

Janki Sondiyazi

Facilitator: This is an interview with Janki Sondiyazi, the date is 1 July 2011, interview is done by Brown Maaba. Please feel free to speak any language. Just give me a background of where you were born, and when and how you were raised and how you ended up in union structures?

Respondent: I was born in 1954, 7 June here in Mangaung. I was brought up here in Mangaung. My father was a teacher, my mother was a domestic worker, I am from a very religious family. My father died when we were still very little, so when I turned 16 in Form I, I had to leave school and look for a job. I worked for Sasko Bakery, at the time I was earning R6 per week working night shift, obviously night shift had a shift allowance. I had left school to come and work so that I can assist my siblings, my two brothers, R6 per week was not enough so I had to look for another job. I joined Friend Newspaper, it was a Bloemfontein newspaper which was printed by the Argus Group of companies. I worked there for plus/minus a year. I left school in 1969 and worked 3 months for Sasko and then Friend, late 1970 (interruption) – when I left school the reason was for me to help my siblings. So I joined Sasko, then I joined Friend, Friend retrenched us late in 1970. Early 1970 I worked for Commercial Indent, it was a clothing company, I worked for them for a long time. The salary was still low. I think when I left the company I was getting R15 per week. I left them in 1984 and got a job with South African Breweries.

You will be surprised how I managed to get jobs easily, at the time jobs were galore, you would lose a job and go next door and get another job.

So there were plenty of jobs in those years. When I joined SA Breweries the salary was much better. This is when I joined the union, I started working for SAB in 1984. The first union we joined is NACTU, Food and Beverages. There was also another union which we joined, I forget the name, it was a general union. What happened was when COSATU was formed, around 1986 there was a recommendation to combine unions according to the different sectors, food separately, mines separately etc. So we were in the process and then the union merged with FAWU in 1986. I became a member of FAWU in 1986, in 1987 I was elected as an alternate shop steward at SAB, I later became a shop steward, then later vice chairperson of the Bloemfontein Branch. I also became .., at the time our area was a region not a province, Free State, Free State was covering Northern Cape like now. It is now called Free State/Northern Cape Province. At the time it was a region. I was elected chairperson of the region from 1988 until 1993. I was still working for the SAB.

I continued working for SAB, I was then part of the negotiating team from 1989 to 1993, I then served on the co-ordination committee, I became the Treasurer of the negotiation team. After our chairperson was retrenched, I became the chairperson of the National Negotiating Team. In 1993 I was retrenched and no longer on the seat.

As a Provincial Chairperson of FAWU, between 1988 and 1993, I served in a lot of committees, for example, I served on the National Executive Committee, and then on behalf of the National Executive Committee I also served .., this committee does not exist now, we only had the committee when I was with people like Ntate Maseko and Chris – the committee was called Head Office controlling committee. What we did was we would visit the different branches, checking the structures,

whether meetings were held or not, whether they are accountable for the funds, are they taking care of the union members etc. As the chairperson of the province, I also served in the political committee, Chris Dlamini and all those people were part of it, they were chairpersons from their respective areas.

In 1991, because of the role I played in the National Executive Committee, I was influential, people like Chris Dlamini used to listen to me, I was then deployed to Canada for six weeks as an exchange for worker relationship. This happened from May until mid June. Then in 1993 we were retrenched. I was retrenched in March, then in October I got a job with FAWU, I became a farm organiser. Three months after that, one of our comrades who was the branch secretary and organiser for the Bloemfontein branch, he was already appointed as the regional secretary. So the Bloemfontein branch requested from head office that I become an organiser for Bloemfontein. I started organising in Bloemfontein. So with FAWU as an official, I became an organiser, not shop steward, then in 1993 from October I became an official as a farm organiser. I was there for three months and then after that I became an organiser.

When I first started I did not know a lot of things, for example I could not use a typewriter or computer, could not write reports, I was from the factory background, all I knew was to speak on behalf of the workers in the factories. I now had to learn those things because my responsibility had changed because I had to help workers in the factories with their problems, I had to write reports because I am the regional secretary at the time, etc. I attended a COSATU course which was a foundation course. The course really gave me a lot of insight, I learnt a lot. It is

unfortunate COSATU does not organise such courses anymore. The course would give one entry as an organiser into how you should organise, how to deal with the different worker problems, the course would equip you and guide you as how to deal with the problems. After the course I felt quite confident and understood what I was doing.

I attended the course in 1994 and became the branch organiser. Early 1995 I was elected as the Regional Secretary, representing the whole region. I was in that position from that period until 2003 as the regional secretary. My duties entailed supervising branches, writing reports for RAC, NEC, compiling minutes etc. and to do branch visits. I did things differently because when I visited branches I was hands on. I would visit the factories that had problems and deal with the problems.

In 2003 December I was now involved in legal issues in terms of representing workers, particularly at the labour court. The end of 2003 I had quite a few cases as a secretary, I requested the NEC to move me from the secretarial position and remain on legal. NEC informed me that this might be a problem because I was elected in the position. I had to assure them that I will assist the person who will take over from me, they also supported the idea of me getting involved in legal matters because it was going to be very helpful for the workers. I became a legal officer from December 2003, the NEC had approved this in November 2003. My position, although I was head office staff but I was based in the province. There were a number of cases that I had taken to the labour court and CCMA. CCMA cases were not complicated, most people were able to do them but the labour court cases were difficult. I have never appeared in the labour appeal court, I only attended as an observer in the labour

appeal court. In the labour court I had been there a number of times from 2003 to date.

The remarkable case which I do not forget was the one that involved workers from Brandfort. The workers were fired even though they were in a protected strike. The company felt that they strike was unprotected. It was a reportable case, its unfortunate I do not have the case with me, my laptop has gone for repairs. What made me happy on that day is that the company was represented by a legal person, they are advocates, I forget the terminology used in the court. They were called senior councillors. What happened is we won the case against him, the company had to pay the workers. What happened unfortunately on the day is that some of the workers were late and the organiser did not explain to the court when he was cross examined. So those that had died did not benefit from the outcome, most of the workers were re-employed and benefited, they were paid a lot of money, they threw parties and bought cell phones and had fun.

Another official was fired by the union, see those bundles on the chair, we also won a case against him at the labour court in Durban. It is encouraging for anyone that from a rank of an ordinary worker, you go through the stages to get to where I got. Once you are there there's no going back. If you have supporting links, for instance you attend workshops, you get support – at the moment I think I'm an asset to a lot of people. Some of the CCMA commissioners would be asked to excuse themselves and not chair the cases because we share ideas with them. So in order to avoid conflict of interest the other one must recuse themselves from the case. Some of them if they have problems with some disputes they would call me and ask for advice. The legal officers in

FAWU, most of them, the fortunate thing is that they are educated but they still need advise from us. They are told that we have the experience of representing workers over a period of time. We have a legal officer in Gauteng, in PE, some have resigned, but whenever they meet a challenge they always ask for my advice. When drafting reports, they would ask for samples from me, for instance if they are applying for a review, they would ask me for a format, I would give them a file like this one (he was showing you the file). I really wish my colleagues could get that sort of assistance whereby they can draft submissions on their own. I don't know if you have any other questions.

Facilitator: Just to go back a bit. You started working in 1969?

Respondent: Yes in 1969

Facilitator: How was the environment in the workplace by then because it was just after 1964, the Treason Trial and so on, and kind of quiet in the country in terms of politics. What was happening in the workplace?

Respondent: At the time, in the workplace, particularly in the Free State, I will not know about other areas. People were just working – what they were doing, if people had something to discuss they would not discuss in the presence of other people, I also noticed this in Canada. People preferred to talk to people they trusted, they did not want their discussions to be leaked. Most people were only looking out for themselves, they wanted to benefit. It was not easy to organise workers. Some people when we were organising them to join the trade unions they would tell you that they do not want to join because they do not want to become terrorists. They called us terrorists. I remember after I left Sasko, my uncle

got the job for me, I had an argument with him regarding the salary, I told him how can I work for R6 night shift with the responsibilities I have. One morning a colleague of mine and myself went and looked for a job and we got it. So I went back to the factory and resigned, when they told him that I had resigned he was angry with me, he wanted to know why I left the job. He didn't want me to work with people that he did not know. At the time it was common for people to work together because they knew each other. He was worried that they might not be able to care for me.

Facilitator: and then you came to the clothing industry in 1971?

Respondent: Yes

Facilitator: over the years, there has been complaints that it was the most exploiting industry in the world. How was it in those days?

Respondent: It was the same, the salary was still very little. I worked with older folk who loved to drink a lot, we were not more than ten and we did not get on well. We wouldn't even talk about what we were earning, the employer would just tell everyone individually how much increase they would get. Overtime, there was a lot of work, management would ask employees to work overtime and promise them a bottle of brandy, I know it was very cheap at the time and maybe for overtime you will get R10 or R15 at the most. So it was exploitive, it is still the same to date.

Facilitator: but in those years, did people know about unions, did people talk about unions and so on, it was the era of Black Consciousness I'm sure people were beginning to talk about it?

Respondent: Between the period of 1969/70/71 – up to 1983/84, there wasn't much talk about unions. What happened had to do with the ANC, people leaving the country, unions were not so strong at the time. Talk about unions began late 1982/83/84 – that is when it started in the Free State.

Facilitator: so they became more serious in the early 1980s?

Respondent: early 1980s ja

Facilitator: How were you introduced to the unions, were you not afraid to join?

Respondent: With us what happened is an organiser from Food and Bev, they organised us and we held our own meeting. In our own meeting we had a lot to talk about, we debated, some of the people were afraid that the information will be leaked to the employer that we want to join the union. Some wanted to join others were not interested. It took time, that is why at the end of the day the union was not able to service us, even though they already had the majority of the plant. I forget the name of the union, let me ask someone if she can remember the name of the union (he called Georgina) – the name of the union is SAWU, South African Allied Workers Union, it was a general union. The union was joined by a lot of people, the whole factory. There were a lot of worker problems. SAB's salary scales were not the same across the board. The other thing that bothered the workers was that people in Gauteng, at the time it was called Transvaal, their salary scales were very different to ours. During the time of Food and Bev and SAWU I was not a shop steward. We left FAWU because we had liaison committees which was approved by

employers. FAWU was formed, people were elected in leadership positions, people were not happy with the salary scales and the treatment, the job was the same but the salary was not the same. So we joined FAWU and then there was a strike. I was not a shop steward at the time. The shop stewards went to a meeting, I just took over, I don't know what inspired me. I explained to my colleagues that the shop stewards had gone to a meeting and we do not need to be scattered we must remain in one place so that when they return we are together. We started debating about things like why do we have separate canteens, separate toilets, black people parked outside whilst whites parked inside the factory. A lot of things came out of the debates. The strike took about two weeks. Some of the debates we would debate from the newspaper.

During the two week strike the workers asked the shop steward to take me with to their meetings. The shop stewards refused, their refusal was not negative, what they were saying is that I am not a shop steward, secondly he is doing a good job by keeping you all in one place, he has been helping us with the mandate. We cannot take him with us because nobody will keep you together. Then elections were held. I was then elected as an alternate shop steward. What happened is, when I became an alternate I bought a bag, a pen and a book where I was going to make notes. When meetings were held I would ask the shop stewards to let me go in as an observer so that I can learn what the responsibilities of a shop steward it. The workers elected me as a shop steward because they saw a lot of potential in me. Even now people still call me asking for my help. I tell them they should go to their shop steward.

Some of the workers were transferred to Kimberley after the 1993 retrenchment. So when they had problems they would call me and seek advise from me. Some people were still worried that they might lose their jobs if they join unions. But after joining the national forum of SA Brewery, we were able to gain many factories. SA Brewery changed the entry levels, when you joined you would get the entry level salary. So everything was fair and a lot of people joined because of this. We also did not depend on the officials to service us, we used to assist the new shop stewards with training. FAWU has never trained shop stewards. Nowadays unions are spending these days, when there are rallies people are carried with busses to the different destinations. We would pay from our own pockets to attend meetings or demonstrations. At the moment shop stewards travel is paid for by the unions. We used to spend our own money.

Facilitator: The challenges on the floor as a shop steward of SA Breweries, what were you faced with?

Respondent: The shop floor challenges were many. Racism was rife at the time, besides that .., when I first joined, the white man would have the last word, because he/she is white, or your superior. I remember Sedge Seretso who disappeared and Paulo who died. Paulo used to drive and collect whites from the airport when they come back from meetings in Johannesburg. He used to drink a lot and would collect them drunk. On this particular day they decided to discipline him, he had been doing this before. Most of the shop stewards did not want to represent him. There was a young man called Livo, he had just been promoted. He didn't want to represent the workers. At the time people did not know that I am capable of representing workers in cases. They thought that because I

have just arrived I might not be able to represent him. They asked Sedge to represent him. I then asked if I could join them just to listen to the proceedings. SA Breweries's policy was that if you had been drinking they had to use a breathalysers so that they can ascertain how much alcohol you have taken. Our argument and cross examination was around the reading of the breathalysers. We couldn't get the reading because they did not breathalise him. So we said to them you had an opportunity from the airport to the company – you should not have allowed him to drive. You let him drive from the airport to your destination and the following day you decided that his attitude was wrong. Paulos informed the workers that they should not overlook me I am capable of representing them. So I got busy even if I was away cases would wait for me. This led to me being employed in the personnel office. Say for instance I would be away representing someone and when I return there are problems I would have to represent them. The company gave me an office. White people did not take us into consideration, they still believed that because we are black we can only do certain jobs.

There was a certain man who died, I helped him, not because we were related. He had gone to other shop stewards who asked him to pay them in order for them to represent him. I assisted him. The job he was doing was Grade 4 but he was paid as a Grade 2 for many years. We fought for this and his money was backdated. He was paid a lot of money. The shop stewards reported to the workers that he finally received what was due to him. SA Breweries did not take unions seriously until a man from the UK came to the plant (interruption) – when he came he met his match, he wanted to do as he pleased, he wanted to use his colour as power. But to date I am proud to say during my rein as the chairperson of the plant, SA Breweries took another direction – in a sense that we did not fight by

banging on tables, or staging walk outs in meetings, we would discuss and exhaust matters and agree to disagree, have vigorous debates. If things are difficult we knew that we will go and collect Mabutho so that we go to war.

Facilitator: what about issues of victimisation if you are shop steward, for instance if you are a shop steward maybe they want to fire you because you were creating problems for them? Did you experience that?

Respondent: I once fired because .., there was a rolling mass action before .., I think it is between 1992/93, there was a rolling mass action which was held nationally – but it was held per province. It was combined with the ANC, SACP. We went to Grootvlei, there's a prison there. We went there. The mass action I think was for two weeks. We went to Grootvlei and returned. The following week we visited the offices of the homelands, Bophuthatswana, Transkei etc., we staged stay ins. This shop steward who is now a councillor took another group of workers back to work. Only two people were left. We came back on Monday and I was suspended, comrade ..(unclear) was not suspended. I went to a hearing and was fired. I kept the document but unfortunately because I moved a lot from one office to another. There was an appeal when the workers heard that I was dismissed, the production was disrupted. The following day the shift was stopped because of my dismissal. Everybody felt that there is no way they can work without me. An appeal hearing was called on the same day. The employer sent people to come and fetch me at home. The appeal was just a formality, I was reinstated. There was a lot of victimisation and it was rife in a sense that if you were a union member and there was misconduct, you would just be dismissed because you are a union member. Laws were different in those days, you would be

dismissed because you are a union member, people were not given an opportunity to state their cases. Promotions were not based on merit. Some shop stewards were bribed with promotions so that they do not become active in union matters. Some of the committee members in my committee accepted the promotions. The employer tried many times to promote me in order to keep me quiet but I refused. They even told me that they will go and tell my wife that I am refusing a promotion. I told them that if there's a position they must advertise it and let people apply so that the best man can win. I called the workers and informed them that management want to promote me but I don't think there's a vacant position, if there is a vacant position the position must be put on the notice board so that all can apply. Other shop stewards were given positions and others were ignored.

Facilitator: parking your cars outside, how did you deal with that, was that eventually solved?

Respondent: yes it was solved after we were retrenched. But now black people are parking inside the factory. The union is not as strong as it was before, the numbers have reduced. I think we have about 12 or 13 members at the moment.

Facilitator: the challenges of becoming a regional secretary of FAWU, what were those?

Respondent: the first challenge was membership which was not growing. The other challenge was the officials who did not want to work. I remember we had to make some changes. The person who held the position of regional secretary when I was chairperson, Story Thulu gave me

a lot of problems and unfortunately at the time office bearers did not have the power to charge you only head office was able to charge you. What Story would do is come to the meeting with no minutes, or he comes to the meeting with no report, if there's no report he has the minutes. If he does not have any he does not attend the meeting. The first challenge was I had to ensure that I must have minutes, I must have a report. For me to have minutes and a report I must first before the meeting of regional executive committee, I must have a regional office bearer meeting so that I can share the report with them. The other thing was that the lady who came into the office now, she has been with FAWU for a long time, Amelia, she is from Benoni. When she arrived here she was an organiser in Benoni (interruption) – what I would do I would first table a report, correct it and then take it to the meeting. We had to ensure that minutes are sent out 30 days before the meetings. So he could not type, so I had to get someone to help him with the typing and assist him. I know that when I took over the other challenge was that he could not do financial statements or administrative work as per the report of the previous acting secretary. Head office wanted to dismiss her, I asked them to skill her so that she can do the job. I told them that as a union we are encouraging companies to skill people and we are not willing to train, we must train her. That is why she is still here today. The other thing is previous secretary did not visit branches, it is important for them to visit the branches so that the workers can get to know you. Random visits to companies are important. The other thing was that a lot of noise was made about ANC comrades, people liked using their slogans, some of the workers were not willing to associate themselves with political issues. I think it was also a debate at COSATU's Central Committee, the workers would tell you that they are not interested in politics their interest is in worker issues. It was another challenge, we had to teach the workers that South Africa's

struggle is not just in the workplace but also outside, politically. Our committee joined organisations such as Civic Associations etc., we also encouraged our members to attend such meetings in order to fight for their rights in their respective communities (interruption). The other challenge we had was we should ensure that workers understand the importance of getting involved in community issues, politics. We were successful that is why when squatter camps like Freedom Square, Namibia, we were the only group who managed to set up people in the areas and negotiated for this together with our Civic leadership. I left the Civic when people started fighting for positions, I then pulled out. I also pulled out of community structures where I served as a legal officer. Things were becoming problematic because people were fighting for leadership positions, even today ANC meetings become family meetings, you can only be in a position if you have a lot of supporters. But in the trade union movement, in COSATU for instance I play the role of para-legal consultant.

Facilitator: You talked about the issue of the ANC, did you guys have dealings with SACTU in exile as FAWU? During the apartheid era did you have some links with SACTU in exile?

Respondent: The people who had a link was the people who were going out most of the time, FAWU's national office bearers had a link. Most of the exiles when they were returning from exile they were employed by FAWU. Some resigned along the way for greener pastures.

Facilitator: You also worked as a labour office at some point in time. Things like labour brokers and so on what is FAWU's position on them?

Respondent: I am still a legal officer. FAWU's position on labour brokers, for instance on public hearings, FAWU supports that labour brokers should be phased out, they are too many and they affect FAWU's membership. Companies like SAB still has labour brokers even though the name is different, Blue Ribbon falls under Premier Mill, Sasko – FAWU's position is the same labour broker should be done away with.

Facilitator: The issue of the living wage do you think its been achieved in the case of FAWU and broadly COSATU or is it still an issue?

Respondent: My personal view on the issue of the living wage, it has not been achieved and it was left as is. Nobody is talking about it although Sedumo the other day raised a question that companies should settle around 10%. I think he was relating to the issue of the living wage when looking at poverty in the country. People are earning low salaries. But again there must be a muscle, if it is put in a statement form, a structure must be in place in order to deal with it. The other thing is presently unions do not have good negotiators. I am saying we do not have good negotiators, people go there, all they care about this themselves, yes people can say this is rife within SAMWU, but its not only SAMWU. Nowadays when organisers negotiate with employers, they are only looking at his living conditions to improve and not those of those that he is servicing. That should not be the case. If you are serving a community you should be last, serve the workers first and then you will be rewarded later. So all they care about is themselves, they become friendly so that maybe they can be offered a job. It is not all the organisers that behave like that but some do. So the issue of the living wage will never be taken forward. They also fail to implement decisions of bargaining counsel because this is where statements are made, this is what FAWU is

requesting in this particular year. Some refuse to translate that into a programme of action in the plants.

Facilitator: the labour laws today, you were involved with unions from the apartheid era to post 1994. Do you think labour laws are effective for the workers and so on or are there some loopholes and gaps that need to be tightened up?

Respondent: Well the labour laws today allow unions to grow, that is a fact. In the olden days one would find that if I'm in a supervisory position, I'm not in a position of hiring and dismissing companies would say I cannot be a union member because you're a supervisor. Today if you don't have those powers to hire and dismiss you can become a union member and also become a shop steward and represent the unions. The labour court has a problem with the contradiction. It is allowed that you can become a union member and a shop steward at the same time. The other thing, labour laws today allows for sufficient representation and majority representation. In the past people were more interested in having the majority, now you can have sufficient and build the union within the industry in order to get the majority. The other thing is that it allows the workers to become union members. A company can be charged for not allowing its workers to belong to a union. The other thing companies were not willing to deduct union fees, when we first started members paid cash. Nowadays companies deduct from employees and pay the union, other companies were reluctant to deduct the union fees.

There are still some issues in the Act that are still problematic. Currently there's an area of Pre-arbitration Dismissal, Section 188: the section allows employees who are in a certain income bracket, the company can

negotiate with the employee to have a CCMA commissioner handling the case. If you are guilty you are dismissed and you no longer go to the CCMA you only review of the dismissal. Most companies do not take the section into consideration, they employ consultants or employer organisations who handles the cases without the employer's consent. They are trying to amend the Act, it does not address the problem of employer organisation in chairing cases and dismissing employers. If you are dismissed by an employer organisation, you are not dismissed by the employer you are dismissed by the organisation. There's a big argument around that issue, we believe courts will assist in the matter: who has the right to dismiss, the employer organisation or employer.

The other area is retrenchments. Companies are not taken to task in terms of retrenchments in my opinion. Once they inform you they must have a consolidation and consultation, the consultation must try to seek consensus and to minimise retrenchments and so on. So Section 189 (a) tries to assist in the matter, companies do as they please and it becomes worse if officials are not aware of the procedure it becomes problematic. The problem is not so much the Act it is the officials. If officials do not understand the process, when the procedure was not followed, and challenge it and interdict the proceedings at the time it becomes a problem. If the process of Section 189 is not followed you have to go to court and request an interdict and force the employer to follow the proper procedure.

The other problem is the one of rate of execution which the Act formed in terms of the Labour Relations Act, it enforces wards, the enforcement of the wards was better if it was done by 158 1 (c) that is why I am fighting with CCMA regarding rates. You get the rate from the labour court,

which is not a labour court order, you then take it to the sheriff who goes knocking at doors. He comes with the rate, he is my uncle, he is not going to attach anything. So its another problem, the sheriff will not attach anything.

Facilitator: do you think CCMA has come in handy for labour structures and so on?

Respondent: yes but it depends, it is handy for labour. It depends on the senior convening commissioner. If he is pro-employer it will be a problem for that province. If he is not pro-employers then the institution will be handy. For instance here in the Free State, what we are doing now is .., as I had indicated that I play a role for para-legals. What I did is I combined organisers who are dealing with most cases under COSATU and we are using the CCMA to advise them on how to handle cases. We workshop them, if they did not understand at the workshop, they also have an opportunity to call and ask for guidance regarding a labour case. So its very handy. If the form is not completed properly they call you and ask you to submit the relevant information so that the case can serve again.

Facilitator: what about bargaining counsels, have they been effective?

Respondent: I only know of one bargaining counsel. It is the one in Pretoria. It is very effective even though it is problematic – there's a new law which was formed because of Khumbulani's case. In the past CCMA will throw your case out for certain reasons. Say for instance you are a worker, unions do not inform you about conciliation. We do not go to conciliation and the case is dismissed. But the case between NEHAWU, Khumbulani and Premier of Gauteng changed the whole thing. The

Commissioner of Conciliation has no right to dismiss a case. The only thing he can do if the parties are not there or the applicant is not there is to issue a certificate and so on. So CCMA does that if you did not attend a hearing, they issue a certificate. But when you come for arbitration they will start at conciliation if you agree. But at the bargaining counsel they operate differently, it is costly in terms of time for the unions. Currently we are trying to resolve at the national council: people who sit on the board of the bargaining counsel, they must take a resolution to the board and debate (1) the roles of the board – if you did not go through conciliation they dismiss the case, then you have to apply for recession. This is very costly in terms of time, drafting of papers, travel costs to represent the recession even though they know they are going to grant it. Thereafter you go for arbitration. The only way to fix this problem is for us to draft a resolution and it must be adopted in a form of ..(unclear) then the people who represent us can fix it. It is also costly in the sense of areas like Lephalale, we have members of corporations, we also have them in the Free State, Northern Cape, I'm not sure of the other areas but these three areas we have members in areas like Klerksdorp which belong to the bargaining council, even in Arcadia, Pretoria we have. For conciliation the people must be transported to and fro, book them a hotel, it is costly. They are not represented in those areas. So we are also supposed to draft a resolution which states that they must be represented in their respective areas. That is the resolution we need to take and are preparing for the national conference.

Facilitator: Unprotected strikes, within FAWU, will people still get involved in the strikes, but are they now minimal?

Respondent: they are rife in the Northern Cape currently. The case I referred to earlier, of unprotected strike, we asking a lawyer to do a write up for the unprotected strikes. It will depend who the organiser is. Sometimes the organiser instigates the workers. Sometimes management instigates the workers. In Northern Cape we are not sure of the reasons we are still investigating, we have to deal with this as soon as possible because this is going to be costly for us. In the Free State we have very few unprotected strikes, we educated the workers, they follow proper procedures.

Facilitator: The issue of union members to go and work in the government, premiers, ministers and so on, directors, has that affected the unions or has it benefited unions in a sense that you now have your men within the system?

Respondent: For union cadres to be deployed to government should be on merit and it brings us to the question of the current debate within ANC. When somebody is deployed they should be deployed on merit and there should be a debate, this affected the unions in 1994, when people like Chris went to Legislature or government. This really affected the union because a lot of people who had relevant experience were deployed. Some of us remained behind and we had to close the gap which was huge. I don't think we ever recovered from that because at the time people were just taken in and so on. If this is going to happen again it must be done properly, based on merit, the person must qualify to be deployed to government, they have the necessary skills. Also at the same time, unions, like the ANC has to build the second layer of leadership so that if someone resigns they should be able to replace that particular person. Unions need to have the second layer of leadership. The only

thing that has affected us as FAWU, not sure about other unions, over the years, is the question of we involve ourselves in things that are not work related. People get involved in things like workers are complaining that you do not work, or so and so should have been given a certain portfolio, a president, secretary etc. We should not be dealing with such issues. For one to be a leader you have to work for it. You must lead the people as their leader. We need to move away from having meetings which are fruitless and decisionless, there will be arguments, people want to lead. I remember one conference here in the Free State, there were so many arguments at the conference, elections for a new secretary were not held, and no decisions were taken. Officials were fighting for the secretarial position. The previous secretary was elected properly. I am not sure whether other unions are having such problems or not. FAWU needs to deal with that problem because this is costly in terms of time and money. We go to meetings and discuss things that are not on the agenda.

Facilitator: the challenges that are faced by FAWU today, and where do you go from here as FAWU?

Respondent: Most of the challenges we have in the province mostly, which is also on the national programme is to increase the membership, to provide service for our members, to sustain membership and service. Once you have those two things membership will grow automatically. In order to do that you have to have structures which are effective. For instance we are trying to introduce .., in the coming national congress, we have about 127 members and decisions are not reaching the members and they are paying subs. We want to find a communication channel through branch general meetings, where workers in the branches are

called and given reports. If May Day approaches you prepare them at the general meeting. Union is spending a lot of money for nothing. The union rents a bus and only 10 members go and the bus can carry up to 70 people. Those are the challenges. We need to have branch general meetings where workers are informed of what is going on. In those days if the SAB van is parked at Shoprite Checkers, and then I see another van from Clover SA, I know that this is a FAWU member. I will go and speak to him and ask him if he is a union member or not, which union is representing them and then tell him about our union and ask him to join us. People don't do that anymore. The workers meet and do not talk. In terms of cases, we have cases of theft. Union must be responsible and address the workers on the matter. Instead of stealing ask for an increase otherwise you are going to lose your job and so on.

The other challenge is ..., some shop stewards cannot represent workers. So we need to empower them, find a platform where we can teach them.

Facilitator: Is there anything that you think is important for this interview that we did not discuss?

Respondent: I think we covered everything, if I think of something I will let you know.

END

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