

Phemelo Keokupilwe

Respondent: Let me give you a background from just immediately after schooling. Immediately after schooling I worked in a bakery by then the bakery was known to be Barclay West bakery it was about 35 kilometres from here, then the bakery went bankrupt, then there was a new bakery established in Kimberley that was the Albany Bakery. That was round about 1981, I then joined Albany Bakery. Then its when I started becoming aware of unions because there was some exploitations. The environment was not conducive to join a union because of the style of management. Just around early 1982 I left the bakery and went to work for a construction company as a steel fixer, company known as Amalgamated Reinforcing Company, its head office was based in Benrose in Johannesburg. I worked in that company for 11 months, I left because there were retrenchments, the project came to an end.

When I left the Amalgamated Reinforcing Company I went back to bakery because in bakery I had a number of skills, I started as a lorry boy, I then became a baker, then I became a confectioner. So I did a number of jobs and the last one I left was in Cluncan?? While I was still employed by Albany by then, just after March 1983 I then worked up until towards the end of 1985. In 1985 I joined de Beers Consolidated Diamond Mines. I joined de Beers on 18 December 1985, I was then dismissed on 20 October 1992. The first year when I joined de Beers was during the festive period, I could not interact with some of the workers in the mine. My background in the union started in the mining industry. The year in question, we are going to 1986, some comrades identified the potential from me. I became a shop steward towards the end of 1986 up until the year when I was dismissed which was 1992.

I have occupied a number of positions as a shop steward. In the union I firstly became the secretary of the branch that was my first experience in the trade union, while I was secretary of the branch I was also recruited by some of the comrades to

join the team of the negotiators, the negotiators dealing with de Beers centrally. You have de Beers Finchman, Koffiefontein, Kimberley Geology, Kimberley Mines, we have Cullinan, so we formed a team. During the negotiations we had to leave for Johannesburg. I then became a member of that particular negotiating team up until the time that I was dismissed.

During my time as a secretary, the first term of office when it came to an end I became a deputy chairperson of that same branch. A year later the chairperson of that branch passed away in an accident just after Gogmusfontein, the road when you go to Kuruman, he died on a Sunday in accident. Then the challenge was that we do not have a chairperson and somebody must occupy the position. We called a special conference because it was a special issue it cannot be a normal conference. In the special conference is when I was elected to be the chairperson of the branch. I was chairperson of the branch for two terms. Then, because the position that became vacant was going to be obviously two, the rest were still occupied, it was only if I move, I close the other position of the chairperson somebody must be elected to close the deputy. So was it, my background.

During my time when I was employed in the mine. I happened to be exposed to Marcell Gold who was the deputy secretary to Ramaphosa by then, so during that period the first person that I was exposed to was Cyril, after Cyril Ramaphosa left then came Marcell, then Marcell occupied the position. So when Marcell had to leave the National Union Mineworkers I was no longer employed. Between October 1992 and August 1994 I was unemployed. I then got employment with SAMWU, my employment became effective from 5 October 1994 to date.

Now when I was employed by SAMWU, firstly I was based in the Vaal Area as an organiser. Between 1994 and 2001 my duty was to concentrate on transforming Rand Water Company. When I joined that particular branch of the Greater Vaal, Rand Water was one of the very conservative companies. You did not have black managers at category, in the middle and up. So the task that was given to me was

to transform. When I left Rand Water in 2001 it was transformed because I know of two guys who happened to be the Labour Relations Officer which was Vusi Sampumla and Sam Tshabalala who is currently the Municipal Manager for Emfulweni Municipality in the Vaal. He started his career with Rand Water as an Employee Relations officer. Unfortunately Vusi Sampumla happened to be dismissed for his misconduct, irregularities around tender issues and so on.

The challenge I had with the Vaal especially with Rand Water during 1994 when I joined and up to 1996, because I had to drive a transformational agenda, I was fortunate that by then the chairperson of the board was Kenny Fitlha, and then after Kenny Fitlha then came Perry Shokeme and during that period the minister by then was the late Kader Asmal and then after him came Ronnie Kasrils. I worked with both of them, fortunate as well I worked with Kader when I was the Chairperson of the SGB in Soweto in the Protea Glen area when he was the Minister of Education. I had a relationship with him on a number of levels, and Ronnie I had a relationship with him in the Rand Water Board up until we opened a project in Odi, it was Odi Water Project which is a model that we agreed upon was Public Public Partnerniship (triple P project) – so I was also part of that project when it was established.

Then in 2001 I left the Vaal area I was then based in your West Rand area as an organiser, took a transfer, Vaal was too far to travel. I then worked in Randfontein, I was based there until mid-2005, I was then .., in 2000 when I arrived at West Rand and a month later I was elected secretary of the branch. I became secretary of the branch from that period until mid-2005 around April. We then had a crisis in Johannesburg at the province. I was then called to act in an interim basis as the Provincial Secretary for Gauteng Province from June 2005 up until to the Congress that was held towards the end of 2005. At the Congress in 2005 I was then elected as a secretary, formal secretary. I became secretary during that period up until June/July 2005. The reason why I did not complete my term of office is I got involved in an accident, I was bumped by a car and I suffered some spine problems so I couldn't perform the duties I was expected to. Branches felt that as a result of my illness because I was laid off for six weeks, during that six weeks, the province

couldn't function well as it was expected. Then I was then expected to be relinquish my position which I considered favourably. I went back to Randfontein to West Rand from that period up until end of May 2009 as an organiser. I then started working in Kimberley on 1 June 2009 to date as an organiser.

From 2 August until end of October I will be completing my acting as a Provincial Secretary, that is not my position I was requested to stand in for my colleague who happened to be sick and was expected to be long out of work.

The challenges that the unions are facing today I will categorise as follows:

- The vigilancy that we had in the 1980s is no longer there
- The issue of unions being strategic like we used to do are no longer anymore
- Cohesion on dealing with issues on the table is very lacking
- Co-ordinations of implementation of decisions is no longer there

What is very painful is that it has appeared that within the union you would have, it appears to have some officials that are not really for the job. You see in a trade union movement is not like in your formal work where you would expect that it's this or that or that:

- Firstly with the unions you must have passion to work with people;
- Secondly you should be able to sacrifice;
- Thirdly you must be down to earth to deal with people

We are not expecting to be 100% but we are saying there are times that days are not the same but you must be able to cope and you must be able to deal with that. The fast rating situation comes where an official of the union cannot be able to assist a member. If an official of the union cannot analyse a charge sheet on allegations brought against an employee becomes a problem. Where a union official cannot be able to sit in a meeting and present a position becomes a problem.

You see during the time when I was employed, computers, introduction of technology was a style, it was not really a need. Today technology is advanced, computer becomes a real ..(unclear). Now you firstly need to have personnel that can link that and provide a service. My assessment when I arrived here particularly in the Northern Cape is that there was a lack of confidence by members of the union. You could hear it when somebody talks and say "ag, ag". Arriving in the Northern Cape to me was like a blessing in disguise because I had to change the attitudes of people against the union, I had to change members conduct against some of the officials and I would intervene at any time where I foresee that there could be a problem, although in some camps it's not welcome but I think it's my job to do it I do not need permission to do that because I am formally employed. If a member of this union or members of this union are not happy then my job is at a risk because my salary and some of us and all of us our salaries are made up from their subscriptions. For me its a question of if I lose one member by dismissal or whatever it means my job is at stake, so I would rather add numbers than reduce numbers because the numbers are in the more it becomes better because there will be more input in terms of finance and an employer would be able to listen when we talk sometime.

The hypothetical thing that is happening with the unions, union officials are not organised and they don't belong to any union. So how they co-ordinate their issues will be rather by establishing consultative committees or by one to one. Like in our case we've got a consultative structure but that structure is not functioning well, there's a number of weaknesses.

Just to conclude, the one challenge that the unions are having is that unions does not train their officials properly. You see you have what we call in house training and we have what we call official training. In my case the last time that the union took on training was in 2001, so it means I'm rushed, I need to take time and go and oil my car. But not really because I read a lot and mostly because my job challenges are more in the legal aspects, so in most instances I am dealing with those kinds of

issues. Like currently now when you called me, when I came from arbitration I suffered a blow yesterday where a matter was dismissed for having incorrect timing, so I'm busy preparing papers to re-enrol that matter, which is a job that I must ensure that before I get the ruling my papers should be ready. So immediately when I get the ruling I just push them, that's the challenge.

In this area one of the frustrating issues is that the place is very vast, you travel a lot and you rest little and that's a problem that we are having.

Facilitator: what is then the future of SAMWU with these challenges and problems?

Respondent: Well look for as long as you going to have what we call local government in place, SAMWU will still be there, that's the starting point. The challenge that SAMWU is having is that you have more old and more old members than new employees. New employees now, we have realised that they don't have an interest in trade unions. They rather prefer to deal with their matter through the legal process which is very costly. Unions are the cheapest way of getting service done than getting to lawyers. I have assessed last time one case that I dealt with against the cost of a lawyer on the same volume – union could have paid a lawyer R27 000 once off for that matter whilst I'm getting a salary which gets 10 times or five times into that particular amount, and the challenge to the union officials is that you don't have a recognition or an award if you are doing well, you are not assessed. It's like you're just working, you deliver, you don't deliver you are the same. So you are discouraged in fact. Currently my attention is to leave the unions and go and run business.

Facilitator: are you that discouraged?

Respondent: Of course. Look for me it's not a question of money, for me since I've been in this union for 18 years I've never had a word from my employer "thank you, you've done well, you made us proud", I've never heard. Now you don't even heard words where somebody says thank you you've done it. Victories that I attained for union is not for me is to place the union on the map and if the same union cannot appreciate that, then who am I. So I think even yourself at your own home, you would anticipate that when your child has done well, you would praise your child and say you've made me proud. Here you don't they would rather push you away because you become a threat. Once you prove that I've got this competency, you are pushed away because you are threatening somebody. My attitude and my approach for me as a person is ..., and my colleagues knows me, that's my principle. If I can make one member of this union happy, so it be. If I can add joy into the members of the union socially and what I believe it is that I cannot be a threat to any colleague of mine because the job we are doing we are not in competition, we are in a work that we have to work collectively. If my colleague feel that there's a case, I've got a case like this and this, did you ever have a case like this and what was the outcome, how did you channel it so that we work as a team. But in this instance we don't work as a team, and more so in unions we having this thing of being jealous with each other. If it's somewhere, NEHAWU, like with the current situation, NEHAWU has gone out and made noise about the transfers of the nurses, DENOSA does the same but we are all from the same federation. At this stage we are considering to call a federation to intervene. For us it is not about membership, for us it's about members leaving this particular employers, they are going to have more problems than they envisaged. So we wanted to ensure that if they go there, they can go to any union, if they go out of the municipality, but we have to be able to ensure that their benefits, how they move, where they go they are going to enjoy it. But other unions does not look at it in that way. So hopefully the competition is about membership not about what is in it for our members and for me I am saying my members must leave the union happy, so it should be a happy parting, not a heart feeling parting. So that's what we want. But other unions are ..., so the issue becomes a game of numbers. You can have many numbers but you might also have challenges not being able to serve them, and the lesser number also you have you can be able to reach your members and

make them happy. So I believe that it's better that you make members happy, give service.

Like any other trade union we have our own downfalls, ups and downs, so we will admit, but I would accept in fact when I've done a day service to a member, a member to come and address me, not through a grievance route. The issue today is that if I have to talk to you I have to follow a grievance procedure. There is no way I can talk to you and tell you how I feel.

Facilitator: You mentioned the fact that vigilance is gone and commitment and co-ordination has left the unions today. What really happened, where did you guys go wrong?

Respondent: Well look, the challenge that we are having. Let me address on local government. Management in local government vs post 1994 is different. People that are managing us, our own comrades, people that are in the struggle with us are councillors, my cousin, whoever. Now taking the struggle hard as it could during the apartheid, getting taped, because how then do I, a councillor who is my brother, who is my uncle, who is my cousin do I support my colleagues to go and fight him. Normally people think that when you say during apartheid it was better because you knew that it's time to go, it was better because we dealt with the enemy that oppressed us, now you are dealing with the devils that we know which becomes difficult. Now amongst that also, the issue of corruption. Even some of our shop stewards are enjoying the corruption that are enjoying corruption that is taking place. Some of them are being given kick backs. I can give you examples of what we have now. Let's take a typical example, we have about 228 who are on the waiting list, who are temporary employees, who have to be employed, two or three of our shop stewards, knowing about that list, they brought their cousins, their nieces, their wives to be employed. Now when are we going to deal with the list? That list cannot move. What do you do? You have a situation where there is, not even a position being advertised, there's a position somewhere that has to be advertised, a

shop stewards places himself in that position and move the person in that position. What do you call that? It cannot be. You have a situation where a shop steward, a member gives him a grievance, with supporting documents, the shop stewards turns his back against the member and represent the manager whom a grievance is being made against. What do you call that? So the challenge is that we don't have quite, frank and honest shop stewards. We have shop stewards who are looking at where their bread is buttered. And I don't think when I joined the unions I was one of them. In fact when I was the Chairperson of the Shop Steward Committee in de Beers, the former premier of this province Manne Dipico was accountable to me at that level as a shop steward. Your current deputy minister of minerals and energy Godfrey Olifant worked with me in the mines. I always like to tell people that Godfrey is only now smart, he has never been a smart person, he started as a tool boy, got his Matric in the mines, he ended up in the laboratory. I know him from toe to head because we were together, Manne I know him too. But when you tell people about this, my problem is one, I am one person who likes a low profile, I don't like to be known, you will hear about me where you go but I prefer to be down to earth, because I'm afraid of one thing because once you see yourself at that level, where the people placed you, you start undermining them, their credentials, their credibility etc. I can give you a list of many people that I dealt with that are millionaires in this world but they always find me the same person. Some are recruiting me, come and join the party I say no, I don't belong to that group, my group is this one. So I don't think there's nothing wrong to die poor, I don't think there's nothing wrong to die where I am because in fact as long as my soul is there, I'm protecting my soul, not my pocket, not whatever and some, even of late I was recruited by some comrades in the party saying they think I've played my role, I've contributed a lot, look at where some of us are today. In fact I was supposed to be occupying the position of the Labour Relations Officer, I rejected it. I could see the thinking of the employer, come here and become a roadblock, get rid of these bloody unions. The same person who is in that department is afraid of me, he's a former shop steward who comes out of me, that I recruited. There wouldn't have been peace between myself and him because he wouldn't take my word because now that he is the boss. So I felt that there would be a conflict of interest and I moved out and I'm still out so that's the issue.

Facilitator: SAMWU how much has it been affected by the issue of labour brokers?

Respondent: not really but it's happening on a very small scale and when it happens it happens on categories that are on your Section 56/57 there. In your ordinary level we have not yet experienced that.

Facilitator: and the kind of cases that you have to deal with nowadays, you've just returned from another case, what kind of case are they, are they winnable or is it the fault of the workers?

Respondent: My assessment since I've been here and that can be proven and tested with my record. We are at 80/20 level of dealing with cases, we winning a number of cases. Most cases range, the dominance in those cases are dismissals, and the second level of those cases are unfair labour practice and so they follow. But they are dominated by interpretation of collective agreement, where you would find that the employer suspends a person, the collective agreement says suspend a person with three months with full pay whilst investigating. The employer can suspend a person for more than a year, two, three years. And the difficulty, the challenge that the Northern Cape has had in fact is the question of capacity. The union officials did not see that as a problem up until I knocked it into their minds. I said comrade it is like this "if a member is going to be suspended for more than three months, up to a year, two years, three years" something is wrong, what does your collective agreement say. And I have launched now a campaign which some of them have felt it, where most of them have been a penalty of R10 000 has been imposed upon most of them and they've paid it and most of them if they want to go to Labour Court they turn around when they look at "we taking a dead case to court" – because their argument is that union is not for you to look at compliance of the collective agreement. I'm saying legally as a signatory I'm bound to observe compliance. If you do not comply and you're signatory so I shall declare a dispute against you, and so shall I take you head on. I have to benefit out of that collective agreement. The reading of the, an understanding of the collective agreement is

different and I think employer deals more with the interpretation of agreements academically than real. Because for me if you suspend me for more than three months I have a right to question why more than three months while the agreement is this. I have in fact now recently pushed the employer to suspend a suspension of somebody which was about more than five months. After they lifted the suspension I turned the case against them and I said now what we need to do is we must now go to plea bargaining and sentencing the agreement. And when they refuse I challenge them with another case in CCMA. So in one case they have now three in our case that is against them from one simple thing. Now they want to settle one but they want to negotiate one. I said no if you are going to give me information that I want on this case I am withdrawing the case, if you don't do it then I'm making an application for cost ..(unclear), so you must choose between the two which cheapest way to go, because here it's about ..., and when you hit the man in his pocket you hit him hard. So already now, Sol Plaatjie they have entered into an agreement with me to settle for 10 000 penalty, but they refused to pay when I said they must pay it – they have to pay it because they have breached and violated the collective agreement. A day prior the arbitration, they approached me and said "we are prepared to pay", now they did not see what they are paying for because now, in another two cases against them, they are challenging the same ruling. They are taking the matter to labour court. So I don't want to make noise for now I'm just waiting for them to give me proof that they've paid, once I've got the proof and once I have their papers of review then I'm going to say "but look you can't challenge this particular penalty, because here you've paid, here you choose not to pay, here you choose not to pay, in fact how do you understand this agreement, what did you understand when you paid" – I think I pulled them into a trap now it's a catch 22 situation and this shouldn't be happening. Municipalities have been cruising when they dealt with unions and did not even feel it, to that extent I'm a victim of circumstances, they think I'm the one who is fighting them it's not the union and unfortunately the cases that are raised can prove that it's not me I'm just the service provider. So the attitude is changing. So you could now come to conclusion to say okay there has been something sinister here, either with management and our shop steward or with our officials or with somebody. But I am one person I believe that anything wrong that you do that I believe does not benefit all of us it stinking and I must stop it, that's my attitude. I always tell my colleagues

that I enjoy to work under pressure than working relaxed because when I'm under pressure I'm always alert and I always make sure that anything that I do I do it perfect and that's where I'm sitting and now these kinds of things are putting me in a situation where some comrades believe that look you have a hidden agenda, I'm a straight talker, what is wrong with it. I am straight if you do something now and I have a different opinion I will tell you. But if we cannot go for a common approach well let's part ways, you go away I go away we meet the other side of the mountain if we have to go over the mountain and that's how I am. That's the unfortunate part.

So the decision that I want to leave the union is that I really get disappointed and disturbed around the attitude that I see prevailing amongst our shop stewards, amongst some of our leaders, that it's damn thirsty, I kiss their daughters, their niece and whoever. The struggle is not about people, it's about individuals and I don't want to be part of those individuals, I rather can die without history written on my name I don't care, and that I'm prepared to take and I've said it. So that's the situation.

Facilitator: But is it true that the unions are now being used as some vehicle to power into government and other things or do people deserve to be there?

Respondent: If you were sitting where I'm sitting and having the background of the unions, I would agree with that statement on the basis that people that used to be shop stewards, and I'm talking about those around the 1990s, when I joined the union and before up to 2002, most of them are from the unions. And most of them in the positions they are holding, they are the worse ones handling unions, because unions are fresh to them. They know what they've done in the unions that they fear will happen to them. So it's clear. I can quote a number of shop stewards especially in Johannesburg, that I know they are occupying key positions in local government, I can even tell you now that the guy heading SALGA at head office is a former secretary of the Greater Johannesburg Branch, Themba Khumalo. When

he joined SAMWU I was there and I can tell you there's also another guy I know, Hamilton Wiseman, he is working for government in Johannesburg I think now, I'm not sure which department. When he joined SAMWU I was there, I also worked with Maria Fantu, she also is gone. I can tell you one thing for sure, officials that joined unions after me when I was in Jo'burg they are no longer there. They've got new faces. In fact they get shocked when they hear I've been here before them, and I know Johannesburg better than them in terms of problems in Johannesburg. It's like I'm saying, whether you are giving in or not. My view is that I've given in and I don't think that I'm going to enjoy to be employed by any formal employee if I have to leave my job because I'm going to have a problem with that. In fact I've had this problem since 1992 and it's there in my mind. So I in fact also tried to talk with one lawyer, a human rights lawyer in Johannesburg when I was made an offer and I said "man honestly I need your advice, I've got this challenge, I need to quit the union, not for the base of money but for the base of change of environment and get to the other side". She said to me "look I don't want to discourage you, you are just a good unionist you cannot be a good manager, because once you are going to be that side, that side is going to be suppressed by you, because you know, you hit them whilst you are close to them, now you are better because you are far and they always know that we are expecting this obviousness. There won't be obvious things now". She discouraged me and said rather look at some other things. I said I feel that I've reached a ceiling with the unions and somebody can prove me wrong. I am doing my own legal documents, I don't appoint, I only appoint an attorney and advocate when the matter goes to court. The matter at a bargaining council, whether it's rescision, it ..(unclear) – while in other instances, and you go to the provinces you find that lawyers are engaged to do with that. Immediately when we part ways, I am busy with another document, which when I was busy preparing it I got a ruling against it. So I want to finish and submit it by Monday then make an application for rescision?? On an attorney and go and challenge that matter because the manner in which the commissioner behaved there is wrong. I only got the head of argument of the employer on the 12th and I was not here and on the 14th he gives a ruling. So what time did I have to make that .., I was not given even 48 hours to respond and while on 5 September I wrote him a letter when he demanded ..(unclear) argument, that I have not received any arguments from the employer, there's nothing that I can do. Now the document arrives on the 12th

when I am not here, I arrive on the 12th in the evening, I only realise it, I had to start working with them yesterday, I'm still working with them, then what. So it means the conduct is here, there's a conduct here. So even with some of the commissioners, unions are enemies. So it's not fine and well. In fact you must recall that some of these commissioners are coming from the unions. I have a few of my colleagues in CCMA Johannesburg and sometime when I'm there you may think that it's a union meeting because they will always talk about the 1995 Class, that is what we call ourselves because there's this 1976 Class then we have the 1995 Class, we joke about that.

Facilitator: what special about this 1995 Class?

Respondent: It's a class that emerged after the transition, so it's just about transition. The one mistake that COSATU is doing and even unions are doing lately, they no longer hold what we call Summer or Winter Schools. You see when I joined the union, in the past you were able to be exposed to your work. COSATU would arrange, would ask affiliates to send names of new employed staff, administrators, organisers, etc. COSATU in that particular province will then organise a Summer School or a Winter School or Autumn School. You are removed for a full month out of the office, you are just going to be taken through Induction from your union to the COSATU and it will also be taken through all other relationships in the lines and so on. And every evening you would have talk show class whether it is going to be about legal, there will be some people invited to come and share views with you, if it is political they will Blade, invite Mantashe etc. So they enjoyed that. So that is what happened with the 1995 Class, I hear very little about these schools. Then Ditsela was introduced, when it started it was had good programmes, of late they are also falling in the same trap. But within our Seta's it's worse in terms of corruption, because money allocated to training is not used. Look at how Seta's work, monies in the Seta are mostly benefiting senior managers, it's also benefiting the staff in the Seta's, the board of the Seta's. Now what was intended to by establishing something that does not work. I will tell you, I studied most of the Work Based Plans of Municipalities. General workers are not trained. I can show you four of them they

are not taken to training. Training takes only middle management, artisans and up. Now if you really serious we talking about trying to deal away with illiteracy, we can't do that and we must tell ourselves we have failed because there is on training because the majority of base of your employees are general workers, that's where the cream, the bulk of employees are. Now if you don't train them for the next coming years, ten years, how do you expect any person who was ten years employed could have a knowledge when they are grown up. In fact you are suppressing that person, unless that person is capable they will do it themselves, but even if he reaches that it does not mean that he will obviously be lilies and roses. I can give a typical example of a bus driver in Tshwane who when he was employed ten years later. The employer realised that they've employed an advocate or an attorney driving a bus. He was studying and as he studied he was succeeding, and he was doing his job. And the challenge with the employer was that now he can take this person, put him in a legal office department and he must go and work there. This comrade refused and said I would rather and do it privately, what is in it for me because you are saying the right that I used to have as a worker driving a bus I must come and suppress it now when I'm there and I would rather go out. And he left. That is caused by one thing, that the employer does not conduct skills audit, with the union is worse, you are not even assessed with the union, that's why I'm saying sometimes we put pressure on the employer that you are not doing this and this but we are covering the background of where we're coming from. With us it's worse and I can tell you. How can you be a secretary of a union or being a manager and you fail to observe the law – you employ somebody, this happened in Germiston. Somebody comes and say I'm volunteer. Okay fine you going to volunteer we going to give you a stipend. The environment changes and you don't observe it. Isn't it your duty to manage, to co-ordinate, to monitor and to assess? If these four things were done, COSATU would not have been in that problem. Fortunately, I don't know how they were saved by then because I was no longer a PAC member. But this person was from the Transkei passed away whilst giving voluntary service to COSATU and when the family realised that this person was in fact employed for quite some time by COSATU, the family then approached COSATU to say that we are informed this person was your employee and people in the business could have confirmed because this person was a regular here and COSATU had to negotiate with the family because this person was not employed, he

did not pay UIF, he did not have ID and they had to give an certain amount to the family to bury him. It is happening right here.

Somebody has worked for 17 years and does not have a contract of employment. The salary you cannot match it even with a general worker, it's pathetic. What do you? There's a clear policy and people are not following it. Now I can tell you that very soon don't get shocked that sometimes we may have to close our offices because we are not complying, we will have to close the office because the mistake is here and either one will have to go Mafikeng to go and work from Mafikeng or one should go to Bloemfontein, I have to choose because they cannot terminate I would rather take a retrenchment and that I have to negotiate because my workplace is this one. For you to relocate me there must be an agreement for the relocation.

Facilitator: Just to go back you said that in 1981 you went into the world of bakery and you could not join the union because there was some kind of exploitation. What was happening in that environment?

Respondent: Well in the sector itself, trade unions were not welcomed because they were seen as evils that were coming within the place and you would have not ..., you must understand that bakery is an institution established by investors and you have your board and for you to do anything that must be approved by the board. And also you must understand that we were just in the 1980s, we were just coming out of the 1996 Uprising, so anything that comes with a black man it's either it's a communist or it's evil or whatever. So the environment was not really ..., six years later the environment was not proper. So that is the situation that we find ourselves in. So to join a union was a problem, in fact even the municipality when we started we could not recruit openly. You would have to go to a workshop, if you know there's a workshop here, with forms hidden under your shirt, give somebody who can infiltrate and get them signed and bring it to you. Then you have to write a letter to the employer that you request a meeting to come and talk to the employer, it's only by

then that you can produce those particular forms to the employer to say I've signed this particular union and I'm a member can I get the stop order. We also used to collect stop order by hands. I know of one official who lost his work because of that practice, money got lost in his pocket – she was on the road, she was going to work and had financial crisis, she used some of the money to travel but ..(unclear) I ran short of money when I was on the road I ran out of money and I used that money and it was not the intention to use it for me. There's nothing wrong that she could have because she could have been tempted without money when money was there which doesn't belong to her and she must reach home, what does she do. So that was the problem. So you do not have a choice.

Facilitator: After Matric didn't you consider going to university maybe?

Respondent: Well unfortunately I did not attain Matric, I end up at Standard 8. When I was in the mine I then enrolled for Matric that was in 1987 and unfortunately I was unsuccessful, I got discouraged and decided to concentrate on my labour movement politics. I have not attained Matric and I had the desire to have one but I couldn't. You must also recall that by then I was the .., my father was a pensioner I had now to look after my three other sisters and so on. And in fact the unfortunate part is that the three of us at home, my elder brother, my sister and myself we now rank within the unions. I don't know whether it's this norm that my father used to be a mine worker and my mum used to work in the kitchens and we felt that look let's go to the trade union all of us. In fact I was the first one to be a trade unionists, I recruited them, though my brother politically and trade union was the same group, with my sister and myself we from COSATU, we from the party, from the ANC, but normally people ask me how do you cope with your brother being a PAC and being socially per se, I say that answer lies on the womb, I cannot answer that. The person who brought us to earth should have been able to respond to those, unfortunately she is not on earth, so, blood is thicker than water, he's my brother, that's all.

Facilitator: then the choice of going to de Beers, how did it happen? Mining is a tough world.

Respondent: You will recall that in the bakery I was earning about R65 a week and the value of the rand was very strong. For me was rather to .., because you must recall in 1986 I had a first born, a girl, I had to start thinking of a better career, better future for myself. De Beers was one considered to be the one best paying company by then, in fact it was by then. If you look at the salary one earned by then, moving from earning about R150 to R200 in a month which you get staggered, you don't get it once, you go to the mine, and you are not provided with food and accommodation, you have to travel. In the mine I was given accommodation, I was given food of a cheaper price and I had accommodation. I would travel when I want, if I want to stay over the weekend no hard feelings. Now my first salary at de Beers was R456 a month, that was the total salary for a general worker and it was a lot of money. I can tell you that I bought a shoe that I cannot even buy today. I bought a Barker shoe, I wore it for 10 years until I gave it up, that shows you there was value for that quality. I had to buy a new trouser, a new shirt, a jacket because now my parents were saying you are a man you must wear a jacket. So I towed the line. So going to de Beers I thought it will be for greener pastures, it was not. So what I experienced and what I heard gave two different dimensions.

Facilitator: what did you experience?

Respondent: what you heard and what you experienced was two different things, because you would see somebody working for the de Beers being smart on dress, driving this car and that well behind that was the smart clothing you did not know how this person earned this kind of clothing and driving style, I am realising that some of them were even stealing diamonds. Some of them were ..(unclear) so that is the experience that I came across. I could not join any of those because I wanted to live a clean life, any dirty life that I am going to live is going to put my kids in

danger. What I am going to do is going to be counted on my kids and that's how things went.

Facilitator: and then you became a shop steward in 1986, did the workers see something in you?

Respondent: Well I can tell you one thing, I have enjoyed my time in office, in fact I was rated one of the best shop stewards within my branch. In fact the painful situation is when I was dismissed and I had to leave them and go home because I had to call a general meeting and talk to them "comrades now the road has come to an end I have to go". And then it was painful, people were crying and I said maybe I shouldn't have been part of this meeting because I would not have seen and heard these things. And there were a number of stories of course but I said comrades there's nothing that I can do, I can't force myself in the relationship with the employer I have to do. For the fact that I hope and I trust that I was the best person, the union then opened a project of a shop in the mine and I was called to come and work in that shop and while I was doing that job I was also doing my ..(unclear) and assisting other shop stewards to know how to deal with things. I would sit down and assist them how to prepare a case. So I think I still believe that even today I think I had some feeling that sometimes I have to visit that mine just for a week, go and stay with them and try to hear what are the challenges happening in the mines. I know that for those that I normally meet the situation has become better.

Facilitator: why were you dismissed?

Respondent: We had an issue with a very adversarial management style underground. There was one or two managers, you must recall when you work underground you wear gum boots and they get ..(unclear) – now there was this underground mining officer, newly appointed, management had a style that if you

are going to the building you cannot go in with gum boots, you must go to the change rooms and change what you are wearing, wear your clothes that you came wearing to the mine and then go there. For us it was foolish because you wasting time to go to the change room, change and then go back to the offices and come back and change again, it was a distance between the office and the change rooms etc. Workers decided that we are going to stage a sitting and when we stage a sitting we are going to launch it on three offices. We challenged the office of the General Manager, the office of the superintendent of the plant, the office of the superintendent of the mine manager. So we then invaded the office, fortunately I was not there when it started. When the blame was implemented, when it was discussed I was there, I was not there when it was done. Of course I was in the same building when the action took place. Then I was called because I was the chairperson of the shop stewards committee to come and observe what is happening. In the meanwhile I had to go and occupy that office with them, tried to cool down the situation then Manne Dipico and Godfrey Olifant were occupying the one of the general manager and Montwedi, the current regional secretary of NUM here and another guy Mosweu, they had to ..(unclear). So we planned this thing. Now I was just giving information. Amongst those I was the only one who was dismissed and another colleague of mine because the employer wanted me, the office that I occupied ..., I requested a phone from the manager of the mine and said you are saying this and I can't hear what you are saying, borrow me a phone so that I can phone ..(unclear) I pick up a phone I phone Godfrey I got hold of Godfrey and he said you are okay Mchana that's what we are doing, I then phoned Montwedi and he said that's what we are doing. So he picked up the phone and phoned and found that the situation that he had in his office is the same in other offices. So management felt that .., now they demanded me to pronounce names of people who were in the office I said I can't do it, why should you want me to do it, you were there, you should know in terms of a shift that was there at work who are those people. I knew, because I was part of that shift, so I couldn't do anything unfortunately and I declined. Then they said you pronounce the names we not going to charge you and I said I'm prepared to die alone and I did that exactly. One of the things they were saying is that I was not co-operative because I did not give them the names. I said I don't know what names you are talking about because you're talking about your own employees and you should know them. I

was dismissed purely for the basis that we occupied an office and they alleged that some staff were ..(unclear) in the office, that was alleged, and that there was a lady, a Greek or Jewish lady that was working there as well who suffered a blow of abnormal period because these guys were pushing him around. I could not see .., the guy admitted that when we were sitting here, guys were sitting on this side of the table and she was coming at the back, so she was caught right at the door, I couldn't see because I was sitting. I could have stood .., so they said my conduct of not disclosing is a problem and that they cannot take it

Facilitator: and they got rid of you.

Respondent: I knew that they were going to dismiss me, I was mentally prepared I knew that they were going to dismiss me. They had tried on a number of occasions and couldn't.

Facilitator: I was just about to come to that to say what about victimisation at work, being a shop steward and so on?

Respondent: there was victimisation, but not direct, it was indirect because I would sometimes get report from the foreman that this and that has not happened, the people would not come to me directly and say that, so really it was a question of hidden faces. What I know and what I can confirm is that I know very well that our management was fearing me because they knew that I'm untouchable. I did not take it light because I knew that at some time they sent some people to go and attack me and they did not get it right. I knew that there were some dirty jobs that they had attempted. In fact even when I was in the West Rand, I know of an incident that people were given R50 000 to go and get rid of me and the same person came to me and I decided to quit, that's why I left Gauteng because I realised my life was in danger and did not take it lightly. In fact I know that now and then my life is under threat and I don't take it lightly and therefore I'm always

prepared to take that punch. I always say to people that I can only be a threat to management but not to my colleagues and I know that I am a threat and I feel it even when it happens, my conscious tells me (interruption). So that is the set up.

Facilitator: but in terms of also talking about 1985 to 1992, the mining industry. How were the issues of safety and so on? Did you have those challenges?

Respondent: You will recall that the Kinross incident happened in those period. Now that particular incident happened when health and safety was at a high risk. Diamond mines are not high risk than gold, coal and other mining industries. The diamond mine Rockinsalt, your gold mine you follow the pipeline, a coal mine is dangerous in that coal can burn at any time if something is wrongly spilt. So you understand the degree of dangerousness in the mines will differ chamber by chamber and mine by mine. So that is the situation. NUM was the first union to become vocal on the issue of health and safety and recall as well that after the Kinross mine we staged a stay away that if people could die in this situation what about us, so we are not exonerated from that and I think that's what we've been doing.

Facilitator: so in another words people can sue the mine over certain issues like death in the mine or injury in the mine?

Respondent: there has been death in the mines but they would happen as ..., like the one that I know that was very disturbing was with one mineworker whom a dumper??, bumped him, in fact went over him and was smashed, we identified him by the hand that there's a person lying here. All we could do was to pick up the hand and get the particular pieces of flesh were still under, that was hypothetical one. So it does happen, like people who happen to have high blood or who can't take the pressure in the mine and they faint or they die, you have a number of incidents that happen. Some of them happened ..., I was involved myself in a rock

fall but fortunately I was not hurt, in fact the four of us were not seriously hurt because we could identify the incident in time because the timing was wrong for us to be at that particular point because there was no barricade to stop us, we took advantage of that and we could see through the pit, the open cast that there's something wrong outside, because you could see when you are just over to move when there's something going wrong outside.

Facilitator: did the union deal with such issues, you were a shop steward in the middle of all these things?

Respondent: well they did deal with it but not really in a sense that you would be satisfied, you must understand the employer always will only take something serious if there's a bone fracture, when there's a chop of a limb or a break of rib and all that, but only because I had stretched muscles and that is something that would heal and so on, and it was just like that.

Facilitator: levels of exploitation?

Respondent: well during that time, one could say there was because if you look at how the mines used to do away with your mine sinkers, people who sink mines, it's where privatisation started and NUM did not look at it in that way because you would have people who are called shaft sinkers in your mine who were employees who after introduction of these contracts that are called mine sinkers, then you have people to be faced with retrenchment because their career in that field is no longer certain. That was the problem

Facilitator: what were the living conditions of the workers? Some workers lived in the mine hostels and so on, that could be an issue that the union had to address?

Respondent: Let me be honest with you. The environment of hostels that we used to stay in, including myself, it was in four folds. You would have accommodation for your C Class people, your managers and all that in a formal stay area, with your coloureds, with your black married staff and all that. You would then have a separate accommodation for your security personnel which is your security guards. You would then have a separate accommodation for artisans, you would then have accommodation for what were called hostel dwellers, the category that they belonged to. Now, if you get into that hostel you will find double storey building and you will find semi story buildings, you were allowed to choose where you want to go to, but within that same particular area you would then have a flat area where it's only your supervisors and your whoever who would stay there, and drivers and so on. So the condition of that hostel was such a nature that you would not believe that it's a hostel, you would have thought it's a guest house. The manner in which it was built and the way it was maintained – it was not just an ordinary hostel, like the hostels that you know, that you may have seen. It was very classy.

Facilitator: wage issues, were wages an issue at that time?

Respondent: Wage was an issue because the first strike that de Beers experienced was in 1986, that was the biggest wage strike that de Beers ever had, and that was my first year in the mine, preceding the year that I would now become a shop steward. So it was a strike, was an issue in the mine.

Facilitator: but were the cases winnable, wage cases, did you succeed on getting better wages?

Respondent: Look we did but you must recall that, we did win them but with a very minimum scale because by then your Department of Labour, your CCMA's of today were not there. So the matter would be dealt with by the Department of Labour and the determination would be made finish and *klaar*. It's not like today where you

can negotiate, you get into a deadlock, you dispute, you get a conciliator, you get an advisor, it's not like that. Today's way of dealing with wages is moderate, it's much more better and it gives room for parties to exchange – before you couldn't, if it's deadlocked its been imposed, finish and *klaar*. But in fact we are seeing that particular style coming back in local government with SALGA, where in 2005 SALGA did that, they did it again this year. So I think the style that SALGA is trying to install, the style that, management style that says, your bargaining powers are weakened and are weakened by implementing without an agreement. The question that I'm asking myself from where I'm sitting and I still need answers for that. If next year we have to have a wage negotiation, if we have to have it, on which agreement are we going to negotiate? The agreement is not concluded, it's not signed, so there's no agreement. So we can call the negotiations at any time, as it suits us because there's no agreement and that can work against them, and that can catch them with their backs on the wall. They could not come to any labour court and say but we had an agreement on wages, they should rather say we implemented what we offered which was not acceptable, it can't be an agreement. So it's going to be, I think the problem that SALGA is having, it's working on issues by emotions and you must recall again these are people that come from us, trade unionists, politicians, activists and so on, so they are trying to gain scores and to place themselves in a better position that during their time this wouldn't have happened.

Facilitator: did NUM succeed to attract in this province, coloured workers to be part of the union?

Respondent: Of course during my time we did, not only coloured as well, but also artisans that were still undergoing training because you must recall, in terms of the Training Act by then, your Department of Labour dealing with the Training Act, you wouldn't have your trainees at any capacity, you could not have them joining the union. If you were an artisan still under training or let's say for that matter for lack of a better word, you could not declare a dispute with de Beers if you have a dispute, you have to lodge your dispute with the Department of Labour and they will decide whether it's a dispute or not and you would also have to lay your complaint with the

Training Board, so you do not have a right as a trainee to lodge a complaint or whatever up until you have obtained your trade and you are done then, working for the company you are covered by the Labour Relations Act.

Facilitator: During your stay at Vaal, I mean you joined SAMWU at 1994, you mentioned that there were challenges in transforming the water sector. What kind of challenges did you face?

Respondent: Well look the first one is that the water sector by nature they were very conservative, dominant conservative – you must recall that the water sector was one of the strongest hold of National Party and Conservative Party. Now Rand Water has two styles of management in the local government. They will have what you call board members who are politicians and councillors but they are called board members. Now you would have what you call your ordinary management style. Now in Rand Water, what used to be an executive counselling municipality is a board, it's not investors it's a board – not board in terms of you have investors – Rand Water is one of the biggest parastatals. Now if a time comes that you must have your politically inclined group, a party within that area of jurisdiction should now concentrate on deploying cadres into the board. There was a time when I was still with SAMWU in Jo'burg we asked Blade Nzimande to be part of the board and its the time that the late Joe Modise was the MEC. We did not succeed, we tried to canvass COSATU to say look if you are going to allow that some people from COSATU to be on the board, we not going to be able change that board. It's when NAC started deploying Kenny Fitlha, Phiri Sholkemay, Jean Magubane, I can name a long list that they must now be members of the board and by then, we then started having what we call a bilateral with them. Prior to any board meeting they will caucus with us and when I say us in this particular instance I am referring to SAMWU and to say comrades look this must be on the agenda of the board that we want to go and discuss, they could even canvass for some of the shop stewards within ourselves for employment, deploy in particular areas. If you can see Rand Water now, I know of a guy who was dismissed in 1996 who is today a regional manager and I think before you wouldn't have a dismissed person to occupy such a

high position. I also know of another guy who is occupying a reasonable position in the office of the labour relations, I also know of a shop steward who was not a member of SAMWU but he is a shop steward that I know, the surname is Zulu, Swartkoppies, he was an employ relations officer. There's another one that I know Lawrence Mpekwana, from SAMWU, he was also a labour relations office. But could you have had that, during the conservative style .., you wouldn't. We used this precisely because we wanted to change the style of management. The people that I have listed to you and many others, they turned their backs to the unions. What do you do?

The model that you want to bring in to deal with issues can also work against you if it's not properly done, because there was no way these people would have accounted to the union. It was gone, so you don't account and if you come and say we want you to account the person can say I am not here on your account, I'm employed by so and so. So this is what has been happening with some of the councillors within the ANC, you can tell that they are not employees of ANC but they are deployed. So you will always try to find a way in which you will try to deal with things the way that it suits you.

Facilitator: when you look back, starting with NUM, what would you say were the milestones and the downside?

Respondent: Two things I would recognise and consider milestones, NUM has been able to be one of the biggest trade union movements in the mining industry that has changed a number of issues and especially around their compound style, the style where in some model were segregated per groups of nation and all that. But the downfall now is this, that as trade unions even today, we are not making follow ups on matters that we had. I realised about two days ago, when I was dismissed in 1992, NUM did nothing in my case. Meanwhile, Kgalema by then, the Deputy President was the secretary. I was dismissed in 1992, I received a letter around April/May in 1993 that the union is going to put money on the defence of my case

but since then it was gone. When I tried to follow up I was told that look hopefully your case is being closed. But how, when? These are the questions I want answers to, I want to set up a meeting with the regional secretary of NUM to clarify these issues because then if it goes to a push then they will have to pay me for making me wait for something that they know they are done with but not telling me. I have the right to know what happened.

Facilitator: in the Vaal what would you say were there downside there?

Respondent: Like I said, the downside that we had in the Vaal, precisely that you had shop stewards that are in for themselves but not for members and it's still happening, and I pick it up that it's happening now in 2009 around June when I went to represent one person who was a manager and was our member. They refused to give defence to that particular person, because he did not agree to allocate certain positions to shop stewards in his department because they wanted their own bras. He said refused to do it because he said we need to way in way that will not put us into conflict and what they wanted him to do is something that was against his principles. So I had to move from here to go and defend her because I believe that he was right. The first thing that I did was I requested her to produce his salary advice for three months to ensure that he's a member. I dealt with the matter and the case was dismissed. So in fact the employer was wrong, so if I would have not intervened, I would have contributed to the downfall and even the current municipal manager, when he was attacked on allegations that were not proven, I managed to push the employer to settle and after that settlement they recalled him to come and be the municipal manager. By then he was a deputy municipal manager. So I did it only because of conscious reasons, not that I wanted money or I wanted to be popular and that is why when they wanted to offer me a position of a labour relations officer both of them I said somebody is going to read it as pay back time, somebody who does not have a history of what happened in the relationship, so I said you owe me nothing. So he stopped.

Facilitator: and here, have you made some headways since you came back?

Respondent: what do you mean?

Facilitator: successes, downfall problems, challenges?

Respondent: I can, without doubt in my mind, I'm doing very well and even better and I think I've reached the ceiling. There are no more challenges for me now, I also do not foresee any challenges – for one reason that most of the things that come up are things that I see them to be obvious. You see when a member comes in and present me with a charge sheet, I just look at it and say I have to get the following for me to be able to do my work and I do it.

Facilitator: Just a general question, the position of women within NUMSA, where do they stand?

Respondent: our union advocates, SAMWU per se advocates the role of women to be in the centre of the struggle. We use to have what we call Women's Forum, we've changed that name to gender because we realised that calling it women's it means you are discriminating but rather established gender. We have a national gender committee, we have a provincial gender committee, we have a branch and regional gender committee. So whether the committees are functioning or not, really I don't know because you will understand my role mostly is on the service providing. The person that would be knowing more about gender issues would be the education officer because that particular responsibility lies with his office. Mine is really just on servicing but what I've in fact seen as a challenge, again as a union official, is when you have to defend a case of a woman in the workplace because well on this side you are male and that side is a female. If a comrade comes into your office and consult and close the door, then the mind changes. And I always

talk with my colleagues that is why normally I don't like to be consulted in my office, for one reason, whether you are male or female, I prefer to come to a board room, sit in a the board room because I think the board room is much more placed and does not give you those kinds of mentality and I'm trying to work with the mind set of people because also it's the role I have to do, that look there's nothing wrong if a woman comes in my office and consults, and in fact female comrades they like to go to my office. They prefer to come to my office and I tell them the environment that allows us to talk and be open is the board room. The office is congested. In fact what is happening now of late, we finding a high developing level of employment of young women in the municipal sector than before. Before any woman who would have worked in the municipal sector from the previously disadvantaged group would be a cleaner. It's unlikely that you would have women who would be managers, who would be clerk and so on. They were always pushed to the cleaning of the passages or either to the tea rooms to make tea and now that has changed and I think we welcome that.

Facilitator: Did those particular women have benefits, maternity etc?

Respondent: Well they did not up until we were able to negotiate such, but also I think the problem that we had, why these benefits would have not been there, is that the pool of negotiators in the area of negotiating benefits were males. So it was dominantly male. Why should I worry about pregnancy if I cannot be pregnant, why should I worry? Why should I worry about my kids if I could not sit at home with the kids? The issue of that as a father is you may need to be at home with your kids and your wife is not there. You see that's why even when we look at most of the agreements you will see them they are still gender bias. They will always talk about "he" so they are not balanced. So constitutionally these women should stand up and say "we claim our constitution here that we are added as well", it's going to be a real challenge for these books to be changed and history is going to prove us wrong that even after 1994 we still have not.

Facilitator: but in general are women willing to push and occupy positions within?

Respondent: Yes they are but their downfall is about us as men, why should my wife go and sit in a meeting until 10 o'clock with males, and why should when my wife always talk about Mr D and Mr D and not about me. It's a challenge that we have as men that as men we cannot change our minds, that if a woman admires Phemelo because Phemelo is there, he's a good guy around the table, it's not like that, we always think beyond. So it happens with my wife when somebody calls me and discuss and it's a female she will complain and say this woman is taking up my time, I want also want to talk to you. It's a question of education, how do you deal with those issues. I thought my wife would have been matured to know unions because when I was her boyfriend she was already in my life, I'm celebrating 20 years now in January and I think I have to knock this into her sense that I've been with her for 20 years and she still does not understand what is happening in my life. Out of my 20 years that I have been married with her, it's only two years ..., I spent most of my marriage life in the trade unions. So that's why I'm saying I need time to quit so that I can start a new life.

Facilitator: The SAMWU strike seems to have not taken off as expected. Is this the beginning of the end?

Respondent: Not really, I think the strike has been faced with a number of polaration, poloration that members felt that when we strike nationally we do not address their grievances locally which is correct. But also that the emergence of the grievances that emerged during the strike that could not lift off the ground is of the fact that members felt that in some instances their matters were left hanging and this is done by the employer and therefore they hold the view that if that has to happen or could have happened, it should have been addressed in another way. The other way that they wanted to address was during the strike, it's where they wanted us to deal with two issues in marches. We address the local grievances through that same march and we address the same national aspect in the same

march. Now you would have understood that would have clouded the national strike march. I know and I recall very well that I in fact, I in fact advised them and there are those that have taken my advise that there's nothing wrong for you to have a march but why don't you choose a day that you have your own march that the province will come and lead and two or a day later we have a march that belongs to national. This march belongs to national it doesn't belong to us. Then there were a number of pity issues that then came out and then others said since I lodged a grievance two years ago is not addressed, since I did this months ago and is not happening and now I was supposed to be promoted, my case is in arbitration, etc., so such things started clouding issues. So we could have not, and instead the morale of our members went down. The one issue also that became a very serious concern was that we have what we call a strike fund, which has been going on for some time. Members want that the strike fund must be disburse certain awards when they are on strike, but assessment of the head office .., the assessment financially that the money, the status of that particular fund is not in a good state to start doing that. Not that it's not enough, it could have been enough. You will recall that in 2005 we had a strike that took more than 6 weeks. The union bought t-shirts for members because there was an outcry that we don't have t-shirts. The union bought t-shirts for all members for them to be identified, to be identical during the strike. We then had a strike in 2009, members said no this time we want food packages, but then I think the critical part and the failure here lies with the leadership of the union. Failure to finalise the policy dealing with the strike fund – because it's a policy, there was a proposal, how will we deal with the strike fund issue in an event of a strike and how many days shall it become effective because if are just to spend two days and expect this, and of course the issue again is the question of our co-ordination. You will expect with this vast province, if the province have to give out food parcels, what will it mean. It would mean other people will even go up to as the month end not getting their parcels because you would have to ensure that you get a proper co-ordination, otherwise you are opening yourself to objections and some were drawing from the strike fund. That is the situation.

Facilitator: Was it worth it to be part of unions, or given a chance you would want to live another life?

Respondent: I do not want to put a general answer to this issue. My assessment is that yes it was a good thing to belong to the union, I have no regrets, I don't regret to be within this union for the past 18 years. But you will understand that leadership comes and leadership goes. But where you start finding yourself in a situation, where the leadership starts changing their style, approach, how things are dealt with, people not following the policies of the union then it becomes a dangerous area because I don't believe that my age that I've been with the union, the positions that I held in the union, allows me to let somebody to mislead me. I don't. For me most hypothetical now is that I've realised that the relationship with the union in terms of management style is going down the drain, so rather than starting fighting with you and going to the CCMA, going to the labour courts of this courts of this country and I know that I will ..(unclear) – but who suffers, it's the monies of the workers that are at stake by individuals. I've said to my colleagues that I would rather quit, I think I've had enough. But I can tell you I've benefited a lot in the union – when NUM could not do anything with me – this union got me where I am and I'm proud to be part of this family, it's just that there comes a time that at some point in my ..(unclear) let's quit now, the blankets are no more warm let us part ways. When that time arrives it's a heat of a moment and has to happen. I don't want it to be done in such a way that some people should feel that look ..(unclear), I'm doing it for the benefit of saving the loss that the union could suffer as a result of my challenges against it. And in fact I'm contemplating to start with ..(unclear) now before the end of this – just to tease them to find out where are they. And I know for a fact that I'm going to succeed with all of them.

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

Respondent: Look, I think what could be considered is when you are going to deal with interview on this issue, that you seem to get hold of people who have been to the unions prior to 1994 and also try to get the young workers, those two categories. Because COSATU have now started a young workers campaign, now I think the

commencement of that is to try and alert these young people that while you were not here some time ago this was the life that people lived as workers and you cannot divorce yourself from this particular history. There's a history that you should know otherwise you are lost as a generation. I think that is what it's doing, unless that maybe at the end of the objective of it, is to have junior union members because I know in England with NUM there was such a thing, that establishment, where England established a youth league for mine workers, and I don't think within COSATU it's the same. You can only think about the succession plan of Malema in another sphere.

Facilitator: Thank very much.

END

Collection Number: A3402

Collection Name: Labour Struggles Project, Interviews, 2009-2012

PUBLISHER:

Publisher: Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand

Location: Johannesburg

©2016

LEGAL NOTICES:

Copyright Notice: All materials on the Historical Papers website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Disclaimer and Terms of Use: Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

People using these records relating to the archives of Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, are reminded that such records sometimes contain material which is uncorroborated, inaccurate, distorted or untrue. While these digital records are true facsimiles of paper documents and the information contained herein is obtained from sources believed to be accurate and reliable, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand has not independently verified their content. Consequently, the University is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the website or any related information on third party websites accessible from this website.

This document forms part of a collection, held at the Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.