

THE DEVELOPMENT OF WORKER CONSCIOUSNESS AMONG THE
AFRICAN RAILWAY WORKERS IN ZAMBIA, 1953-1972

by

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A dissertation submitted to the University of
Zambia in partial fulfilment of the requirements
of the degree of Master of Arts in History.

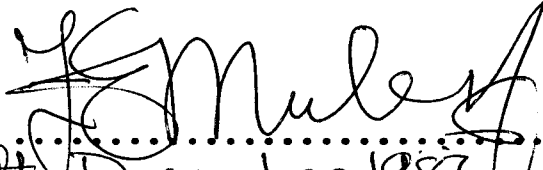
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LUSAKA

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DECLARATION

I, Friday Eliya Mulenga, hereby declare
that this dissertation represents my own
work, and that it has not previously been
submitted for a degree at this or another
University.

Signature 

Date: 10th December, 1987 

APPROVAL

This dissertation of Friday Eliya Mulenga
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ABSTRACT

This study basically attempts to examine the development of worker consciousness among African railway workers in Zambia. Worker consciousness is defined here as the awareness of the workers of their situation, whether of exploitation or gain, at their place of work. The awareness arose out of common experience at work. Common experience led to the development of group consciousness among the workers and also to the articulation of their interests and aspirations.

The study is divided into five Chapters. In Chapter One we introduce the content of the study. We argue that the most important justification for this study is that there are wide gaps in the labour historiography of Zambia, which this study attempts to fill. A review of literature reveals that there has been very little written on these workers, and yet they were important in both the political and economic development in Northern Rhodesia (NR) and Zambia.

In Chapter Two we examine the constraints in the development of worker consciousness among African railway workers. We argue that despite the presence

of many constraints, by 1953 worker consciousness among African railway workers had developed to an appreciable degree.

In Chapter Three, we examine the way worker consciousness was expressed by African railway workers through demands for better conditions of service, higher wages, better housing and sanitation, and an end to industrial Colour Bar. We argue that the development of such consciousness was rooted in their experiences at work, and especially in their struggles for higher wages.

Chapter Four examines three major issues: these are African advancement, trade unionism and politics on the railways. We argue that African railway workers, together with African mineworkers, were in the forefront of the struggles for African advancement in industry in NR. However, each group struggled for advancement in its own particular industry without any attempt at unity in the struggle. We have attempted to show that there was an attempt to turn the African railway workers' movement into a political movement. The attempt failed. Also the attempt to turn the Trade Union Congress into a political movement failed. Then we also show that the political movement failed to harness the potential strength of the labour

movement in the 1950s and 1960s. This state of affairs exists even today.

In the concluding Chapter, six points are made. Basically, the study concludes that there are more interesting and more complex issues in Zambia's labour history than many people have assumed. Therefore, the history of African railway workers proves worthy of study.

A major point which comes out in this study is that the African workers in NR did not become sufficiently united to be able to wage a common struggle for their political and economic advancement as workers. As a result of such a state of affairs, even after independence there was not any significant unity in the working groups in Zambia. This helps to explain why the labour movement did not become politically influential. It has remained a threat politically, only because of its potential strength. In spite of this, however, this study shows that the workers' struggles for economic advancement began in the colonial era and still continue today. The African railway workers have been part of these struggles from the beginning.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Many people have helped to make this work possible, but there is room to mention only a few of them here.

Firstly, I owe the greatest debt to Professor Martin H.Y. Kaniki. As a teacher and friend, he became a source of inspiration and encouragement. Many ideas and insights which he freely offered helped to shape this work.

Secondly, I wish to express my gratitude to Dr. Kusum Datta who assisted me, as supervisor, in the early stages of this work. The members of staff in the History Department also deserve my thanks. Their readiness to help was a great encouragement. Similarly, I also thank the staff of the University of Zambia Library and the National Archives of Zambia in Lusaka for being ever so helpful. I also owe many thanks to Mrs. Theresa Ngulube, of the Dean of Students' Office, who typed this dissertation.

Thirdly, in Kabwe, I wish to express my gratitude to the Management of Zambia Railways at the 'Top Office', and in particular to the Administration

Manager, Mrs. Helen Mukumba, who helped to make my research in Kabwe a little easier. I also extend my thanks to the clerks at the Zambia Railways Archives (Records Office). I am also grateful to the Railway Workers' Union of Zambia officers in Kabwe for allowing me access to their material at Head Office.

Fourthly, I am aware that I owe a debt to informants in the field which can never be fully repaid. To single out anyone of them is invidious. Therefore, to all of them I say thank you very much. The research for this work was financed by a research fund from the Government. Without this support this study could not have been made.

Lastly, but most important, are my one and only love, Marjorie Kafula - and Victor Mumbi, Joseph Mutale and Clifford Mulenga, who suffered uncomplainingly my absence for more than two years, as only angels could. I am particularly grateful to the boys for taking my absence from them bravely and for giving their mother wonderful company. To Clifford Mulenga, whom I left when he was only two months old and so had to learn to say 'Tata' (i.e. father) by looking at my photographs, I say:

I hope you will grow up to understand and appreciate what 'Tata' was up to.

The views expressed here are mine alone, and so, any defects and weaknesses which might be found in this work are entirely of my own creation.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my father,
Eliya Mulenga, and my mother, Estelle,
for everything they ever gave me.

And to my elder sister, Elisa, who
always made sure I did not have any
excuse for staying away from school
when I was in Sub-A by making sure I
always had a clean pair of uniform
to wear.

ABBREVIATIONS

AAD	African Affairs Department
AEU	Amalgamated Engineering Union
AFM	African Freedom Movement
AHB	African Housing Board
AMU	African Mineworkers' Union
ANC	African National Congress
ANFM	African National Freedom Movement
ANIP	African National Independence Party
ARWTU	African Railway Workers' Trade Union
BH	Broken Hill
BSAC	British South African Company
CANU	Central African National Union
CAPU	Central African Peoples Union
CO	Chief Officer
GM	General Manager
ITWF	International Transport Workers' Federation
JIC	Joint Industrial Committee
NAZ	National Archives of Zambia
NIC	National Industrial Council
NR	Northern Rhodesia
NRG	Northern Rhodesia Government
NRTUC	Northern Rhodesia Trade Union Congress

RAWU	Railway African Workers' Union
RC	Regional Controller
RR	Rhodesia Railways
RRAEA	Rhodesia Railways African Employees' Association
RRWU	Rhodesia Railways Workers' Union
RTUC	Reformed Trade Union Congress
SA	South Africa
SIC	Statutory Industrial Council
SR	Southern Rhodesia
SRG	Southern Rhodesia Government
UAC	United African Congress
UFP	United Federal Party
UK	United Kingdom
UNIP	United National Independence Party
UTUC	United Trade Union Congress
ZANC	Zambia African National Congress
ZCTU	Zambia Congress of Trade Unions
ZR	Zambia Railways
ZRB	Zambia Railways Board

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CHANGED NAMES

<u>Old Name</u>	<u>New Name</u>
Bancroft	Chililabombwe
Belgian - Congo	Zaire
Broken Hill	Kabwe
Northern Rhodesia	Zambia
Nyasaland	Malawi
Tanganyika	Tanzania
Southern Rhodesia	Zimbabwe

Note on Currency:

In January 1968 Zambia changed from Pounds, Shillings and Pence (£.S.D.) to Kwacha and ngwee (K.n). In this study the old currency is used. In view of this a conversion table of 1968 is hereby shown:

6 pence = 5 ngwee

12 pence = 1 shilling = 10 ngwee

20 shillings = £1 = 2Kwacha (K2.00)

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

This study attempts to examine the development of worker consciousness among the African railway workers in Zambia. Worker consciousness will be studied against the background of the economic and social structure of Northern Rhodesia (NR) as a whole, and the colonial capitalist system. It will also be done against the background of the European railway workers. The study will attempt to show that the European workers were a very important factor in the whole question of the development of worker consciousness among the African railway workers.

The industrialisation of Africa created a demand for African labour.¹ A steady and reliable supply of African labour was required for the effective economic exploitation of the resources in Africa. As a result of such a state of affairs, the imposition of colonialism in Africa led to the introduction of wage labour.² It has been argued, however, that, 'The African peasant in NR, like his counterpart elsewhere in black Africa, was for several decades after the imposition of European rule... to remain either a hesitant or hostile would-be-wage earner, because he found it repugnant to leave his village

and family for many months in order to work for the white man'.³ As a result, there were labour shortages prior to the 1920s:

This was because wage employment was a new development, and it also carried with it some demands and restrictions on the life of the employed. No doubt few people would work for others if they had a choice.⁴

In order to solve the labour shortages, colonial governments assisted capital, by devising different methods which were used to force Africans to take wage employment.⁵ It has been argued, for example, that, 'With the coming of the colonial powers, capitalist relations were introduced on a hitherto unknown scale. More and more Africans were wrenched from their previous modes of production and reproduction and constrained to place their labour power at the disposal of alien forces of production'.⁶

This study argues that in the broad context of the labour situation in Africa, and in Central Africa in particular, the Africans were 'goaded' by capitalism 'into the world capitalist system to turn them into workers'.⁷ It was in such a state of affairs that Africans found themselves employed on Rhodesia Railways (RR). As a result of this, this study also attempts to show that the question of the employment of African labour on the railways fits in the whole

colonial context of labour organisation and labour management in Central and Southern Africa. By 1953, **Africans** no longer felt any repugnance about leaving his village and family to go and work for the white man. Instead, **Africans** even demanded to be wage-earners.⁸

In this study, worker consciousness is defined as being the awareness of the workers, of their situation, whether of exploitation or gain, at their place of work. The workers became aware of their situation by taking into consideration the totality of their social consciousness.⁹

There are various ways through which worker consciousness may be expressed. This study explores the various expressions of worker consciousness among the African railway workers in Zambia. This will entail an examination of various forms of labour protest among African railway workers. Such an examination is important because 'labour protest points to the rise of both economic and political consciousness among the workers'.¹⁰ Labour protest is also 'a reflection of conditions of life and work, and of the place of producers vis-a-vis managers and owners'.¹¹ In view of this, whatever labour protest was exhibited by the African railway workers is an important aspect of this study.

This study also argues that the African railway workers in NR were aware of what they could gain in a colonial economic situation. Such awareness was what led to the formation of the African Railway Workers' Trade Union (ARWTU) in Broken Hill in 1950.

The period of study starts from 1953, which was a year of momentous political changes in the Rhodesias.¹² The Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland started in that year. The first African workers' union in NR had been formed by then. This came about as a result of a 'rebellion' against the Rhodesia Railways African Employees' Association (RRAEA). The African railway workers in NR considered the RRAEA to be insufficient to represent them as it was controlled by the Southern Rhodesia Government (SRG) and the Railway Administration. The idea of a Union for African railway workers, as opposed to an Association, first took root in NR. In SR African trade unionism was slower in emerging because there was no large concentration of labour in one industry as was the case on the Copperbelt. It was also due to the fact that before 1960 the law did not allow Africans to form trade unions.¹⁴

In 1950, when the ARWTU was formed, it did not seem to have much of a chance of survival.¹⁵ However, by 1953, the ARWTU had become such a force on the

railways in NR that Railway Administrators watched its development and activities with a lot of trepidation. This study examines some of the activities of the African railway workers' union. It also examines the attitudes of the ARWTU and later the Railway African Workers' Union (RAWU) towards the Federation.

The period of study ends in 1972. On 13th December, 1972, Zambia entered the period of the 'Second Republic'. In the 'Second Republic' the labour movement in Zambia entered a new era. The problems and issues that arose then require a detailed study which this particular study cannot fulfil due to lack of space. However, the period 1953-1972 is adequate for the examination of issues raised in this study. The period allows us to examine such issues as the stand of the African railway workers' union on the Federation, the stand of the Union on the split of the African National Congress (ANC) in 1958, the formation of the Zambia African National Congress (ZANC) in the same year, and, later, the United National Independence Party (UNIP). In discussing these issues, the study will also examine the relationship between the Union and the political parties in NR, and later in Zambia. Such an examination should give some insight into the role played by the Union and individual railway workers in the political developments in NR, and in the struggle for independence.

The study also examines the stand of the Union - and its role - in the frictions that beset the NR Trade Union Congress (TUC) in the 1950s and 1960s. The issue of the advancement of Africans on the railways and the stand of the Union on the issues are also examined.

Review of Literature

There has been very little work done by historians on the railway workers in Zambia. The works of scholars like John R. Day, Anthony H. Croxton, S.E. Katzenellenbogen and B.E. D'Erlanger, cover the construction and financing of the railway system. The African workers are hardly mentioned in these works.¹⁷ Scholars such as L.H. Gann, E.L. Berger and Arthur A. Turner, have written works which give glimpses of African railway workers. However, even these works do not give much detail about the African workers.¹⁸ Even Henry S. Meebelo's recent book on African workers in NR is relatively general and it does not give much detail on African railway workers.¹⁹

There are also a few articles on the development or formation of railway unions for African workers in NR and SR.²⁰ However, these are short studies. Therefore, they do not tell us much about what was happening to the African railway workers on RR. This study

attempts to fill the gap. It explores the conditions of employment, wages, housing and sanitation, food rations and the standard of living of African workers, industrial Colour Bar and advancement of Africans. In this way, the study hopes to contribute to an understanding of what was meant to be an African worker on the railways during the colonial period.

The fact that African railway workers have been largely ignored by historians may mislead people to believe that they were not important in the labour movement of the country. However, as this study will show, these workers were important in both the political and economic development of NR.

Although there is not a single book which deals exclusively with the African railway workers in Zambia or Zimbabwe, there are a number of books and articles which deal with African workers' trade union movement and African workers' movements in general.²¹ There are also a number of books and articles which deal with specific examples of African labour issues in some African countries.²² One study in particular, deals with African railway workers in Ghana, while another deals with African railway and harbour workers in East Africa.²³ Richard Jeffries's book on the Ghanaian African railway workers is the most detailed analytical study of African railwaymen so far available.

A number of scholars, among whom are Charles van Onselen, Charles Perrings, Ian Phimister and Jane Parpart, have written a lot on African worker consciousness in other industries in Zambia and Zimbabwe. But there is nothing written on the political and economic consciousness of the African railway workers in this region.²⁴

There are also Colonial and post-colonial monthly and annual reports on labour and African Affairs, which were consulted for this study. They contain useful material which gives us the colonial view of the state of affairs. The National Archives of Zambia (NAZ) also has a lot of material on labour in general, and on railway labour in particular. The Historical Manuscripts (HM) deposited in the NAZ by Arthur Turner were particularly useful. The material in the Zambia Railways Archives in Kabwe and at the offices of the Railway Workers' Union of Zambia (RWUZ) in Kabwe was also consulted. Much of this material has proved useful for this study, especially in giving some of the views of the African workers about their conditions and what they wanted.

The United National Independence Party (UNIP) Archives at Freedom House has material which I suspect might have been useful for this study. However, I was not allowed access to this material, as I was not 'a Party researcher'.

Oral sources were also consulted for this study. This was done through a number of interviews with workers and retired workers on Zambia Railways and other industries in Zambia. The interviews were conducted mainly in Kabwe, which is the Railway Centre in Zambia, and in Lusaka. The interviews were conducted in English, Cinyanja and Cibemba, depending on the preference of the person being interviewed. I did not need the services of an interpreter. All in all, the oral sources have proved useful for this study. The study might have greatly benefitted from the oral contributions of Ananiah H. Mwanza (also known as Simwanza), who was General Secretary of RAWU and later ZRAWU, and Eliya H. Mwanza, who was Assistant General Secretary of RAWU and later ZRAWU. Unfortunately, both men died in 1984.

Rationale

This study can be justified on various grounds. The first and probably the most important justification for it is that there are wide gaps in the labour historiography of Zambia. This study attempts to fill up the gap. The African railway workers in NR were one of the first large groups of employees to

be engaged in wage employment, and yet very little has been written about them.

The second justification for this study is that the railway line considered in this study has formed the backbone of the transport system in Zambia. Therefore, a study of the railway labour force is justified because it helps to explain some aspects of the transport industry which have not been explained so far. The railway industry is so important that it was argued that, 'Without a railway a significant mining industry could not have been established, and without a mining industry, it is doubtful if the rail-road would have been built until many years later'.²⁵

The third justification for this study is that the role played by African railway workers in NR in the development of African political awareness has been overlooked. Dixon Konkola, the leader of the RAWU, played an important role in the development of African politics in NR in the 1950s,²⁶ and yet that role has been ignored by most scholars. This study, therefore, attempts to reconstruct the history of the railway workers in NR in order to determine their role in both nationalist politics and trade unionism.

Within the wider context of Central and Southern African labour politics, there is yet another feature of the railway workers which makes them an interesting group to study. It was from among them that the Federation got a Prime Minister in 1956, namely Roland 'Roy' Welensky. Such a state of affairs raises two interesting questions. Firstly, if Welensky managed to become Prime Minister of the Federation, why did Konkola, or indeed Katilungu or other African labour leaders prominent in the colonial period, fail to rise to positions of prominence in Zambia? Secondly, what chances did an African railwayman have of rising to prominence in politics while operating from within the Railway industry in the colonial period?

The final justification for this study is that it will contribute to a better understanding of the history of labour in Zambia in particular and in Central Africa in general. The study attempts to show that apart from the African mineworkers, there are other groups of labour, too, whose history reveals aspects that the history of the mineworkers does not.

The Geographical area covered by the Railway system in Northern Rhodesia/Zambia

This study is concerned with the area from the centre of the Victoria Falls Bridge to the Zaire border

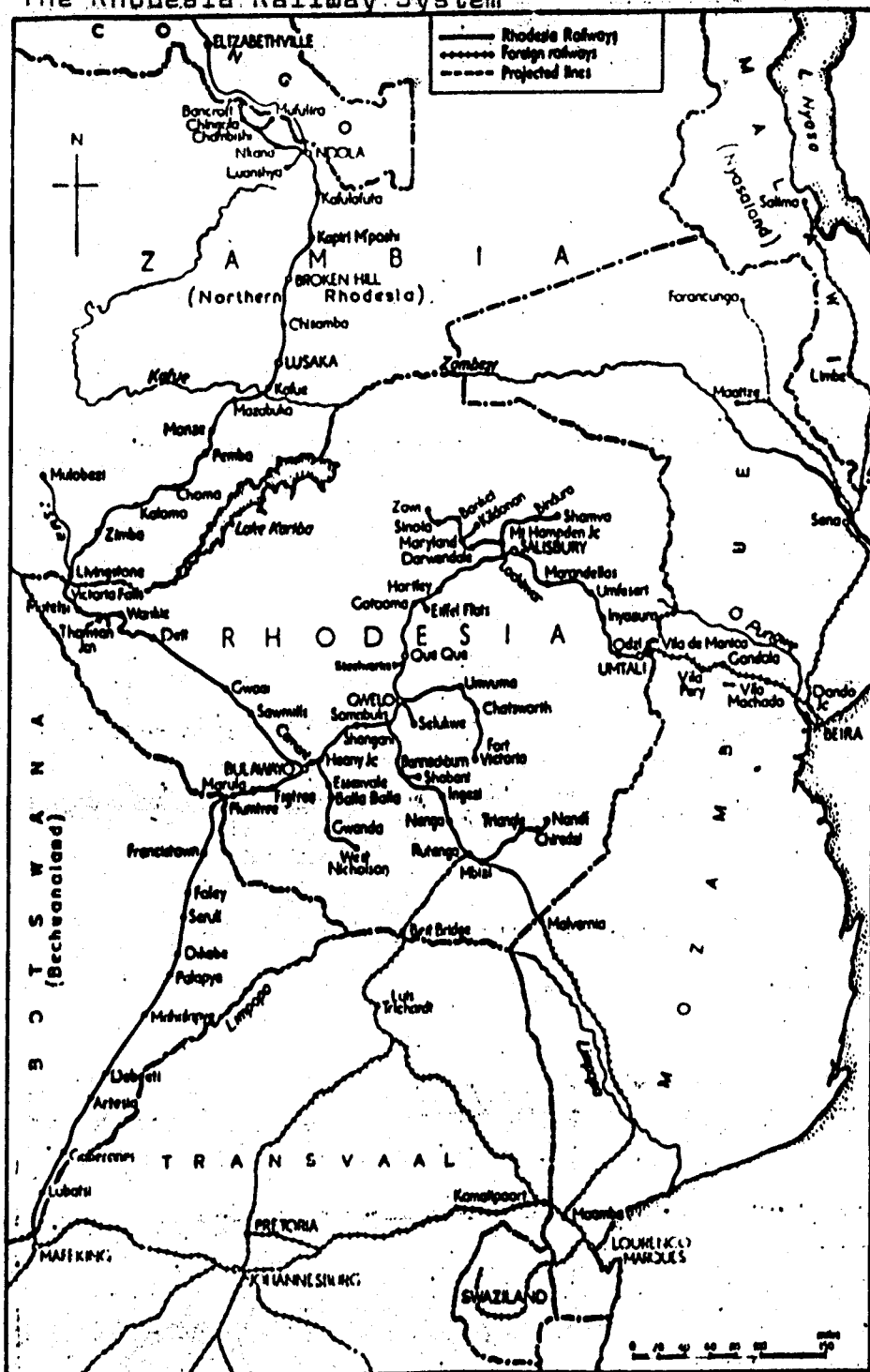
with Zambia covered by the main railway system. This is a distance of a little over 1,040 kilometres. There are a number of significant towns along this line. (See the maps on pages 13 and 14). The most significant railway centres in NR were Broken Hill (now called Kabwe), Livingstone and Ndola.

The RR system was conceived by Cecil John Rhodes, and was carried out by him and his successors.²⁷ The system was constructed in the period between 1800 and 1920, which is considered to have been the greatest age of railway building in Africa.²⁸ The RR was an extension of the South African network. The construction of a line to the Zambezi was one of the conditions for the granting of the Charter to the British South Africa Company (BSAC) by the British Crown.²⁹ The line reached Broken Hill in 1906, where deposits of zinc had been found to be more immediately exploitable. In 1909 the line linked up with the Belgian system of the Congo,³⁰ when it reached Katanga.

Data Collection (Methodology)

The first part of my research was devoted to collecting published and unpublished data from both primary and secondary sources in the University of Zambia Library. The second part of the research was devoted to collecting material from the National

The Rhodesia Railway System



Map of Rhodesia Railways system

Source: Anthony H. Croxton, Railways of Rhodesia.
(New Abbot: David & Charles, 1973).

Archives of Zambia. The work took place between September 1986 and December 1986. The third part of the research involved a visit to Kabwe for material in the Zambia Railways Archives. Material was also collected from the files and records of the RWUZ at the headquarters in Kabwe. I was in Kabwe from 12th January to 8th February, 1987. The oral interviews in Kabwe were conducted during this period, while the interviews in Lusaka were conducted in the period between February and August, 1987.

Organisation of the work

This study is divided into five Chapters. Chapter One is the Introduction. Chapter Two examines the 'Constraints in the Development of Worker Consciousness among African railway workers on Rhodesia Railways'. Chapter Three examines the expression of 'Worker Consciousness among African railway workers on Rhodesia Railways in NR'. Chapter Four examines 'Advancement, Trade Unionism and Politics on the Railways to 1972'. The final Chapter is the Conclusion, which sums up the various findings of the study.

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CHAPTER TWO

CONSTRAINTS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF WORKER CONSCIOUSNESS AMONG AFRICAN RAILWAY WORKERS ON RHODESIA RAILWAYS

There were a number of constraints in the development of worker consciousness among African railway workers. Firstly, the presence of European railway workers on the railways was a serious stumbling block. In the railway industry there was a high skill component. That is to say much of the work required particular skills. This was an important feature of labour activities in the railway industry. It was this feature which led to there being a comparatively high ratio of Europeans to Africans on the railways.¹ It was also because of this feature that there were comparatively fewer Africans employed on the railways than in the mining industry, or the agriculture sector or the domestic services. (See Table 1 on page 3). In fact, the nature of work on the railways seemed to favour European workers.

The European workers organised themselves into a trade union to fight against the poor conditions of service facing them at a relatively early date.

In 1916 they formed the Rhodesia Railways Workers' Union (RRWU) to cater for the interests of European workers. The Union spread from Bulawayo into NR.² In 1920 the RRWU organised a major strike which won for European workers a twenty-five per cent rise on substantive pay. The general conditions of service for European workers were also improved. After this victory, the European workers became less interested in direct warfare with capital and management. Instead, they became more concerned with preventing the infiltration of Africans into skilled and semi-skilled work at lower wages imposed on them by the administration.³

This attitude of the European workers established the South African industrial pattern of 'Colour Bar' on the railways.⁴

Secondly, the labour policy of the Southern Rhodesia Government (SRG) was also a constraint. The SRG, which from 1947 owned the Rhodesia Railway (RR), was different from the NRG. While the NRG was appointed by the Colonial Office in London, the SRG was elected by the European settlers in SR for themselves. So, although from as early as 1926 Africans could have been employed in skilled or semi-skilled jobs on the railways, the SRG did not allow it.⁵ The SRG labour policy was guided by the

TABLE 1

RHODESIA RAILWAYS LABOUR FORCE - EUROPEAN AND AFRICA,
1953 - 1963

Year Ended:	European	African	Number of African Labour in NR	% of total RR Labour for NR African Labour
31.3.53	7,792	19,516	4,813	17.6
31.3.54	7,846	19,978	4,646	16.6
31.3.55	8,505	20,748	4,944	16.7
31.3.56	9,122	21,776	5,344	17.3
31.3.57	9,789	23,273	6,480	19.6
30.6.58	9,895	20,805	5,986	19.5
30.6.59	9,775	20,957	5,968	19.4
30.6.60	9,887	21,466	5,875	18.7
30.6.61	10,320	21,589	5,849	18.3
30.6.62	10,179	21,194	5,354	17.1
30.6.63	9,537	20,469	5,154	17.2

- NOTES: 1. Figures for African labour in NR were not always given in the RR Annual Reports. In the table above, figures for NR for the years 1957-1960 were extracted from the RR Annual Reports. The rest of the figures were extracted from the NR Annual Reports for labour.
2. Percentages for totals of African labour in NR are estimates because the figures above do not include Coloured/Asian Labour on RR.

SOURCE: Rhodesia Railways Annual Reports of the General Manager, 1953-1963; and
Northern Rhodesia Labour and Mines Annual Report, 1953-1963.

Industrial Conciliation Act of 1934, which was modelled on South African legislation. The Act provided for the regulation and registration of trade unions. It set up an Industrial Conciliation Board for the settlement of industrial disputes. However, African workers were entirely deprived of the benefit of the Act. They were not covered by the term 'employee' and they could not be employed at wage rates other than those specified in an agreement under the Act. In other words, the Act legalised industrial Colour Bar in SR. The Act, amended in 1945, **indirectly** prevented Africans in SR from forming trade unions until 1959⁶ when a new Industrial Conciliation Bill was passed. It came into operation in 1960. Africans were now included in the term 'employee'. Multi-racial trade unions could now be formed and conciliation machinery was to apply equally to all races.⁷ It is noteworthy that the racial labour policy in SR was allowed to operate in NR, especially on the railways, even though the labour policy in NR was supposed to be non-racial.

The fact that the European railway workers were a force to reckon with both in Northern and Southern Rhodesia, is illustrated by the career of one of them,

namely, Roland 'Roy' Welensky. He was born in SR in 1907.⁸ He joined the railways as a fireman at the age of seventeen.⁹ In 1928, he was promoted to driver. By then he had become a trade unionist.¹⁰ In 1933 he was transferred to Broken Hill, and he was appointed Chairman of the local RRWU branch, which he completely re-organised.¹¹

It was from his position as a trade unionist that Welensky became a politician. In 1956 he succeeded Godfrey Huggins as Prime Minister of the Federation. According to Andrew Roberts, Welensky frequently affirmed his support for material improvements for Africans, but he tended to regard the prospect of African political advance with the defensive attitude natural to a white trade unionist.¹² The defensive attitude was hidden behind paternalistic feelings which Welensky showed towards African political advancement. The attitude was also common among those Europeans who thought that the African could not advance in any field unless the European was holding his hand to guide him. Welensky brought out this attitude clearly in Kitwe. On 7th May, 1953, when he spoke at an inaugural meeting of the

Kitwe Branch of the Federal Party, he appealed to Europeans in Central Africa not to suppress the rising tide of African nationalism. This was not because he thought African nationalism was a good thing, but because: '... the proper thing will be to guide it and use it to the eventual good of the federal scheme.'¹³

✓ The 1945 African Railway Strike on RR convinced Welensky and other Europeans with foresight that the Africans were capable of organising themselves industrially. It is noteworthy that Welensky and a substantial white community saw in the African trade unions, not a vehicle to be used for the improvement of the African workers' life per se, but a vehicle to be used for the continued domination of the Africans by the Europeans. Welensky and a substantial portion of the white community were really worried about the fact that the Africans had the potential capacity to organise themselves. Their energy, therefore, had to be harnessed and guided lest it fell into wrong hands and be used against the interests of the Europeans. Behind this line of thinking was the assumption that it is normally easier to control people who were

organised in a trade union than it was to control a non-union mob. The West African labour revolts in the 1920s drove home this fact in the British minds.¹⁴

It was in view of such a belief about organised African labour that Welensky informed a Royal Empire Society audience in London on 31st July, 1946:

I am convinced that it is in the best interest of the European workers - and I am one of them - that the African should be organised; I believe it is the only way to protect our own high standards of living. If the African becomes organised he will protect his own interests and will endeavour to bridge the gap between his way of life and ours, and for that he must have organisation.¹⁵

It should be noted that Welensky was only an individual operating within a social and political set-up that he was determined to defend and protect. He was an important representative of pressure groups and social groups of Europeans. These groups were interested in seeing to it that the status quo continued. As a result of this the Europeans supported paternalism, which was 'the guiding principle of large-scale enterprise in Africa'.¹⁶ Paternalism was a major constraint in the development of consciousness among African workers because, 'Harmony between management and workers was conceived

as depending on a system of welfare, which was "logically totalitarian" - that is, it attempted to control both form and content of the totality of worker ideas and activities.'¹⁷

It ought to be pointed out that although Welensky ensured that he had the support of the European workers on the railways by remaining a member of their unions, he was definitely not a friend of the African workers who neither liked nor trusted him. In 1959 the General Council of the RAWU passed a resolution which accused Welensky of being responsible for the delay in African advancement. In the words of the General Council resolution, he was described as 'a good grandpa to the European Railway Workers' Union'. The RAWU also refused to 'tolerate his nonsensical utterances on the issue of African advancement, or to bow down to other railway employees because they happened to be white'.¹⁸ In view of this it can be observed that the European workers were a power block with Welensky as their effective spokesman since railway matters were Federal matters. It was this position that made the European railway workers a major constraint in the development of

consciousness among African railway workers.

It can be argued, too, that the colonial system generally acted as a constraint in the development of consciousness among African workers. For example, although the British Government had decided in 1930 that trade unions should be legalised in the African colonies, the colonial administrators in the colonies resisted the move. Their attitude arose from the fear that African trade unionism would represent a serious danger for them. It was especially feared that trade unionism might lead African workers to confuse economic exploitation with political domination and thereby encourage nationalist demands.¹⁹ The situation changed in British colonies after the Second World War when African trade unions were allowed. But even then colonial governments sought to keep the trade unions weak²⁰ through the office of trade union advisers (also called Labour Officers), who advised African trade unions to follow the official colonial policy on labour matters, which in most cases meant being docile.

The Railway Administration was also a constraint in the development of worker consciousness among its workers. The Administration was willing to allow the existence of an Association (formed in 1944 in Bulawayo) for the African workers, but not a union which would have bargaining power.²¹ In

1946 the Administration created the African Affairs Department (AAD), whose job was to effectively regulate the functions, operations and activities of the RRAEA.²² It had been hoped that the AAD was going to ensure that conditions for Africans received special attention.²³ The AAD, however, turned out to be an instrument for the oppression of African railway workers. This was due to the fact that it was run by European workers who could engage or initiate the dismissal of an African worker.²⁴

In order to ensure that the African workers on the railways were kept in a weak position, the Administration could move 'difficult' workers from place to place along the line of rail. They could also be sacked and be replaced with migrant workers from other Central African territories. The 'unco-operative' workers from NR were threatened with deportation from SR. This intimidation was carried out partly to scare the African workers from joining the Association, thereby keeping it weak.²⁵ In addition to this, the Administration did not allow some of its African workers to join the union when it was formed. This was especially the case with the educated Africans who were employed in the

categories of jobs the railways considered 'sensitive'. When the ARWTU was formed in 1950, Dr. E.M.B. West, the Chief Officer in charge of African Affairs did not perceive much of a threat in the new union. This was because it had comparatively fewer educated personnel than the mine union. The only articulately literate man at that time who was willing to risk his job for the union to help the 'rank-and-file' was John Sichalwe, the Union's General Secretary. West thought he would easily destroy the Union by threatening to sack Sichalwe.²⁶ But Sichalwe would not be intimidated. He was sacked from railway employment but continued to work for the Union as its full-time employee. Such action by the Administration put fear into several African workers who felt that the union was not for them, if belonging to it could cause a man to lose his job.²⁷ As a result of this, the union organisers found it difficult to win support for the union among some workers.²⁸

The exclusion of some African workers from union activities was a constraint in the development of worker consciousness among African railway workers. It had the effect of denying the union

the services of literate and articulate people who could provide strong leadership. Only a few literate people were willing to risk their employment for the sake of their union. It is noteworthy that this question of which category of workers should become members of the union arose even after the break-up of the unitary railway system in 1967.²⁹ It became a policy on Zambia Railways (ZR) that certain officers should not be members of the union. Even today, officers in 'middle management' positions and upwards cannot be members of the Railway Union.³⁰ The ZR policy was not welcomed by several workers some of whom feel that it robs the union of the services of able men who could strengthen the union.³¹ It is noteworthy, too, that the ZR Administration has the same type of fears about union membership and influence that the RR Administration before it had.

The fact that for a long time the Railway Administration did not allow the African railway workers' union to collect union membership subscriptions through the 'check-off system', was quite a significant constraint in the development of worker consciousness. This situation tended to weaken the

financial position of the union and it impeded its growth.³² The African Union was only granted facilities to use the 'check-off system' in July 1960,³³ following a change in the law on labour in SR.

The distribution of the railway workers along the length of the line also acted as a constraint. Since they were dispersed at scattered places of work, sometimes a sense of common interest was lacking among them. In contrast to this, the mines with over 36,000 African and over 6,000 European employees concentrated on the Copperbelt were uniquely situated for labour organisation and strike action.³⁴

An additional constraint had to do with the majority of the African railway workers themselves. Before the late 1940s the majority of the African workers were illiterate. Although they may have been aware that they were working under poor conditions, they lacked the ability to express their feelings to their European supervisors. It was not until the late 1940s, when a new breed of African workers began to seek railway employment, that the situation changed. The new breed of Africans could read, speak and write English. As a result of this they were able to articulate their grievances and those of the 'rank-and-file' about poor conditions of service to the Administration.³⁵ A glaring example of the negative effect of the lack of

education among the African workers lies in the fact that they failed to come up with any publication through which they could articulate their grievances and spread consciousness. In contrast to this, the European railway workers had a magazine, the Rhodesia Railways Review, which from about 1916, became the official mouth-piece of the RRWU. The magazine proved to be effective in making the Administration aware of the grievances of the European workers. The Administration was always on the look out for the 'uproars' raised in the magazine against it.³⁶

Despite the presence of many constraints, however, by 1953 worker consciousness among the African railway workers had developed to an appreciable degree. Evidence of this consciousness was given by the rejection of the idea of workers being represented by the Association. The workers knew that the Association had no power to do anything for them. In view of this, the workers formed a Trade Union³⁷ which refused to be emasculated or subjugated by the Administration. It survived and gained recognition and legal status as a union.³⁸

FOOTNOTES

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9. Allighan, The Welensky Story, pp. 77-8.
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22. Simwanza, The Formation and Growth, p.5.
23. Annual Report (Labour) for the Year 1946, p. 4.
24. NAZ, HM56, File No.1, GMS 315/65: General Secretary, RAWU, Bulawayo to Chief Officer, AAD, Bulawayo, 14th August, 1958.

(This is quite an 'angry' letter in which a number of serious allegations, against the Railway Administration, were made by the RAWU, pointing to the existence of racial bias on the part of the Administration against African labour. The General Manager denied all that was alleged and accused the General Secretary of RAWU of reacting emotionally to an issue that was not true).

25. Turner, 'A Socio-Economic History of Kabwe', p. 428.
26. Turner, 'A Socio-Economic History of Kabwe', p. 428.
27. Interview: Robert Muchendwa, Kabwe, 3.2.87.
28. Interview: Dixon Konkola, Lusaka, 10.6.87.

29. RWUZ Offices, ZRAWU File: Eliya Mwanza, Assistant General Secretary, ZRAWU to General Manager, ZR, Kabwe, 26th September, 1967.

ZR Archives, ZRB/5/6 - ZRAWU: Personnel Manager, ZR, to Chairman, ZR Board, Kabwe, 10th March, 1970.
30. Interviews: Mrs Helen M. Mukumba, Kabwe, 31.1.87.
J. Kabamba, Kabwe, 17.1.87
J. Mubanga, Kabwe, 30.1.87.
31. Interview: J. Kabamba, Kabwe, 17.1.87.
32. Central African Post, 13th August, 1954.

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R. Muchendwa, Kabwe, 3.2.87.
Dixon Konkola, Lusaka, 10.6.87.
33. Annual Report (Labour) for the Year 1960, p. 17.
34. Berger, Labour, Race and Colonial Rule, p. 167.
35. Interviews: Konkola, 10.6.87.
R. Muchendwa, 3.2.87.
36. ZR Archives, File S.49: 'African Labour - General, 1962-1964': District Civil Engineer, Broken Hill to Works Foreman, Ndola, 28th May, 1962.
37. Simwanza, Formation and Growth, p. 6.
38. Turner, 'A Socio-Economic History of Kabwe', p. 429.

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CHAPTER THREE

WORKER CONSCIOUSNESS AMONG AFRICAN RAILWAY WORKERS ON RHODESIA RAILWAYS IN NORTHERN RHODESIA, 1953-1963.

In considering the development and expression of worker consciousness among African railway workers in Zambia, we will basically be looking at the issue of group identity for workers. As a result of common experiences at work they began to feel their identity and to articulate their common interests and grievances. Through common experience, both positive and negative, they were bound together as workers. In this way they formed a force against other groups, for example, the European railway workers and the Railway Administration, whose interests were antagonistic to theirs. This identity as a group of workers was largely determined by the nature of their employment on the railways.¹

We cannot talk about a working class consciousness developing among them in the fuller sense of the term, which includes among other things, the development of a distinct working class political ideology. It is for this reason that in this study we do not refer to the African worker consciousness as workers' class consciousness.

There were two factors which prevented the clear development of a typical working class as

seen in a typical capitalist system. The first factor was the colonial economic system which thrived on the exploitation of African workers. Under this system, too, European workers were divided from African workers. European workers enjoyed better conditions of service and higher wages. They scoffed at any suggestions that they should unite with African workers and wage a common struggle as workers. The second factor was the racism which operated at places of work through industrial Colour Bar. Through industrial Colour Bar, European workers prevented African workers from entering skilled or semi-skilled categories of employment.

In this case we see the expression of African worker consciousness at three levels. First, there was the struggle with the employer; then the struggle with the European workers, and finally the struggle against the colonial state. However, although there was worker against worker antagonism it would be correct to argue that through their group identity, African workers displayed the early stages of the development of a working class consciousness. This was due to the fact that as a group of African workers they were against the inequalities of the prevailing socio-economic system and they wanted it changed.

Northern Rhodesia and Southern Rhodesia developed different types of colonial political systems. The former was a Protectorate while the latter became a Colony within the British Imperial system. There was a stronger white presence in SR, which influenced developments there and led to differences in the way certain institutions developed in the two countries. As a result of this, too, there were differences in the experiences of the African workers in the two countries. The Africans in each country lived their own history and this defined their group experiences and identity.²

In view of this, although until 1967 N R and S R had a unitary railway system, worker consciousness among the African railway workers in Zambia can be studied as if they worked for a different railway system. This point has also been supported by Hobsbawn, using the example of Welsh miners and Breton quarrymen.³

It is not assumed in this study that worker consciousness among the African railway workers in N R developed in the 1950s, merely because before that time there was no trade union for them. As Van Onselen has argued, such an assumption cannot be correct.⁴ Meebelo also argues that workers'

struggles in N R. started almost at the start of colonialism itself and lasted throughout the period.⁵ No doubt such struggles have not ended.

On the railways the African workers had expressed group consciousness before the 1950s. In 1945 the African railway workers had gone on strike over a demand for wage increase. The African workers at Broken Hill, the Regional headquarters of Rhodesia Railways, were on strike from 27th October until 5th November.⁶ African workers at the Works Yard at Kafulafuta went on strike in November 1949 because they had no rations.⁷ There were other such spontaneous reactions by African workers to their work situations which took place before they had a trade union. However, the factors that militated against such expressions of worker consciousness hindered and delayed the development of the consciousness into a proper organisation such as a union at an early stage.

The total number of African workers on the railways in N R. in 1953 as at 31st December, was 4,638 against a total of 72,649 Africans in the whole country employed in the mines and other principal industries. Between 1950 and 1952 the number of African workers on the railways in N R.

never fell below 4,000.⁸ This figure made up between five and six per cent of the total labour force in the principal industries in N.R. Between 1953 and 1962 the figure did not drop below five per cent.⁹ (See Table 2 on page 45).

The strategic importance of the railway industry made the African railway workers a significant group as a block of workers, however small their number was in comparison to other industries in N R.

The year 1953 witnesses momentous political changes in the Rhodesias.¹⁰ The Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland started on October 23.¹¹ Enlightened and articulate Africans (those who could read and write and speak out) hated the Federation and mobilised the masses against it. There were ninety-two strikes by Africans in this year. These resulted in the loss of 22,422 man-days. Only eight of these strikes lasted four days or more, while seventy-two lasted one day or less. (See Table 3, on page 46) On R R in this year there were two industrial disputes in N R involving African workers. The disputes did not involve any loss of work because they were solved by arbitration. (See Tables 4 and 5 on pages 47 and 48.)

TABLE 2

NORTHERN RHODESIA AFRICAN LABOUR FORCE, 1953-1963.
 (Covers only industries employing over 300 workers)

Year Ended	INDUSTRY		INDUSTRY		INDUSTRY		
	Mines and Mine Contract	Various Employers	NRG Depts	Federal Depts	Rhodesia Railways	Grand total for NR	Railway labour as % of total
31.12.53	39,914	-	-	-	4,638	72,649	6.4
31.12.54	56,521	24,426	-	-	4,815	80,947	5.9
31.12.55	55,808	17,910	29,218	1,608	5,187	104,544	5.0
31.12.56	56,314	23,956	34,059	4,206	6,416	118,535	5.4
31.12.57	47,994	17,784	29,903	4,195	6,480	99,876	6.5
31.12.58	42,029	20,546	30,274	3,998	5,835	96,847	6.0
31.12.59	45,147	19,107	28,369	3,708	5,802	96,331	6.0
31.12.60	45,722	18,933	30,657	4,538	5,791	99,850	5.8
31.12.61	45,337	16,743	25,205	4,879	5,726	92,164	6.2
31.12.62	42,624	15,006	25,475	4,959	5,224	88,064	5.9
31.12.63	42,085	13,015	26,393	4,700	5,100	86,193	5.9

SOURCE: Labour and Mines Department Annual Reports for
the years 1953-1963.

TABLE 3

SUMMARY OF INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES INVOLVING STOPPAGE OF WORK
DURING THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER, 1953

INDUSTRY	Number of Strikes	Workers Number	Involvement % of total	Average	Man-Day-Lost Number	% of total	Average	Race
All Industries	94	6,421	100.0	68	24,230	100.0	258	-
Total African	92	5,651	88.0	61	22,422	92.5	243	A
Total European	2	770	12.0	385	1,808	7.5	904	E
Agriculture	8	146	2.3	18.25	220	0.91	27.50	A
Building and Construction	29	2,537	39.5	87.41	4,550	18.78	150.89	A
Cordwood Cutting	9	1,115	17.4	123.78	3,700	15.27	411.11	A
Haulage and Transport	10	252	3.9	25.20	151	0.62	15.1	A
Mines and Quarries (E)	2	770	12.0	385.0	1,808	7.42	904.00	E
Mines and Quarries (A)	4	273	4.3	68.25	12,004	49.541	3001.00	A
Local Authorities	3	75	1.2	25.00	110	0.45	36.67	A
Engineering & Manufacture	3	173	2.7	57.67	100	0.41	33.33	A
Shops and Stores	2	93	1.4	46.50	60	0.29	30.00	A
Bakery	1	6	0.1	6.00	2	-	2.00	A
Brickmaking	12	754	11.7	62.92	1,261	5.21	105.08	A
Hotel and Catering	2	59	0.9	29.5	14	0.06	7.00	A
Distributive Trade	3	30	0.5	10.00	34	0.15	11.33	A
Miscellaneous	6	138	2.1	23.00	216	0.89	36.00	A
TOTAL	94	6,421	100.0	-	24,230	100.0	-	

SOURCE: Northern Rhodesia Labour and Mines Department
Annual Report for the Year 1953.

TABLE 4

SUMMARY OF INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES INVOLVING LOSS OF WORK IN
ALL INDUSTRIES, 1954-1963.

Year	No. of Disputes	Involving		Man-days Lost	Causes of Disputes			Non- pay- ment	Increas- of wage demand
		European	African		Housing	Task	Conditions of service		
1954	143	334	14,197	589,209	11	25	57	22	23
1955	49	152	39,811	1548,420	6	14	6	5	3
1956	110	1,596	118,065	469,682	4	13	4	9	6
1957	76	2,881	13,354	210,070	3	13	-	2	11
1958	40	2,924	24,303	1159,218	3	8	9	4	5
1959	23	99	2,085	2,185	1	6	1	2	3
1960	61	107	6,134	7,507	2	7	13	5	12
1961	65	25	12,037	19,640	3	5	22	2	17
1962	94	499	50,834	561,534	-	-	30	3	14
1963	194	1,577	40,109	409,559	-	-	30	1	39

SOURCE: Northern Rhodesia Labour and Mines Department
Annual Reports for the Years 1954-1963.

TABLE 5

SUMMARY OF INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES WITHOUT LOSS OF WORK IN ALL INDUSTRIES, 1954-1964.

Year	No. of Disputes	Involving		Housing and rations	Causes of Disputes				Causes of Disputes	
		Europeans	Africans		Task	Conditions of service	Non-pay- ment of wages	Increase of wages demands	Alleged wrong- ful dis-	
1954	36	1,834	12,763	1	6	14	5	6	-	-
1955	37	7,692	4,224	3	1	2	2	3	-	-
1956	11	56	10,259	2	-	-	1	1	-	-
1957	25	197	13,133	-	-	-	6	-	19	-
1958	13	5,289	27,371	-	-	5	1	3	-	-
1959	23	8,513	10,386	-	2	3	-	8	-	-
1960	21	753	5,479	1	-	6	-	3	-	-
1961	51	32	5,404	1	1	7	1	2	32	-
1962	28	-	2,133	-	-	1	-	1	17	-
1963	51	4,064	37,121	-	-	3	-	4	33	-
1964	57	6,389	39,781	-	-	1	-	9	32	-

SOURCE: Northern Rhodesia Labour and Mines Department Annual Reports for the years 1954-1964.

What is perhaps more significant about 1953 is that a new element was introduced in labour plitics in N R. The African National Congress (ANC), which was led by Harry Nkumbula and had as other prominent leaders men such as Robinson Nabulyato, Dauti Yamba, Safeli Chileshe and George Kaluwa, organised a 'Two Day National Prayer'. The 'National Prayer' was to be a protest against the proposals for the Federation of the three Central African territories. The two days were to be 1st and 2nd April, 1953. The ANC called upon all African workers in N R to abstain from work on these two days. The aim was to weaken the colonial economic and political system. The labour movement, however, did not co-operate with the ANC. The attempt at a general stoppage of work, therefore, was a very lamentable failure. Nkumbula furiously attacked Katilungu, the leader of the African Mineworkers' Union, and blamed him for the failure.¹² The refusal to co-operate with the ANC put the labour movement in a position in which it appeared to support the colonial system.

The most significant thing here is not that the ANC organised a boycott against the colonial system, but that the workers refused to support the politicians. This is significant because it provided a moral lesson for the future. It pointed to the way relations between the labour movement and the nationalist movement were going to be. The labour movement gave warning to the politicians that it would not agree to be used as a tool to achieve political ends.

In 1953, the African railway workers demanded to have representation in the N R Legislative Council. They wanted to have industrial leaders to represent them at a political level. They recommended two railway workers and two mineworkers as candidates to the Legislative Council. These were T.M. Mtonga and Anania Mwanza, from the railway workers and Matthew D. Nkoloma and Jameson Namitengo, from the mineworkers. In addition to this, the railway workers also wanted the railway industry to be represented in the African Representative Council.¹³ Apparently, the African railway workers wanted the Railway Administration to be answerable in the ARC on the question of their conditions of service.

Neither the demand for representation in the Legislative Council nor the request for railway representation on the ARC was granted. However, it is interesting to note that while the labour movement refused to co-operate with the African politicians, there were some workers who felt they needed political representation. The only people they were willing to trust with this responsibility, however, were the labour leaders. Although it is admitted that the labour movement in Zambia played a very significant role in the struggle for political independence,¹⁴ unfortunately this eventuality did not emerge. Though the labour movement played a significant role in the struggle for political independence, as will be shown in the next chapter, a tradition of non-co-operation between the top leadership in the labour movement and the nationalist movement was established at this time.

On the railways in 1953, the African Railway Workers' Trade Union (ARWTU) raised the matter of the collection of union subscriptions with the management, but no agreement was reached. The union

also put in a claim for improved housing, which was left in abeyance when it was learned that the Labour Department was conducting a complete survey of Railway housing in Northern Rhodesia.¹⁵

The question of union subscriptions was very important. It dogged the union for a long time. In 1953 the union lacked funds to expand its activities.¹⁶ As a result of this the union wanted the Railway Administration to agree to a 'check-off' system whereby union subscriptions would be deducted from members' wages by the Administration and then be given to the union. The Administration, however, in its efforts to suppress the union, did not co-operate. This intricate problem of weak finances faced the ARWTU in 1953, as it did other African unions,¹⁷ and the struggle to resolve it started then and took some years to resolve.

Housing for the African railway workers in NR was poor. In fact, in 1954, there was a serious shortage of housing throughout NR for people of all races. The Employment of Natives Ordinance (1941), required employers to provide housing, or a rent element in wages in some cases, for their African employees. However, many African workers remained

inadequately housed.¹⁸ There were numerous complaints against poor housing for Africans on the railways, but in spite of this the NRG saw it fit to leave the question in abeyance. The survey conducted between September 1953 and 1954 by the Labour Department on Railway African Housing came to nothing. Railway African housing remained poor for a long time.

At this point let us consider the factors which contributed to the development, growth and expression of worker consciousness among the African railway workers.

The Engagement of African labour on Rhodesia Railways

The engagement of African labour on RR could be done by virtually any European worker on the railways. This was because the European workers, by virtue of being European, were placed in supervisory categories over the African workers. The system of engaging African labour was open to abuse by the European supervisors, especially the artisans, who had more contact with the African workers than the other European workers. African workers could be, and were, abused by European workers, who could use them as if they were personal servants.¹⁹

The attitude of the European supervisors towards African workers was apparently encouraged by the Railway Administration. The Africans under a European supervisor became 'his Africans', as if he personally owned them.²⁰ In August 1953, the Works Foreman at Broken Hill reminded the pumper at Kafue to follow proper channels when he wished to engage African labour.²¹ Often times a pumper, or a fitter, or a carpenter along the length of the railway line would decide that he needed some more Africans to work under him. He would engage them on his own without following proper channels. The Chief Engineer had to point out this wrong practice to the District Engineer in Broken Hill in December, 1956.²²

The European workers did not follow the Railway Regulations governing the dismissal of African workers from employment either. Apparently they felt justified in doing this because they were Europeans and they were the ones who engaged much of the African labour. In October 1953, the Area Controller at Lusaka disagreed with such an attitude. He refused to dismiss the African labourer the pumper at Kafue had sent to him with the recommendation to be dismissed.

This method of dismissing African workers was contrary to the Regulations, but it was widely used by various European supervisors. The pumper at Kafue, determined to have the African dismissed, had appealed to the Works Foreman at Broken Hill, but he was ignored.²³

It is evident that although the RR had regulations governing the engagement and dismissal of African labour, the regulations were subject to abuse by European supervisors. Such a state of affairs made the position of the African workers weak in comparison with the European workers. The position of strength granted to the European workers explains in part the reason for the ill-treatment and abuse of African workers by their European supervisors. There are numerous examples of ill-treatment and use of abusive language on African workers by their European supervisor.²⁴

There were numerous barbaric acts performed by the 'civilised' European workers on African workers on the railways. Two examples will suffice here. On 2nd June, 1958, a fitter threw paraffin on the Blacksmith's fire at the Locomotive Shed at Broken Hill. This resulted in an African worker being severely burned. The fitter got away with this crime scot-free.²⁵

In March 1964, an African coal-trimmer travelling with the crew of train number 112 Up between Livingston and Choma was locked up in the tender at Kalomo and again at Sibanyati siding. The tender was the store-room in which coal used to fire up a train's engine was kept. The coal-trimmer remained in the tender with no food both ways. He had no water to drink. He was not allowed to get down at the sidings to drink water. When this case was reported, the African was not believed, so the case was closed.²⁶ This was the way most such cases involving European workers and African workers ended. The European workers were easily believed, but not the African workers. Usually the African workers failed to put forward their cases because they were afraid of the European workers²⁷ who could at least initiate dismissal.

This state of affairs is very revealing insofar as labour management and control in a colonial situation was concerned. The European workers were charged with the responsibility of supervising African labour. But they were jealous and afraid of the presence of African workers on the railways. They could see that the Africans could do the so-called

European jobs. This explains in part the reason why the European workers were sometimes so cruel to African workers. It was as if they wanted to wipe out the African workers by maiming them, all in the name of protecting their jobs.

Categories of employment for Africans on Rhodesia Railways.

When an African was employed on RR he was classified and put in a category of employment that existed for African labour. There were four categories of employment for African labour. These were the 'Ratings', 'Groups', 'African Senior Staff' (as from 1956), and 'Grades' categories. The Railways' wages scales for Africans followed this classification.²⁸ The African Senior Staff were to be paid an annual inclusive salary. They were to enjoy certain other privileges that were not applicable to the African labourer groups. As at 31st March, 1956, there were only 185 African Senior Staff. As at 28th June, 1956, the number had risen to 188. (See Table VI on page 59). The importance of the creation of this new class of African workers on the railways was seen by the Administration to lie in the fact that the first and most important step towards the creation

of a responsible middle class group in the African community had been taken.²⁹ The Railway Administration agreed to the creation of the African Senior Staff class because it hoped to use this class against the rest of the African workers. Because the African Senior Staff appeared to be better catered for, the Administration hoped they would help to show the labourer class that the railways had their interests at heart. It was hoped that the labourer class would look up to the African Senior Staff and be convinced that conditions of service were good. All they had to do was to desist from giving the railways any problems and aspire to become Senior Staff. Since African Senior Staff appeared privileged in the colonial situation, many of them were envied by the labourer class.³⁰

The rating system on the railways was not understood by the majority of the African workers. Although the ratings had been drawn up most meticulously and carefully, a Classification Committee found out in 1956 that the ratings were theoretically sound but practically unsound. They were beyond the comprehension of the ordinary African worker. There were differences in pay structures between African

TABLE 6

DETAILS OF AFRICAN EMPLOYMENT ON THE RAILWAYS
 (As at 28th June, 1956)

<u>RATING</u>	<u>NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES</u>
40	6329
45	2901
50	7529
55	1018
60	93
65	14
70	539
75	649
80	985
85	475
90	15
95	41
100	16
105	4
	Sub-total: <u>20,608</u>

<u>GROUP</u>	<u>NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES</u>
1	13
2	65
3	71
4	10
Special	Sub-total: <u>185</u>

<u>GRADE</u>	<u>NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES</u>
2	378
2	163
4	59
5	3
	Sub-total: <u>603</u>

African Senior Staff 188

Grand total: 21,584

- Notes: 1. The number of employees accommodated with their wives was 9,571. Of these, 6,766 drew rations and 2,805 drew a family Allowance in lieu of ration.
2. There were 585 employees who had applied for and were awaiting married accommodation
3. Of employees in the service on 31st January 1956, 5,866 received no immediate benefit from the Hoffman Award in September, 1954 by reason of their short service. By the 31st January, 1956, 4,535 of these had been absorbed into the higher wage agreement.

SOURCE: Debates of the Federal Assembly, (28th June, 1956), Cols. 139-141.

workers that they neither understood nor accepted.³¹ As a result of this there was discontent among African workers expressed to European supervisors who wrote numerous letters to Administration officials seeking classification on African pay.³² Then also, as will be shown in the next chapter, African workers demanded wage increases at almost every Joint Industrial Committee meeting.

The African workers rightly felt that the RR was not a fair employer. By failing to explain the conditions of service clearly, the railways wanted to perpetuate its exploitation of African workers. However, when these workers found out that they could obtain better wages they waged a struggle against their exploitation.

On the other hand, the African mineworkers in N R were divided primarily into two main classes: ticket-paid employees and monthly paid staff. This classification was easier to understand than the one on the railways. On the RR, the S R policies affected labour management. Before 1949 the Masters and Servants Act was in operation in S R. By this Act, Africans were not accorded the status of free workers. They were servants whose conditions of service were determined by the Masters. It is not

surprising that the railways which were controlled from Bulawayo were poor managers of African labour, compared with the copper mines,³³ who by the 1950s had had a long history of labour unrest which had at least given them experience in labour management and control.

Although railway matters were discussed in the Federal Parliament, the African railwaymen did not get any help from there, as did the British railwaymen from their parliament.³⁴ In 1954, Wellington M. Chirwa from Nyasaland asked the Minister of Transport and Communications, Roy Welensky, whether he would consider the establishment of a technical school in the Federation for the training of Africans working on the RR to enable them to undertake more skilled work. Welensky, who was also in charge of railway policy, refused to make a policy statement on the matter. He informed Parliament that the question whether the Africans should do skilled work or not was a matter between the Railway Administration and the European railway unions.³⁵

Welensky was merely alluding to one of the realities of the colonial economy of Central Africa. Technical education and advancement of Africans was

not considered to be an issue worth discussing in Parliament. The colonial regime did not want the advancement of Africans. It is not surprising, therefore, that Welensky, who was a Minister in a Federation Government that purported to stand for a partnership between Europeans and Africans, was defending industrial Colour Bar. Welensky was himself a former employee of the railways. He had supported Colour Bar as a trade unionist. He was still defending it as a Minister in the interests of the European workers. The fact that Welensky was not challenged by the other white members of Parliament only shows too well that they had no sympathy for the African workers.

In August 1956, Dauti Yamba from N R introduced a motion in the Federal Parliament in which he said there were 'serious grievances' of the African employees of the RR. He called on the Parliament to appoint a Commission of Inquiry to investigate the conditions of service of all classes of African employees. He suggested that the terms of reference of the Commission should include 'terms of employment, promotion and grading, housing and sanitation and educational and recreational facilities'. He wanted

to draw the sympathy of the Minister of Transport and Communications, Roy Welensky, and members on Government Benches, for African workers on the railways.³⁶

Welensky argued that he could not personally accept the suggestion that African workers were labouring under serious grievances.³⁷ His response was not surprising. Although he was a Federal Minister he was also a life member of two of the largest European Trade Unions in S R that operated on the railways. These were the Rhodesian Railways Workers' Union (RRWU) and the Amalgamated Engineering Union. (AEU). In this regard, it would be too much to expect him to be sympathetic to African workers. In fact, he was not happy that the issue of the African railway workers had been brought up in the Parliament in the first place. He accused Yamba of trying to use the Parliament to strengthen the African workers' union, which according to Welensky, Yamba apparently knew was too weak to fight on its own.³⁸ After the ruthless response from Welensky, Yamba withdrew his motion on 14th August, 1956.³⁹

The African railway workers, therefore, did not have the sympathy of the white-dominated Federal Parliament. It became clear to them that if they

had to make any advancement, the battlefield had to be outside the Federal Parliament.

Harrassment of the African Trade Union on the Railways

The Railway Administration was very cruel to those African workers who were Trade Unionists. The Administration either dismissed these men from employment or made things so difficult for them that they were left with no alternative but to quit railway employment. Significantly, similar treatment was given to Trade Unionists on the British railways during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁴⁰

John Sichalwe, said to be the founder of the trade union idea among the African railway workers in N R , was dismissed from employment on 15th November, 1950. He was accused of neglecting his railway duties and acting too much for the union. Dixon Konkola, the General President of the ARWTU, was dismissed from employment in November 1952. He was accused of having incited the African workers to go on strike in April 1952. A final example is that of Anania Mwanza. He was forced to leave employment on 31st July, 1955, because of his union activities. All these three men were employed by the Union as full-time workers.⁴¹ Since Konkola became a full-time

paid employee of the union, he was able to continue as General President.

Later, even when the Railway African Workers' Union (RAWU) was recognised by the Railway Administration, Konkola, the Union's General President, was not allowed into S R by the Government there. Konkola's ban into S R started in 1953, when on 24th January, on his way to Bulawayo for a Joint Industrial Committee (JIC) meeting, he was taken off the train at Victoria Falls by SRG Immigration Authorities.⁴² The JIC was established in 1952 by the Railway Administration, as a consultative body to deal with industrial problems concerning African workers on the railways. Konkola's removal from the train drew strong reaction from a number of groups. The N R Governor demanded to know the reasons for Konkola's prohibition into S R. The Governor was informed that the SRG was afraid Konkola would stir up trouble in Umtali where ARWTU had a branch.⁴³

The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITWF) based in London was also interested in the matter.⁴⁴ The matter was also discussed in the N.R. Legislative Council. It was raised by the Reverend E.G. Nightingale, Member for African

Interests, who complained against the ARWTU General President's treatment by the SRG.⁴⁵

The strongest reaction came from the NRG, which felt that the action by the SRG was detrimental to the 'object of building up and maintaining industrial peace and good relationships between the RR and its African employees'. The NRG strongly felt that the JIC for African employees should function smoothly because that would work to the advantage of both the Rhodesias. According to the NRG, the JIC could only function smoothly if the General President of the ARWTU in N R was allowed into S R. The SRG was, therefore, asked to consider allowing Konkola into S R for such important meetings.⁴⁶

So although by the 1950s trade unionism on RR was allowed, only the European workers' unions worked without any harassment from the employers. Although Africans were allowed to have a union, in practical terms their union was not allowed a free hand. This was a clear example of double standard applied on workers. It was dictated by the colonial economic and political situation that promoted European supremacy.

The strong reaction from the NRG over the incident involving Konkola, the General President of the ARWTU,

needs to be commented upon. The NRG might be seen to have been supporting Konkola and African trade unionism, but this was not the case. In fact, the NRG did not like Konkola or any of the radical African trade unionists for that matter. In June 1953, the NRG imprisoned Konkola for leading a campaign against the Colour Bar in N.R. The NRG explained Konkola's imprisonment as something necessitated by his political actions.⁴⁷ It is not easy to believe this because Konkola was at that time already a prominent labour leader. The NRG imprisoned him in order to alienate him from the workers he was leading. The NRG was only interested in those trade unions which could accept to work within the colonial system and support it by abstaining from politics. It was for this reason that the NRG was anxious to have industrial peace in N.R. The action by the SRG threatened industrial relations in N.R. because the African unions were likely to protest. After all, by agreeing to attend JIC meetings, Konkola and his union had indicated willingness to work within the established colonial channels of negotiations. In view of this it can be argued that the NRG wanted Konkola allowed into S.R. so that he could be used as a tool of the colonial regime in achieving industrial peace.

On the RR, as on the British railways in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,⁴⁸ when the African workers negotiated for better conditions of service and wages, the Railway Administration would show its unwillingness to reward African workers adequately. The Administration's attitude towards African wage demands was tough and harsh. Almost every demand made by African workers was deliberately resisted so that it could go to arbitration. The arbitration tribunals most often came up with awards which caused a lot of resentment among African workers. This happened in 1954, for example. African workers demanded an all-round increase of £3.0.0 per month. The cost of living was high and the African workers were finding it difficult to make ends meet. The Administration, whose approach to wage demands by African workers was based on very shaky assumptions, resisted the demand. The matter ended up at arbitration, but the Hoffman Award gave the Africans inadequate increases of 10s. and 7s. 6d. a month on alternative years after the fifth year. The previous incremental rate had been 5s. a month.⁴⁹

The Hoffman Award was received unenthusiastically by African workers because it was unrealistic. It had little practical effect. The majority of the Africans in the lower grades had less than five years' service, so they were to receive virtually no increment. On the other hand, the higher ratings and groups were awarded higher increases, but there were very few Africans in these groups. The Award, therefore, carried little material benefit, and yet, surprisingly, the African unions agreed to be bound to an agreement that said they were not to negotiate for further wage increases for two years. As a result of this unsatisfactory award, discontent grew on the railways among African workers. In NR the African workers threatened to go on strike.⁵¹

African Wages on Rhodesia Railways

One striking feature about the position of the African railway workers is that throughout the period from 1953 to 1963, and even up to 1972 on Zambia Railways, there were persistent demands made for wage increases. This is hardly surprising because compared with the mines, and in some cases even with the Government, the wages paid to Africans on the railways

were low. By 1954, African workers on the railways had also received wage increases, as had the African mineworkers. In spite of this, the African wages on the railways were still low compared with those on the mines. By 1956, the lowest earnings for thirty days' work on the railways was 157s. 6d. On the mines it was 202s. 6d., at Chilanga Cement Works it was 67s. 6d., while for casual labour employed by the Government it was 90s.⁵²

The fact was that even in 1942 in NR, it was known that the life of a full-time African worker had changed. The life called for the provision of many accessories that helped to make life comfortable. However, the wages paid to Africans seldom took these accessories into account.⁵³ Although the cost of living in the urban areas was high for African workers, their wages were based on the assumption that the African could draw his subsistence from the land. However, by 1942, there was a growing number of African workers who could not do so. It had become necessary to match wages with the cost and standard of living.⁵⁴

In 1945, it was found out that a strong under-current of discontent existed among African railway

TABLE 7

THE RULING RATES OF MONTHLY WAGES (AFRICANS) OVER
TEN YEARS IN NORTHERN RHODESIA.

	Agricultural	Industrial
1927	5s.0d. to 12s.6d.	5s.0d. to 12s. 6d.
1928	5s.0d. to 12s. 6d.	10s.0d. to 20s.
1929	7s.6d. to 12s. 6d.	10s.0d. to 20s.
1930	7s. 6d. to 12s. 6d.	10s.0d. to 20s.
1931	7s.6d. to 12s. 6d.	10s.0d. to 20s.
1932	6s.6d. to 12s. 6d.	10s.0d. to 20s.
1933	5s.0d. to 10s. 0d.	5s.0d. to 20s.
1934	5s.0d. to 10s. 0d.	5s.0d. to 20s.
1935	5s.0d. to 10s. 0d.	5s.0d. to 20s.
1936	7s.6d. to 10s. 0d.	7s.6d. to 20s.

SOURCE: Major G. St. J. Orde Browne, Labour Conditions in Northern Rhodesia. (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1938), p. 13.

TABLE 8

AFRICAN WAGES IN SELECTED INDUSTRIES IN NORTHERN RHODESIA/
ZAMBIA, 1953-1972 (Figures are in Shillings and pence)

Year	Mines		Surface		Railways		Agricultural (Average Monthly wage)	Government Service	
	Under- ground								
	Min.	Max.	Min.	Max.	Min.	Max.		Min.	Max.
1953:	115/3	162/11	106/7	149/11	85/6	215/6	-	70/-	625/-
1955	105/-	127/6	90/-	112/6	95/-	142/6	65/-	70/-	625/-
1957	215/-	237/6	197/6	220/-	110/6	193/-	73/11	-	-
1959	240/-	247/6	222/6	230/-	138/6	221/-	80/5	60/8	65/-
1961	260/-	267/6	242/6	250/-	175/-	255/-	90/9	78/-	153/10
1963	305/-	312/6	287/6	295/-	197/6	277/6	87/-	78/-	195/-
1965	390/-	396/-	364/-	390/-	256/-	338/6	126/-	130/-	195/-
1967	560/-	690/-	540/-	660/-	260/-	340/-	150/-	234/-	250/-
1969	560/-	690/-	540/-	660/-	300/-	390/-	150/-	280/-	330/-
1971	560/-	690/-	540/-	660/-	340/-	430/-	150/-	280/-	330/-
1972	560/-	690/-	540/-	660/-	340/-	430/-	150/-	280/-	330/-

SOURCE: Annual Reports (Labour) for the Years 1953-1972.

workers in NR. The dissatisfaction was caused by low wages and poor housing.⁵⁵ There was a general demand by the African workers throughout the railways for an increase of wages.⁵⁶ This was due to the fact that the effect of the war upon the cost of the articles which an African had to buy had been extreme. The African felt the effect of increased prices more than any other section of the community. The rations that he received for himself and his wife had to be supplemented. He had to buy food for his children and other dependants.⁵⁷ In addition to the food purchases, the African had to buy clothes, blankets, utensils and other articles for himself and his dependants. These were expensive, so the wage of the African, even when he was supplied with housing and rations, bought less than half of what it did before the war.⁵⁸

As a result of this, the African worker, out of necessity, could only afford the cheapest foodstuffs: mealie meal, low quality meat, dried and fresh fish, bread and sugar, which accounted for roughly eighty per cent of the food consumed by Africans. Despite improvements in wage rates for Africans, even in 1958, the African wages were still insufficient to maintain socially desirable levels of living.⁵⁹ There

was no serious effort made to relate African wages to European wages in terms of comparative efficiency or job content. Where the Africans were capable of doing similar work to Europeans, employers justified wage differentials on the grounds that Africans lacked adaptability or a sense of responsibility, or by reference to a dual economy in which the needs of the Africans were less than those of the Europeans.⁶⁰ As a result of such misconception, the railways introduced a cost of living allowance equivalent to three per cent of the basic wage for those grades of workers coming within the scope of the SIC only from 1st April 1962.⁶¹

The assumptions used to keep the wages of African workers low were wrong. Although one cannot argue effectively on the cost of living for African workers because where statistics are available, they are not complete, still the few statistical figures available, indicate that the cost of living for African workers was always going up.⁶² There was also the fact that the African wage earners compared their lot with that of the European workers. The Africans rightly felt that they deserved a standard of living equal to that of Europeans, since they saw themselves as the people who did all the real

work. So the Africans felt a growing need for European material goods. Unfortunately, the low wages they were paid thwarted their ambitions.⁶³

It is against the background of the rising cost of living for African wage earners that their wage demands should be seen and understood.

There were various reasons advanced by employers of African labour and colonial government officials to justify the low wages paid to Africans.⁶⁴ There was also in S.R., for example, the Industrial Conciliation Act (1945) which fixed European rates of pay. These were very high, and so employers found it cheaper to exclude Africans from the rates.⁶⁵ An Arbitration Court in March 1954 awarded European workers a basic pay rate of about £641 4s 0d. per annum. With allowances, the basic pay for Europeans was more than £799 18. 0d.⁶⁶ The wage rates for Africans railway workers were revised as from 1st September, 1954. However, even then an African's wage on the railways was on average less than 10 per cent of an average European's salary.

There is no doubt that the question of wages was very important to African workers in general, and to the African railway workers in particular,

in as far as the development of worker consciousness was concerned. When the issue involved a wage claim, the African workers did not hesitate to go on strike. In 1952, African workers in N.R. joined a strike protesting the dismissal of three African workers at Broken Hill. They had done this because they had thought the strike was to support a demand for wage increase.⁶⁷

Housing and Sanitation

Housing and sanitation for the African railway workers were very poor. The railways were as reluctant to provide good African housing and sanitation as they were to provide higher wages.

In September 1953, a detailed survey of all African housing of the RR in N.R. was carried out by the Government. This was as a result of complaints by the African workers. The survey revealed that the African railway workers in N.R. were poorly accommodated. There were inadequate houses for the workers. There were only 2,938 houses of various types with 4,625 rooms for a total of 4,199 workers, of whom 2,499 were married with 5 226 children.⁶⁸

The type of houses built for Africans was of the cheapest material available because the railways were reluctant to spend money on African housing. The houses were often one room dwellings. These were constructed from prefabricated material or they would be rondavel units for rural areas - that is small stations. **Itinerant** African labour used portable 'A' type huts of tarpaulins.⁶⁹ In some cases, pole and daga huts were constructed by the Africans as their railway accommodation. Even in the established African railway compounds and cottages, there was 'terrific congestion'. The African workers with families slept in one roomed buildings. The room was at the same time used as a kitchen and living room.⁷⁰

The Federal Minister of Transport and Communications, was asked by an African member of the Federal Parliament from S.R. in 1956, to explain the situation regarding African housing on the RR. As the 'Schedule for African Housing' (set out on the next page) shows, the situation was bad.⁷¹

On 18th January, 1957, the Broken Hill Branch of the ARWTU, declared a dispute with the railways over the sanitary facilities in Broken Hill's Railway

TABLE 9AFRICAN HOUSING: RHODESIA RAILWAYS - SCHEDULE

<u>Year ended 31st March</u>	<u>Southern Rhodesia</u>			
	<u>Pise</u>	<u>Prefab</u>	<u>Brick</u>	<u>Other</u>
1949	385	-	-	-
1950	206	612	-	33
1951	-	983	-	11
1952	-	969	-	-
1953	-	913	-	-
1954	-	645	-	-
1955	-	356	-	-
TOTAL	591	4,478	-	44

	<u>Northern Rhodesia</u>			
	<u>Pise</u>	<u>Prefab</u>	<u>Brick</u>	<u>Other</u>
1949	-	-	120	-
1950	-	80	-	32
1951	-	207	-	-
1952	-	233	-	-
1953	-	292	-	-
1954	-	338	-	-
1955	-	80	-	-
TOTAL	-	1,230	120	32

Total Southern Rhodesia: 5,113

Total Northern Rhodesia: 1,382

GRAND TOTAL: 6,495

- NOTES: 1. All the above houses were married quarters.
2. During this period the Railways built no single quarters.
3. Single Africans were accommodated in married quarters.
4. The number of rooms in all the married quarters was:
- (a) In Urban Areas: 2 rooms and a Kitchen
- (b) In Rural Areas: 2 room.

African Township.⁷² The sanitary facilities were structurally dilapidated beyond description'.⁷³ The Africans demanded to have the sanitary facilities changed, but the RR General Manager rejected the demands, arguing that the sanitary facilities would cost the RR a lot of money to replace.⁷⁴

The African workers, however, continued to fight for better housing and sanitation. This was done mainly at JIC meetings. The JIC meeting in August 1963 was held specifically to consider this issue.⁷⁵ Outside the JIC the women in Broken Hill joined their men in the struggle. The women demanded that the pit-latrines should be replaced with water-borne sanitation.⁷⁶ The participation of the Railway African women, wives of railway employees, in the problem is very significant in the context of the workers' struggles in the colonial situation. The women had been conscientised and shown that the colonial regime was their enemy, too. As a result of this, the women did a lot to cause the Regional Controller for the railways in N R to feel uncomfortable and urge the headquarters in Bulawayo to solve the sanitation problem.⁷⁷

In January 1957, the RR had passed on the problem of African housing in N R to the NRG through the African Housing Board (AHB) that had just been formed

to deal with urban African housing. The AHB was to provide urban housing while the railways would continue to provide rural accommodation.⁷⁸ This move, however, did not work out very well. Between 1960 and 1963, the issue of inadequate housing for the African railway workers grew so hot that it culminated into a strike threat in July 1963. The issue was only temporarily solved when Kenneth Kaunda, then Minister of Local Government, stepped in. He promised the railway workers that housing would be given priority after independence.⁷⁹

According to Eliya Mwanza, the Assistant General Secretary of the RAWU in 1963, the RR seemed to be favouring S R. over the question of housing. He observed that since 1958 the RR had evaded the issue of building houses for African workers in N.R.⁸⁰

The housing problem in N.R. was not peculiar to the African railway workers. It was a problem that affected all African workers in the territory and in other territories, too. Such a state of affairs arose from shaky assumptions used by colonial governments working out programmes for African housing. The Carpenter Report on Kenya

shows that the assumption was that 'the African labour force would always remain one of single men.'⁸¹

African Rations on Rhodesia Railways

Finally, it ought to be mentioned that the development of worker consciousness among African railway workers in N.R. can be seen from the way the workers fought against the system of being given rations in kind in lieu of cash. The assumption was that the African was irresponsible and incapable of providing himself with food. The railways felt that if the African was given cash for his food, he would spend it on other things, not food. The African workers, however, refused to accept such a state of affairs. They agitated for the abolition of the system, so that they could receive cash for their food. The copper mines had been forced to agree to such an arrangement at the end of 1955.⁸²

The RR agreed to give cash in lieu of rations to all African workers in 1956. By December 1957, this option had been taken up by all African workers in N R.⁸³ This was a very important development on the railways. But taking into account the reluctance with which the measure was introduced, one wonders

whether the Railway Administration accepted it in appreciation for African workers' maturity or as a strategy to avoid labour unrest.

Conclusion

Sharon Stichter writing about the situation in Kenya, argues that, 'A complex of socio-economic changes emerged in the war and postwar years to make possible the beginnings of African labour organizing.'⁸⁴ In N.R. too, it can be argued that the introduction of wage labour and urbanisation provided a situation in which complex socio-economic changes were carried out. These changes affected the Africans and led to the development of labour organisation.

For many years many authors of the numerous studies on African 'efficiency and productivity' did not think it was necessary to answer the questions why the African working in a colonial economy should increase his productivity, or what he was working for and who was going to get the benefits of his increased productivity. The African, however, was aware that whatever he produced was going to benefit the European, so whenever he could,

he refused to sell his labour power.⁸⁵ It was such awareness about who was benefitting from his labour that led to the growth of consciousness in the African worker.

The development of worker consciousness among the Railway African employees in N.R. was rooted in their struggles against poor conditions of service, low wages, poor housing and sanitation, and ill-treatment from the European railway workers, who were determined to see that the African was oppressed through Colour Bar. The Colour Bar was allowed in the colonial regime, so the workers' struggles included a struggle against the colonial regime.

It was these issues that caused the African railway workers in NR to begin identifying themselves as a group of workers that deserved better conditions of service, higher wages and better housing and sanitation. Once the group identity began, the formation of a trade union became the next logical step to take. This gigantic historic step was taken in 1950 in Broken Hill. By 1953 the African railway workers had become a relatively stabilised workforce. As a group of workers sharing the same work experiences and aspirations, they were responsible enough to make trade unionism of feature of their industrial experience.

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CHAPTER FOUR

ADVANCEMENT, TRADE UNIONISM AND POLITICS ON THE RAILWAYS TO 1972.

African Advancement on the Railways

In 1952 a Joint Industrial Committee (JIC) for African employees on the railways was formed. The establishment of the JIC was important. Firstly, for the first time regular consultations were established between the Railway Administration and representatives of African employees as trade unionists. Secondly, the Northern Rhodesia African Railway Workers' Trade Union (ARWTU) for the first time agreed to work with the Rhodesia Railways African Employees' Association (RRAEA) based in Bulawayo.¹ The JIC was to be used to ensure that there was no industrial strife on the railways. In N.R. the government considered the JIC to be absolutely necessary for good industrial relations.

It was at JIC meetings that important issues, such as conditions of service, wages, and housing and sanitation, were discussed. The JIC was purely a domestic body - that is, it was for the railways only. It had no statutory authority. Agreements

reached at JIC meetings were not legally binding either on the Railway Administration or the Unions.² Nevertheless, it can be argued that the JIC went a long way in limiting the amount of industrial strife that took place on the railways. The issues that arose were discussed at the JIC meetings. When the decisions reached at the meetings did not satisfy the 'rank-and-file', the union leaders had to move carefully before they could decide on strike action. This was important because the African unions had to prove they were 'responsible' and that Africans were capable of representing themselves.

On the railways there was a 'very strong' prejudice against employing Coloureds or Africans in posts in which Europeans were employed.³ Nevertheless, the issue of African advancement was first presented formally to the Railway Administration in the meetings of the JIC.⁴

The Railways had claimed to the Dalglish Commission (1947) that they had a scheme for the advancement of their African employees. As a result of this, although the railways were, after the mines, the second most important industry operating in N.R., the Commission did not collect any evidence on the

railways.⁵ Indeed when the railways were nationalised in 1947, part of the agreement was that 'opportunities for employment in more responsible work should be secured for African employees as and when they qualified to undertake such work'. However, nothing was done to advance Africans,⁶ and the Railway Service Commission did nothing about it.⁷ As it turned out, it was the consent of the European railway workers that was needed before any African employee could advance. This meant that although when negotiations for the advancement of Africans began, they were supposed to be between African workers and the Administration the negotiations were actually between the African workers and the European workers.

In 1953 the railways came under the control of the Federal Government. In the early years of the Federation, the railways were desperately short of skilled and semi-skilled men and could not cope with the rising traffic. In August 1954 an intensive recruitment drive was launched. The aim was to obtain men from the United Kingdom, the Continent of Europe, South Africa and within the Federation. The effort resulted in the recruitment of 2,176 European workers. Fifty-nine per cent of this number was obtained from local sources, twenty-one per cent from South Africa and fifteen per cent from overseas, mainly

the U.K.⁸

The situation did not improve, however, so in 1955, a British Traffic Commission was invited to visit the Federation and advise it on its railway **difficulties**. They stressed the need to advance Africans into more skilled jobs. The Railway Administration was willing to do this. The Federal Government, however, stalled for five more years. This was so in spite of the fact that for many years past in the countries bordering the Federation, Africans had advanced in their jobs on the railways. Much to the annoyance of the Africans, the Federal Government brought out completely untrained and inexperienced Greeks and Italians to be trained as firemen, shunters and drivers.⁹ By 31st March, 1956, a total of 2,370 European recruits were engaged.¹⁰

Welensky, the Federal Minister of Transport and Communications in charge of railway policy, had several critics over his policy of importing Greeks and Italians to work for the railways. It was argued that the Greeks and Italians were worse than Africans since they were unskilled and inexperienced.¹¹ The African railwaymen themselves protested over the

use of Greeks and Italians. The RAWU wrote a strongly-worded letter to Welensky, protesting about his policy. The letter was signed by Dixon Konkola, General President of the RAWU, and also President of the Northern Rhodesia Trade Union Congress (TUC). The RAWU regarded Welensky's policy to be political. The letter argued that Africans had contributed a lot to the development of the railways, and this fact should be considered serious.¹²

In spite of the criticism over this decision, Welensky said he was 'absolutely unrepentant about it'. He argued that the Greeks and Italians had played a very large part in building up civilisations in various parts of the world. As a result of this, he faithfully believed that they could make a major contribution towards a similar development - of civilisation - in the Federation.¹³ In view of Welensky's stand on African advancement on the railways, it is not surprising that the Federal Government's policy towards African employees hampered their advancement. It is because of this that it has been argued that 'in the advancement of Africans in industry, and even more important, in the technical training of Africans to fit them for such advancement,

the record of the Federal Government was lamentable'.¹⁴

The Federal Government had such a poor record on African advancement partly because of the European Trade Unions. The Federal Government, the mining companies and the railways were afraid of the European Trade Unions' reaction to African advancement.¹⁵ On the railways, the European workers were much better organised than the African workers, and their union was financially much stronger. This was a point that was conceded even by Konkola who had experienced intense pressure from them during the 1950s.¹⁶

In a wider context of the colonial situation in N.R., at the root of the problem of African advancement in industry was the obvious clash of economic and political interests. The clash was between the African workers on the one hand and the European workers and colonial governments and private companies on the other.¹⁷

The African Unions in NR led by the TUC declared 1954 to be the year of African advancement in industry.¹⁸ In this study, African advancement means higher pay for work of increased responsibility, and the provision of better and more facilities for European and African workers when they perform similar tasks.¹⁹

The question of African advancement in industry in NR was so crucial that a good number of European politicians discussed it during their campaigns in the elections for the Federal Assembly in 1953.²⁰ African advancement was opposed by the European candidates of almost all the parties formed to contest the elections. Welensky, the leader of the United Federal Party (UFP), was in the fore-front of this opposition.²¹ Nevertheless, in 1954, many of the African Trade Unions pursued an active policy aimed at forcing the pace of economic advancement for Africans.²²

The European railway workers under the leadership of the RRWU and AEU fiercely resisted African advancement on the railways. They were afraid that they might lose their jobs to the Africans.²³ They were helped in their resistance by the SR law that reserved skilled and semi-skilled jobs for Europeans. This was the Industrial Conciliation Act (Amendment) of 1945, which was applied even in NR where the British Government's labour policy for the territory allowed for African advancement.²⁴

The pressure from Africans at JIC meetings resulted in the opening up of negotiations on African advancement on the railways in 1957.²⁵ The negotiations were between the RAWU, the RRWU, the AEU and

the Railway Administration, and they were protracted. It was not until 19th January, 1960, that the European railway workers and the Railway Administration agreed to African advancement. The Africans were to be admitted to certain selected jobs on a trial basis.²⁶ From now on, recruitment for all jobs covered by the National Industrial Council (NIC) was to be on a strictly non-racial basis.²⁷

On the railways, as on the mines, the European workers insisted on African advancement on condition that the principle of the 'rate for the job' (or 'equal pay for equal work') should be fulfilled. In doing this they appeared to be giving in to African advancement, but this was not so. It was through this orthodox trade union principle that the European workers succeeded in entrenching themselves in skilled employment. And to make matters worse, the whole machinery of government and industry was established on this basis.²⁸ In such a situation, the truth was that the European workers knew that the 'rate for the job' could not be applied to Africans. The railways would have had to pay out a lot of money in salaries and wages, since the European workers were paid very high salaries. Their salaries were fixed high enough to cover items such as servants, imported food, drink, clothing, and a car.²⁹ The Africans were not expected to aspire to

such a high standard of living. Instead, their wages were kept low in order to give the Europeans a high standard of living.

The situation was compounded by the fact that the railways met all their expenses out of revenue received from railway users and railway investments. The RR was one of the few publicly owned railway systems in the world which did not cost the taxpayer any money. This was as a result of the insistence of the Rhodesian and Bechuanaland Governments when the statutory body to establish the railways was set up. The railway system was to be run along business lines.³⁰ When it came to deciding on to whom the railways should give money, the African workers were always considered last, usually never at all.

As from 24th June, 1960, the new agreement on African advancement was given the force of law in terms of Railway legislation. The NRG considered the agreement as an outstanding achievement for all parties involved, especially because of the protracted negotiations on African advancement on the railways. At certain times the problem had seemed impossible to solve. Now, towards the end

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of 1960, consideration was being given to the principles of possible new legislation for the railways. There was also the question of forming one industrial Council on which all railway unions would be represented.³¹

The NRG also considered the agreements reached on African advancement on the railways and the mines to be excellent achievements which provided a firm basis for hoping that serious industrial disputes could be avoided in the future. The agreements also provided a lead to other industries to settle on full and practical measures for African advancement in employment.³² A significant point to note here is that the African railway workers in NR were, together with the African mineworkers, in the forefront of the struggle for African advancement in industry.

It should be pointed out too, that although the RAWU fought relentlessly for African advancement, it can be argued that the fight was not for the majority of the African workers; and this was common knowledge. In June 1956, Konkola, the President of the union, toured the Copperbelt branches. He was informed by the 'rank-and-file'

there that they did not want their leaders to pursue matters concerning basic conditions of service. They wanted them to concentrate on wage claims only.³³ The 'rank-and-file' on the Copperbelt basically wanted higher wages. They were not concerned with long term policy matters.

In July 1960, all African railway workers received a pay rise. The increase in all cases exceeded 22s.6d. a month. However, at the large Railway Centres - Broken Hill, Ndola, and Livingstone - there was considerable dissatisfaction over the increase. Many of the workers felt that the increase was much too small. The general opinion expressed by the workers was that the increase in Grades 1-11, was inadequate. It was the feeling of the 'rank-and-file' that their union had accepted the low wages for them meekly. They believed that if the union had been firmer, they could have secured a higher increase for them. The discontent among the 'rank-and-file' was compounded by the feeling of hostility felt by the lower paid workers towards those Africans who had 'advanced'; they had benefitted relatively more from the wage increase.³⁴

From the point of view of the lower paid African workers, African advancement into European posts was not such an important issue. Many of them were labourers who could not hope to advance into European posts. They understood little of what

such advancement meant.³⁵ However, the union fought for African advancement because success in the struggle was to be a sweet victory against capital and the colonial system with its numerous barriers against African progress.

By 30th June, 1961, 22,000 non-Europeans on the railways had applied for advanced posts within the NIC. At the same date there were 579 non-Europeans employed in NIC posts. This number was made up of 226 Africans, 20 Asians and 333 Coloureds.³⁶ The NR Labour Department reported that, 'By the end of 1961 in regard to all jobs falling within the scope of the NIC and the principle of the "rate for the job", the removal of discrimination on the grounds of colour and race was successfully implemented on the railways'.³⁷ In view of what happened on the railways after 1961, the Labour Department report shows one important thing: significant social changes had taken place which even colonialism had to accommodate.

In 1961, eighty-one Africans were trained as firemen, while twenty-two were trained as learner shunters.³⁸ In 1962, twelve Africans were trained as firemen, while only five were trained as learner shunters, compared with 154 and thirty-six firemen and shunters for Europeans.³⁹ In 1963, eighteen Africans were trained as firemen, while the figure

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for Europeans was ninety-five. In the same year, thirty-nine Africans were trained as learner shunters, while the figure for Europeans was eighty-two.⁴⁰ These figures reveal that only a few Africans were advancing. Such a state of affairs is hardly surprising since the advancement required that applicants for advanced posts must be able to read, write and speak the English language.⁴¹ Since only a few Africans had access to European education at this time, discrimination when it came to advancement was applied on the basis of educational qualifications.

In August 1964, as a result of a strike of European workers in the NIC grades between 3rd and 19th August, all non-Zambian artisans in the NIC grades were given £12 10s. 0d. a month as a special allowance, plus £17 6s. 2d. a month as an artisans allowance. The non-Zambian, non-artisan employees who could not be replaced by Africans within a relatively short period also received the same amounts in allowances. The Zambians in the NIC grades received only £5 a month as a 'compensatory' allowance.⁴² We can see that in spite of the 1960 advancement Agreement, colour and race were still at work and salaries and wages were fixed on this basis.

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Not surprisingly, such a state of affairs caused resentment among African workers. They felt that they were being treated as second class citizens by the RR. Such a sour mood should be understood in the light of the fact that, the total allowances that the European workers got in 1964 exceeded the total wage of the majority of the African workers in Zambia.⁴³ It ought to be pointed out that in terms of wages and racial prejudice, the state of affairs was the same in other establishments too, for example, the mines. In view of this, it is amazing that the African railway workers did not go on strike because of such a bad situation.

It ought to be pointed out, too, that 1964 was an eventful and turbulent year for the Railways. In Livingstone, the racial prejudice that existed on the railways did cause a problem. As a result of an incident in which a European driver was alleged to have used bad language to two African employees at Livingstone, there was a strike from 5th to 10th March by African workers in the SIC grades. The strike started in Livingstone and spread to all other main depôts in NR. Agreement to resolve the problem (into which a wages issue had been brought in) was reached at meetings held on 8th and 9th

March. The meetings were attended by all interested parties, and were chaired by a Zambian Government official.⁴⁴

The Africans who joined the NIC grades were bound by Railway Regulations to join European unions which represented the interests of the NIC grades, while the RAWU represented the SIC grades. Relations between the Africans who had joined the NIC grades and European workers were poor. As a result of this, the Africans in the RRWU were discriminated against. They were denied the benefits fought for by the European unions.⁴⁵ In the end the Africans in RRWU broke away from this union in frustration. On 27th May, 1966, they formed a branch of their own union, the Zambia Railways Workers' Union (ZRWU) at Broken Hill.⁴⁶ On 2nd June, 1967, the ZRWU amalgamated with the Zambian section of the RAWU to form the Zambia Railways Amalgamated Workers' Union (ZRAWU).⁴⁷

In the struggle for African advancement the African railway workers in NR had to contend with three governments: the Federal Government and the two Territorial Governments of Northern

and Southern Rhodesia. Then there were also the two European unions - RRWU and AEU.⁴⁸ On the other hand, the African mineworkers had to contend only with the mining companies, the NRG and one European union. They also had the advantage of greater concentration. Such a state of affairs made matters a little easier since no outside forces were directly involved. In view of this, we can argue that the African railway workers had a much more difficult struggle.

The African advancement agreement was signed on the railways in 1960, but the majority of the African workers did not benefit from it. Instead, at the attainment of independence, the lower paid workers found themselves full of bitterness and resentment. This feeling was compounded by the fact that political independence did not seem to promise immediate salvation for them.⁴⁹ This state of affairs appeared to be a natural development since the leaders of the nationalist movement had not effectively harnessed the potential of the labour movement during the 1950s and early 1960s.

Trade Unionism and Politics on the Railways to 1972

The African railway workers' union did not engage in any political activities in the colonial or post-colonial periods. As a result of this the union never became an instrument of any political party.⁵⁰ The railway workers' union was not alone in this situation. The other African unions in N.R. also avoided political issues. Apparently no clear relationship emerged between unions and political parties.⁵¹ The railway workers' movement, however, provided the African National Congress (ANC) with manpower. One of these men who was significant in the ANC, and might have become important in UNIP, too, was Dixon Konkola, who was the President of the union and at various times, also led the TUC.⁵²

Under Konkola the TUC formed a Political Action Sub-committee in October, 1955, with Konkola as chairman and Matthew Nkoloma as secretary. The Sub-committee was formed independently of political influence. It had no backing from the ANC, and it did not intend to work with the ANC. It was formed in order to represent the workers, by fellow workers, at Government level. For example, the

Sub-committee intended to put forward to the Government suggestions for amendments to certain laws in NR that concerned workers, such as the Workmen's Compensation and Silicosis Ordinances.⁵³

When Konkola ascended 'to the highest office in the country's labour movement' in May 1955, (when he was elected President of the TUC), he did not inform ANC headquarters about it, and yet he was ANC Deputy General-Secretary. This action caused the ANC General-Secretary, Kenneth Kaunda, to write to him and complain. Kaunda reminded Konkola that his task as TUC President was to organise the workers in NR for the liberation of ~~the~~ country.⁵⁴

It would appear that there was an attempt by Konkola and others in the TUC to turn the labour movement in NR into a political movement, independent of the ANC. Such a position explains the reason why 'the leadership of the trade union movement and that of the ANC were kept apart scrupulously'.⁵⁵ The stand taken by the labour movement also explains why at various times, both Konkola and Katilungu, the leaders of the labour movements on the railways and the mines respectively, attempted to take over control of the political movement in NR. So it does not seem to be true that there was a close

relationship between the TUC and the ANC, as Meebelo suggests.⁵⁶

Meebelo has covered Lawrence Katilungu and the African Mineworkers' Union (AMU)⁵⁷ quite adequately. But Konkola, who was at one time President of both RAWU and the TUC, and Deputy General-Secretary of ANC, is left out in the discussion of relations between the political parties and the labour movement in NR. Meebelo's omission is rather surprising especially in view of the fact that Mwendapole, himself a prominent former trade unionist, reveals that Konkola had a 'brilliant career... as a leader both in politics and the labour unions...' Mwendapole also concedes that Konkola 'certainly made a tremendous contribution to the political and trade union struggle of the country'.⁵⁸

Konkola has been many things. He has also done many things. He has been a teacher, a Trade Unionist, a politician, a Welfare Officer on RR, a Scout leader, and now he is a businessman in Lusaka. He was born in 1920 at Mkanga village in Mporokoso. He attended the Methodist Primary School in Lusaka, and Kafue Training Institute where he was between

1942 and 1944. He then trained as a teacher at Chalimbana and taught briefly at the Methodist school in Lusaka. He joined the RR as a Welfare Officer in 1948. He became involved in Trade Unionism and politics by accident. His prime interest was scouting, but because the position of the African in NR was bad, he found himself drawn into Trade Unionism and politics.⁵⁹ He attended the inaugural meeting of the ANC which was held at Munali School in Lusaka in September, 1948.⁶⁰

When the ARWTU was formed in 1950, Konkola became its Honorary General President and later he became an elected President. At the end of July 1955, the NR and SR African railway workers' unions amalgamated and formed the Railway African Workers' Union (RAWU). Konkola was elected President of this inter-territorial union.⁶¹ In 1954, Konkola as President of ARWTU had attended the conference of the ITWF in London. The ARWTU was affiliated to the ITWF. Konkola also attended a two-month course on trade unionism after the conference. The course was sponsored by the British Trade Union Congress.⁶²

As President of both the NR TUC and the RAWU, Konkola visited the United Kingdom again from July

to October, 1956, to campaign for support against the Federation and to raise funds for the TUC. At about this time, Konkola began to face dissent in the RAWU. At the Annual Conference of the Union held at Livingstone in January 1957, there was an attempt to oust him from the Presidency. The attempt failed.⁶³ There were differences between Konkola, the President, and some members of the RAWU executive committee who felt that Konkola was concentrating on politics to the detriment of trade union affairs.⁶⁴

Konkola was deposed as President of the RAWU in August 1959, by the Regional Committee of the RAWU based at Broken Hill. The action of the Committee was a culmination of the petty quarrels and personal differences that had existed since about 1957 between Konkola and the Regional Committee members on the other hand, especially Eliya Mwanza, the Regional Secretary of the NR section of the RAWU. Mwanza was also the Assistant General Secretary of the inter-territorial RAWU.⁶⁵ At the Annual Delegates Conference of the RAWU in November 1959 at Livingstone, Konkola was elected Vice-General President, but he refused to accept the post.⁶⁶ At this time, too,

Konkola had been isolated in the national labour movement. He had been replaced as President of the TUC by Katilungu of AMU sometime in 1958.⁶⁷ It is perhaps worth noting that Konkola had dethroned Katilungu as President of the TUC in 1955.

So it was in 1959 that Konkola's career as a labour leader came to an end. As President of both the RAWU and the TUC, his ideas had been socialist. He had a vision of a country ruled and controlled by workers. For this reason, he had been suspected of being a Communist, as a way to discredit him,⁶⁸ as the Colonial officials had tried to discredit Makhan Singh, a militant labour leader in Kenya.⁶⁹ The railway workers' movement rejected Konkola firstly, because of tribalism that existed in the movement, especially in Livingstone. The Lozis and Nyasas in the Livingstone branch thought as a politician, he would represent only Bemba-speaking peoples. Secondly, the 'rank-and-file' of the other branches did not completely trust him either. They feared that his involvement in politics would hinder his ability to negotiate effectively with the railways for their material benefit.⁷⁰

Konkola had tried to pursue a political career. He had tried to turn the African railway workers' movement in N R into a political movement. Towards the end of 1957 a Women's Guild was formed as a branch of the union.⁷¹ On 26th October, 1958, some members of the ANC broke away after disagreeing with Nkumbula, in a split which was said to have involved personalities rather than policies.⁷² They formed the Zambia African National Congress (ZANC). Konkola, who was then still President of RAWU, was one of the men who broke away from Nkumbula to form ZANC.⁷³ When elections were held in ZANC, Konkola stood against Kaunda for the post of President. He was defeated, but was subsequently elected vice-president of ZANC. He refused to take up the post because, according to him he did not want to serve under Kaunda.⁷⁴ Konkola reverted to the original ANC led by Nkumbula. At a meeting in Ndola in December 1958, Konkola, who was President of RAWU, called on all RAWU branches to remain supporters of Nkumbula's ANC, because ZANC were a 'bunch of criminals'.⁷⁵ Konkola was referring to men such as Kaunda, Simon Kapwepwe, Munukayumbwa Sipalo, Sikota Wina, Grey Zulu and Lewis Changufu. These men were in the ZANC

Executive Committee, which he had refused to join.⁷⁶

It was also in December 1958 that a Youth Section was formed as a wing of the RAWU in N R.⁷⁷ Neither the Women's Guild nor the Youth Section, however, became effective wings of the union.

The ZANC was banned in March 1959 because it allegedly planned a campaign of violence to enforce a boycott of elections to be held in NR in that month under the Benson Constitution.⁷⁸ New political parties were immediately formed to replace ZANC. Konkola, who was still President of RAWU, resigned from ANC in April 1959. Sometime in June 1959 he formed the African Freedom Movement, a political party for which he tried to obtain the support of the Ndola branch of the RAWU. The Ndola branch refused to give the AFM its support. Relations between the Ndola branch and Konkola, their President were not good. Besides this, most of the Ndola branch executive committee members were also in ANC. The Ndola branch was at this time pressing the AAD in Bulawayo through the Area Controller, for substantial improvements to be made in the standard of housing provided by the administration for African railway workers.⁷⁹

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The AFM apparently failed to make an impact, so with the help of Solomon Kalulu, Konkola formed the United African Congress (UAC).⁸⁰ Barry Banda, Dauti Yamba and Pascal Sokota formed the African National Freedom Movement (ANFM).⁸¹ In June 1959, UAC and ANFM amalgamated to form the United National Freedom Party (UNFP). Konkola became the President-General of the UNFP, with Kalulu as vice-President-General, Barry Banda as Secretary-General and Yamba as Chairman.⁸² At about this time, Paul Kalichini formed a third party, the African National Independence Party (ANIP). This also joined UNFP led by Konkola in September 1959 to form the United National Independence Party (UNIP). It was also in September 1959 that UNIP held its first Party Conference at Broken Hill. There were elections at which Kalichini defeated Konkola for the Presidency. The other office bearers were: Kalulu (Secretary-General), Frank Chitambala (Assistant Secretary-General), Gordon C. Chindele and S. Ndilila as Information Secretary.⁸³

Konkola resigned from UNIP after his defeat by Kalichini. Chitambala stated that this was

Konkola's manner of doing things. He added:
'Even in ZANC when he was defeated by Kaunda he resigned. He wanted to be a leader all the time.'⁸⁴
He formed the Central African National Union (CANU), which Mulford refers to as the Central African Peoples' Union (CAPU) and a UFP 'front' organisation.⁸⁵ It was on the CANU ticket that Konkola became a member of the Federal Parliament in 1962. But the CANU broke up in September 1962, over allegations that Konkola had been given a car by the UFP of Welensky. And then Konkola angered UNIP. He allowed himself to be used by the UFP to attack UNIP. He allowed the UFP to use his name in propaganda leaflets published in S.R. that condemned UNIP. The worst of these leaflets was one entitled 'You have been warned'. It violently attacked UNIP and contained a list of the most damaging incidents which UNIP could be accused of, such as the murder of a Mrs. Lillian Burton in Ndola in 1960. All this propaganda was in defence of the Federation.⁸⁶

Konkola had made his worst political miscalculation. He became 'the one man UNIP has refused to forgive', and a 'sell-out who had turned against Africans and was now supporting Europeans and the

Federation'.⁸⁷ After this Konkola disappeared from the political scene in N R.

Even after Konkola left the RAWU, relations between the Union in N R and the political parties, especially ZANC and then UNIP, were still not good.⁸⁸ UNIP adopted the 'divide and rule' approach in dealing with the African railway workers' movement in N R. It started telling the African railway workers to look up to UNIP for their freedom, and that the RAWU had done nothing for them.⁸⁹ UNIP's approach did not help because the N R section of RAWU was not united on the question of support for political parties. One faction led by Eliya Mwanza did not want to have anything to do with UNIP because it did not want the Union to participate in politics.⁹⁰ Another faction called on the members of RAWU in N R to support UNIP. This faction was led by Ananiah Mwanza, the RAWU General Secretary, who described UNIP as 'the only sincere and true African party'.⁹¹ The Union suspended A. Mwanza for making an appeal to N R RAWU members to vote for UNIP. The Union was afraid that he would endanger the 'check off' system with the railway Administration which frowned upon Union participation in politics.⁹²

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In February 1960, the NRTUC split up and the Reformed Trade Union Congress was formed. The RAWU was affiliated to the RTUC. In January 1961, there was a merger between the NRTUC and the RTUC. The United Trade Union Congress was formed.⁹³ The RTUC was strongly aligned with UNIP, and Konkola, the former General President of RAWU advised the Union to play disengagement with political parties, as supporting them would destroy trade union unity and weaken the labour movement.⁹⁴ Konkola was right, although for a man who had mixed trade unionism and politics such a stance was a contradiction. In Livingstone in 1961, the ANC began to tell the members of RAWU to stop supporting their Union because it was affiliated to the UTUC which supported UNIP. The ANC alleged that the workers' trade union subscriptions would go to UNIP. This confused the members of RAWU, many of whom were ANC's supporters. ANC's propaganda had an adverse effect on their membership of the Union.⁹⁵

When Kaunda was Minister of Local Government in 1963 he saw the dissention and division that existed in the labour movement as a challenge to the emerging African government by the workers. He promised that the challenge would be met more than

half way.⁹⁶ It is not surprising, therefore, that after 1964, UNIP sought to control the labour movement in Zambia. The UNIP Government passed the Trade Unions and Trade Disputes Ordinance (Amendment) Act in 1964. Under this Act, the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) was created.⁹⁷ The first Executive Committee of ZCTU was appointed by the UNIP Government through the Minister of Labour.⁹⁸ The Government cleared the TUC debts amounting to K10,000. Then the ZCTU was given K10,000 by the Government to start it off. This was not all. Kaunda showed personal interest in the ZCTU. He gave it a personal donation of K4,000, and on several other occasions afterwards he gave personal donations in cash and in kind to the trade union movement.⁹⁹

But the relations between the Railway Union on the one hand, and UNIP and the Government of Zambia on the other hand, did not improve much in the eight years after independence (1964-1972). The Union appears to have become defiant of government authority. Early in 1969, Justin Chimba, Minister of Trade, Industry and Mines, accused the Railway Union of having failed the nation more than any other union in the country, because it was

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declaring too many disputes, and yet accidents at work among railway workers were on the increase.¹⁰⁰ The Minister's accusation did not daunt the Union. Between 2nd and 10th March, 1970, the Zambia Railways (ZR) system was paralysed by a nation-wide strike of some 3,000 railways workers. The strike was over a demand for an K8 increase in wages for employees earning between K26 and K50 per month. The strike took place in spite of President Kaunda declaring the railways a 'necessary service' and banning strikes there. The railway workers had also defied Kaunda's ban on wage increases made in 1969.¹⁰¹

The process of institutionalising Government control of the labour movement in Zambia was taken a step further after the formation of the ZCTU in 1965. In 1971 the Industrial Relations Act was passed in Parliament. The Act was to replace the colonial labour laws which 'had nothing in common with Zambia's approach to national affairs'. The workers were now going to participate in the system of industrial relations.¹⁰² The Act has been referred to as 'the most advanced piece of labour legislation existing in English-speaking Africa.'¹⁰³ This is not surprising, since the Act is so comprehensive that it covers just about every sphere

of industrial relations, on top of which there is the establishment of the Industrial Relations Court to settle industrial disputes.¹⁰⁴

All this was taking place because the UNIP Government's labour policy was guided by two considerations. Firstly, there was the need to have a development labour policy in which the labour force disciplined itself, by not staging strikes, for example, and instead participated in the development of the country for the benefit of both wage-earners and non-wage-earners. Secondly, there was need to have social justice in the country. This meant narrowing the gap between wage-earners and peasants (non wage-earners), by restricting wage increases.¹⁰⁵ The second consideration was the gist of President Kaunda's speech at a Workers' Seminar in Mufulira in March 1970.¹⁰⁶ The workers however, wanted wage increases. This became a dispute which has not yet been resolved in Zambia.

The labour movement at national level does not accept the situation in which wage increases are restricted by Government policy. In December 1978, for example, Frederick Chiluba, the Chairman-General of the ZCTU, expressed the feelings of the labour movement when he spoke against the restriction of

wage increases. He said:

We must not forget that labour productivity in our industries is not running low. It is as high and even higher than before. We have not cut it by ninety-five per cent. Yet we have today an interim five per cent ceiling on wages and salaries increases. Much as we are ready to co-operate with the state we will certainly ask them to remove certain ambiguities which have become noticeable.¹⁰⁷

In spite of Government effort to control the labour movement in Zambia, UNIP has not succeeded, and even the top leadership admits that success has been quite limited.¹⁰⁸ The limited success is blamed on the leadership of the ZCTU. UNIP alleges that the top leadership in the labour movement has not accepted the Party, and so has refused to have the labour movement turned into a mass organisation of the Party. It is also alleged that the top leadership in the labour movement is influenced by outside forces of Western capitalist countries. A further allegation by UNIP is that the top leadership of the labour movement is capitalist oriented and therefore does not accept the Party's socialist policies. The top leadership of the labour movement is seen to behave as if it were an opposition group

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to UNIP. Finally, UNIP alleges that serious differences between the top leadership of the labour movement and itself are a result of ideological differences: that is, capitalism versus socialism.¹⁰⁹

In all this, it is important to note that the pattern of the struggle between labour and capital that was established in the colonial period has not changed in independent Zambia. In fact, in the heat of the struggle, the Zambian Government sometimes resorts to using methods of labour repression used by colonial regimes. On the railways in 1968 and 1970, workers' strikes were ended with the harsh declaration that the railways were 'a necessary service' so the workers could not go on strike.¹¹⁰

At Nkana/Kitwe on 4th March, 1970, nine railway workers were arrested by police for rioting. They were fined K60 each.¹¹¹ On 5th March, 1970, ten railway workers were arrested in Ndola and charged with unlawful assembly. They were found guilty in a Ndola Court, but they were each given a one year suspended sentence.¹¹² These arrests were

carried out to stop the workers from making the K8 wage increase demand.

What is noteworthy is the apparent failure by UNIP and its Government to understand and appreciate the history of the struggles of the labour movement in Zambia, as part of seeking a solution to the labour problems. It is interesting, too, to note that the railway workers' movement has always been a part of the workers' struggles since the colonial period.

It has been argued that 'under colonial capitalist relations of production, there was super-exploitation imposed on the African workers. They were also despised and degraded and treated as colonised people.' As a result of this, 'even the trade unions the African workers formed, were not as effective as they should have been'.¹¹³ It can be argued here that labour relations in Zambia, and in several other African countries that had been colonised, will not change fundamentally as long as workers are not the owners of capital. It does not appear as if such a state of affairs will be attained by the workers in Africa in the foreseeable future.

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Finally, it can also be argued that the workers in Zambia, and in several other African countries, have another disadvantage working against them. Under colonialism they had no political power. Unfortunately, even in independent Zambia, the workers have no political power. This is so in spite of the fact that the nationalist struggle in Zambia was strengthened by the condemnation of colonial labour policies, a fact which should have united the labour movement with the nationalist movement. Since violence against workers is prevalent in those societies in which workers have no political power,¹¹⁴ it can be argued that in spite having 'the most advanced piece of labour legislation in English-speaking Africa', it is not surprising that the workers' position has not changed much from what it was during the colonial period. The workers remain relatively politically weak. The General Secretary of ZRAWU, Ananiah (Mwanza) Simwanza stated when the One-Party State was introduced that in the new political system labour unrest would be something of the past as workers would have to learn to resolve their grievances without resorting to

strikes.¹¹⁵ It can be argued that Simwanza's utterances were an admission that the workers were weak politically and therefore they could not fight effectively. And probably because he showed a willingness to compromise, Simwanza was rewarded by the 'system'. He ended up as District Governor in the Ministry of National Guidance. Apparently this was an indication that the system was willing to reward those labour leaders who agreed to work co-operatively within the political system.

FOOTNOTES

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(Konkola does not seem to have replied to Kaunda's letter, or if he did, his reply was unfavourable. He does not remember this particular letter, but he talked of 'several letters' that Kaunda supposedly wrote to him when the latter was in detention in Kabompo urging him to form a political party and continue the fight against colonialism.)

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CONCLUSION

This study has examined the development of worker consciousness among African railway workers in Zambia, mainly because this is one group of workers belonging to a major industry which has been neglected by other scholars. In concluding the study, a number of points can be made.

First, worker consciousness among African railway workers arose from their common working experiences and aspirations.

Second, a number of constraints placed in the way of African workers in the colonial period prevented the clear expression of their consciousness before 1950. Nevertheless, they put up a struggle to end the era of history in which they were men without power.¹ In NR a trade union was formed on the railways in 1950 by African workers. They wanted to be able to take industrial action whenever they could. This was something that the Association (RRAEA) based in Bulawayo could not do. The decision to form a trade union, therefore, could be seen to have constituted an expression of a desire by the workers to be in charge of their own destiny in the struggle against capital, management and the colonial

system. In view of this, it can be said that worker consciousness among African railway workers developed into a recognisable form from about 1950. The major issues which led to the development of such consciousness were those which related to wages, housing and sanitation, rations and industrial Colour Bar. The issue of wages was more important than the others but by no means predominant.

Third, the European railway workers, through the RRWU and AEU, were a force to reckon with on the railways, and in the politics of both Northern and Southern Rhodesia in general. Colour Bar acted partly as a stumbling block and partly as a stimulus in the development of African worker consciousness. The fact that the European railway workers were much more of a force to reckon with than the African railway workers was demonstrated by the rise of Welensky from an engine driver to Prime Minister of the Federation using the support of the European workers. The European workers became a power bloc, with Welensky as their spokesman. Their position was so strong that they were responsible to a large extent for some of the harsh conditions of service and low wages given to African workers. Such a

state of affairs caused the African railway workers' movement to spend much energy on racial issues, whether they were dealing with political matters or issues connected with their economic exploitation. Political issues and economic issues easily intermingled on the railways. However, the African railway workers' movement did not turn itself into a political movement because a faction among them insisted that the movement should stay away from politics.

As a result of this, although Berg and Butler observed that NR had an economic and social structure that was conducive to stable unions and effective union-party co-operation,² the situation that developed was that stable unions were developed, but not effective union-party co-operation. Instead, at one stage in the 1950s, a faction of the labour movement attempted to gain political power for the labour movement, but failed. Such a state of affairs led to measures being taken at independence to control the labour movement in Zambia. The result of this has been that the labour movement is now perhaps politically weaker than it was in the colonial period, and therefore, in a much weaker bargaining position too.

It is not quite correct that all the workers in NR, as in SR and South Africa, were early divided and organised along racial lines.³ However, from the beginning, the railways appeared to be a racialist undertaking in both Northern and Southern Rhodesia, and African workers were not welcome to it. As such it would appear that there was more racism on the railways than on the mines. The racial division of the workers on the railways was done through the NIC and SIC grades. It is noteworthy that this division of workers has been maintained by Zambia Railways. There are workers referred to as 'ex-NIC', and there are workers referred to as 'ex-SIC', the former referring to the category which had been predominantly white.

Fourth, in some parts of Africa, African railwaymen were in the forefront of labour protest in the colonial period,⁴ and throughout Africa they tended to display quite exceptional level of militancy and radical political consciousness.⁵ On the mines in NR there were important strikes staged by African workers in 1935 and 1940. There has been quite a lot written on these strikes, as if to

indicate that the history of labour is merely a catalogue of strikes. On the railways apart from the 1945 African Strike, there were no significant strikes staged by African workers. It was as if the African railway workers regarded themselves as 'gentlemen' who, unlike the 'labourers' on the mines had to behave 'decently'.⁶

In fact, the 1945 African Railway Strike was conducted so peacefully that the Railway Administration and the Colonial officials were impressed by the fact that people could stage a strike that did not look like a strike at all! It should be noted, however, that right from the colonial period, the railways have been considered to be 'an essential service' by governments. This has meant that strikes have been viewed with a lot of displeasure on the railways and are considered to be sabotage in land-locked Zambia. Nevertheless, the railwaymen take their place among the militant and politically conscious African workers in Central Africa in the colonial period. This point becomes clear when the role played by Konkola in the labour movement and politics is considered.

Konkola was for some years considered to be more militant than Lawrence Katilungu, the leader

of the AMU, who was also a political activist. In fact, Konkola appeared destined to become 'the leading black figure and saviour of the African people in NR, if not in the Federation' and there was a likelihood that he would 'become more powerful than Harry Nkumbula, the leader of the ANC was or ever could be'.⁷ Yet the manner in which Zambia's political history has been written so far agrees with the view that history favours the winners and despises the losers. Partly because of Konkola, the political history of the African railway workers in Zambia seems to be the history of losers, and so it has been neglected by scholars. As a result of this, the fact that UNIP was created from small political parties, one of which had been formed by a former railway worker and labour leader, has been left out.

The omission is rather serious, because the contradictions which existed within the African nationalist movement have not been explained. Konkola, who started off as a bitter enemy of colonial oppression and the exploitation of African workers by capital, and as a labour leader actively campaigning against the Federation, ended up joining

the enemy camp. A close examination of this contradiction makes one wonder as to whether, in fact, African nationalists were really motivated by any sound principles, or by personal feelings and desires. Such a situation could also explain the split of ANC in 1958. Due to lack of space, this study has not been able to pursue the issue of the contradictions in nationalist politics.

Fifth, the African railway workers in NR made a significant contribution to the struggle for the advancement of African workers in industry in the colonial period. Together with the African mine-workers, they were in the forefront of the struggle for African advancement. However, although African railway workers identified themselves as workers, there was no attempt made to unify their movement with that of the mineworkers. The TUC remained an umbrella organisation for different groups of workers whose experiences and aspirations were confined to their own work situations.

Finally, the case of Guinea is a good example of a country in which a trade union movement co-operated with the nationalist movement for political triumph. But more important than this, perhaps, Guinea also shows why in Zambia the politicians

have not been successful in convincing the labour movement that it should become an appendage of the political party. In Guinea, the leaders of the political movement were also the leaders of the trade union movement. There was thus no real separation of goals.⁸ In Zambia, as in several other African countries, this was not the case. UNIP, which came to power in 1964, was not led by labour leaders. From 1964 a state of mutual suspicion existed between the labour leaders and politicians, which looked like a struggle for power. Probably as a way to neutralise the power of the labour movement, some labour leaders were given political posts. This move, however, did not help to improve relations between UNIP and the labour movement. As a result of this, UNIP has still not scored any significant successes insofar as harnessing the potential power of the labour movement is concerned. The labour movement has refused to become merely an instrument of the Party by being turned into a mass movement. This study has highlighted the fact that the stance of the labour movement can be traced back to the colonial period when the workers' movement started.

It is evident from the discussion in this study that Zambia's labour history has very interesting and more complex issues than many people have assumed. This study has highlighted some of the aspects of Zambia's labour history which have been neglected by other scholars. The study has also highlighted the fact that there was quite a lot happening on the railways concerning the African workers that is worth studying.

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APPENDIX 1: STRIKES 1970

INDUSTRY GROUP	NUMBER OF STRIKES	NUMBER OF MAN-DAYS LOST THROUGH STRIKES			
		1970	1968	1969	
		Strikes over Wage Demands	Strikes over other issues	Total of all strikes	
Agriculture	13	3,234	339	3,573	2,601
Metal Mining	9	4,518	1,469	5,987	3,653
Manufacturing	52	4,640	10,164	14,804	4,076
Construction	16	957	1,461	2,418	5,004
Electricity Supply	-	-	-	-	20
Commerce	9	189	178	367	622
Transport: Rail	2	18,151	2,929	21,080	-
Road	5	2,999	4,315	7,314	3,576
Local Government	10	36,764	706	37,470	-
Government: Teaching Service	1	30,927	113	1,178	-
Other	8	1,065	113	1,178	538
Services (Except Domestic Service)	33	194	5	199	979
TOTAL	128	103,638	21,679	125,317	21,069
		(82.7%)	(17.3%)	(100%)	

SOURCE: Annual Report of the Department of Labour for the Year 1970, p. 51.

APPENDIX 2: STRIKES 1972

INDUSTRY GROUP	NUMBER OF STRIKES	NUMBER OF MAN DAYS LOST THROUGH STRIKES			Total of all strikes
		Strikes over wage demands	Strikes over other issues	1970 1970	
Agriculture	14	1,993	517	2,510	
Metal Mining	8	6,762	4,361	11,123	
Manufacturing	22	1,526	417	1,943	
Construction	15	541	2,674	3,215	
Electricity Supply	-	-	-	-	
Commerce	3	-	28	28	
Transport	6	1,034	700	1,734	
Local Government	-	-	-	-	
Government Service	3	-	262	262	
Service (Other)	3	24	35	59	
TOTAL	74	11,880	8,994	20,874.	
		(57%)	(43%)	(100%)	

SOURCE: Annual Report of the Department of Labour for the Year 1972, p. 45.

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