

Railway employees, African or non-African, were exposed to injuries while on duty. Although some of the accidents were reportedly caused by the inability to utilise devices such as coupling sticks, the Railway administration generally attributed others to 'carelessness and inattention to regulations'.<sup>4</sup> Africans in the employ of Rhodesia Railways faced an additional risk of injuries which were inflicted by their European supervisors and workmates. Incidences in which Africans were 'splashed with hot water', 'burned with an egg' and 'pushed into pits' were a source of concern to the Railway African Workers' Union (R.A.W.U.) and the Railway administration.<sup>5</sup> Injuries suffered by Africans were not restricted to those sustained in the course of carrying out their duties on the Railways, but also included those sustained while off duty. In cases where an employee was injured but was able to perform his duties, the Railways deployed him to another department where he could function with the injury.<sup>6</sup> Over 60 per cent of the accidents on Rhodesia Railways in the years 1948-1951 involved African employees.<sup>7</sup> While both African and European employees needed protection, the higher rate of accidents among Africans implies that they needed more protective and curative measures.

Industrial injuries are variant in their levels of seriousness. On the Railways, as in other undertakings such as the mines, accidents resulted in the disablement of employees either temporarily or permanently. Temporary disablement precluded the employee for a certain period of time after which he was able to resume his duties. Permanent disablement, which was either partial or total, affected the workman for the whole of his life. The extreme in accidents among industrial workers was the death of an employee owing to a fatal accident.<sup>8</sup>

The extent of injuries suffered in the course of employment had a direct bearing on the amounts and nature of benefits to the workman or, in the case of death, to his dependants. Legislation with regards to occupational accidents in the then Northern Rhodesia recognised this aspect of social security coverage. According to the Employment of Natives Ordinance, 1940, employees who had suffered permanent partial incapacity were entitled to 'not less than one month's wages and not more than one year's wages', while those with permanent total incapacity were expected to receive 'not less than one year's wages and not more than two years' wages.'<sup>9</sup> Similarly, legislation such as the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance which came into force in March 1945 and the Workmen's Compensation (Amendment) Ordinance Number 19 of 1950 fixed the amounts of benefits to injured African workmen on the basis of the seriousness of the injuries.<sup>10</sup>

A factor which should not escape consideration in a discussion of employment injury is that of preventive measures which are put in place by the employer. On the Railways, classes of instruction in first aid (which included the supply of first aid boxes) were held for new entrants as well as those who were already in the service.<sup>11</sup> In addition to first aid classes, Rhodesia Railways made use of 'safety first' posters and safety films in order to spread accident awareness among the employees.<sup>12</sup>

The supply of protective clothing for the prevention of accidents and reduction of their effects was one of the conditions laid down for Africans in the employ of Rhodesia Railways.<sup>13</sup> The Railway administration undertook to provide Africans with protective clothing when they were engaged on duties which involved risks of injury. Despite the laid down conditions of service, there were reports of Africans 'handling steel shavings

without gloves' and 'handling acids without overalls or aprons'.<sup>14</sup> The inability of the Railway administration to provide the necessary protective clothing was described by the African union in 1951 as 'an old outstanding complaint'.<sup>15</sup> This situation was also existent among some European railway employees such as Checkers and Crane Drivers at Lusaka who had been making demands for protective clothing 'for a long time'.<sup>16</sup> The inadequacy and lack of protective clothing had a bearing on the nature and seriousness of accidents to African workmen which could have otherwise been prevented.

Most of the accidents among African employees in the period 1952-1964 could have been reduced both in their occurrence and seriousness if adequate protective clothing had been supplied by Rhodesia Railways.<sup>17</sup> In spite of appeals by some European supervisors to have an increased supply of protective clothing to African employees who worked under them, the response of the Railway administration was sometimes negative.<sup>18</sup> This attitude resulted into a situation where employees such as Motor Trolley Boys worked without protective clothing and were more exposed to injuries. In contrast with African employees who were dependent on supplies of protective clothing from the employer, European employees could even afford to make requests to the Railway administration for overalls (two types) to be purchased on their behalf and the cost of the protective clothing was deducted from their wages.<sup>19</sup>

The subject of protective clothing was treated with importance, leading to its discussion at Joint Industrial Committee (J.I.C.) and Statutory Industrial Council (S.I.C.) meetings. For example, both the J.I.C. meeting of November 1959 and the S.I.C. meeting of April 1962 were informed that a report on protective clothing for Africans was being awaited since no response had been received from the Safety Assistant.<sup>20</sup> The delay in

the release of the Safety Assistant's report could be attributed to inefficiency, as well as the problem of what its contents were supposed to be since it would require the African Union representatives to go through it. As a result of this, the General Manager's instruction to the Chief Officer was that the report was to be 'phrased accordingly'.<sup>21</sup>

The reputation of the Railways with regard to accident prevention through the issuance of protective clothing was not entirely unsatisfactory. Although evidence from the 1945 Railway Strike Commission showed that the Railways at Ndola and Lusaka went to the dehumanising extent of providing 'ninety-nine empty [grain] bags ... to be used as overcoats',<sup>22</sup> the obligation of supplying protective clothing was sometimes fulfilled. However, such protective clothing as rain capes and tunics were more of a protection from weather conditions than a protection against accidents.<sup>23</sup> The rule on the Railways was that any uniform or equipment issued remained the property of the company and had to be returned in good condition on leaving Railway service.<sup>24</sup> The charge slapped on African employees for the loss of uniforms could be attributed to this regulation. While acting as a disciplinary measure among Africans so that they could take good care of their protective clothing, the regulation was aimed at cutting down on costs by lowering the number of requisitions to the Stores Department at Umtali, Southern Rhodesia.

Accident prevention, though of crucial importance in industrial production, does not completely do away with the occurrence of injuries to workers. In instances where workers were injured, one of the required actions was the reporting of the accident in order that the employer and the state could be notified. The failure to report accidents was punishable by law. The Railway administration was well aware of the need to report

accidents promptly. In 1960, the African Affairs Department of Rhodesia Railways reminded all European supervisors to report accidents occurring to Africans within twenty four hours by filling in the injured on duty reports.<sup>25</sup> The injured on duty reports used on the Railways were, until 1963, different for European and African employees.

All accidents which required compensation were initially handled by the Compound Manager at Broken Hill, who did so in collaboration with the Labour Officers at Livingstone and Broken Hill.<sup>26</sup> With effect from 1st October, 1950, the Regional Controller, African Affairs Department and the Labour Officer (both based at Broken Hill) took charge of all cases of accidents involving Africans occurring anywhere in Northern Rhodesia.<sup>27</sup> The procedure, therefore, was that the report of the accident moved from the European supervisor to the Regional Controller who, in turn, submitted a report to the Labour Officer at Broken Hill. The ineffectiveness of this arrangement was described by the Labour Officer (Broken Hill) as an 'unwieldy procedure' and a clumsy overcentralisation' which caused delays.<sup>28</sup> Delays in the reporting of accidents entailed a chain reaction. They meant delayed assessment and, subsequently, delayed payment of compensation to the deserving worker.

Initially, in order to meet the expenses involved in compensation to workers, Rhodesia Railways paid some money to the Workmen's Compensation Commissioner. By so doing, Rhodesia Railways became the only exempted employer in Northern Rhodesia and was not required to pay any premiums to insurance societies.<sup>29</sup> The Railways were, subject to the approval of the Governor of Northern Rhodesia, issued with a certificate of exemption which was renewed annually. Between April 1965 and March, 1966, for example, Rhodesia Railways transferred to the Workmen's

Compensation Fund Control Board the amount of £2,034. 12s. 9d. for the payment of compensation to its employees.<sup>30</sup> With effect from 1st July, 1967 when the unitary system came to an end, Rhodesia Railways ceased to be an exempted employer.<sup>31</sup>

African employees on the Railways were not paid their wages during the periods when they were off duty after having sustained injuries on duty. This practice was brought to an end with effect from March 1961, when the Acting General President of the Railway African Worker's Union signed an agreement with the Railway administration. By this agreement, the Railways undertook to pay full wages to incapacitated workers for three months with possible extensions.<sup>32</sup> This award rectified a problem which had been leading to loss of wages among African employees and, as such, was a source of complaints.

Where compensation was required, the amounts of benefit depended on the assessment of the degree of incapacity which was expressed as a percentage. According to the Commissioner for Labour and Mines, permanent disablement of over 35% among Africans would entitle them to pensions, while lump sums which were payable for deaths were raised from thirty-six to forty-two times the monthly earnings as from 1st December, 1950.<sup>33</sup> The loss of both legs was assessed at 100 per cent incapacity in accordance with the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance, 1944. This entitled the affected employee to not only artificial limbs at the expense of the Railways, but also a monthly pension the calculation of which included the value of food and quarters, monthly earnings, and an allowance for two children.<sup>34</sup>

The monthly wage rate and the value of food and quarters were assessed through the records held by the employer, such as the Workmen's Compensation Form Number

33 which was the employer's register of accidents to African employees. For the calculation of children's allowance, the Labour Officer (Broken Hill) entered into correspondence with respective District Commissioners (where necessary) in order to establish whether the worker had eligible dependants or not. In cases where there were no dependents or the children were above the qualifying age, the compensation excluded children's allowances.<sup>35</sup>

The conditions of service for African employees on the railways did not make the employer responsible for finding alternative employment within the company for workers who became disabled as a result of industrial injuries. At the discretion of the Railways, however, the incapacitated worker could be redeployed to a suitable designation where he could function with the disability. In such cases, the issue of the periodical pension payable to the employee was put in abeyance, while the worker was given his wage, food, and quarters.<sup>36</sup>

In determining the amount of compensation due, Railway Medical Officers played an important role. While a board made assessments for disability at Lusaka, this work was entrusted to Railway Medical Officers at other centres. This arrangement was not problem free, and caused many queries from Labour Officers. The observation made by Labour Officers was that Railway Medical Officers did 'not always have either a general industrial background or a sufficient knowledge of local conditions', the result of which were 'erratic and inequitable assessments'.<sup>37</sup> It was the statutory responsibility of the Railways to ensure that their employees received compensation. The reductions in assessments by Railway Medical Officers even from a figure as high as 100 per cent to 30 per cent was a source of concern to state agents and the Railway African Workers'

Union representatives.<sup>38</sup> Without close observation, the inadequacy of the compensation could have proceeded unnoticed and, therefore, unchecked.

## **MEDICAL AND MATERNITY CARE**

In order to provide medical and maternity care to its employees and their families, the Railways entered into medical agreements with the colonial administration. The initial medical agreement was signed in 1908 between the British South Africa Company (B.S.A. Company) and the Railways, in which the B.S.A. Company administration undertook to provide medical facilities to African railway employees and their families on condition that the Railways paid an annual subsidy. In April 1926, the subsidy paid to the colonial administration was increased from £3000 to £4000 per annum.<sup>39</sup> According to Mr. T. W. Gardner, the Area Controller (Broken Hill), the endemic diseases among African employees were venereal diseases, malaria, bilharzia, dysentery and diarrhoea, tuberculosis, hookworm and conjunctivitis.<sup>40</sup>

Maternity, while not considered as sickness *per se*, is related to medical provisions in that the health of both the mother and child is supposed to be safeguarded. This was recognised by the memorandum of agreement signed between the Railways and the colonial administration. By this agreement, the Railway administration made a contribution towards the costs involving midwifery and abortion among African employees.<sup>41</sup> However, maternity was not specifically addressed in the conditions of service for Africans who were in the employ of Rhodesia Railways. This could, in part, be attributed to the small number of African female employees as compared to their male counterparts. In 1955, there were only five African female employees on the Railways in Northern Rhodesia.<sup>42</sup> Three years later, the Deputy General Manager gave the figure of

28 as representing female employees in both Northern and Southern Rhodesia, against a strength of 20,000 male employees.<sup>43</sup>

Attempts by African Union representatives to secure the participation of women in the Territorial Industrial Council (T.I.C.) and the Joint Industrial Committee (J.I.C.) proved futile. The Railway African Women's Guild, which was aimed at addressing the 'various problems affecting African Railway women,'<sup>44</sup> was not supported by the Railway administration and was not strong enough to achieve its objectives.

Regardless of their gender, African employees received medical attention. The medical arrangements on the Railways were discriminatory on the basis of race. While Africans received 'free' medical services, European employees were members of a medical fund to which they made financial contributions.<sup>45</sup> The facilities were organised on similar lines. At Kalomo, the rest room was converted into a Railway Surgery (there was already a Railway African Clinic) at a cost of £163 to cater for European employees and their families.<sup>46</sup> Before independence in October 1964, Government hospitals were equally separate, as typified by the African hospitals at Kitwe (Nkana) and Lusaka. Hospitals such as these were intended to cater exclusively for Africans.

The Railways as employers undertook to provide curative services (excluding hospital accommodation) and transport to a hospital or Railway Medical Officer.<sup>47</sup> At centres such as Kafulafuta which did not have adequate medical facilities, employees were sent to the Railway African clinic at Ndola and even to Bulawayo if surgery was required, in which case the Railways provided transport by train.<sup>48</sup> Although the Chief Officer, Rhodesia Railways African Affairs Department, and the Commissioner for Labour and Mines shared the view that it was not the legal responsibility of the Railways

to provide medical services to their African employees, both the 1945 Railway Strike Commission and the Labour Department Annual Report for 1947 observed that this was the responsibility of the Railway medical service.<sup>49</sup>

The Government and the Railways provided medical care to the African employees and their dependants. However, the medical facilities provided in the Railway townships were not adequate. The union representatives demanded for an increase in medical facilities but the matter was not resolved at the March 1962 J.I.C. meeting.<sup>50</sup>

As in the case of accidents, reports of illnesses and the resulting failure to report for work were to be made through Railway Medical Officers, Sisters in Charge, or the European supervisors in places where the medical personnel were not available. Where illness was not reported, or concealed specifically in the case of venereal diseases, the practice on the Railways was a loss of wages in respect of each of the days when the employee was absent.<sup>51</sup> African employees on the Railways were sent to either the Railway clinics or government hospitals for treatment. After the completion of medical treatment, such employees were required to report for duty. For employees such as Chikuti Tankuni who left the hospital in August 1951 and went to his home village in Chief Chipepo's area of Broken Hill where he died, the Railways treated this as desertion.<sup>52</sup>

Employees who served the Railways for ten or more continuous years but were unable to remain in employment owing to illness and were discharged were entitled to gratuities. In his submission to the 1945 Railway Strike Commission, Jamane, who had worked for the Railways from 1926 to March 1945 when he was discharged on medical

grounds, stated that he was paid five shillings (5/-) after leaving the hospital and that his gratuity was still being worked on.<sup>53</sup>

An issue which remained for long a source of complaints among African employees was their loss of wages when they were off duty as a result of illness, even in instances where proof from a Railway Medical Officer was produced. The 1945 Railway Strike Commission recommended that only the first three days should be with pay. By 1951, this problem had not been resolved although it 'troubled every African' and 'the deductions in most cases were too much'.<sup>54</sup> At the J. I. C. meeting of June 1958, the General Manager defended such deductions as being a universal practice which was aimed at reducing incidences of 'casual sickness', and the meeting agreed that half the normal wage would be paid for the first four days of absence from duty on account of sickness.<sup>55</sup> The alteration in the arrangement was a reduction in pay for four days, as opposed to no pay at all for the initial three days of illness. The reality, however, was that there was still loss of pay. The issue of loss of pay during illness was directly related to the treatment by European employees of genuine cases of sickness among Africans as being casual, and the sick were treated harshly.<sup>56</sup>

The loss of pay for days absent from work owing to illness was determined by the ticket to ticket system. The ticket to ticket system was a contract in which the employee's wages were determined by the number of days on which the worker had carried out his duties, with each day being ticked on a card or ticket. African employees on the Railways were aware of the fact that their counterparts on the Copperbelt mines in Northern Rhodesia were allowed to complete their tickets by making up for the days lost,

and were therefore able to make comparisons and demand for a similar condition which was constantly rejected by the Railway administration.<sup>57</sup>

In the event of the hospitalisation of an employee, it was one of the duties of Railway Welfare Officers and African Welfare Assistants at centres such as Broken Hill (Kabwe), Bulawayo, Ndola and Salisbury (Harare) to visit the patient. At Broken Hill, the Welfare Assistant, like other welfare staff, was reported to have carried out this responsibility in 1952 and patients were given sugar, tobacco and reading matter.<sup>58</sup>

Besides African Welfare Assistants whose job description predominantly dealt with general welfare, the Railways employed medical personnel such as African Health Demonstrators (also known as African Health Aids). The main duty of the Health Demonstrators was 'to ensure that the environmental conditions under which African railway employees live are conducive'.<sup>59</sup> The environmental conditions included general cleanliness and sanitation, which were of crucial importance in public health and the prevention of outbreaks of diseases in the Railway townships and villages. The Railways provided their African employees with mainly the rondavel and prefabricated type of accommodation, while the sanitary arrangements were dominated by *aqua privies* and pit latrines at centres such as Kashitu, Mapepi, Natebe, and even Broken Hill (Kabwe).<sup>60</sup>

The *aqua privy* type of latrine is a modified septic tank which is filled with water and situated just below the lavatory pan or squatting hole.<sup>61</sup> Although the view of the Senior Health Inspector at Broken Hill was that *aqua privies* were not a 'nuisance from a public health point of view',<sup>62</sup> the *aqua privies* were odorous and unhygienic since they were liable to blockages and even overflowed after downpours.<sup>63</sup>

The *aqua privies* and pit latrines did not do much to improve the sanitary conditions among African railway employees, a situation which in 1956 forced the African Railway Workers' Union in the Central Province to declare a dispute over the unsanitary conditions in the Railway housing areas.<sup>64</sup> This was, apart from being an expression of the awareness of the importance of sanitation, an indication of how bad the situation was.

### **FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S ALLOWANCES**

Family and children's allowances are social allowances paid to married employees and employees who have children so as to raise their incomes and protect them against income reduction which results when a family expands. These allowances are non-contributory, implying that the employee need not make any financial contributions towards their costs. Rhodesia Railways paid both family (or marriage) and children's allowances in cash to Europeans in its employ before a similar condition could be extended to the African workers.

In 1953, the African Railway Workers' Trade Union demanded for the payment of marriage allowances to its members, but this was rejected by the Railway administration on the grounds that 'no employer of African labour (except the Southern Rhodesian Government) paid a marriage allowance to its African staff'.<sup>65</sup> The other explanation given by Rhodesia Railways was that family allowances were given to Africans on the Railways in kind in the form of accommodation and rations to wives. In 1955, partly owing to persistent pressure from African employees, the General Manager offered a flat rate of 22s/6d (twenty two shillings and six pence) which was accepted by

the Union.<sup>66</sup> The payment of this allowance was made on the condition that the wife was resident with the employee. With effect from June, 1958, however, it was acceptable for the wife to be away for 180 days, but she was required to live with her husband for more than 30 consecutive days when she returned to the Railway township or village.<sup>67</sup>

Although there had been some resistance by the Railways to the introduction of marriage allowances for African workers, statistics from the Rhodesia Railways African Affairs Department revealed that married employees stayed in employment longer than those who were single. For example, in the period from 1st July, 1959, to 30th June, 1960, approximately 24 per cent of the 1,254 African employees who resigned from Railway service were married.<sup>68</sup> The number of married employees leaving Railway service was lower than that of single workers. Since the policy of the Railways was to encourage the stability of African labour to increase efficiency, the payment of marriage allowances was justified. In fact, the rates of the family allowances were dependent on the length of the present contract, and none were payable to employees who were in their first year of service.<sup>69</sup>

African employees who were designated as African salaried staff (formerly African Senior Staff) did not receive family allowances *per se*. Instead, they were given an inclusive wage which incorporated a sum in respect of a family allowance.

The Railway administration continuously rejected demands by African employees for the introduction of children's allowances. The reason repeatedly advanced by the administration was that there was no compulsory registration of births for Africans, and the Railway administration's view was that 'there would be no administrative control' since 'the African has a custom of assuming full responsibility for children of deceased

relatives'.<sup>70</sup> In 1960, this argument was weakened by the production of children's birth certificates by some African N.I.C. employees, a development which the Rhodesia Railways African Affairs Department viewed as a possible source of serious labour unrest which would be encouraged by the wives of the employees since the wives were 'constantly urging their husbands to pursue the claim for children's allowances'.<sup>71</sup> Despite such a warning from the African Affairs Department arising from the invalidity of the excuse of birth certificates, the introduction of the children's allowance only became a reality in 1962, with amounts fixed at 5/- (five shillings) for the first child and 2/6d (two shillings and six pence) for the second.<sup>72</sup>

The application forms used on the Railways with regards to children's allowances had an affidavit overleaf which explained that a child's birth certificate was accepted as a qualification for this allowance. In the absence of the birth certificate, the employee would present a baptism certificate, a certificate issued by a Native or District Commissioner, papers of legal adoption, or a certificate from a Native Authority showing that the child in question had been placed in the custody of a divorced employee.<sup>73</sup> The Railway management utilised the excuse of the lack of compulsory registration of African births and put emphasis on written proof in order to with-hold children's allowances for African employees, most of whom were illiterate. This was both a cost saving measure and a perpetuation of a discriminatory practice.

## PENSIONS AND GRATUITIES

Pensions and gratuities are necessary for workers since they not only recognise the length of service, but also the relevance of an employee in the production process. Old age, poor health and disablement make it imperative for an employer to terminate the contract of service entered into with the worker, qualifying him either for a pension or a gratuity. Pensions are used in industry for the purpose of ending a contract on the basis of ill-health, long service, old age, and disablement. On the other hand, gratuities are used for terminating a contract in circumstances such as poor health, while an employee who receives a gratuity after the qualifying period may be allowed to continue in employment if he is still productive. As has already been discussed in the section on medical care, African railway men in the then Northern Rhodesia were entitled to medical gratuities once they became invalid.

The Rhodesia Railways Ordinance (1949) empowered the Railways to provide pensions and to establish and administer any scheme or fund for this purpose.<sup>74</sup> There was no old age pension scheme for Africans laid down by law in the colonial period, and 'the general policy of the Government [was] to encourage employers to provide such pensions'.<sup>75</sup> Rhodesia Railways, prior to the establishment of a pension scheme for Africans, relied on the provision of gratuities which were paid to workmen who had served the Railways for twenty or more years of continuous service. Such gratuities were paid irrespective of the circumstances leading to the termination of the contract.<sup>76</sup> An employee who had worked for the Railways for twenty or more years of continuous service but was dismissed was as much entitled to a gratuity as one whose service was

terminated on account of old age, the amount being not less than one pound and five shillings for each completed year of service.<sup>77</sup>

The background of gratuities on Rhodesia Railways lies in their introduction in 1944 as a result of demands made by the African workers through the Labour Department.<sup>78</sup> Although the 1945 Railway Strike Commission recommended that a pension scheme should replace gratuities, investigations by the National Native Labour Board (N.N.L.B.) in 1947 revealed that this had not been done, when there was 'no reason why a [pension] scheme should not be introduced on the same lines as that applicable to European employees'.<sup>79</sup>

The gratuity and pension scheme for Africans on the Railways was introduced with effect from 1st January, 1955 and gave long service employees three options of a lump sum gratuity, a pension, or a gratuity and reduced pension. Employees who had served the Railways for 20 or more continuous years were allowed to commute their pension, while dismissed employees were entitled to a gratuity which was to be determined by the employer. The African employees commuted their pension by receiving part of it as a lump sum, and the remainder as a monthly pension.<sup>80</sup> In the event of the death of an employee who qualified for a gratuity or a pension, the benefits were paid to his widow or dependants.<sup>81</sup>

The amount of the gratuity or pension was calculated as a percentage of the exclusive wage (basic pay) multiplied by the total number of years of continuous service. For example, the percentage used for those who had worked for between 20 and 25 years was 30%, while 50% applied to employees who had been in the service for 35 years and above.<sup>82</sup> The amount of benefits with regards to pensions and gratuities were dependent

on the levels of wages, since an increase in wages resulted into a corresponding percentage increase in the amount of the gratuity or pension. For this reason, the Arbitration Tribunal (the Harragin Award) which altered some of the conditions of service for African employees on the Railways with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> September 1956 did not directly give any increments in respect of pensions and gratuities since wages were increased.<sup>83</sup>

The pension scheme which was introduced in 1955 was non-contributory. The African employees were not required to make any contributions by way of deductions through paysheets. Even though the explanation made by the 1945 Railway Strike Commission in favour of a non-contributory scheme was that the African labour force on the Railways was of a 'fluctuating nature', the more important reason was that it would involve fewer administrative expenses which the Chief Accounts and Finance Officer estimated at £15000 per annum if deductions were involved.<sup>84</sup> The general trend in the major industries (besides Rhodesia Railways) of Northern Rhodesia was that there was a preference for non-contributory pension and gratuity schemes for African employees as typified by Zambezi Sawmills, Central African Road Services (C.A.R.S.), the Copper Mining industries (all of which introduced their schemes in 1954) and Lever Brothers Limited.<sup>85</sup>

Conversely, European employees on the Railways had a contributory pension fund, and the Trust Deed and Rules required all members to make contributions through deductions made from wages by the employer. It was also the duty of Rhodesia Railways to transmit the funds collected to the Trustees for investment.<sup>86</sup> In 1964, when African

railway employees were given the chance to apply for membership of this fund, the *Northern News* made the following report:

To make the fund multiracial, it will be necessary for its rules to be changed. As recently as 1962, the then Federal Minister of Transport, Mr. Eastwood, explained that the rules of the fund did not permit African membership.<sup>87</sup>

Through racially based restrictive membership, the European employees and the Railway administration were able to successfully prevent Africans from entering the contributory pension scheme. The development in which Africans were also allowed to apply for membership was as a result of the Inter-Territorial Agreement signed in December 1963 between the Black dominated Government of Northern Rhodesia and the Southern Rhodesian Government, by which it was agreed to remove all racial discrimination in labour laws affecting the Railways.<sup>88</sup>

The relevance of pensions and gratuities for African employees can be demonstrated by the presence of workers such as Makina Mende, Jeremiah Njovalema, and Muwika Ndhlovu who had served the Railways for more than 20 continuous years by 1965. Muwika Ndhlovu, an outstanding example of worker stability, worked for 37 years without breaking service and was awarded a Certificate of Honour for Loyal and Devoted Service by the Governor General, Lord Dalhousie, in 1962.<sup>89</sup>

In order to encourage such 'loyal and devoted service', the Railway undertaking introduced long service awards in 1958, with the requisite period of qualification placed at 25 years' continuous service. The initial presentation of inscribed wristlet watches was done in the same year for those who had completed the qualifying period by 1st June, 1958. As at this date, 167 Africans qualified, while 40 qualified for long service awards as at 30th June 1959.<sup>90</sup> It can be argued that such presentations were, considering the

qualifying period and price of the watches, a mockery and a failure by the Railways to appreciate the importance of long service. Goods such as ploughs and bicycles could have better served the purpose since these could be used for income generation by the employees when they left railway employment.

## **BEREAVEMENT**

The death of an employee, besides invalidity and old age, could be said to be the worst risk against which protection is extremely relevant. One explanation is that death robs the employer of labour which could have otherwise remained productive for a considerable period of time. While measures such as medical care and safety precautions were provided to avoid this eventuality, deaths of employees in Rhodesia Railways nevertheless occurred. The table below gives an insight into the frequency of deaths among both African and European railway employees in the period 1949-1957.

**TABLE: MORTALITY AMONG RHODESIA RAILWAYS EMPLOYEES IN THE RHODESIAS, 1949-1957.**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>AFRICANS</b>	<b>EUROPEANS</b>
1949-1950	88	16
1950-1951	70	29
1951-1952	67	22
1952-1953	81	23
1953-1954	76	25
1954-1955	76	36
1955-1956	83	19
1956-1957	84	21
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>625</b>	<b>191</b>

*SOURCE: Rhodesia Railways Annual Reports, 1951-1957.*

Over this eight year period, a total of 625 Africans in the employ of Rhodesia Railways died, with the average being about 78 employees per annum. During the same period, 191 European employees of the Railways passed away, giving an average of 24 employees annually. These figures refer to a combination of the railway employee populations in both Northern and Southern Rhodesia. For variant periods of time, Africans from Northern Rhodesia worked in Southern Rhodesia, and the converse was also true. This situation led to repatriations at the end of the unitary system.<sup>91</sup>

The implication for social security of there being more deaths among African employees was that more preventive measures were required. In addition, more expenses were incurred by the employer to cover the costs of coffins, transport, and burial fees.

The causes of death among African employees varied from non-work to work related ones. Causes which were related to work mainly concerned fatal accidents, whose frequency on the Railways even caused concern in both the Labour Officer and the Workmen's Compensation Commissioner. In a minute to the Workmen's Compensation Commissioner, the Labour Officer wrote as follows: .

As a result of your recent letter to the Regional Controller, A.A.D., Rhodesia Railways, Broken Hill, I have now been notified of 6 deaths due to compensable accidents which have occurred on the Railways between October, 1952 and February 1953. This seems a distressingly high figure and I wonder if you think our Department should take any special measures e.g. attend inquests ...<sup>92</sup>

In his reply to the above minute, the Workmen's Compensation Commissioner indicated that the fatality rate on the Railways was very high, and advised that all serious accidents which caused suspicion be investigated.<sup>93</sup> While such work related deaths were compensable on the Railways, there was also the need to provide assistance to the employee so as to meet funeral and burial expenses. For all Africans in the urban areas

of Northern Rhodesia, the amount of burial fees payable to the Local Authorities was fixed at a maximum of ten shillings (10s), which the majority of Africans could not afford owing to the low wages which they received.<sup>94</sup>

In order to contribute to funeral expenses with regards to a deceased employee, the Railways paid an amount of £5 in Northern Rhodesia, while an undertaker was contracted in Southern Rhodesia and paid £5. 17s. 6d. which included the cost of a coffin, transport (hearse) and grave fees.<sup>95</sup> For employees who were in the N.I.C. grades, there existed a voluntary provident fund to which interested employees who were members made some financial contributions. On the death of a male member, £600 was paid to the family, while £450 was paid in respect of female employees.<sup>96</sup> The non-S.I.C. employees were able to make such arrangements and contributions because of their wages which were higher than those in the other categories.

In the event of the death of an employee, benefits calculated on the basis of the length of continuous service were paid to the widow or the next of kin. For employees who had served the Railways for less than eight years, a small *ex gratia* payment was made, while employees who had more than eight years' service received amounts which were calculated from a sliding scale.<sup>97</sup>

In addition to assistance in cases where employees died, African employees needed help when the deceased were members of their families. In December 1952, through the Joint Industrial Committee (J.I.C.), African railway employees demanded that their dependants be considered for coffins and transport at the expense of the employer. The response of the Railway administration was that the employers were 'not required to accept any liability for the burial arrangements of dependants ... but in a

number of cases A.A.D. staff assisted with transport'.<sup>98</sup> By 1961, the subject of free coffins for dependants of African employees was still not settled and discussions between the Railway African Workers' Union and the Rhodesia Railways administration continued.<sup>99</sup>

## **CONCLUSION.**

The main argument of this chapter is that while various social security aspects were applicable to African railway workers in Zambia, the aspects were not introduced at the same time. Medical facilities were the earliest to be introduced, while children's allowances were rejected by the Railways until 1960. We have also argued that while the Railways made efforts to implement accident prevention and the provision of compensation, these were inadequate and were marred by problems such as delays. In addition, we have argued that the Railway administration, through deductions made from the wages of African employees when they were sick, denied African employees access to protection and used the deductions as a cost saving measure.

From the discussion, a number of conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, the Railways undertook to provide social security to its African employees and social security related aspects were included in the terms of employment. However, the social security provided was inadequate as shown in the demands for increased supplies of protective clothing and medical facilities. Secondly, in spite of problems such as delayed payment of compensation to injured employees, the Railways were able to compensate their African workers. Where applicable, injured or disabled employees were redeployed to other departments. Thirdly, there was reluctance by the Railway administration to introduce aspects of social security such as a contributory pension scheme and children's

allowances. This was a cost saving measure. While supporting a contributory pension scheme for European employees, the Railways relied on gratuities for Africans up to 1955 when the non-contributory scheme was introduced. Rhodesia Railways preferred a non-contributory pension scheme not solely because it would be expensive, but also for the reason that this would imply reduced pensions for Africans which would force them to retire to their rural homes.

Fourthly, through discriminatory practices which were mainly based on race, Africans were denied access to better paying employment categories prior to the introduction of advancement on the Railways. Since the majority of Africans were restricted to low paying jobs, the effect was that they received lower benefits such as gratuities, pensions, and worker's compensation.

## NOTES

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4. *Rhodesia Railways Annual Report*, 1952, (Bulawayo: Rhodesia Railways, 1953), p. 42.
5. See NAZ, HM 56/1, Chief Officer (A.A.D.) to General Manager, 25th August 1949; NAZ, HM 56/1, General Secretary (R.A.W.U.) to Chief Officer (A.A.D.), 2nd March, 1960.
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10. N.R.G., *Labour Department Annual Report* 1945, (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1946), p. 2; NAZ, LSS 1/2/4, Commissioner for Labour and Mines, Circular Minute Number 32, 18<sup>th</sup> November, 1950.
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12. *Rhodesia Railways Annual Report*, 1953, (Bulawayo: Rhodesia Railways, 1954), p. 23; *Sitima*, October 1966.;
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17. Z.R. Archives, 148/1, Natives Injured on Duty, 1952-1964.
18. Z.R. Archives, W.F./U/I, Motor Trolley Driver to District Engineer, 19<sup>th</sup> January, 1949. This note was written at the bottom of the letter which Bennett, the Motor Trolley Driver, had addressed to the District Engineer. The practice on the Railways was that the supervisors of African employees made requests for the supply of specified protective clothing. Interview with N.K.J. Nyirenda, Kabwe, 28<sup>th</sup> March, 2001.
19. Z.R. Archives, W.F. /U/I, District Engineer to Works Foreman, Broken Hill, and Clerk of Works, Ndola, 17<sup>th</sup> May, 1949. This minute cited Minute 21 (d) of the N.I.C. meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> January, 1949. The Railway administration agreed to this request.

20. NAZ, HM 56/19, Minutes of the Meeting of the Joint Industrial Committee for African Employees of the Rhodesia Railways, 19<sup>th</sup> November, 1959; NAZ, HM 56/21, Minutes of the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Statutory Industrial Council for the Rhodesia Railways, 10<sup>th</sup> April, 1962.
21. NAZ, HM 56/18, General Manager to Chief Staff Officer, 25<sup>th</sup> June, 1958.
22. NAZ, SEC 1/1372, Submission by Roderick Joseph to the 1945 Railway Strike Commission.
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26. NAZ, LSS 1/2/4, Labour Commissioner to the Labour Officers, Livingstone, Lusaka, Broken Hill, Ndola, Mufulira, Kitwe and Luanshya, 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 1947.
27. NAZ, LSS 1/2/4, Commissioner for Labour and Mines, Circular Minute Number 26 of 1950, 4<sup>th</sup> September, 1950.
28. NAZ, LSS 1/2/4, Labour Officer (Broken Hill) to Labour Officer (Lusaka), 31<sup>st</sup> January, 1953; .NAZ, LSS 1/2/4, Labour Officer (Broken Hill) to Workmen's Compensation Commissioner, 10<sup>th</sup> February, In the same minute, the Labour Officer brought it to the attention of the Commissioner that two compensable deaths (White Kandaweri 1/9/52; Chamwala Kandala 28/11/52) had not been reported by the Railways.
29. N.R.G. Gazzette, 9<sup>th</sup> February 1945, Workmen's Compensation Regulations, 1945, Government Notice Number 18 of 1945, Section 44.
30. N.R.G. *Annual Report of the Workmen's Compensation Fund Control Board for the Year 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1965 to 31<sup>st</sup> March, 1966*, Appendix C, (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1967), p. 9.
31. N.R.G., *Annual Report of the Workmen's Compensation Commissioner for the Year 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1967 to 31<sup>st</sup> March, 1968*, (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1969), p. 17.
32. *Chronicle*, 18<sup>th</sup> March 1961; H.S. Meebelo, *African Proletarians and Colonial Capitalism: The Origins, Growth and Struggles of the Zambian Labour Movement to 1964.*, (Lusaka: Kenneth Kaunda Foundation, 1986), pp. 358-359. The employee who was unable to report for work owing to illness was required to produce proof of illness from a medical officer, after which an off duty certificate was issued. Interview with F. Chisalaba, Kabwe, 29<sup>th</sup> March, 2001.
33. NAZ, LSS 1/2/4, Commissioner for Labour and Mines, Circular Minute Number 32 of 1950, 18<sup>th</sup> November, 1950.
34. NAZ, LSS 1/2/4, Chief Officer (A.A.D.) to Workmen's Compensation Commissioner, 6<sup>th</sup> December, 1951.
35. NAZ, LSS 1/2/4, District Commissioner (Mumbwa) to Labour Officer (Broken Hill), 15<sup>th</sup> December, 1951. District Commissioners located dependants to whom benefits were apportioned in the case of the death of an employee. See NAZ, LSS 1/2/4, Commissioner for Labour and Mines, Circular Minute Number 3 of 1950, 21<sup>st</sup> January, 1950.

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51. N.A.Z., LSS 1/7/18, Southern Rhodesia Government Notice Number 840, 28<sup>th</sup> October, 1949: Extracts from the Railway Natives Employment Regulations, 1949, Regulations 65, 67 and 69.
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55. N.A.Z., HM 56/18, Minutes of the Meeting of the Joint Industrial Committee for African Employees of the Rhodesia Railways, 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> June, 1958. Through General Manager's Circular Number 20 of 1/7/58, all African employees were informed.
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91. Interview with Kopa Chisala, Chinsali, 14<sup>th</sup> July, 2000.
  92. N.A.Z., LSS 1/2/4, Labor Officer (Broken Hill) to Workmen's Compensation Commissioner, 4<sup>th</sup> March, 1953.
  93. N.A.Z., LSSI/2/4, Workmen's Compensation Commissioner to Labour Officer (Broken Hill), 7<sup>th</sup> March, 1953.
  94. N.R.G., *Report of the Committee Appointed to Review the Financing of Services and Amenities Provided for Africans in Urban Areas*, (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1961), pp. 24, 47.
  95. N.A.Z., HM 56/14, Notes of Meeting held in the Office of the Chief Officer, A.A.D., Bulawayo, 12<sup>th</sup> January, 1953.
  96. N.A.Z., LSS 1/9/57, Labour Officer (Broken Hill) to the Under Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Mines, 11<sup>th</sup> June, 1964.
  97. N.A.Z., LSS 1/9/57, Labour Officer (Broken Hill) to the Under Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Mines, 11<sup>th</sup> June, 1964.
  98. N.A.Z., HM 56/7, Rhodesia Railways, African Affairs Department, Notes on Items of Agenda, 9<sup>th</sup> January, 1953. The Railways refused to accept the provision of coffins and transport for deaths to dependants partly for the reason that this was not done in the case of dependants of European employees. See N.A.Z., HM 56/14, Notes of meeting held in the office of the Chief Officer, A.A.D., 12<sup>th</sup> January, 1953.
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## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THE ROLES OF THE STATE, THE EMPLOYER AND THE EMPLOYEES IN THE PROVISION OF SOCIAL SECURITY FOR AFRICANS ON THE RAILWAYS**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter discusses the roles played by the state, the employer, and the workers in the provision of social security for Africans on the Railways. The chapter is divided into four sections. In the first section we give an insight into international labour standards as set by the International Labour Organisation (I.L.O.), which directed labour policies and conditions and monitored their implementation by member states. In the second section we discuss the role played by the state, and give consideration to both the colonial and postcolonial periods. In the third section, we examine how Rhodesia Railways determined and provided social security to its African employees. In the fourth section we discuss the role played by the African railway workers, either collectively or individually.

#### **INTERNATIONAL LABOUR STANDARDS**

The International Labour Organisation (I.L.O.), a specialised agency of the United Nations created in 1945, was charged with the responsibility of improving and regulating national labour conditions through the adoption of international labour standards called Conventions and Recommendations. Member states are required to ratify the Conventions, which puts them under obligation to conform to the I.L.O. labour standards. On the other hand, Recommendations are not binding and are only used as guidelines which member states should follow in their labour policies.<sup>1</sup>

In the colonial period, the application of the Conventions and Recommendations to Northern Rhodesia was done through the metropolitan state. With the coming into force of the 1946 revised I.L.O. Constitution, the British Government ratified a total of 15 Conventions and made declarations in respect of only five of these.<sup>2</sup> One of the five Conventions which Britain undertook to apply to its territories with or without modification was Convention Number 83, Labour Standards (Non-Metropolitan Territories) of 1947 which covered other conventions dealing with maternity protection, medical examinations, and workmen's compensation.<sup>3</sup>

The Convention which specifically dealt with social security was Convention Number 102, Minimum Standards of Social Security, which was adopted by the International Labour Conference of 1952.<sup>4</sup> Convention 102 defined the contingencies which needed coverage, such as medical care and employment injury.

In order to check the application of Conventions, the I.L.O. received annual reports which were sent to the Committee of Experts. For the period covering 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1953, to 30<sup>th</sup> June, 1954, the Northern Rhodesian Commissioner for Labour dispatched reports to the I.L.O. through the Chief Secretary.<sup>5</sup> The reports which were sent to the I.L.O. were of vital importance since they indicated the extent to which the Conventions were applied and how they were put in force through the inclusion of aspects into national legislation.

However, the reports were of a general nature and did not cover specific industries such as the Railways. Through the Department of Labour, the state received reports on the labour conditions pertaining in the various industries.<sup>6</sup> With regards to the medical examinations of employees on engagement, the I.L.O. standard was that

indication be made in the contract as to whether this had been done or not.<sup>7</sup> As a result of this standard, the engagement cards used on the Railways showed whether the employee had been medically examined.<sup>8</sup>

In 1953, the Secretary of State complained that the British government was embarrassingly slow in making declarations for Conventions which had been ratified.<sup>9</sup> The failure to make declarations quickly for Conventions which included Convention 102, Social Security (Minimum Standards), 1952, and Convention 103, Maternity Protection (Revised), 1952,<sup>10</sup> had two major implications for social security in Northern Rhodesia. Firstly, the Conventions which had not been declared were not applicable to Northern Rhodesia. Secondly, the colonising power did not make a commitment as to whether such conventions were being applied. However, with the ratification of Convention Number 83 which comprised 13 other Conventions requiring no declaration, some aspects of social security were covered.

After attaining independence in 1964, the Zambian Government accepted the I.L.O. Constitution and ratified 14 Conventions which had previously been applied to the country by the British Government.<sup>11</sup> Between 1964 and 1967, Zambia actively participated in I.L.O. activities. Apart from sending a tripartite delegation (representing the Government, the employers, and the employees) to the International Labour Conference in Geneva in June of each year, Zambian representatives attended several I.L.O. events which included the 5<sup>th</sup> World Congress on the Prevention of Occupational Accidents and Diseases which took place in Yugoslavia.<sup>12</sup>

## THE ROLE OF THE STATE

The term state as used in this section also considers the colonial period which began with B.S.A. Company rule (1894-1924) and the Colonial Office rule which lasted from 1924 to 1964 when Northern Rhodesia became the sovereign Republic of Zambia. A consideration of the political status of a country, based on whether it is self governing or not, helps in illuminating the problem of social security provision since this determined the social and economic policies.<sup>13</sup>

The initial impetus to take up wage employment, and the ensuing need to provide social security, was as a direct result of the colonial economic policy which required Africans to leave their villages and kins so as to support industrial production. In order to foster proletarianisation, the colonial state introduced hut taxes between 1900 and 1901. These taxes, which became poll taxes in 1914, were imposed and collected by agents of the state.<sup>14</sup> Taxation and coercion produced the desired effect of turning peasants into wage earners, and the need to provide social security for them when they were away from their villages was created.

As a result of its importance, the subject of social security measures for the prevention and amelioration of hardships among both European and African employees was raising general interest. By 1942, the problem of social security had already become a subject of discussion in the Northern Rhodesian Legislative Council (Legco).<sup>15</sup> In 1958, Mr. S.H. Chileshe, an African member of the Legislative Council, moved that the Government be urged to establish a contributory pension scheme for Africans in employment in the urban areas since these could no longer be supported by tribal societies. The motion was successfully rejected on the grounds that industries such as

Rhodesia Railways gave pensions to their African employees, and that Africans were to be encouraged to retire to their rural homes.<sup>16</sup>

The insistence on non-contributory pension schemes for Africans meant that African pension schemes in Northern Rhodesian industries only depended on contributions from the employers. Apart from reducing the costs involved in administering a contributory pension scheme, this lowered the amounts of pensions for African employees. This was in line with the policy of forcing Africans to retire to their villages since they could not afford to live in the urban areas with the small amounts of money they received as pensions.<sup>17</sup>

In their rejection of the motion moved by Mr. Chileshe, the Legco members who were predominantly European did not take into consideration the weakening of the traditional social security system especially for employees who had lived and worked in the urban areas for many years. In a minute to the Administrative Secretary, the Labour Commissioner expressed his dissatisfaction with the way the motion had been handled as follows:

I disagree with many of the views expressed by these members and was surprised to find that the motion was treated as a native affairs, welfare and financial measure ... This is very much a labour matter and I am disturbed that it was not so treated in the debate of 5<sup>th</sup> December.<sup>18</sup>

This failure to appreciate the importance of a contributory pension scheme to be introduced and administered by the Government for the benefit of Africans on the Railways and other industries was in line with the policy of the Government in which employers were encouraged to establish their own schemes.<sup>19</sup> By so doing, the colonial state played a passive role as far as this aspect of social security was concerned.

While placing the responsibility of providing pensions on the employers, labour legislation passed by the state such as the Employment of Natives Ordinance (1940), the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance (1944) and the Rhodesia Railways Employment of Natives Regulations (1949) covered aspects of social security.<sup>20</sup> As a result of such legislation, the colonial state determined labour conditions by making it mandatory for employers to provide medical facilities, workmen's compensation, and protective clothing to their employees.

Through the National Industrial Council and the Statutory Industrial Council which were statutory bodies set up under Railway legislation in the Rhodesias, the state provided forums for the discussion of labour conditions on the Railways. In January 1960, following discussion among the Railway Administration and the European unions at an N.I.C. meeting, it was agreed that Africans be allowed to enter selected jobs in N.I.C. grades on a trial basis. As a result of difficulties in how this was to be implemented, the Ministers of Labour from Southern and Northern Rhodesia intervened. The final settlement in which discrimination on the basis of race was removed with regards to entry by Africans into N.I.C. jobs and six additional jobs for Africans was made in May, 1960.<sup>21</sup>

The entry of Africans into N.I.C. jobs automatically meant increased rates of pay and, consequently, higher social security benefits. Even so, the number of Africans who were given access to the N.I.C. category was small, and the majority of the African employees did not benefit from this advancement.<sup>22</sup>

The lack of advancement among African employees prior to 1960 can not only be attributed to the attitude of the European employees who wanted to protect their jobs, but

also to the racial labour policies of Southern Rhodesia.<sup>23</sup> Rhodesia Railways had a special relationship with the state. With effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 1947, the Southern Rhodesian Government acquired the assets of Rhodesia Railways Limited and on 1<sup>st</sup> November, 1949, Rhodesia Railways became a statutory body established under Southern Rhodesian laws. During the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland which was in existence between 1953 and 1963, the Federal Government was put in charge of the Railways. In 1963, following the signing of the Inter-Governmental Agreement between the Southern and Northern Rhodesian Governments, the ownership and control of the Railways passed in equal shares to the two Governments.<sup>24</sup>

Since the state owned and controlled the Railways, it regulated labour conditions and made financial contributions towards Arbitration Tribunals and the meeting of liabilities under the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance of 1944.<sup>25</sup> As a result of this relationship between the state and Rhodesia Railways, the Rhodesia Railways undertaking was never prosecuted for cases such as not providing satisfactory housing and failure to report accidents.<sup>26</sup> This meant that Rhodesia Railways, in spite of flouting laws and regulations, was able to deny African employees adequate social security protection without being prosecuted by the courts of law.

State agents such as Labour Officers and the Labour Commissioner were not unaware of the poor conditions of service for African railway workers.<sup>27</sup> However, the furthest they could go was the issuing of threats of prosecution to the Railway administration.<sup>28</sup> Under the pretext that African employees on the Railways were engaged on a ticket to ticket contract, for example, the Rhodesia Railways administration was able to reduce wages through deductions from Africans when they were put off duty

(for real or alleged indiscipline) and when they were sick. In spite of being aware that this was a breach of contract, the Railway administration persisted in making such deductions.<sup>29</sup> The income security of the African employees was not guaranteed because their wages fluctuated as a result of such deductions.

The coming into force of the Employment Act (1965) passed by the Zambian Government abolished the ticket to ticket system and replaced it with payment of wages on a monthly basis.<sup>30</sup> One of the social security benefits of this piece of legislation was that it entitled employees to wages when they were incapacitated for work.

While the colonial state avoided the establishment of state social security schemes by using the excuse that these would be expensive to administer, the Zambian Government made a step in this direction by establishing the Zambia National Provident Fund (Z.N.P.F.) in October 1966. The Z.N.P.F. had as its main purpose the provision of benefits to regularly employed persons who retired from the labour force owing to old age or disability.<sup>31</sup> The Z.N.P.F. was a savings scheme to which both the employers and employees contributed. African employees on the Railways benefited from the introduction of this Fund, and made both statutory and voluntary contributions.<sup>32</sup>

## **THE ROLE OF THE EMPLOYER**

In the provision of social security for workers, the employer plays a number of very important roles which are dependent not only on the nature of the industrial activity, but also on the interpretation and implementation of prescribed national legislation.<sup>33</sup> Legislation such as the Railway Natives Employment Amendment Regulations (1949) and recommendations made by Commissions of Enquiry such as the 1945 Railway Strike

Commission, were to be implemented by Rhodesia Railways to determine the terms of employment for the African employees.

Regardless of the knowledge of its responsibilities as decreed, Rhodesia Railways did not completely comply with legislation. Although the Railways financed and provided workmen's compensation, medical facilities, and gratuities, the subject of the issuance of important protective clothing such as safety boots for Track Workers was evaded on the grounds that it would 'prove to be a very costly business [and] an impossibility to administer'.<sup>34</sup> Through attitudes such as this, the Railway administration was able to deny Africans conditions and facilities which they were entitled to in line with national legislation.

In addition to the interpretation and implementation of laws, regulations and recommendations, Rhodesia Railways had the duty of engaging Africans according to its labour requirements. The engagement policy on the Railways was to the disadvantage of African employees. The system of employing Africans allowed European employees to engage African labour at their own discretion. European supervisors, as a result of this duty, had the impression that they owned African employees, could use them as personal servants, and assault or dismiss them from employment at will.<sup>35</sup>

Through this loophole in the engagement process, the misapplication of the disciplinary code, and mere cruelty, African employees lost their social security benefits owing to dismissals, or were unable to report for duty as a result of inflicted injuries. The flimsy excuse given by the European trade union, the Rhodesia Railway Worker's Union, was that European supervisors were 'not fully aware of the terms of the disciplinary code'.<sup>36</sup>

In an attempt to address issues affecting African employees, the Railways established the African Affairs Department (A.A.D.) in 1946.<sup>37</sup> The A.A.D., which was headed by a Chief Officer, was not able to effectively deal with the multiplicity of problems facing African employees. Besides being an organ of the Railway administration for the oppression of Africans, its existence was weakened by the fact that it was administered by European employees who did not fully appreciate the poor working conditions among African workers.<sup>38</sup>

One condition of service which is closely related to social security is worker education, which encompasses skills training and safety education. The acquisition of new skills enables employees to enter new jobs or keep their present positions, and increases earning capacity.<sup>39</sup> Rhodesia Railways, through Safety Inspector's Assistants, was able to teach risk prevention techniques.<sup>40</sup>

However, the Railway administration was directly able to curtail the entry of Africans into skilled and higher paying job categories by restricting their enrolment at the Rhodesia Railway Training School at Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia. It was mainly as a result of the establishment of a Black dominated government in Northern Rhodesia in 1962 and the subsequent granting of independence in 1964 that an intensified training programme for Africans to be employed by the Railways was pursued.<sup>41</sup> This was a response to the need to fill vacant skilled jobs which were left by non-Zambians.

Before its official opening on 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 1965, the Broken Hill Training School was able to train as many as 129 learner shunters, 125 new entrant firemen, 123 firemen 'A' and 80 learner guards within 1964.<sup>42</sup> The result of this localisation of training was that 'many Africans ... entered, and [were] entering, the N.I.C. Grades in Zambia',<sup>43</sup> a

development which gave the affected employees access to higher wages and better social security benefits.

Finally, it was the legal obligation of the Railway administration to effect deductions of statutory contributions through paysheets. While Rhodesia Railways was 'very keen to use the N.P.F. as its provident fund and pension scheme,'<sup>44</sup> it successfully rejected demands by Africans for the establishment of a voluntary savings scheme which involved the check off system as was practised on the Copperbelt mines.<sup>45</sup>

### **THE ROLE OF THE EMPLOYEES**

In the provision of social security for industrial employees, the worker is of cardinal importance since not only is he the recipient of the protection, but also because he determines the conditions in which he works by making requests as well as demands. In addition, the extent to which the employee makes use of such protective measures as protective clothing and medical facilities determine the effectiveness of the protection that has been put in place.

In order to make requests and demands for social security, the employee needs to be aware of his terms of employment and the conditions in which he works, and even make comparisons with conditions pertaining elsewhere. Worker consciousness was prevalent among African workers on the Railways, making it possible for them to check their conditions against those of their counterparts especially on the Copperbelt mines.<sup>46</sup>

The level of consciousness among African railway employees could be measured, *inter alia*, by their ability to organise themselves and press for demands even prior to the establishment of African trade unions on the Railways. As a result of oppressive

legislation and an employer who was scared of 'militant trade unionism',<sup>47</sup> the farthest the African employees could go by March 1944 was their establishment of the Rhodesia Railways African Employees' Association (R.R.A.E.A.) at Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia.<sup>48</sup>

According to the R.R.A.E.A. constitution, some of the objectives of the organisation were to secure unity of action among all African employees and to 'do all possible to improve the social and economic conditions of members'.<sup>49</sup> Apart from the R.R.A.E.A., Africans on the Railways were organised into ethnic associations and mutual aid societies such as the Lozi Improvement Association and the Rhodesia Railways African Benefit Society, which 'were concerned with the conditions of workers and their families including their social security'.<sup>50</sup>

It can be argued that the establishment of such worker organisations, in spite of there not being trade unions, brought in a sense of unity of purpose and action among African railway employees. As David Matthews observed, 'unorganised workers are impotent before the power and authority of employers'.<sup>51</sup> With the ability to focus their demands, African employees on the Railways went out on strike in 1945 in order to give force to their demands. The strike, which began in Bulawayo on 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 1945, was called after a joint meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> October, 1945, between the Lozi Improvement Society and the Railway African Benefit Society.<sup>52</sup> However, the organisation of the strike was largely done by the R.R.A.E.A., and the spread of strike action to Broken Hill on 27<sup>th</sup> October, 1945, was as a result of the instruction which the Association issued.<sup>53</sup>

The 1945 strike among African employees was mainly caused by demands for increased wages and improved housing.<sup>54</sup> The desire to have better wages was as a result

of the high cost of living and the inability of the wages to meet the requirements of the employees and their families.<sup>55</sup> In addition, there was the problem of loss of pay when Africans were absent from duty owing to sickness.<sup>56</sup> Though the African workers withdrew their labour so that grievances such as the lack of adequate and suitable protective clothing and housing, loss of pay, and the inability to pay injury compensation promptly could be addressed, these problems remained bones of contention long after the strike.<sup>57</sup>

The major achievement of this strike was that it tested the ability of the African employees to hold their own against their employers. In order to try and find out more about the causes of the strike, a commission of enquiry was appointed. The recommendations of the 1945 Railway Strike Commission did not seriously consider the problems confronting African employees.<sup>58</sup>

Consequent to the continued problems, African employees became more appreciative of the importance of an organisation through which they could channel their demands. In 1950, the African Railway Workers' Trade Union (A.R.W.T.U.) was established at Ndola and by 1953, the Union 'had become such a force on the Railways in Northern Rhodesia that the Railway administration watched its development and activities with trepidation'.<sup>59</sup> The Railway African Workers' Union (R.A.W.U.) was established in 1955, and it was the R.A.W.U. which represented African employees on the Railways up to the break of the unitary system in June, 1967.<sup>60</sup>

With the guidance of their Union leadership, African railway workers were able to organise strikes so as to back up their demands. In May, 1952, for example, the A.R.W.T.U. called for a strike which lasted eight days. This strike, which was caused by

the dismissal of some African workers at Broken Hill, was described by the Labour and Mines Department as '100% effective at Broken Hill, Lusaka, Kafue, Mazabuka and intermediate sidings, and approximately 75% effective at Chingola and Ndola'.<sup>61</sup>

Although the Railway administration was able to break this strike by way of threats of dismissals, the strike action exposed the awareness of the African employees with regard to income insecurity and loss of social security benefits which arbitrary dismissals could entail. In the years between 1952 and 1967 African workers were able to show their discontent through disputes with their employers, and even went out on strikes.<sup>62</sup>

Strike action on the Railways sometimes meant loss of income and rations. In order to assist affected employees, the African trade union on the Railways made use of strike funds. However, the union faced the problem of recovering the funds from the members within the expected time. In 1951, £3. 12s. Od. and £10. 4s. 9d. were outstanding at Ndola and Livingstone respectively.<sup>63</sup>

The State and the Railway administration attempted to frustrate the efforts of the African trade union by refusing to register it. Even so, the union did not stop making demands and pressing for improved conditions for its members. The registration of the R.A.W.U. as a statutory union under Railway legislation was withheld until 25<sup>th</sup> November, 1960.<sup>64</sup>

In addition to the lack of registration prior to 1960, the Railway administration used the strategy of weakening the R.A.W.U. financially by not co-operating in the collection of union subscriptions through the check off system. In 1953, the membership subscription issue was raised with the Railway administration, but no agreement was

reached.<sup>65</sup> The reason constantly advanced by the employers was that payroll deductions would be 'impracticable' and the expenses 'considerable'.<sup>66</sup> According to the Railway Workers' Union of Zambia (R.W.U.Z.) officials, the more important reason behind the negative response was that the Railway administration aimed at crippling the operations of the union by making it financially weak.<sup>67</sup>

In 1953, Dr. E.M.B. West, the Chief Officer of the African Affairs Department of Rhodesia Railways was satisfied with the financial predicament of the African trade union when he commented that the A.R.W.T.U. 'had lost prestige ... owing to the fact that a promise to repay the cost of rations purchased during the [last] strike had never been fulfilled'.<sup>68</sup>

In 1955, the method of collecting union dues at pay parades was introduced.<sup>69</sup> This was very ineffective, especially that Railway employees were scattered along the line of rail, were highly mobile, and received their wages on different dates. The R.A.W.U. nevertheless continued to put pressure on the Railway administration until the collection of union subscriptions through paysheets was granted in 1960.<sup>70</sup>

It was not always the case that the R.A.W.U. made its demands through calling for strike action. Demands were also made by tabling complaints at such forums as the Joint Industrial Committee meetings. Representations made at J.I.C. meetings were received with mixed feelings by the Railway administration and were, as Mulenga observes, 'unnecessarily sent to arbitration tribunals which in turn gave inadequate wage increases'.<sup>71</sup> Even an important request to the management for the Union's Head Office to be notified of accidents to African employees was thrown out and described as 'absurd'.<sup>72</sup> The stand taken by the Railway administration on the matter of the reporting

of accidents was meant to keep the R.A.W.U. uninformed, ignorant, and unable to make follow ups on accident occurrences and payment of compensation.

The R.A.W.U. did not leave the provision of social security for its members to the employers alone. In this vein, the R.A.W.U. constitution (1960), which was accepted by the Railway administration on 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1960, had a clause which made provision for the payment of benevolent funds from the union coffers to members who were in distress as a result of death or any other cause accepted by the Executive Committee.<sup>73</sup>

In a memorandum to the 1963 Victoria Falls Conference on Railways, Mr. A.H. Simwanza, the General Secretary of the R.A.W.U., reiterated the importance the union attached to social security as follows:

Conditions of service in the form of remuneration, allowances and social securities [sic] as presently applicable to us should not in any way be reduced in value and number, but be maintained as they are or improve them for the better...<sup>74</sup>

The concern over possible changes in the conditions of service was as a result of the imminent dissolution of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland at the end of 1963.

Besides participation in strike action, individual employees supported union efforts through financial contributions which were made, as from 1960, by way of deductions through paysheets. These deductions were made with the consent of the employees who signed authorisation forms. The initial amount was one shilling.<sup>75</sup>

African employees were not docile recipients of social security from the state and the employers. Like African workers elsewhere, African railway employees made use of kinship based social security systems.<sup>76</sup> The traditional social security system basically functioned through the maintenance of links or contacts between the place of work and

one's rural home, as well as contacts at the workplace among those who had a common area of origin or ethnic group.<sup>77</sup>

One of the important ways in which contact with the area of origin was maintained was by the employees making visits when they were on leave. By July 1944, Railway Tribal Representatives had been asking for paid leave and free passes to enable them visit their villages.<sup>78</sup> Although free passes were given for the employee, wife and children, and vacation leave was guaranteed by the 1949 conditions of service, the fact that the transport concessions given by the employer only considered transport by rail meant that those employees who came from areas which were not traversed by the railway line had to incur additional transport costs. In 1951, African trade union representatives walked out of an emotionally charged meeting at which the Chief Officer, A.A.D., rejected the demand for transport by road while on leave. At the 1956 Territorial Industrial Committee meeting, the matter remained unresolved.<sup>79</sup>

Notwithstanding road transport costs, links were still maintained with the districts and countries of origin. One way in which this was done was by keeping the wife and children in the home village for most of the period when the employee was required to be on duty. The spouses could stay away from the railway townships for as long as six months, and it was the responsibility of the husbands to maintain them by sending them money.<sup>80</sup> In addition, links with the rural homes were maintained by visits to the urban working place by people from the rural areas. Even chiefs who wished to keep contact with their people did so by making urban tours.<sup>81</sup>

The wives and chiefs were of strategic importance in the provision of access to traditional social security in the peasant economy. While the wives worked on the land

and took care of the children, the chiefs acted as the guardians of the land. According to Heilser:

Basic social security for the people of the Labour Camps was their right to utilise land in their place of origin. Some 94 per cent of the land in Zambia was reserved for Africans in 1947 and chiefs and headmen safeguarded the interests of migrants in land pending their return.<sup>82</sup>

African employees on the Railways were no exception to the situation in which membership of the rural community was maintained through ownership of land. At the 1958 J.I.C. meeting, the R.A.W.U. representatives argued that 'as many employees still had land in the reserves, it was very necessary that their wives should spend long and frequent periods there'.<sup>83</sup>

Apart from ownership of land, African workers purchased their security in the villages of origin through sending of gifts and money to their kinsmen. When proceeding on leave or retirement, 'the people at home [expected] one to have come back from work with money'.<sup>84</sup> Remittances were augmented by the obligation of taking part in the affairs of the traditional society by visiting sick relatives, attending funerals, and even participating in political issues such as accession to positions such as headmanship.<sup>85</sup> This type of response to events in the rural areas provided assurance of assistance when an employee faced difficulties such as illness or loss of a job.

The traditional system of social security also took cognizance of children and dependants as a source of security especially in old age. As a result, it was common for African employees to not only look after their own children, but also take care of dependants such as brothers and nephews.<sup>86</sup> In order to ensure that such dependants got well paying jobs and, therefore, became better placed to provide security, emphasis was attached to their having access to education. On the Railways, African employees made

demands for increased educational facilities in the railway townships, a shortage of which 'could lead to grave labour unrest in the undertaking'.<sup>87</sup>

Efforts by the African trade union to enhance the ability of their members to educate their children through receipt of educational allowances from the employers proved futile. Between 1953 and 1956, the response of the Railway administration was that it could not pay educational allowances as was paid to European employees because education was a government responsibility, and that African education was not compulsory.<sup>88</sup>

Kinship based social security was not restricted to ties between the rural and urban areas. The general trend in the urban workplaces was the formation of associations among people who shared common languages and areas of origin. Ethnic associations such as the Lozi Improvement Society and the Ansenga Young Men's Association, in addition to burial societies such as the Zambia Burial Society, had as their major objective the provision of assistance to their members in times of crises such as sickness and death.<sup>89</sup> Similarly, dancing groups such as Nyakasanga, Kalela, and Nyau did not only exist for the sole purpose of entertainment, but also as provident societies which provided succour.<sup>90</sup>

When Aidan Southall argued that 'African workers are notoriously prone to absent themselves from work ... to attend ... funerals',<sup>91</sup> he overlooked the social security aspect. According to African norms and values, one is required to attend funerals and provide assistance in order that one can get similar treatment when in difficulty.

In a study of escorts of hospital patients in Lusaka, Boswell concluded that the taking care of patients by friends and relatives was a 'nationwide phenomenon'.<sup>92</sup> During illness and death, African employees on the Railways showed benevolence by making visits and donations to the affected family.<sup>93</sup> Even in the event of the death of a relative in the home village, the practice was the visiting of the affected family by friends and kin as an expression of grief.<sup>94</sup>

Of significance also as a source of assistance and active co-operation in times of crises were the joking relationships among clans belonging to the same ethnic group (*cinungwe*), and among ethnic groups (*cimbuya*).<sup>95</sup> The clan based joking relationship rested on the relationships among the objects after which the clans had been named. For example, the Crocodile clan (*Bena Ng'andu*) shared a joking relationship with the Rain clan (*Bena Mfula*) because crocodiles live and hide in water.<sup>96</sup>

Inter-ethnic co-operation by way of joking existed among ethnic groups which had a historical background of conflict with each other, such as the Lozi and the Tonga, and the Bemba and Ngoni.<sup>97</sup> To accommodate ethnic groups which did not necessarily share such joking relationships, there was a tendency among Africans to bunch ethnic groups together. For instance, ethnic groups from the Northern Province of Zambia were collectively referred to as Bemba, while those from the Western Province were identified with the Lozi.<sup>98</sup> Besides tasks such as making arrangements for the burial, the clans or ethnic groups which were related through joking relationships collected donations on behalf of the bereaved family.<sup>99</sup>

In order to protect themselves against the eventuality of death, some African railway employees took out life assurance policies with insurance companies such as the

African Life Assurance Society to which premiums were paid by way of deductions from wages.<sup>100</sup> As a result of low wages, deductions which were above the amount agreed upon, and the absence of a provision to withdraw some money when in need, there was a trend among African employees to cancel their endowment assurance policies.<sup>101</sup>

Consequent to such problems, African employees preferred to use building societies such as the First Permanent Building Society and post offices for their savings.<sup>102</sup> Foreign African employees on the Railways, like those in other Northern Rhodesian industries, had security through savings which were compulsorily deducted from their wages in accordance with the African Migrant Workers Ordinance Number 30 of 1948, which came into operation on 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1949.<sup>103</sup> This practice of forcing employees to send remittances to their countries of origin ended in 1960, though the scheme continued on a voluntary basis.<sup>104</sup>

While both foreign and local African employees on the Copperbelt mines were given the facility of a voluntary savings scheme through payroll deductions,<sup>105</sup> demands by African railway employees for a similar service received negative responses. In 1956, the Railway management evaded the issue by referring it to the Chief Accounts and Finance Officer (C.A.F.O.) for consideration.<sup>106</sup> In 1962, the demand was harshly cast aside by the Railway administration which declared that the stop order system of savings was 'out of the question'.<sup>107</sup> This kind of uncooperative attitude by the Railways undoubtedly had a negative impact on the desire and ability of the African workers to save and provide themselves with security.

The lack of support from the employers did not prevent the African employees from making use of other initiatives. Significant was the utilisation of mobilising

informal savings through the wage exchange scheme commonly known as *cilimba*. In this system which was also existent among employees who were not working on the Railways, two or more people collected a fixed sum of money from each other. The amounts which were collected were paid to each member alternately.<sup>108</sup>

Savings among Africans in the centres of employment were also made in the form of the purchase and ownership of property such as sewing machines and bicycles. Such goods were usually conveyed to the rural home when an employee proceeded on leave.<sup>109</sup> Closely related to the ownership of property was the ownership of houses. On the Copperbelt mines, the employers supported a home ownership scheme for African employees.<sup>110</sup> In contrast, the Railways did not provide such a scheme for the African employees. At the 1955 J.I.C. meeting, the African trade union representatives tabled the issue of loans for building houses in the urban areas where retired employees could live, but the Railway administration simply promised to look into the matter and the issue was left in abeyance.<sup>111</sup>

Similarly, the suggestion that the Railway administration should purchase land on which to settle retired African employees was rejected in 1955 on the grounds that it 'had been turned down by Government'.<sup>112</sup> When the issue resurfaced at the 1962 S.I.C. meeting, the Railway administration applied delaying tactics and referred the matter to a sub-committee.<sup>113</sup>

The situation obtaining on the Broken Hill Mine was different from that on the Railways as far as the land issue was concerned. The Broken Hill Mine administration, in addition to wages, gave its African employees some five-acre plots on which they were allowed to provide their own accommodation and grow crops.<sup>114</sup> On the Copperbelt, the

Roan Antelope Mine provided a means of supplementing both the incomes and diet of their African workers by giving them one-acre plots and purchasing the agricultural produce.<sup>115</sup> Even though the Railway undertaking owned farms,<sup>116</sup> it was unwilling to share them out to its African staff to enable them augment their incomes and supplement their diet.

African railway employees used their initiative to cultivate land in the proximity of the places where they lived or worked. In 1932, the Lusaka Native Welfare Association was informed that 'large patches of maize [had] been cultivated by railway employees at the Ganger's Compound and at the Station Master's Compound ...'<sup>117</sup> Some of the African workers gave themselves access to the Railway farm at Broken Hill and grew maize, groundnuts and sweet potatoes.<sup>118</sup> Had such productivity been supported as was the case on the Roan Antelope Mine, more extra income could have been earned and security enhanced through increased savings.

Lastly, African railway employees made use of entrepreneurship in order to supplement their incomes. While some employees sold groceries especially at sidings, others sold charcoal. Besides market trade, the women were involved in the brewing and selling of beer, especially *skokiaan* which was brewed by using yeast and sugar instead of fermented maize or millet.<sup>119</sup> The desire to do business was inhibited by low wages which could not provide enough capital, inimical legislation which prohibited brewing of beer in the townships, and the lack of support by the employer especially with regards to the provision of trading places in the railway townships.<sup>120</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The main argument in this chapter is that the state, the employers and the employees all had important roles to play in the provision of social security to African employees on Rhodesia Railways. We have argued that through legislation, the state determined the conditions of service for African Railway employees. We have also argued that the major role of the employer was the interpretation and implementation of conditions of service as decreed by legislation or laid down in railway regulations.

Three conclusions can be drawn from this chapter. Firstly, social security provision in the colonial period was not effective since the government did not take a keen interest in the amelioration of the poor working conditions of the African railway workers. This can be deduced from the refusal to establish a state administered contributory pension scheme for Africans, and the inability of the state to enforce the relevant legislation by prosecuting the Railway administration when the company failed to make provisions such as protective clothing, adequate sanitation and workmen's compensation.

Secondly, the implementation of conditions of service on the Railways was discriminatory. While the employer gave European employees conditions such as check-off for the R.R.W.U. and the Amalgamated Engineering Union (A.E.U.), the R.A.W.U. did not get this until 1960. It was the Railway administration which stood in the way of providing social security to Africans, and this was done by the failure to implement conditions and the rejection of demands.

Thirdly, the African employees made use of initiatives such as participation in the traditional social security system which was based on family ties and the fulfillment of

reciprocal kinship obligations such as the attending of funerals. In addition, they used income argumentation activities such as agricultural production and wage exchange. Through trade unionism, the African employees tabled their problems and even backed their demands through strike action.

## NOTES

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3. N.A.Z., LSS 1/8/15, Report by the Delegates of Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of
4. Great Britain and Northern Ireland on the International Labour Conference, 35<sup>th</sup> Session, 4<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> June, 1952.
5. N.A.Z., LSS 1/15/122, Commissioner for Labour to Chief Secretary, 20<sup>th</sup> September, 1954. See also N.A.Z., LSS 1/8/17, International Labour Office Reports, 1953-1958.
6. N.R.G. *Annual Report of the Department of Labour for the Year 1959*, (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1960), p. 12.
7. N.A.Z., SEC 1/1297, International Labour Office, Sixty First Session, 1<sup>st</sup> February 1933, 7<sup>th</sup> Item on the Agenda: Record of the Meeting of the Committee of Experts on Native Labour, p.9.
8. Z.R. Archives, Basuke Mabowa's file, R.R. Number 7126, Z.R. Number 155051, Advice of Engagement from Number N.F.13. Mabowa passed his medical examinations on 21<sup>st</sup> July, 1956, and was engaged on 24<sup>th</sup> July, 1956; Z.R. Archives, Lasalo Nkoloyi's file, R.R. Number N. 5686, Z.R. Number 157316. Nkoloyi was declared medically fit by the Railway Medical Officer (R.M.O.) on 1<sup>st</sup> November, 1954 and was engaged on the same day.
9. N.A.Z., LSS 1/15/122, Secretary of State's Circular Despatch Number 19/53, 7<sup>th</sup> January, 1953.
10. N.A.Z., LSS 1/15/122, Appendix to Circular Despatch Number 19/53, 7<sup>th</sup> January, 1953.
11. Republic of Zambia *Annual Report of the Department of Labour for the Year 1964*, (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1965), p. 10; E. Kalula, 'The Influence of International Labour standards on Zambian Legislation', *International Labour Review*, 124, 5(1985), pp. 593-594.
12. Republic of Zambia *Annual Report of the Department of Labour for the Year 1967*, (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1968), pp. 5-6. Zambia also participated in international social security affairs by allowing the Zambia National Provident Fund to become a member of the International Social Security Association in 1967. The I.S.S.A. provided Z.N.P.F with guidance. See *Profund News*, Volume 1, Number 43, September-December, 1987.
13. A. Hervo-Akendengue, 'Social Security as an Instrument in the Economic and Social Development of African Countries', *International Social Security Review*, 3 (1972), p. 178.
14. For discussions of tax and the various forms of coercion which accompanied it so as to force Africans to sell their labour, see: N.R.G., *Report of the Commission Appointment to Enquire into the Disturbances in the Copperbelt, Northern Rhodesia, Together with Governor's Despatch, November, 1935*, (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1935), p. 4; C. Van Onselen, 'Black Workers in Central African Industry: A Critical Essay on the Historiography and Sociology of Rhodesia' in I.R. Phimister and C. Van Onselen (eds.), *Studies in the History of African Mine Labour in Colonial Zimbabwe*,

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15. N.A.Z., SEC 3/480., Legislative Council Debates, Mr. Pelleter, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1942, Column 161.
  16. N.R. Legislative Council Debates, 25<sup>th</sup> November to 10<sup>th</sup> December, 1958, Columns 504-524.
  17. R.E. Baldwin, *Economic Development and Export Growth: A Study of Northern Rhodesia, 1920-1960*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1966), pp. 138-139.
  18. N.A.Z., LSS 1/2/36, Labour Commissioner to the Administrative Secretary, 6<sup>th</sup> December, 1958. During the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, the Federal Parliament was white dominated and did not sympathise with African railway workers. See F.E. Mulenga, 'The Development of Worker Consciousness Among African Railway Workers in Zambia, 1953-1972', (M.A. Dissertation, University of Zambia, 1987), pp. 62-63.
  19. N.R.G. Department of Labour, Memorandum on Social Security in Underdeveloped Territories, 1<sup>st</sup> February, 1958; J.S. Munsaka, 'The Law Governing Social Security in Zambia', (L.L.M. Dissertation, University of Zambia, 1987), pp. 22-23,
  20. See for example, The Employment of Natives Ordinance, 1940; The Northern Rhodesia Workmen's Compensation Ordinance, 1944; The Rhodesia Railways Act, 1949; and the Employment Act, 1965.
  21. N.R.G. *Annual Report of the Department of Labour for the Year 1960*, (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1961), pp. 12-13.
  22. Only 63 African railway employees belonged to the African Senior Staff category between July and December 1960. See: N.R.G. *Annual Report of the Department of Labour*, 1960, (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1961) p. 59.
  23. Mulenga, 'Worker Consciousness', p. 25.
  24. F.Austin, *The Rhodesia Railways: A Short History*, (Bulawayo: Rhodesia Railways Public Relations Branch, 1968), pp. 15-16; N.A.Z., HM 56/27, Rhodesia Railways Historic Milestones; N.R.G. *Annual Report of the Department of Labour for the Year 1963*, (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1964) p. 14.
  25. N.A.Z., LSS 1/2/19, Accountant General's Department, Notes on the Completion of Industrial Compensation Award Advice Forms, November, 1953; Republic of Zambia *Annual Report of the Department of Labour*, 1966, (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1967), p. 19.
  26. Under Northern Rhodesian law, provision was made for the prosecution of employers who did not provide enough protective measures against accidents; accommodate their employees satisfactorily; or report accidents. In spite of such legislation as laid down in Caps 188, 193 and 234 of the Laws of Northern Rhodesia, Rhodesia Railways was never prosecuted whenever it was found that the Railway administration had not adequately made provisions to the African employees. See N.R.G., *Labour and Mines Department Annual Report for the Years 1950-1952*, (Lusaka: Government Printer 1953), p.30; N.R.G. *Labour and Mines Department Annual Report for the Year 1953*, (Lusaka: Government Printer,

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27. See J.C. Mitchell, *Cities, Society and Social Perception: A Central African Perspective*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 56; N.A.Z., LSS 1/2/19, Acting Commissioner for Labour and Mines to the Workmen's Compensation Commissioner, 9<sup>th</sup> January, 1954.
  28. N.A.Z., HM 56/8, Chief Officer to General Manager, African Affairs Department, Rhodesia Railways, 29<sup>th</sup> March, 1952.
  29. N.A.Z., HM 56/8, Chief Officer to General Manager, Rhodesia Railways, 17<sup>th</sup> April, 1952; N.A.Z., HM 56/9, General Manager's circular, n.d.
  30. Republic of Zambia, The Employment Act, 1965.
  31. Republic of Zambia, *Annual Report of the Department of Labour*, 1966, p. 19; The Zambia National Provident Fund Act, 1965.
  32. Interview with Juziyeli Zulu, Kabwe, 26<sup>th</sup> June, 2000. See also H. Heisler, *Urbanisation and the Government of Migration: The Interrelation of Urban and Rural Life in Zambia*, (London: C. Hurst and Company, 1974), p. 115.
  33. J.G. Turnbull *et al*, *Economic and Social Security: Public and Private Measures Against Economic Insecurity*, (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1962), pp. 8-11.
  34. N.A.Z., HM 56/14, African Affairs Department Notes on Uniforms and Protective Clothing, September, 1952; N.A.Z., HM 56/13, Minutes of the African Railway Workers' Trade Union Annual Delegates Conference held at Broken Hill, 7<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> July, 1951.
  35. Mulenga, 'Worker Consciousness', pp. 54-56. See also: N.A.Z., HM 56/8, Africans' Conditions of Service, Discipline: 1949-1952, 1952-1964.
  36. N.A.Z., HM 56/8, General Secretary, Rhodesia Railway Workers' Union to the General Manager, 27<sup>th</sup> August, 1952.
  37. N.R.G. *Labour Department Annual Report for the Year 1946*, (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1947) p. 4.
  38. Mulenga, 'Worker Consciousness', p. 31.
  39. J.H. Richardson, *Economic and Financial Aspects of Social Security: An Illustrated Survey*, (London: George Allen and Unwin Limited, 1960), p. 28; P.S. Harris, 'Government Policy and African Wages in Rhodesia', *Zambezia*, 2, 2(1972), p. 40.
  40. *Rhodesia Railways Annual Report*, 1955, (Bulawayo: Rhodesia Railways, 1956), p. 26.
  41. Republic of Zambia *Annual Report of the Department of Labour for the Year 1964*, (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1965), pp. 2, 6.
  42. N.A.Z., HM 56/27, Address of Welcome by the Chairman, Rhodesia Railways Board, Mr. A.R. Kemp, O.B.E., Official Opening by the President of Zambia, Dr. K. Kaunda, of the Broken Hill Training School, 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 1965; Republic of Zambia *Annual Report of the Department of Labour for the Year 1964*, p.6.

43. N.A.Z., HM 56/27, Chairman's Speech: Rotary Club, Lusaka, 9<sup>th</sup> February, 1965.
44. N.A.Z., LSS 1/2/54, Memorandum from Secretary, Zambia National Provident Fund, to Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Social Development, 21<sup>st</sup> December, 1966.
45. H. Powdermaker, *Copper Town: Changing Africa The Human Situation on the Rhodesia Copperbelt*, (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1962), pp. 98, 117; N.A.Z., HM 56/21, Rhodesia Railways Personnel Department, Memorandum to the Rhodesia Railways Board: Meeting of the Statutory Industrial Council, 7<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> March, 1962.
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52. Chishala, 'Railway Unions', p. 87.
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54. N.R.G., *Report of investigation into the grievances which gave rise to the strike amongst African employees of the Rhodesia Railways and the Conditions of employment incidental to such grievances and to make recommendations for the elimination of any grievances proved to be well founded*, (Tredgold Report,) 1945, (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1946), p. 2.
55. Tredgold Report, 1945, p.3.
56. N.A.Z., SEC 1/1372, Submissions to the 1945 Railway Strike Commission by Gibson Gabadale and Santi Musono.
57. See, for example, NAZ, HM 56/13, Chief Officer's Notes of Meeting with the African Railway Workers' Trade Union at Broken Hill, 31<sup>st</sup> October, 1951; N.A.Z., HM 56/7, Joint Industrial Committee for African Employees of the Rhodesia Railways, November 1952-April 1953; N.R.G. *African Affairs Annual Report for 1956*, (Lusaka: Government printer, 1957), p. 43.
58. The report described African housing as ranging from 'very good to very bad.' African employees lived in appalling conditions, but the report wished to cover this fact. In spite of having received

- evidence that sacks were issued as protective clothing, the report recommended that the matter be investigated by Welfare Officers when they were appointed. See Tredgold Report, 1945, pp. 8-11.
59. Mulenga, 'Worker Consciousness', p. 16.
  60. Chishala, 'Railway Unions', p. 90.
  61. N.R.G. *Labour and Mines Department Annual Report for 1952*, p. 14.
  62. See: N.R.G., *Annual Reports of the Department of Labour, 1952-1964; Republic of Zambia, Annual Reports of the Department of Labour, 1965-1967*.
  63. N.A.Z., HM 56/13, Minutes of the African Railway Workers' Trade Union Annual Delegates Conference held at Broken Hill, 7<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> July, 1951.
  64. N.R.G. *Annual Report of the Department of Labour, 1960*, p. 14.
  65. N.R.G. *Labour and Mines Department Annual Report for the Year 1953*, p. 12.
  66. N.A.Z., HM 56/13, Notes of Discussion With General Manager (C.O. and A.C.O.), Points Brought by the A.R.W.T.U., 2<sup>nd</sup> January, 1952; N.A.Z., HM 56/13, Notes of Decisions Arrived at Meeting of Joint Industrial Committee for African employees of the Rhodesia Railways held in Bulawayo on 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> September, 1952.
  67. Interviews with H.K. Ndamana, (President, R.W.U.Z.), B. Ngula, (General Secretary, R.W.U.Z.), and A. Mutale, (Assistant General Secretary, R.W.U.Z.), Kabwe, 30<sup>th</sup> March 2001.
  68. N.A.Z., HM 56/15, Memorandum of a discussion held in the General Manager's Office at 2.15 p.m. on 30<sup>th</sup> July 1953 at which were present the General Manager, Colonel Everard, Mr. Symington, Director, Northern Rhodesia Chamber of Mines, Dr. E.M.B. West, Chief Officer, African Affairs Department; N.A.Z., HM 56/3, E.M.B. West to Regional Controller, Northern Rhodesia, 26<sup>th</sup> November, 1954.
  69. N.R.G. *Department of Labour Annual report for the Year 1955*, (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1956), p. 14.
  70. *African Daily News*, 27<sup>th</sup> November, 1960; N.R.G. *African Affairs Annual Report for the Year 1960*, (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1961), p. 40.
  71. Mulenga, 'Worker Consciousness', p. 68.
  72. N.A.Z., HM 56/6, Draft Agreement for Recognition of the African Railway Workers' Trade Union (herein referred to as a Union) by the Rhodesia Railways, 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 1953; N.A.Z., HM 56/6, African Affairs Department, Bulawayo, Notes on Draft Agreement, African Railway Workers' Trade Union, 28<sup>th</sup> January, 1953.
  73. N.A.Z., LSS 1/13/21, Railway African Workers' Union Constitution, 1960, clauses 25 (m) and 27.
  74. N.A.Z., HM 56/22, Memorandum submitted to the Victoria Falls Sub-Committee on Railways by the Railway African Workers' Union, 8<sup>th</sup> August, 1963.
  75. Z.R. Archives, Basuke Mabowa's file, R.R. Number H 7126, Z.R. Number 1555051; Zulu, Interview 26<sup>th</sup> June, 2000.

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78. N.A.Z., SEC 1/1372, Submission by the Labour Commissioner to the 1945 Railway Strike Commission.
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80. N.A.Z., HM 56/17, Minutes of the Meeting of the Joint Industrial Committee for African Employees of the Rhodesia Railways held in the Head Office, African Affairs Department, Rhodesia Railways, Bulawayo on Tuesday and Wednesday, 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> May, 1956.
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82. Heisler, *Urbanisation and the Government of Migration*, p. 114; J. Van Velsen, 'Labour Migration as a Positive Factor in the Continuity of Tonga Tribal Society' in A. Southall (ed.), *Social Change in Modern Africa*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 237.
83. N.A.Z., HM 56/18, Minutes of the Meeting of Joint the Industrial Committee for African Employees of the Rhodesia Railways, Bulawayo, on Tuesday and Wednesday, 17<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> June, 1958.
84. N.A.Z., HM 56/13, Minutes of the African Railway Workers' Trade Union Annual Delegates Conference Held at Broken Hill, 7<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> July, 1951.
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89. Chishala, 'Railway Unions', p. 86; *Zambian Workers*, October, 1965; N.A.Z., SEC 2/1275, Ansenga Young Men's Association, 1948.
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93. *Sitima*, December 1965; *Sitima*, January, 1966.
94. D. Boswell, 'Personal Crises and the Mobilisation of the Social Network' in J.C. Mitchell (ed.) *Social Networks in Urban Situations*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1969), p. 259.
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98. Mitchell, *Cities*, p. 270; Interview with Jacobson Chamutepa, Kabwe, 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 2000.
99. Interviews with N. Mumbuna, Kabwe, 3<sup>rd</sup> August, 2000, and J. Chamutepa, Kabwe, 26<sup>th</sup> June, 2000.

- 100.Z.R. Archives, Lasalo Nkoloyi's file, R.R. Number N 5686, Z.R. Number 157316, The African Life Assurance Society Limited: Rhodesia Railways (Insurance Company Code Number 702), Stop Order for Life Assurance, 20<sup>th</sup> July, 1964.
- 101.Z.R. Archives, George Hlazo Jere's File, R.R. Number T4587, Z.R. Number 154346, George Jere to Clerk in charge, Lusaka, 9<sup>th</sup> June, 1966; Z.R. Archives, Lasalo Nkoloyi's File, R.R. Number N5686, Z.R. Number 157316, Branch Secretary, African Life Assurance Society to Lasalo Nkoloyi, 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 1964.
- 102.Z.R. Archives, Lasalo Nkoloyi's File, R.R. Number M 5686, Z.R. Number 157316, Rhodesia Railways Authority or Payment of Salary or Wages into a Bank/Building Society (Form Number 36/31/51), n.d.; For a discussion of the general positive attitude towards banking facilities among Africans, see R.P. Sutcliffe, *Africans' Growing Interest in Banking and Saving Facilities*, (Lusaka: Northern Rhodesia Government Information Section, 1959).
- 103.N.R.G. *Labour and Mines Department Annual Report for the Year 1949*, (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1950), p. 15.
- 104.*Broken Hill Observer*, 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 1960.
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- 112.N.A.Z., HM 56/16, Minutes of Meeting of the Joint Industrial Committee for African Employees of the Rhodesia Railways held in Head Office, African Affairs Department, Rhodesia Railways, Bulawayo, at 10.am. on Monday, 31<sup>st</sup> January, 1955.
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- 117.N.A.Z., SEC 2/453, Minutes of Meeting of the Lusaka African Association held in Old Township Compound on the 13<sup>th</sup> of January, 1932, at 5 p.m.
- 118.N.A.Z., SEC 1/1372, Submission by the Labour Commissioner to the 1945 Railway Strike Commission.
- 119.Interview with Albert Sanyambe, Kabwe, 5<sup>th</sup> April, 2001.
- 120.Y.N. Seleti, 'Entrepreneurship in Colonial Zambia' in S.N. Chipungu (ed.), *Guardians in their Time: Experiences of Zambians Under Colonial Rule*, (London: Macmillan, 1992), pp. 156, 163, 173; N.A.Z., HM 56/21, Extract from the Minutes of the 47<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Management Executive held on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March, 1962.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

# **CONSTRAINTS ON THE PROVISION OF SOCIAL SECURITY FOR AFRICAN RAILWAY WORKERS**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter discusses the factors which made it difficult to provide social security for African employees on Rhodesia Railways. The chapter comprises three sections. In the first section we examine the constraints which were as a result of the political status of the country. In the second, we discuss the administrative constraints by taking into consideration the administrative arrangements and practices on the Railways. In the third section, we discuss the economic constraints in the provision of social security for Africans in the employ of Rhodesia Railways.

## **POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS**

For most of the period that this study covers (1945-1967), the political constraints in the provision of social security for African railway workers in Zambia emanated from the colonial status of the country which lasted up to 1964. According to the then Minister of Labour and Mines, Mr. Reuben Kamanga, the Colonial Office in London, through the European run minority government in Northern Rhodesia, enhanced the oppression and exploitation of African workers.<sup>1</sup>

As a result of Africans lacking political power prior to the establishment of the Black dominated government in 1962, efforts to get legislation which would be to the advantage of African employees through the Northern Rhodesia Legislative Council

(Legco) and the Federal Parliament proved futile.<sup>2</sup> The Rhodesia Railways administration was before 1947 under no legal obligation to provide pensions and gratuities to its African staff and the African employees who were injured on duty before the passing of the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance in 1944 did not receive any compensation.<sup>3</sup> Equally, Chishala has argued that the establishment of forums such as the Statutory Industrial Council at which the grievances of African employees could be tabled was delayed until 1961 'when the [colonial] government was being shaken to its foundation by African political agitation for independence'.<sup>4</sup>

Where legislation relating to the general conditions of employment for African workers existed, it was not only inadequate but also discriminatory on the basis of race. For example, the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance (1944) had a separate section, which dealt specifically with African employees, and the rates of compensation for Africans were lower than those applicable to European workers.<sup>5</sup>

The scales of benefit were only made non-racial by the African dominated Government when it passed the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance (1963) which established the Workmen's Compensation Fund Control Board and the Workmen's Compensation Appeal Tribunal.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, the Inter-Territorial Agreement which was signed between the governments of Southern and Northern Rhodesia in 1963 also addressed the removal of discriminatory labour laws affecting the Railways.<sup>7</sup>

The discriminatory labour legislation based on Southern Rhodesia laws and allowed to operate on the Railways in Northern Rhodesia was applied mainly through the Colour Bar. Lund has argued that in apartheid South Africa the colour bar practices were a negative factor in the provision of social security for Africans.<sup>8</sup> In the case of Northern

Rhodesia, the negative implications of the Colour Bar on social security provisions for African railway workers were basically two. Firstly, the ruthless prevention of the entry of Africans into skilled and semi-skilled jobs by the European trade unions, the Rhodesia Railway Workers' Union (R.R.W.U.), and the Amalgamated Engineering Union (A.E.U.) meant denial of access to high paying jobs and better social security benefits.<sup>9</sup> Secondly, entry into the Railway Training School at Bulawayo was determined on the basis of race and restricted the training of Africans.<sup>10</sup> Like the direct prevention of Africans from entering jobs which were a preserve of European employees, restricted training hindered African workers from effectively competing for and entering high paying job categories.

In spite of the hostility of the R.R.W.U. and the A.E.U., the advancement of African railway employees was initially introduced in 1959 by the opening of seven additional job categories mainly as a result of increased pressure from the Railway African Workers' Union (R.A.W.U.).<sup>11</sup> For African employees such as lorry drivers and ticket issuers, one of the direct results of advancement was the increase in the rates of pay and social security benefits.<sup>12</sup> According to the *African Daily News*, European employees were displeased with this development and African firemen complained of discrimination in the way they were attended to at N.I.C. railway clinics.<sup>13</sup>

As Chishala has argued, even after the granting of independence to Northern Rhodesia in 1964, 'the two Unions [Mineworkers' Union of Zambia and Zambia Railways Amalgamated Workers' Union] suffered from ... stagnation because of the presence of ... European workers who had been schooled in the doctrine of industrial colour bar'.<sup>14</sup> The European workers wished to maintain their dominant position by

restricting the entry of Africans into better paying job categories, and could not therefore adequately participate in Union matters affecting M.U.Z. and Z.R.A.W.U.

Additionally, social security provision for African railway workers was constrained by the lack of the registration of births, marriages, and deaths. According to the Natives Registration Ordinance, the registration of births, marriages and deaths was not compulsory for Africans. Only male Africans were required to register at the age of 16, and the identity certificates which were issued could not be effectively used for identification in a social security scheme since they did not bear the photograph of the holder.<sup>15</sup> The lack of a proper method of identification was one of the constraints on the introduction of social security schemes for Africans in Northern Rhodesia. As was observed by the 1958 Conference on Urban Problems in East and Central Africa, 'no system of social security can be fully successful without some effective general system for the identification of individuals'.<sup>16</sup>

The absence of a proper identification system and the lack of registration of African births were direct factors of constraint in the provision of social security for African employees on the Railways.<sup>17</sup> Firstly, there was inability to produce proof of age for purposes of taking out insurance policies, causing 'most insurance companies [to do] little business with Africans'.<sup>18</sup> Secondly, the Railways made use of the unreliable method of ascertaining the ages of employees through interviews.<sup>19</sup> In 1963, over 200 African railway employees failed to produce satisfactory proof of their ages for pension purposes.<sup>20</sup> Thirdly, the inability of the colonial government to introduce the registration of African births was, until 1960, used by the Railway administration to deny Africans

children's allowances, a factor which had been making African railway workers 'much more angry'.<sup>21</sup>

With regards to the names of African employees, the identification system used on Rhodesia Railways was poor. The Railways used the words 'African' and 'Native' before an employee's name and railway number, and names such as 'African John' or 'Native Mulonda' were used. In 1962, the replacement of 'African' and 'Native' by the designation of the employee to create names such as 'Labourer James' and 'Coal Heaver Sam' was still both a derogatory and ineffective method of identifying African workers.<sup>22</sup> As a result of poor identification, the Railways sometimes paid wages to employees other than the rightful payees, in which cases the African employees were inconvenienced by the loss of wages.<sup>23</sup>

The problem of improper identification of employees spilled over into the Zambia National Provident Fund (Z.N.P.F.) which was established as a state run contributory pensions and savings scheme in 1966. While the Z.N.P.F. relied on national registration card numbers which were used as Z.N.P.F. account numbers,<sup>24</sup> one of the chief problems confronting the Fund was the identification of workers who had happened to change their names, or only had a single name such as 'John'.<sup>25</sup>

It is worth noting that there were colonial policies which curtailed African initiatives. Although there was a desire among Africans to enter commerce especially at main centres such as Broken Hill, 'an African wishing to trade [had] no practicable alternative but to peddle his wares in the markets'.<sup>26</sup> In addition, 'it was practically impossible for an African to own land or property in a town',<sup>27</sup> a situation which only came to be reversed after independence in 1964.

## ADMINISTRATIVE CONSTRAINTS

The administrative constraints as used in this section refer to those factors which were directly or indirectly a result of the Railway administration's relationship with African railway employees. In this discussion, we shall also consider the administrative arrangement on the Railways, how the Railways reacted to demands from African workers, and the conditions of service such as leave and gratuities.

Unlike their counterparts on the Copperbelt mines who were concentrated in their places of work, African employees on the Railways were thinly stretched along the line of rail and were highly mobile.<sup>28</sup> The implication of this geographical factor and the mobility involved in working on the line was that the nature of the accommodation and sanitation was poor since it was predominantly temporary in the form of 'A' huts which were made of tarpaulins and could easily be shifted.<sup>29</sup> In addition, African railway workers were more vulnerable to diseases and accidents since they often worked in areas which were far away from government hospitals and railway clinics, making it difficult for accident reports to be made and medical attention to be given.<sup>30</sup>

Furthermore, African employees of the Railways who worked in areas which were predominantly rural faced the problem of having access to educational facilities for their children and dependants. As was observed by John Mwanakatwe in his contribution on the lack of educational facilities for African railway workers who worked in remote areas, 'the African labourers' children would have no advancement opportunities and would themselves be destined to be labourers like their fathers'.<sup>31</sup> Although railway schools existed at main centres such as Bulawayo, Salisbury (Harare), Broken Hill,

Umtali and Wankie, employees in remote areas were unable to have access to such facilities which included adult education classes for African railway workers.<sup>32</sup>

The African trade union on the Railways was no exception to the problems presented by its members not being concentrated in one workplace. In its quest for improved conditions of service for African workers, the Railway African Workers' Union (R.A.W.U.) 'suffered from communication problems both human and physical ... causing communication breakdowns between branches and the Head Office'.<sup>33</sup>

Poor communication between the trade union and its members also entailed a distortion of information. This could best be exemplified by the May 1952 eight day strike which was sparked by the dismissal of three African employees and called by the African Railway Workers' Trade Union (A.R.W.T.U.).<sup>34</sup> However, the information reaching some branches regarding the reason for going out on strike indicated that the Railway administration was not responding positively to a demand for a wage increase.<sup>35</sup>

Besides the usual insensitivity of the Railways to the problems affecting African railway employees, the flow of information and subsequent attention to problems were marred by the centralisation of authority at Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia, where the headquarters of Rhodesia Railways were.<sup>36</sup> Within Northern Rhodesia itself, authority over issues affecting African railway workers such as accidents and diseases were entrusted to the Senior Compound Manager at Broken Hill who, once a month, sent reports to the Supervisor of Natives who was based at Bulawayo.<sup>37</sup> The result of this arrangement was that there were delays in the receipt of protective clothing, the reporting of accidents, and the payment of compensation to affected African workers, issues which

for a long time raised the concern of African workers, the Workmen's Compensation Commissioner, and even Labour Officers.<sup>38</sup>

In 1945, the Railway Strike Commission received as one of the causes of discontentment among African employees the failure by the Railway administration to issue free passes promptly. According to Santi Musono, an African railway employee:

If we want to get urgent leave to see someone who is ill, we have to wait a considerable time before we hear from Bulawayo. We think that in urgent matters they should have authority at Broken Hill to issue us immediately with a ticket.<sup>39</sup>

This complaint, it can be argued, was based on the desire by African employees to participate in the traditional social security system and be assured of protection and assistance by responding to kinship obligations such as the visiting of sick relatives and attending funerals. By 1962, African employees could be issued with Privileged Ticket Orders (P.T.O.s) to enable them travel by rail, but these were only obtainable at main centres such as Lusaka.<sup>40</sup>

The other administrative constraint was the difficulty of facilitating skills training for African railway staff. Even though by 1966 Zambians had been receiving training at the Railway Training Centre at Broken Hill and the East African Railway Training School in Nairobi, 'overall programmes ... tended to be hampered by the administrative structure of the Railway undertaking whose headquarters were in Bulawayo, [Southern] Rhodesia'.<sup>41</sup>

Consequent to the inter-territorial arrangement in which the Railways were run jointly by the governments of Northern and Southern Rhodesia, adverse political events in one country affected railway administration in the other. This was the case when the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (U.D.I.) was made in Southern Rhodesia in 1965.

Besides retarding overall economic development for Zambia, the U.D.I. made it 'no longer possible to send Zambian apprentices of the Rhodesia Railways to Bulawayo for part of their training as had been done in the past.'<sup>42</sup> Delayed training had a direct negative bearing on the entrance of African employees into well paying categories of employment.

Of crucial importance in the administrative structure of Rhodesia Railways was the African Affairs Department (A.A.D.) which was headed by a Chief Officer. Although the A.A.D. was established to create a link between the Railway administration and the African workers, the manner in which the A.A.D. handled the affairs of African workers was not satisfactory.

Firstly, the A.A.D. was some kind of intelligence service which sent confidential reports to the Railway administration on such subjects as matters of discussion at African trade union meetings. This was done by interviewing both anonymous and named African employees who had opted to be sell-outs.<sup>43</sup> Secondly, the A.A.D. received reports on behalf of the Railway management from European employees who often described offences among African employees as 'insolence', 'insubordination', 'agitation' and 'defiance', paving the way for either putting the African employee on off duty or a dismissal.<sup>44</sup> Putting African employees on off duty led to loss of pay, while dismissal meant the loss of security possessed by being in employment. Thirdly, the A.A.D. made recommendations to the Railway administration which were unrealistic and lacked a sense of seriousness. For example, the A.A.D. recommended in September 1952 that sandals made from discarded tyres be supplied to African railway workers as protective clothing to do away with 'most of the administrative difficulties encountered in

the matter of a boot issue'.<sup>45</sup> Sandals were not an effective protection from injuries to the feet which were common among African railway employees.

To the African employees, the roles of the A.A.D. were questionable and its achievements indiscernible. In 1953, the General Secretary of the A.R.W.T.U. wrote to the Chief Officer, A.A.D, and demanded to know the powers, objectives and functions of the A.A.D since the Union had never succeeded in negotiating for any case taken up with the Head Office of the A.A.D.<sup>46</sup> In his reply to the General Secretary's minute, the Chief Officer, A.A.D., claimed that there had been much greater improvement in the standard of accommodation provided for railway African employees and in their conditions of service including wages.<sup>47</sup> What is clear from this encounter by correspondence between the African trade union and the A.A.D. is that while the Union was not satisfied with the functions and performance of the A.A.D., the A.A.D. regarded itself as having made progress in improving the welfare of African railway workers and interpreted the concern of the A.R.W.T.U. as having been based on mistaken beliefs.

The Railways, as well as not laying down to the African staff what the functions of the A.A.D. were, did not explicitly state some of the conditions of service for African railway workers. The rules pertaining to gratuities and the grading system were not generally understood by African employees, most of whom were illiterate especially before the 1940s.<sup>48</sup> In addition, the ticket to ticket contract on which the Railway administration engaged Africans was not clearly stated and was indeterminate. It was the ticket to ticket system which enabled the Railways to make deductions from the wages of African employees when they were bedridden or put off duty, creating fluctuations in the levels of pay.<sup>49</sup> In his submission to the 1945 Railway Strike

Commission, Mr. Stubbs, the Labour Commissioner, described the ticket to ticket contract used on the Railways as 'a loose system' which 'worked into the law but it [was] not actually a system recognised by the law'.<sup>50</sup>

By ensuring that African workers were ignorant of their conditions of service, and through the use of illegal deductions from wages, the Railway administration exploited African workers and created income insecurity for them.<sup>51</sup> Since there was no clear understanding of the conditions of service, injured African employees could be discharged if they complained or appealed, resulting into an atmosphere in which the African workers worked in fear.<sup>52</sup>

Though the African staff were able to establish trade unions so as to effectively present their grievances, constant harassment of union leaders by the employer was a constraint in the operations of the employee associations. While the European employees assaulted African workers with impunity,<sup>53</sup> African union leaders were often implicated in some alleged or trivial cases and dismissed from Railway service. In the years between 1950 and 1955, the Railways dismissed from employment members of the African trade union leadership such as John Sichalwe, Dixon Konkola and Ananiah Mwanza.<sup>54</sup> There was a loss of social security benefits and access to facilities such as Railway clinics by the affected African staff. The intended result of the harassment of union leaders was to render the union ineffective by instilling a sense of fear into the African employees so that they could not make demands militantly, and even make follow ups on cases of dismissals, loss of pay, assaults and delayed payment of workmen's compensation.

## ECONOMIC CONSTRAINTS

One of the major economic constraints on the provision of social security for African railway workers were the low wages which they received. The majority of African employees on the Railways belonged to the least paying categories and lived below the poverty datum line.<sup>55</sup>

As a result of the low wages, the amounts of social security benefits were low since the benefits were calculated mainly on the basis of the basic wage and the length of service.<sup>56</sup> In addition, it was difficult for Africans to save and also take out insurance policies since the premiums were based on the earning power of European employees.<sup>57</sup>

Three strategies were used by the colonial state, the Railway administration, and the European employees to keep the wages of African employees low. Firstly, the colonial state fixed the minimum wage at a very low level, and therefore perpetuated the underpayment of African railway workers.<sup>58</sup> In 1960, even the Southern Rhodesian Minister of Labour, Housing and Social Welfare, A.E. Abrahamson, complained that the minimum wage for Africans was too low, and recommended that it be fixed at £14. 10s. Od.<sup>59</sup>

Secondly, the inadequacy of the training of African workers and the restricted entry into training schools was used not only as a cost saving measure for the Railways, but a strategy 'to keep the African employees unskilled for the sake of paying them a slave wage.'<sup>60</sup> Thirdly, the European employees kept the wages of African employees at low levels by restricting the entry of Africans into certain categories of jobs until 1960 when advancement was effected. Low wages and unsatisfactory wage increases were a

major source of discontent among African railway workers who persistently demanded for improved pay.<sup>61</sup>

Closely related to the keeping of wages at a level which could not enable Africans to afford a decent living and provide themselves with adequate social security protection was the reduction of wages. Apart from the illegal loss of pay by African employees through suspensions and being put off duty',<sup>62</sup> the Railways used rations for reducing wages.

In 1953, the Railway administration gave the option of cash in lieu of rations to a few categories of African railway workers.<sup>63</sup> Since the general feeling of the African employees was that rations were inadequate and unnecessary, persistent demands through trade union representatives bore fruit in 1956 when the option of cash in lieu of rations was granted to all African employees.<sup>64</sup> By December 1957, the minimisation of costs by the Railways through rations came to an end when all African railway workers took up the option of cash in lieu of rations.<sup>65</sup> The receipt of cash as opposed to rations was an augmentation of wages especially for African employees who belonged to line gangs, grew their own crops, and did not need to receive rations such as beans, vegetables and maize meal.<sup>66</sup>

However, the removal of rations did not so much improve the financial position of African railway employees as granting them freedom of choice. African wages were still strained by demands such as those emanating from kinship obligations which required one to take care of relatives, making it difficult for African employees to have savings and even purchase property owing to large families.<sup>67</sup> As a result of increased demands on their incomes, some African employees such as George Hlazo Jere requested for

transfers to other centres 'because of many brothers looking for jobs and they have no money they only depend on me'.<sup>68</sup> It can be argued that low wages were a constraint on the maintenance of kinship links and the fulfilment of traditional obligations which were the basis of the traditional social security system.

Apart from kinship demands and low wages, social security for African railway workers was constrained by inflationary trends. On the Railways, workmen's compensation payments for African employees could be withheld until the employees left the service of the Railways, while delays in the payment of compensation continued into the late 1950s.<sup>69</sup> Since benefits were not protected against increased price levels, the amounts of the social security benefits were not as significant as they would have been without an erosion of purchasing power.<sup>70</sup>

## **CONCLUSION**

The main argument in this chapter is that the introduction of social security schemes for African employees on the Railways was constrained by political, administrative and economic factors. We have also argued that the social security schemes and accompanying benefits were inhibited by various problems such as discriminatory labour legislation.

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the discussion in this chapter. Firstly, colonialism was a constraint on the introduction and provision of social security for African railway workers since it did not fully address the problems facing African workers, and perpetuated their exploitation. The coming of independence in 1964 reversed this trend. The post-colonial state was able to remove discriminatory labour

legislation and paved the way for the introduction of a contributory pension scheme and the advancement of Africans on the Railways.

Secondly, the inter-territorial arrangement in which the Railways were run jointly by the governments of Northern and Southern Rhodesia meant delayed responses to problems confronting African employees in Northern Rhodesia since authority was centred at Bulawayo. The lack of quick action was compounded by geographical problems since African employees were scattered along the railway line.

Thirdly, the existence of a separate department, the A.A.D., which was supposed to address issues affecting African railway employees as from 1949 was a hindrance to progress since the A.A.D. was run by European employees who spied on African workers and made unjust recommendations for the dismissal and suspension of Africans.

Fourthly, the low wages received by African employees constrained efforts by Africans to provide themselves with social security through methods such as taking out insurance policies and attending to kinship obligations. The low wages reduced the significance of social security benefits such as pensions and workmen's compensation.

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53. N.A.Z., HM 56/1, Chief Officer to the General Manager, Rhodesia Railways Limited, 25<sup>th</sup> August, 1949; N.A.Z. HM 56/1, General Secretary, Railway African Workers' Union, to the Chief Officer, African Affairs Department, 2<sup>nd</sup> March, 1960.
54. Mulenga, 'Worker Consciousness', p. 64. The victimisation of African trade union leaders was not restricted to those in the executive, but also affected branch officials and employees who actively participated in union activities. See N.A.Z., HM 56/8, Nganga, Shed Fire Boy, Statement, 6<sup>th</sup> September, 1958; N.A.Z., HM 56/8, Appeal by the Railway African Workers' Union Concerning Nganga, n.d.
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61. N.A.Z., HM 56/20, General Secretary, Railway African Workers' Union, to the Chief Officer, African Affairs Department, Bulawayo, 18<sup>th</sup> August, 1960; Mulenga, 'Worker Consciousness', p. 69.
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## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

This study has examined the provision of social security for African railway workers in Zambia in the period between 1945 to 1967. Rhodesia Railways viewed social security as the coverage of conditions of service such as the provision of pensions, gratuities, protective clothing, and the payment of workmen's compensation. The social security situation on the Railways at the time this research was being conducted was different from that which existed from 1945 to 1967. The structural Adjustment Programme (S.A.P.) which was started by the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (M.M.D.) Government in 1992 created job insecurity and loss of access to social security benefits since it involved massive retrenchment of employees.

This study set out with three objectives. Firstly, to investigate whether social security was provided for African railway workers in Zambia. Secondly, to examine the roles of the state, the employers, and the employees in the provision of social security for African railway employees. Thirdly, to assess the effectiveness and significance of the social security measures which were put in place for African railway workers.

The key argument of the study is that industrialisation and proletarianisation are accompanied by socio-economic transformation which affects the provision of social security in a traditional non-industrial set up. As Africans were drawn from the peasant communities to take up wage employment on the Railways and other industries, they could not effectively have access to the protection given by their kith and kin in the village communities.

On the basis of the drawing away of individuals from the rural areas, we have argued that African railway employees became dependent on their employers for the

provision of social security in times when they were ill, aged, or injured. This view is supported by the continuous demands made by African railway workers for social security provisions such as pensions, sick pay, worker's compensation, and medical facilities.

A number of conclusions can be drawn from this discussion of social security for African railway workers in Zambia. Firstly, the social security measures introduced for African railway workers in Zambia varied over time depending on the political status of the country, the urgency and importance attached to the provision such as medical treatment, and the amount of pressure from the African employees. Medical provisions, as a result of their indisputable importance, were the earliest to be introduced when the British South Africa Company and Rhodesia Railways signed medical agreements as early as 1917. Worker's compensation was not provided for African railway workers until the passing of the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance in 1944. A non-contributory pension scheme for Africans on the Railways was only introduced in 1955, and Rhodesia Railways had previously relied on gratuities which were introduced in 1944.

Secondly, the colonial state did not effectively and fully support the introduction and administration of social security schemes for Africans on the Railways because it was not only dominated by Europeans, but also because it owned Rhodesia Railways. On the other hand, the legislation which was introduced by the colonial state such as the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance (1944) was both inadequate and discriminatory on the basis of race. The Workmen's Compensation Ordinance (1944) had separate sections dealing with European and African workers, and it fixed the rates of compensation for

Africans at lower levels than those for Europeans. This study has shown that positive developments such as the introduction of a contributory pension scheme for African railway workers came to be introduced when a Black dominated government started administering Northern Rhodesia in 1962, and after independence in 1964.

Thirdly, while the colonial state was supposed to give force to its laws by prosecuting employers who were guilty, Rhodesia Railways was never prosecuted mainly as a result of the special relationship which it shared with the colonial state. As a result, Rhodesia Railways was able to oppress and exploit African employees through the withholding of workmen's compensation, the making of arbitrary deductions from wages when employees were sick, and the provision of unsuitable and inadequate housing.

Fourthly, the Rhodesia Railways administration persistently rejected the introduction of some social security measures. The refusal by the Railways to introduce and administer a contributory pension scheme, the delay in the introduction of the payment of children's allowances until 1960, and the supply of inadequate or no protective clothing were all aimed at cutting down on costs and exploiting African employees.

We have argued in this study that the effective exploitation and oppression of African employees in the employ of Rhodesia Railways was perpetuated by the African Affairs Department (A.A.D.) of the Railway undertaking. The A.A.D., which was run by European employees, was detrimental to the provision of income security for African railway workers since the European employees often recommended Africans for dismissals and putting off duty which resulted into the loss of wages and social security benefits. Worse still, the engagement policy on the Railways allowed European

employees to employ Africans, giving the European workers the impression that they owned the African workers and could dismiss and assault the Africans at will.

Of vital importance in the provision of social security for African employees was their ability to enter better paying jobs. However, European employees viewed the advancement of Africans on the Railways as European degradation. The granting of advancement to African employees was, until 1960, rigorously fought against by the two European unions, the Rhodesia Railways Workers' Union (R.R.W.U.) and the Amalgamated Engineering Union (A.E.U.). We have argued that the delay in allowing Africans to enter better paying jobs meant a corresponding delay in their having access to better social security benefits.

Fifthly, regardless of the pressure from the colonial state, the Railway administration, and the European employees, African railway workers were able to make demands for improved conditions of service and even engage in major strike action by 1945 so as to back up their demands. Both the colonial state and Rhodesia Railways resisted the growth of trade unionism among African railway employees, but the African workers were able to organise themselves first through the Rhodesia Railways African Employees' Association (R.R.A.E.A.) and later the African Railway Workers' Trade Union (A.R.W.T.U.) and the Railway African Workers' Union (R.A.W.U.). We have shown in this dissertation that three strategies were used by the Railway administration to frustrate the growth and operations of African trade unions on the Railways.

Firstly, the Railways, through the Registrar of Societies, resisted the registration and recognition of African railway trade unions until 1960 when R.A.W.U. was recognised. Secondly, the Railway administration frustrated the African trade union

movement financially. While the R.R.W.U. and the A.E.U. were allowed to collect union dues through paysheets, the R.A.W.U. was only given this concession in 1960 after continuous pressure from the African trade union. Thirdly, the Railways intimidated the R.A.W.U. by harassing the union leadership to such an extent that members of the R.A.W.U. executive such as Dixon Konkola, Ananiah Mwanza, and John Sichelwe were dismissed from Railway service.

Sixthly, we can conclude that while the state, the employers and the employees played their various roles in the provision of social security for African railway workers, the social security which was provided was insignificant and ineffective as a result of constraints which inhibited such provisions. We have shown that the legislation which was passed in the colonial period was inadequate, as in the case of the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance (1944) which placed amounts of benefits for African employees at a lower rate than that applicable to European workers.

The other constraints were the low wages which meant low amounts of benefits as well as a consequent inability among Africans to save or engage themselves in entrepreneurial activities. In addition, we have shown that the administrative structure of Rhodesia Railways whose headquarters were in Bulawayo created delays in the reporting of accidents, the receipt of protective clothing and free passes, and the payment of the required compensation to African employees in Northern Rhodesia.

On the whole, we can conclude that although social security was of vital importance in the productivity and stability of the African labour force on the Railways, there was reluctance on the part of the Rhodesia Railways administration to make such provisions. As a result of an increased appreciation of social security schemes such as

pensions, as well as the growth of worker consciousness, African employees were able to press for improved conditions of service. However, the social security schemes which were put in place were constrained by such factors as low wages, delayed payments of benefits, and arbitrary dismissals of African railway employees.

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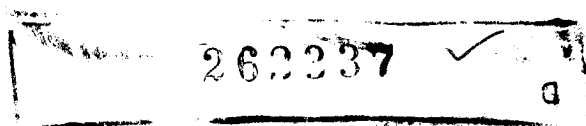
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