

Douglas Maila

Facilitator: This is an interview with comrade Douglas Maila we are in Heidelberg, the date is 6 September 2012, interview is done by Brown Maaba. You are welcome to speak any language. Just give me your background, where do you come from?

Respondent: I was born at Ga-Maila in Sekhukhune area on 21 May 1957 that is next Lulumont then I started schooling at Modiketse Primary school going three days, two days per week because we were looking after cattle, sheep and goats and we were three boys, one at home and two from my paternal fathers, uncles, we would exchange. Then I would be borrowed to look after cattle to Gomani's people, that is when I started to steal attending school, I would leave the cattle, go to school and come back and collect them until I completed my Standard 6 and went to Galatlou Secondary school at a place called Skunort and did my Form 1 and Form 2, I then failed Form 2 and had to go to an area called Manganeng where I completed my Form 2 and Form 3. After that I went back to Galatlou, they now had Form 4 and 5 which is Grade 11 and Grade 12. I then did Grade 11. In 1979 we were dismissed from school because there was a strike at school regarding writing of exams, other students were given 3 hours to write and we were given 1.5 hours to write. We fought for our rights we felt that we should be treated equally. At the end of the year we were dismissed by Phatudi who banned us for 5 years. We couldn't study anywhere in Lebowa currently known as Limpopo. We could not study for five years. I then moved to Vereeniging and stayed with my aunt at Sebokeng. Unfortunately I was sick at the time, I looked for a job and could not find a job. I then moved to Springs. In 1980 I started working at a brick factory in Springs at an area called Elgin Refractory.

Facilitator: Just before you go any further, the strikes at school, what did you know about struggle (mzabalazo) because you were in Lebowa, Sekhukhuneland, how did it all begin?

Respondent: I got to know about the struggle, I think I must have been 9 or 10 years old in 1965, around that period, the British arrested my father Johannes Mmathabeng Maila, he belonged to the royal family of Chief Mmatshupe Maila and did not agree with what was called "Molemi" basically what this meant was people were distributing land amongst themselves. He just didn't agree with what the English were doing to black farmers, they were selling out black people and they were also against ANC people. Most people at the time were following Chief Morwamotshe Sekhukhune-Thulare, at the time he had been arrested and kept at St. Helen. I saw how they treated my father when they were arresting him, they treated him so badly. I just couldn't forget what I saw so as I grew up I constantly asked myself how can people behave like that. I looked for uncles and found only one of them, the father to the late George Nkadimeng. When I inquired about my other uncles I did not get answers. This is when I learnt that George Kgwana Nkadimeng who is one of my uncles was the former General Secretary of SACTU. So when I asked where he was my mother did not tell me she would just cry. I then asked my brothers nobody told me the truth until when I arrived in Kwa-Thema, my uncle, George's father told me what happened. There was a lot of things that did not make sense to me at the time. He told me that one of my uncles is at a certain place, he has been arrested because he was very active in politics. That is how the struggle was introduced to me. Apparently my uncle was the secretary of the ANC. He was based in Springs but would ensure that people in Sekhukhune received some of the donor funds which were donated to the ANC. That is how I was introduced to the struggle. This was between 1980 to 1983, FOSATU existed at the time. I joined FOSATU because they spoke the same language as me, I was oppressed at work by whites, I felt discriminated. I joined FOSATU through an affiliate called PAWU which was lead by comrade Luthuli who worked at SAPI

Facilitator: What is PAWU?

Respondent: It was Paper Allied Workers Union.

Facilitator: So you left Sekhukhune and went to Vereeniging?

Respondent: Yes I went to Vereeniging in 1979, in 1980 I moved from Vereeniging because things were not happening for me and went to live with my aunt in Kwa-Thema. I got a job at a brick factory, we would pick bricks and put them onto a pallet. I experienced apartheid at its best, discrimination, low wages, exploitation, abnormal shift hours etc. When I asked why we were being treated in this way I was told I must go to the Industrial Council I went. When I arrived there I realised that the organisation was not relevant for my needs, I need an organisation that is going to help me get an increase and recognise my rights as a worker. So I quit Elgin in 1984 and went to Van Leer the engineering part of it. Before I quit Elgin I had worked in the laboratory as a tester for raw materials and finished products. From there I resigned and worked for Van Leer. Van Leer relocated after 12 months and went to Vanderbijlpark. I then came back I then went to study a course on bricklaying. When I came back I realised that bricklaying did not appeal to me. I then looked for a job and got one at Kimberley Club in 1985.

When I arrived there I was given an increase of 2 cents, other workers had received 5 cents and others 7 cents. We were told not to discuss the different increases. When I asked the other workers how much increase they received, they told me and I realised that I was the lowest paid employee together with other 10 staff members. I then asked them if they knew anything about unions, I was told that should I join the union I would be fired, indeed this happened because I was fired the same day and paid off.

I then got to know about Luthuli, they called him Luthi, he spoke a lot of sense on radio, this is how I joined the trade union. Van Leer did not want me to join because I was a temp, it was company policy that all its employees were only given permanent positions after 11 months

Facilitator: Van Leer?

Respondent: Yes

Facilitator: Was it also called Kimberley Clark

Respondent: I left Van Leer after realising that things are not happening for me at Kimberley Clark, Kimberley Clark was referred to as Carlton Paper before. In 1985 I got a job at Kimberley Clark. We then organised ourselves as workers and became one, we then affiliated to a union, it was a secret at the time, until 1986 when we were told that shop stewards can only be those that have worked for one year and above, knowing very well that staff members under one year were not vocal. We then compromised in 1986 I became a shop steward. From 1986 I decided that I want to leave a legacy in the labour movement because to me the labour movement was not just for workers, it affected the communities through Civics, we also received a lot of political education. Every weekend workshops were held at our offices, we were taught about unions and the processes.

In 1987 I became the chairperson of the workers of Carlton Paper. There was a demand for plant level, company level and national level. We would all meet and negotiate at plant level. Workers in Durban, Roodekop and Pretoria were not earning the wages as us, our salaries were higher than theirs. We then demanded from the employer that all employees are the same, all salaries to be negotiated on one table. The Western Cape workers were under SATU (South African Topographic?? Union)

Facilitator: Not under PAWU?

Respondent: They were under SATU. I went and organised them but they seemed uninterested. I then brought our payslips and showed them how much our casual staff was earning, they were earning R5 more. They then joined PAWU so all negotiations were held at the same time.

In 1985 we formed COSATU in Durban and were motivated to fix most of the things (interruption – phone rang) – from the day COSATU was formed I felt liberated/free and was going forward with the struggle. We were addressed by people like the late Elija Bagai, Cyril Ramaphosa, Jay Naidoo – we learnt a lot from them. From 1986 we demanded that we have full time shop stewards, provident fund, medical aid schemes, all those things that were not given to us before. We had a local office which were a secret, I was the chairperson of the local office for PAWU members

Facilitator: PAWU members?

Respondent: In the firm I was chairperson of the workers of Kimberley Clark or the so-called Carlton Paper by then and I was also the national chairperson. I was then appointed as a full time shop steward, I did union work but the company was willing to pay my salary. We also did not understand the difference between Provident Fund and Pension fund, we thought they were the same, Prof. Anthony Esher from Wits educated us on this. We started recruiting in industrial areas for all sectors. What we did was we got them to join the correct affiliate, Impala workers were under NUM, Sappi and Carlton Paper fell under us; New Era had people in the plastic, paper and metal industry, wood was also included. We recruited members from all sectors. FOSATU assisted us in placing workers in their relevant sectors. The metal industry had pension and provident fund, all other sectors did not have. We managed to win this although the win was not satisfactory. What they did is they gave us the surplus to start the fund. We also demanded tax refunds, it helped us recruit members to the union.

As a shop steward I was expected to be an organiser also, so I had to organise in other sectors as well. The slogan "an injury to one is an injury to all" was adopted at this time. We supported each other so that the employer knows that we are one.

We now had regions and branches in the union. I always wanted to know what was happening with the prescriptions that we were collecting so the workers appointed me as Treasury for PAWU. I then decided to study Bookkeeping with Damelin College on Saturdays, at the same time I was appointed Branch Education Officer and asked me to train people about finances and administration. I accepted. After that I was appointed National Treasurer. We now merged with other unions and were called PWAWU (Paper Wood Allied Workers Union), we didn't have wood before we only had paper.

Facilitator: Why the merger?

Respondent: We wanted one industry one union that's why we merged with smaller unions, a lot of unions were mushrooming at this time and we wanted to have one major unions.

Facilitator: Did you not encounter problems with people fighting for positions?

Respondent: We did have some problems but at the time if you had a position in the union or community organisations it put your life at stake because the police would be after you. Companies used to have what was called Management Intelligent Service which informed the police about people who were active in the workplace, the same thing happened with community organisations, the organisations were infiltrated. Some people did not want to be appointed to such positions. Other people formed a rival union called NACTU. Most unions took the political line, others wanted democracy and NACTU was pushing for Pan Africanism,

blacks only and did not recruit any other groups. COSATU recruited everybody irrespective of colour, if you were oppressed come we will help you fight.

Some time later we merged with the printing sector. We wanted the unions to merge, and then became PPWAWU (Paper Printing Wood and Allied Workers Union), they merged. The union was growing as we merged. When I joined the union we had a debt of R900 000, we only had R30 which we got from Siphon Gumede. We rented a place with the money, R20 for venue and R10 for security. I asked all employees of the union that they should concentrate on recruiting and held their annual increase back. We managed to recruit more members and started getting more income. The staff received an increase of 35%, this motivated them to recruit more members.

Later on I would attend meetings of the Central Executive Committee in COSATU, sometimes I would be invited to Exco meetings in the absence of the secretary or the president if they were out of the country. Again I was a member of the Finance Committee (FINCOM) of COSATU, this happened around 1988 until it was fully operational. We then bought a building for COSATU. Adrian Vlok who was the Minister of Law and Order then would come and bomb us. We called him the Minister of dis-law and order because in our opinion he didn't maintain any law and order. Siphon Kubheka was continuously in and out of jail, he took over from Jeremy Pascin. He left and joined the research team. We then recommended that he goes to the COSATU school, NALEDI. I worked with Siphon and Lungelo Mbalani as the president. Later on Nelson Mpenzu became the president, I continued and worked with him as the National Treasurer. Pasco Jani then became our president, I continued working with him. Our secretary at the time was Obed Nzimande. Later on our secretary was Themba Mfeka, Sicelo Siceka was still at branch level together with Malindi Mthethwa, they were the youngest people in the executive. Malindi is now with Nampak as the Human Resources Director, Sicelo Siceka has passed on as you know.

We would travel all over the country recruiting for the union and the ANC. This is when we met a comrade called Gerald Nyembe who is a grandson to the late Dorothy Nyembe, he is now with the military intelligence. Gerald Nyembe was an MK Commander and we did not know. He would come, recruit us and train us underground without us realising.

Facilitator: Trained you on what?

Respondent: Trade unionism and he also established units for the ANC so that they can give information to ANC members in exile, also so that we can assist them with harbouring freedom fighters when they came into the country. So we didn't know a lot about Gerald. He would come and check on us. He gave us a lot of information about the struggle and he started bringing a publication called *Umsebenzi* which was published by the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA): How to Master Secret Work. We started establishing bases for MK cadres internally. We didn't know they were for MK we just wanted to be soldiers, when we wanted to skip the country they refused and told us that they need us inside the country. From 1987 things started changing, there was a campaign for the Labour Relations Amendment Act (LRA), most unions were banned at this time because the government believed that they were political. Then Adrian Vlok called in all office bearers of PPAWU, he couldn't find all of us, some were caught others not. I would move from one place to the other.

Gerald then asked me to go and live with the police, teachers and nurses, I was worried because they were all anti-unions. He ordered me to go and live there and collect information, get to know the thinking of the police, nurses and teachers etc. I moved and lived there and received the information I needed. Later on he asked me to start recruiting the police. By then Rocky Rockiman formed a union, defied the police by forming a trade union movement. There was a policeman called Sithole who killed people, I was worried he would kill me too. I had a cousin who was in the police force, he had an interest in the struggle, he got involved

underground. He gave me all the information I needed to know: the salary structures; the working conditions etc. – so when I recruited them they joined. The police were now looking for me again, I then moved to Tsakane Ext and bought a house in 1989. There was tension in the country, from 1987 to 1992 things were bad, there was a lot of unrest in the country. In 1992 Dorothy's younger brother whom I had named Castro, the police wanted to kidnap him with the assistance of the workers, at the time a strike was on at Kimberley Clark. Some of the workers had an agreement with the employer through Management Intelligent Service. The strike continued and they could not find Castro anywhere. The police visited all the crèches in the area and did not find him. Life was difficult, you had to be wary of the people around you. People had opened accounts on the union account, for instance the military would take money from the funds we were receiving from abroad. The other one was opened by some of the comrades who benefited this way. They would use the union's letterhead to obtain funds using a different bank account number. I investigated and found out because I could not understand why is it that we have a lot of members but the subscriptions are low. I then called a special NEC meeting and informed them about the leakage, we had different account numbers in Springs, Ethekwini and Johannesburg. We appointed private investigators to assist us. The accounts were then frozen unfortunately at the time there were no more funds in the bank accounts. My life was now in danger, I had to attend meetings in Johannesburg and my classes.

I became interested in the struggle because I wanted to defy everything that was introduced by the National Party – at the time we were defying everything that the government came up with so that there's ungovernability. We used to also listen to Radio Freedom secretly at Tonato, Mahlangu's place and listen to it. People like the late Joe Slovo, Chris Hani and Oliver Tambo used to speak on Radio Freedom. We were interested in what they were saying, we paid attention to what they were saying. I can say again that the people I worked with were Jay Naidoo, Sam Shilowa, Vavi was in the organising committee but I eventually worked with him. We went all over South Africa recruiting the workers. Although they wanted me to organise for PPAWU, I also recruited in rubber, plastic, metal and mining and allocate them to the relevant sector. I remember there was a regional union called

TAWUSA, it organised in XwaXwa and Thabanchu, at the time we were campaigning for tax. I can say things were difficult at the time. I remember TAWUSA's president secretary was Mpedi's son, who was the chief prime minister of Xwaxwa, he was the secretary, treasurer and president. We had to bring it down and introduce COSATU. I went with Dickson Motha to address the workers who eventually joined the Farmers Union, I am not sure where he is right now, he was from Mpumalanga. We brought it down and later were sent to the Northwest Province and deal with Mangope's unions and brought them down by introducing COSATU. At this time I was the national treasurer, full time shop steward, doing union work but paid by the company. I was then requested to train other branches and train them about finance, provident fund and inform them about the importance of belonging to the union. I spent a lot of time Limpopo, far West and Western Johannesburg. I also had to deal with areas like Mogwase, Marikana, Pretoria, Western Cape – I had to take care of 15 branches. My weekends were full because of my work and had no time for my children. I would sometimes take my children with because their mother would look after the one, I would go with Castro and she would look after Gadafi, he was still breast feeding. I travelled with Castro. At the same time on provident fund I trained workers nationally.

Recording stopped:

Recording Number 2

Facilitator: You were still telling me about how you travelled with your kids while you worked

Respondent: Yes I did, they didn't want to remain behind, and at the same time the union had delegated jobs to me, travelling all over the place. For instance I would be sent to Durban for provident fund training or gender equality training, or be sent to Louis Trichardt, Northwest, Western Cape etc., Northern Natal, Natal Midlands, Free State, I was going all over the place. Sometimes I would be away for almost a week. The important thing for me was whether I could measure my success or not. People nowadays are not sacrificing nor sharing. I would say it was good to be part of the union struggle, being a shop steward, an organiser, contributing in community structures. At the same time I had to attend COSATU local at Roma in Kwa-Thema.

Father was the only person who gave us a venue to meet until the police started harassing him with threats, we no longer had a venue to meet. We would try using union offices but we would be harassed by Adrian Vlok. I managed to escape a couple of times. We organised campaigns, work stoppages and so on, go slows and wild cat strike until you are released from the prison.

The difference today is people are no longer afraid, the police are no longer arresting people for political reasons, that is why union officials are relaxed. After I stopped working I went back home to help people living in rural areas. The idea was to see whether there are changes in terms of their lifestyle. I embarked on farming projects so that they can live on the crops. Even when I was involved in union activities, I still visited the rural communities, I shared information with them by distributing pamphlets. I distributed pamphlets at Jane Furse, Ga Maila. The youth would call special urgent meetings so that I can address them on matters of the struggle. A lot of people used to die in the area therefore most of the youth joined the current army.

At some stage I was sent to Turfloop, I remember when OR Tambo died and Chris Hani died I had to go to Limpopo and Louis Trichardt to address the masses. People were still very tribalistic and preferred to be addressed in their own language. In areas where I was not fluent in the language I would make sure that I have someone to translate in their language. In Natal Midlands there was a guy called Richard Hlophe who also translated for me, in the Western Cape there was Zama Nkgewu who assisted me, Keith Jacobs assisted me with Afrikaans. I would say the struggle taught me a lot and assisted a lot of people.

In 2006 PPAWU came and asked to me assist them, it had now merged with chemical

Facilitator: PPAWU?

Respondent: Yes PPAWU I was one of the initiators of the merger because they were overlapping, because chemical comes from a tree, why don't we merge chemical sector and paper sector merge and form CEPAWU because it was CWU and SEPAWU was PPAWU, so it became CEPPAAWU. After the merger I left and went back to the rural areas. I then came back in 2003, I was in the rural areas for about two years. In 2005 they asked me to come back to help us. I told them that I will only help them for about 3 months because I was busy in the rural areas. COSATU begged me to come and assist them with training: Basic of Employment Act; ..(unclear) Act, LRA, Constitution and Recognition agreements.

Then CEPPAWU asked that I be register me, I was then registered and started working, it was my passion after all. I can tell you worked from 2005 to 2010 and never claimed any money from CEPPAWU because they had no funds. The very same salary they were paying me I would use for transport. In Springs they needed 3 organisers, an organiser was fired and there was one in place. He then left and went to join Labour Research Service and I was left alone. For 8 months I worked with the administrator. So I started organising from Boksburg, Danswart, Benoni, Apax, Brakpan, Geluksdal, Springs, Selcourt, Nancefield, Heidelberg, Nigel – I recruited, serviced and negotiated wages for them. Others were negotiating at plant level. I was again requested to approach the Bargaining Council for the printing and newspaper sector and became the national negotiator for the sector. Some of the members were affiliated to SADTU which had more funds and was not willing to negotiate, the union was in bed with the employer. At the end of the day I organised a forum, we managed to register.

I also managed to get more benefits than was required by SEPAWU. If SEPAWU asked for 10% the minimum I would get 15% and other demands. The reason I managed to do this is because if I do not understand something I ask as many times as possible.

I noticed that the agricultural side was not in order, there was no agrarian revolution. I then went to the people and started talking to them. I went to school and obtain the relevant qualification in order to help them. For me labour was my daily bread, I ate, slept and everything I do has been about labour. To date people are still coming to me for advise, organisers like Skosana, Phumutse etc., they still come for advise I've opened my doors to them. I'm always willing to assist where I can. The country should be governed by the labour movement – they will make the laws that will govern the workers. The workers were able to achieve the scrapping of the Bantu Labour Relations Act to LRAA – the workers assisted in the unbanning of the ANC and other political parties. Workers talked, planned and acted. The difference with the union movement and other political parties is that they talk and do not implement accordingly. Workers talk, agree and implement their decisions. I am saying this because I know that some of the clauses in the LRA came from our recognition agreement. Without unions we wouldn't have a good labour law, it's good but it's still 50/50, we wanted 75/25 – it's okay because both the worker and employer are covered. The problem with trade unions today is they do not train workers about procedures relating to disputes and other things – recording stopped.

Recording 3:

Facilitator: You were still saying that today things are different

Respondent: Yes, what I was saying is if workers are in dispute with the employer, what should they do. For example there are certain procedures to be followed for dispute resolution, there are mechanisms – some organisers unfortunately do the work just to earn a living, there is no commitment, they have no knowledge about the procedures to follow, they cannot even complete the referral form to CCMA or Bargaining Council, they would just go without a valid reason. Today the labour law protects both the workers and employers, I have never lost a case. Nowadays the labour law has the following elements: procedure and a valid reason. If the procedure is properly followed from company to CCMA there is no problem, what are the reasons for you to defend the worker. The problem with the current shop stewards is that they do not read/study, they do not research, even if they get information that is relevant they do not use it, they keep the information for longer

and then it is distorted. The other thing is there is no commitment, they are doing this for the money. Some were shocked at the national conference of SEPAWU when they were told that I have not claimed my transport allowance for two years. I do not claim most of the time because I know the books have a deficit, I am not rich but I feel sorry for the workers. The other thing is people want positions so that they can make more money, I prefer to work with people at the grassroots. Today people are fighting for positions and higher salaries whilst workers are being paid low wages. This hurts me, fight for the workers so that they can pay reasonable subscriptions so that you can get better money. In the past we fought for better wages, the workers were able to pay better subscriptions which in turn we used to pay for certain benefits like increases etc. Today people are corrupt, subscriptions are not paid into the union account they are paid into their own accounts and they spend the money. The other problem is we no longer have labour rallies, worker problems should be discussed at rallies – recording stopped.

Recording no 4

Facilitator: You were talking about the lack of labour rallies today ..

Respondent: Yes there are no workshops, organisers are lazy, I'm sorry to say that. Remember I told you I was alone here in Springs, from 2005 when I came back to SEPAWU I never had a day off. I used those days to train shop stewards on basic labour laws. If shop stewards are not properly trained you will always have worker problems. I was there to train the people that is why my off days I trained the people. If I had no meeting scheduled for a weekend I would use the opportunity to train the shop stewards. For instance we've had the Occupational Health and Safety Act which has been in place since 1997/98, very few shop stewards know about it. It is important to call all the shop stewards and the safety reps to the workshop so that they can understand the Act. The shop stewards do not know the procedures at all, some can't even complete a report. It is also important to link community and labour issues – if a community calls a strike or stay away, there is no need for you to go to work and risk getting hurt, inform the employer. Also if there's a strike in a firm, inform the community about it. The work of an organiser is being an

ambassador of the labour movement to the community for political organisations.
Recording stopped

Recording no 5

Facilitator: You were still saying that there's lack of seriousness in the unions today.

Respondent: People are no longer committed, people are no longer reliable, people are selfish and not fully committed to the struggle. A lot of things are ignored, amendments needs to be made to the LRA, there are some elements missing. Basic Conditions also need to be amended, Financial Service Board is faced with the problem of justification in terms of the workers finances because provident fund, medical scheme, insurance and all belongs to the workers, unfortunately workers do not have their own bank, their own rules that they have to abide by. I'm saying this because organisers do not call shop stewards and listen to new ideas and have informal discussions. People seem to think they can just take decisions without consulting the umbrella. Today there isn't much to attract workers to join unions. People assume they know the Basic Conditions of Service, LRA and other Acts but they do not know it. Currently we do not have a minimum wage nationally. This must be achieved by the affiliates. Other affiliates managed to achieve better salaries compared to others. I believe that unions, COSATU and others must have a strong campaign against labour brokers. Labour brokering is a tool that kills union. It is sad to learn that some of us are labour brokers. Do you understand me?

Facilitator: Not really, I'm a little lost

Respondent: Secretaries and presidents of affiliates including some in COSATU have their own labour broking companies. If a certain company has labour shortage, they call me I get them the staff and they pay me instead of the worker, I pay the workers obviously at a fee, some take as much as 70% and pay the worker 30%. I go

to meetings and speak against labour broking while I am a labour broker myself. People are no longer sacrificing for the workers. Workers are constantly being retrenched, day and night. There are certain procedures to be followed in terms of LRA, the employer has more rights to dismiss workers. You can be fired for performance, if an employer has exhausted all avenues and your performance does not improve or is not up to standard he has the right to fire you. Employers can use fancy words to dismiss workers. Workers must challenge that. I am not saying employers must not reduce the number of the workforce if they are faced with financial difficulties, the issue is what compensation do you give to the workers because they might never get a job again because of age, technology and other things. Where are the organisers and the shop stewards? It is their duty have robust discussions until they come up with a resolution as affiliates of COSATU. It is also important that they set time frames. COSATU and other affiliates should be worker controlled, decisions must be taken by the workers. The union officials are employees of the workers therefore they must do what the workers want but the workers do not have the power to retrench officials, to discipline officials based on performance, or if they are faced with financial difficulties they can't retrench. But the law is for everybody.

Now we come to the law called property clause, which is property rights which states that people have rights. What property do they have? You can own a farm but if you discover that the farm has gold or platinum or whatever, or any precious stone, they will give you another farm. So it means you don't have rights. For starters you don't have land rights, nor mineral rights but as workers you are the core of this economy, there will be no economy without workers. What benefits are workers ripping out of this economy which they've built? Where are the officials and the shop stewards? They are no longer coming together, workshoping each other and then go back to various locals and workshop other shop stewards, go back to various companies, workshop the workforce. Yes we will always have people who are anti-union. Some of them started to acquire more knowledge and skill and most of our workforce ignored education and training which is vital. Unions need people who are educated and properly trained.

The Communist Party was the vanguard movement of the working class, today it is not visible because the changes happened too fast. Most of our comrades are holding senior financial positions, some have their own companies. The very same comrades are appointed to go and speak against their own companies, it cannot happen. Labour has three steps: the first step is before we were one and were all over the place; the second step is we got together and step three we are not formulating the correct laws to benefit the workers. NEDLAC is a structure that is supposed to get labour and business people together and share ideas – it is not doing what it is supposed to do. Those things are no longer happening. The workers are also not interested to share ideas; monthly, quarterly and annual meetings are no longer held, the platform is no longer there. Without these meetings there is no programme of action, nothing will be achieved. The only thing is recruit and negotiate wages at Bargaining Council. After meetings the employers invite the officials for a drink. This is where wrong decisions and bribes are made. The officials are selfish and no longer doing their union work. The labour movement starts from the factory, to the industrial level, then national level and finally international level; where officials will meet with companies like the International Labour Organisation. ILO is supposed to supervise umbrella unions and ensure that the officials do what they are supposed to do. For instance is COSATU in Zimbabwe, Swaziland and Mozambique are working together; whether there's solidarity support like before. We were supported by international labour unions and sister unions. As COSATU are we supporting the other COSATU's, especially countries like Angola and so on. Most international donors supported legal training, the funds were never for salaries or offices etc. Do we deploy our comrades to countries that are struggling and train them on COSATU's ideology so that there's synergy.

Today the law does not allow unions to give the employer 7 days notice to go for a solidarity strike. It is illegal in terms of the current law because the employer is allowed to restrict you because the understanding is how can a person in the plastic industry support a miner for instance. In the past we were able to support other sectors, workers were allowed to support each other in solidarity irrespective of sector.

Children today who have studied have never experienced oppression and exploitation of starvation wages. They earn better salaries. They do not care they get their salaries and forget about people on the ground, all they want is to earn. We are living a capitalist life, with no capital things get worse and there is nothing that you can do. Political education and political economy in the trade movement is no longer there. We say we are tripartite – we no longer talk about funds we talk about exchange of skills and it is nowhere to be found. The ANC has deployed them to the labour movement, the very same union officials are now working for the government and no longer support the labour movement, instead they are now working against the labour movement and they criticise it distractively because they have more knowledge and experience which is used incorrectly. This pains me. I am no longer in the union sector but I do sit in union structures and advise the workers. The organisers are no longer assisting workers with their shop floor issues. There is no synergy in union structures today. Politically we are free but labour is not coming up with any ideas to shape our economy. We have to move with the changes.

Today we can criticise those who are asking for a minimum wage of R12 000 in Marikana for instance, check how much the CEO and managers are earning. The workers's demands is not even 1/8th of their salaries. It's a drop of blood in an ocean but the manner in which they want the minimum wage is wrong but they are correct to be making the demand. There must be a minimum wage, each sector has got it's own minimum salary and the salaries differ per sector but we all fall under the same umbrella. Why is there such a difference? There's too much competition and we are not in solidarity. There is no unity amongst the workforce, officials are building their own cabals which they are benefiting from. Stay aways are no longer supported because the workers are also interested in making money. Union officials need to come up with one resolution by so doing they will achieve what they want. There is no communication and co-ordination. Nowadays we have advanced technology, cell phones etc. In our time we had to get into public transport and go to Grootvlei to address the workers, borrow somebody's bicycle and go to Boksburg, sometimes sleep over in Vereeniging and come back in the morning. Nowadays our officials sleep at home, if they do have to sleep out they are being naughty. There is

no self discipline. When I came back into the labour movement I was so shocked to find some organisers drunk, day and night. How are the workers going to achieve their goals? As a union official you must unite your family and the community around you, you also need to unite the affiliates. We are killing the spirit of the struggle, we seem to forget where we are, where we come from and where we are going. We were oppressed, we cannot keep blaming apartheid today; a 20 year old child has been to university, we cannot keep blaming apartheid. Apartheid was there and it is gone. We now have a good constitution stemming from apartheid. The labour laws are better. Unions did not restrict people to engage only in union matters, they encouraged political discussions as well.

As far as the Provident fund is concerned it was difficult, I remember Robinson the state registrar telling us that we have no right to talk about the provident fund. He told us that there is no law that governs what we were saying, that provident fund is governed by the rules of the fund. I told him that the fund belongs to the workers, he said no it belongs to both the workers and the employer. I then asked him why is it controlled by the employer only and the workers do not have a say. I told him to call the police to come and arrest us. This was a big issue. Most officials do not understand what is a surplus, but if you were to ask any ordinary worker from the paper sector who are unemployed will tell you what it means, it is not a deficit, it is monies that has not being used and is created by the fund for the fund. Who owns the fund? This is where the struggle started. Workers are not only fighting for wages they also fight for provident fund. The employer must contribute more than what the employee is contributing. The employer used to contribute 75% the workers contributed 25%. Now the law has changed in terms of democracy, 50/50. Workers were not happy with this, they also have to contribute 50% for medical aid. We can share the benefits but in terms of ensured benefits, if I become disabled or die who must pay for that? The worker must pay but today we understand at officials you are the beneficiary of that therefore you must contribute. How do I contribute to cover my life whilst I work for you? Workers pay for life cover, some do not die and go on pension what happens to their death benefits, where is the disability benefits? There is no benefit for the worker. Workers are ignorant. As far as I am concerned the demands of workers are unfinished. They must start demanding what is due to

them. Medical schemes, your health is insured – why do we have so many categories in the medical aid scheme, why not one category. Certain people working for the Financial Service board decide about the money. You will only be informed as a trustee just to rubber stamp what they have decided on. Working hours today 8 hours a day has existed for a long time, it has been like that for many years. If you can work 4 hours and make a meaningful contribution in 4 hours the other 4 hours you can use to make a meaningful contribution in a positive way. But workers seem to think they have achieved the demand. My wish is to see workers working five hours and the remaining three to learn something so that we can cover up other countries with skills. We need to be capacitated. For instance if you look at the union subscriptions, the amount is debited but the funds remain in the company's account but not paid into the union account. The plastic sector subs were not paid into the metal industry account. People who do not belong to the union and do not have a Bargaining Council their issues take long before they are resolved. Organisers and shop stewards are supposed to encourage workers who are not unionised to join the union by explaining the benefits. Shop stewards go to meetings, have coffee and cakes after meetings they go to the bar, they are not doing what they are supposed to do. In the past we would have a meeting after the meeting nobody will meet with the employer and communicate. Some shop stewards share information with the employers. One cannot advise them because if you do the person walks out like a big baby, they do not take advice from other people. Shop stewards befriend employers.

Political understanding: The labour movement was a school of politics. Officials today do not teach people about politics, they tell them about the party they are affiliated to and do not give workers a choice by explaining the difference. Some of the comrades who were seconded to government, when they get to parliament they are negative towards unions. This demoralises the workers because they feel the union grooms them for better positions in government and eventually they work against the union because they are getting more money. Of course not all of them, some still support unions while parliament. Money is a big problem. We have crime in our country because we the haves and the have nots. Corruption will always be there because of this. Some of our members from the labour movement get

involved in corruption and this is demoralising to the labour sector. Whatever union officials do should give moral support to labour. For instance if I join a company now as a union official, I must support the workers not the employer irrespective of the circumstances. If the workers are wrong I will give advise to the members in the absence of the employer and guide them. Nowadays officials take decisions on behalf of the workers, union officials should be controlled by the workers. I have also noticed that other affiliates do not understand that they are accountable to COSATU. The same thing applies to shop stewards that affiliates are their voice. Shop stewards should listen to what the affiliates are saying and not undermine or defy their umbrella/affiliates. This causes the workers to defy the shop stewards. In this case the shop steward will take his work stress home. The ANC is afraid to call the current life socialism, they call it a better life for all. If we are all living a better life we should be okay.

Now Mr Maaba, we are all born with the struggle, it's a calling, some would follow it and others won't. It is my request that we should ask the Communist Party to work hand in hand with unions, we have triparteid with the ruling party, the ruling party must just rule and govern the country following the country's constitution. The workers and/or the Communist Party cannot get involved with ruling the country, we must just follow the rules of the country. Some of the elements of the constitution needs to be amended, we must all sit and do the necessary amendments.

For me educating the nation does not mean going back to school, workshops and/or rallies can assist in educating the nation. Let us build our country and ensure that labour laws are abided by. The union officials need to also understand that they are also workers, an injury to one is an injury to all the workers. I respect the following slogans: "an injury to one is an injury to all; teach one to teach one". Nepotism is something else that is killing union structures, we all know that this is prohibited but this is happening all over. The very officials are employing their own families. The people who qualify for the positions are not considered. Most of the shop stewards don't even know the number of people affiliated under them, all they cared about was the fact that people have completed forms. The union officials do

not know how many members are recruited in the different affiliates, they also have no knowledge of how many members in a firm have not joined the relevant affiliate. They do not know how many members are affiliated per company. Shop stewards need to be trained in all aspects of the labour movement. The labour movement has challenges on a daily basis and it is important for members to understand what is going on in the sector. The weakness currently in union is lack of meetings, monthly, weekly and quarterly so that they are up to date with what is going on in the sector. AGM's are held very seldom so are rallies. We have the media which is friendlier today but is not utilised.

The current demand of workers is medical scheme, 40 hour week job, shift allowance, most people already have these benefits, how come they don't have them as part of the package. Workers do not know what benefits they qualify for including the levies that they are paying into the union account. Some are educated but they do not know what they are paying for. I used to work with Zakhele Mhlungu when he was still young, I know him very well. He is the one who assisted me to get CAPAWU to adopt the ANC colours. He was very good, he also assisted me in drafting of the LRA. We also had people like Blade Nzimande, Ronnie Casrils and Joyce Mabudafasi – I first thought Dr Nzimande was an alcoholic but I was so impressed with him. He came up with very good recommendations, he also played an important role when we were doing the budget.

Mr Maaba, we need to ask affiliates to start contributing the education and training funds so that the officials can receive the relevant training in LRA and the normal labour procedures.

Facilitator: So back to Carlton Paper, what were the shop floor issues when you first arrived?

Respondent: The first one was wages, they were getting R1.78, I received R1.80 together with five others, the rest were on R1.78, the highest was R2.20. The other burning issue was to cancel the Workers Committee sometimes referred to as Liaison Committee because they did not want to join the union, they wanted to deal with the issues through management. The other one was injuries, workers health was not taken seriously, for instance the chemicals were strong and there was no protective clothing or masks, others were hurt by the machinery etc. The hours of work was also a big concern, people used to work from 6 am to 10 pm at night with no overtime pay. You were expected to leave work at 10 pm and return the following morning at 6 am. The hours were then reduced slowly to 10 hours, 9, 8.5 until we reached 8 hours 40 hour week. Pension provident was another issues, people were dying, their families would come to the factory asking for assistance, the company would not help them with a cent. The father had worked for the company for some time. There was another policy which stated that families had to claim within 3 years otherwise they would forfeit the money. Some families did not even know about the benefit. Some people did not even know what the pension fund was, they called it long service, they thought that the company was giving the money they didn't realise that the money was deducted from their wages. The employer also encouraged workers not to show each other their pay slips, many people were fired for this. We fought against this.

The other burning issue was usage of the canteen, we would get in using the same door, but there were two counters, one for whites and the other for blacks, obviously food sold to blacks were not as attractive as those sold to whites, nor nutritious, paying the same price. The other major one was the Recognition Agreement, the employer took his time before recognising it. More than 8 Human Resource Managers were fired by the union officials because of this, the company was American and did not want us to affiliate to any union. The American company did not approve of work stoppages. It took plus/minus four years to complete the LRA. The other challenge was some of the workers who were doing shift work did not know that they should be paid a shift allowance. We managed to win this. Apartheid was a big problem, too much discrimination. For instance blacks were not allowed in some of the company canteens, they were only open to whites, the

food they were serving to whites was not the same quality as the one served to blacks. There was a lot of discrimination at Kimberley Clark. Some people were fired for nothing "unfair dismissal", you could be appointed and fired in half an hour with no explanation. Some people were victimised for joining a union, or fired for taking a tea break. We confronted the employer about this because it was causing a lot of friction. We once threatened the employer that we will burn the factory, this worked because things changed from there onwards. We also had another strategy whereby if a white man made racist remarks to a black person we would do tools down, management had to deal with the problem and eventually things became better. There was a clause in the Recognition Agreement, we suggested they fire everybody and re-hire everybody. For illegal industrial action, the employer is allowed to fire all union members, the employer was happy with this, but only to later find out that it is not easy to fire all union members. There is no way an employer can fire all the workers.

The factory had a surgery, there was a lot of racism in the surgery. White people were getting preferential treatment, we were separated according to colour. Blacks were not properly checked, if you are sick they would send you to the pass office where you are forced to be naked and humiliated by a white female doctor, we had no rights. We were treated like slaves or as if we had some serious sickness.

I remember there was a strike in Cape Town and I was asked to go and address the workers. The coloured people were not interested but I sat them down and we spoke. The employer called the factory and told them to get me arrested because I am going to make things worse.

The other burning issue at Kimberley Clark was that of employers who died and their families were not compensated. That is why we introduced the pension fund. The surplus of the pension fund was more than the accrued amount, we then challenged them on the surplus. They also wanted to dictate to us that we can only have 3 children and a wife as beneficiaries, but the tax form all children were

included. We forced them to accept all children even if they were more than 3. This created a lot of conflict with families. The last one was having a full time shop steward. I was a full time shop steward for 15 years, national treasurer for 4 and half years.

Facilitator: Comrade thank you very much, that was very detailed.

Respondent: Thank you.

END

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