type of industrial or enterprises or companies that had huge female workforces. They rose to leadership but not predominantly. In our union we had a few women that emerged in a place like Lenin, Chemical Workers Industrial Union, Elmosa, Electrical Lamp Manufacturers of South Africa. There was also a large female workforce. Then we had the emergence of strong women in the East London area, especially around Maxoba??, a very strong shop steward, a very strong leader. She was very young and she used to work with a factory called Protea Pharmaceuticals. So ja, they were, ja but the overall, the large majority of leadership was women. We didn't have any women organisers in the union at that stage, in the Eastern Cape, but we had the national process, you know we had organisers in the form of Chris Bona, Pat Horn, we had some women administration, women administrators, and we had a very prominent women's leader in the form

of Elizabeth Thabede. She was the treasurer, she came from a pharmaceutical factory as well, she became the treasurer of the union, very strong leader, and there were others in the national process, but still the dominance was men.

And these people were all, they had their own community based participation as well, and political alignment. So it wasn't a sectarian political orientation of just shop floor organisation or short fall politics or trade union politics, there was a broader consciousness and a broader participation in community organisation. It was a broad political movement, a mass movement because they were part of ..

Facilitator: and how far did you succeed in dealing with in this case, women's issues, maternity, exploitation overtime issues, the whole thing about nightshifts and so on which does distabilise families?

Respondent: In my opinion we mostly achieved those relative success through the negotiation process because the way the bargaining process starts, in the beginning it was a mandating process based on a factory process, eventually as the union became much more sophisticated, it had a .., as a living wage campaign and process too off and it grew it became a policy framework within which the union started operating as a national union and also within the framework of the federation. There was now more research behind the process especially from some form of economist NGO's, whether it was the labour research services here in Cape Town, or I think it was sociology for work project at Wits, so you know there was more content behind the process now. So the union's policy framework was strengthened, more content with more research, we could analyse company statements, we could know who owned whom

because what you remember disclosure of company information wasn't the order of the day in those days and through that policy framework we had a standard set of demands around maternity leave, shift allowances, and it was never a case of having a gender distinction on the nature of shifts because we were more looking at the material and financial benefit for workers out of the shift process and the shift allowance as time off, transport, even some of the factories in the Western Cape that we had here, especially a company like Holazatics, which manufactured in the plastics industry, plastics industry also employed a lot of women in our union. So those were the set of demands also besides maternity leave, educational, child care allowances, those type of things that we negotiated, it was mostly driven around .., there was a consciousness and awareness but it was mostly driven through the negotiating process.

Facilitator: and the in service training, you only used to get crash courses and so on of course, like a range of issues? Was that effective?

Respondent: In service training for unionists?

Facilitator: yes, was that effective?

Respondent: Yes in my view, when I started in the union, I still make the example today, we had organised this beginners course and one of the training modules if you can call it such. What must you have as an organiser in your brief case, simple things, at least two pens, a notebook, the constitution of the union, membership forms, a recognition agreement, draft model recognition agreement, five 20 cent coins for .., because those days we used to work with public telephones, there were no cellphones. Then you also have to do some basic typing orientation so



that you can use the typewriter to do reports, you must be able to use a telex machine, before the fax machine arrived. Are you familiar with the telex machine?

Facilitator: I don't know how to use it

Respondent: so those were basic organisational , how to organise yourself, then the organising process, how to approach workers, just to do a basic pamphlet, how to find out what the issues are, how to set up an organising group. So in my view it was effective and those are the basics that you will go through and gradually through the process there will be more advanced training either political, economics. And eventually when the union became stronger, had more resources, we had a fully fledged education department and we had a national education officer, I think that was in the middle 1980s, and we were part of that process. We benefited from the process and we also ensured that we've got imbibe or transfer or use our political influence through that political influence to that particular awareness and education of workers.

Facilitator: Then you also asked for a transfer from East London to transfer to come and work as part this part of the country?

Respondent: simple, I fell in love

Facilitator: the challenges of working here and the dynamics, challenges politically. There was support from the national leadership especially from the general secretary Rod Crompton and the national treasurer Ronald Mofokeng at the stage and there was two reasons primarily. The one reason, the union wasn't growing, we were fluctuating in membership

because the industry, there wasn't major chemical industry. And Moskas??, has just started but we were not making any breakthrough, through Moskas, we also just organised ...,the union here came from a different background. There was the Glass Workers Union which organised PG Glass and had a presence here in the Western Cape. There was the union called the Plastic and Allied Workers Union. The Plastic and Allied Workers Union had as its major organisational base United South African Brush Company that used to make Addis plasticware and stuff like that. Origin of that Plastic and Allied Workers Union was from a number of triskers??, orientated politically trained individuals as students and stuff like that. People like John Polisam, I don't know where he is today, he is somewhere in Jo'burg also, another union. I think this probably or fourth union that he is involved with. And that was the origin of the union. It was predominantly coloured workers. So the political consciousness wasn't at the levels that I experienced in the Eastern Cape, in terms of leadership and content. Secondly also is that the intellectual organising crew in the union also had different political orientation and persuasion, you know and they were .., I don't even know which organisations they were part of, but they were definitely not aligned to ANC oriented organisations

Facilitator: they belonged to some church?

Respondent: No I won't classify as a church, whether it was International Socialist Leagues, is all the international .., are you familiar with the Trotsky Fourth International Movement, because there were splinters all over the world and they were party to that particular process. We generally referred to them as the colloquial term, for classifying that category of people, was party ..(unclear), they believed in the establishment of an independent workers party. We were Marxist Leninist Community Party

oriented people, and so the South African Communist Party or the Communist Party of South Africa. Then as the Vengas Party of the working class, they are not. So it was entirely a different ball game. Operating in a different environment, very, you had a more .., at that stage when I came to Cape Town, you had a more established labour relations practices in the labour market, you didn't have the brutality of the state that they experienced in the Eastern Cape, it was very different. And then you had all these bright intelligent level of intellectuals in .., but it didn't necessarily translate into a strong organisational process. Where in the Eastern Cape we had a strong organisational base, but you didn't have the history of intellectualism that you had in relation to the Western Cape, but very grounded people organisation, it was very different.

Facilitator: eventually what was your solution, or you never found a solution on these issues?

Respondent: we were working in our same orientation, I recruited my crew, and for my political process of political education and what you must also realise is that COSATU was formed after 1985, I came to the Western Cape 1989 full time but the people that were strong in the COSATU activist process, were people, some of them I was at university with, we were more or less in the same way orientated. We had just made significant inroads into the Western Province Garment Workers Union which also had a branch in the Eastern Cape. There was a merger to form the Garment and Allied Workers Union. The Western Province Government Workers Union, and the KZN, and the Natal Garment Workers Union – they had formed Garment and Allied Workers Union while there was a counter merger between the National Union of Textile Workers join Coplin and Ibrahim Patel on the one side, and I think one of the textile

affiliates that formed a .., I can't even remember ACTUSA, Amalgamated Clothing Textile Workers Union of South Africa. So and because of the clothing industry, there was a strong presence here, in the Western Cape and those are the people we worked with you know because also the first administrator in COSATU was some of our comrades. And there was also the presence of UDF and the Western Cape had also changed the political orientation, people like Trevor Manuel had a strong political influence amongst broad political thinking in the Western Cape. So ja, we had our, but we had .., you know as this Trots??? Work, they always have their own formations and they believe, they die hard, ideologically, loyalist in their process, no matter .., where the mass movement is going

Facilitator: a football club of some sort?

Respondent: I won't use such derogatory language I will regard them as anti-establishment, anti apartheid, anti capitalist activist and they made their contributions because some of them are very hardworking because if you're in the minority in order to survive you have to have more effort than anybody else.

Facilitator: Last two questions. The quota system of we need two unionists to join parliament and so on in 1994 and beyond. Has it benefited the unions, COSATU in this case?

Respondent: I don't think so because we had a long debate and discussion about you know when the negotiation process started, I remember we attended a seminar and Sydney Mufamadi who was assistant general secretary to Jay Naidoo came and explained to us the negotiating process. And we had a long debate about the

demobilisation of the militance of the labour movement. And how do we sustain in order to support, you can have differences in our union around negotiation, serious differences. But some of us are ..(unclear) how the militancy and the mass movement and the process of political organisation in the trade unions should support the negotiation process for maximum gain, extract maximum concessions. Sydney came and explained and said no, I will never forget it, arguing strongly that we shouldn't demobilise because there won't be an overthrow of an apartheid state there won't be a seizure of power, it has to be a transfer of power to the negotiated settlements. We had long discussions around this and then when we saw some of the policy frameworks emerging post 1994, especially 1996 to 1999, we started speaking of how the decline of the labour movement was being managed. And this management process cause some serious trauma interruptions, I'm not gonna, I'm a parliamentary official, this is my previous history, so I must be careful how I venture into the policy analysis also. But you could seriously see how the management of this particular process and the role of these leaders that went into the .., I can remember a cynical discussion with Jay about COSATU wanting to maintain the 20 member caucus, ..(unclear) from the ANC caucus you know and how do they and how does this 20 leak back to the federation that has mandated them and ja, it was just cynical co-optive process that .., I think it was so mechanical, it was in my view any real strategic value even in the end, its not symbolic and cynical measure.

Facilitator: so you joined into the world of unions and politics, was it worth it?

Respondent: yes I will never, it gave you a life orientation and a view of humanity that you will never forget, you cannot. It grounds you on a set

of values and processes and if you look at what's happening in our institution and our society today, it's a far cry from the selflessness and the serving of people that we ja, its different. I will never give it up it made me what I am.

Facilitator: ja, thanks very much for your time

Respondent: you're welcome.

END

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