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27 May 1983

President  
SACTU  
Box 35251  
Lusaka  
Zambia

Dear Comrade President:

We were recently informed by the SACTU Solidarity Committee that Cmde Zola Zembe is visiting Canada during the period of 30th April to 5th June. Cmde Zembe has visited Canada on numerous occasions, to carry out the very necessary work of SACTU in Canada.

It is my understanding that, when members of the liberation movement visit different regions, they usually pay at least a courtesy call to the official representative of the liberation movement in that region, whether it be an ANC or a SACTU representative. I would understand that, during a short and hurried visit there might not be sufficient time for this. But on this occasion, there would seem to have been sufficient time. Cmde Zembe did not get in touch with us. This is unfortunate, since it would be useful for him to have an assessment from the point of view of the liberation movement of events and organisations in Canada during such a lengthy visit.

There may well be reasons why Cmde Zembe did not get in touch with the ANC office. But we thought we should draw this matter to your attention, as this is not the first time this has happened.

Yours in the year of United Action,

Yusuf Saloojee  
Chief Representative

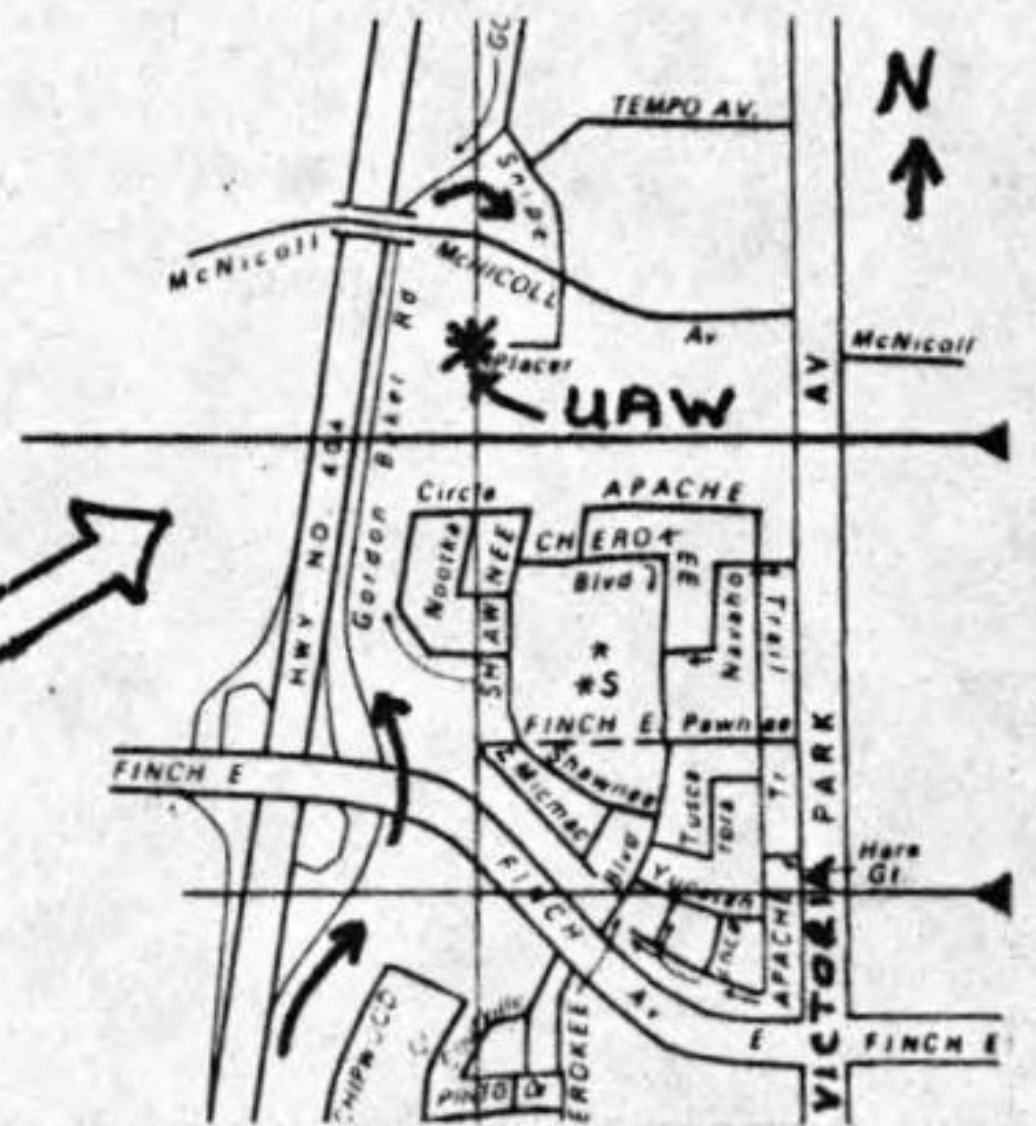


Tentative Agenda for May 29 SACTU-SSC Conference:

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|-----------------|---|
| 12:15-1:00 p.m. | --arrival and registration  |
| 1:00-3:30 p.m.  | --Welcome and Introduction of Pat Clancy<br>(Chairperson of Conference), who will<br>speak on the importance of international<br>working class solidarity |
|                 | --new video on the black trade union movement<br>in South Africa  |
|                 | --Buzz Hargrove(UAW)  |
|                 | --Zola Zembe, SACTU Report  |
|                 | --discussion  |
| 3:30-4:00 p.m.  | --COFFEE BREAK  |
| 4:00-5:15 p.m.  | --Jean Claude Parrot(CUPW)  |
|                 | --SSC Presentation on Sanctions   |
|                 | --Concluding Remarks by Zola Zembe  |
| 5:15-6:00 p.m.  | --Food and Drink  |

Location - Take Highway 404 north(extension of Don Valley Parkway) exit at Finch Street. Cross over Finch and follow Gordon Baker Rd. to 3 way stop. Turn right on Snipe cross over McNicholl to 205 Placer Court.

On public transportation take the Cummer bus #42 east from the Finch subway station to Placer Court. There are also buses on Victoria Park Ave.





# SACTU leader tours Canada

Zola Zembe has been a militant, working class leader in South Africa since the early 1950s. Born and raised in the Eastern Cape, Zembe moved to Cape Town and became one of the most dynamic and respected activists in the Western Cape. He was trained as a trade union organizer by leaders of the progressive non-racial and political trade union--the Food and Canning Workers Union.

From this base, Zembe worked on the railways where Africans are grossly exploited; he became an organizer for the S.A. Railway and Harbour Workers Union. Later, as full-time Secretary for the SACTU Local Committee, he organized transport, metal and timber workers into SACTU-affiliated unions. Progressive newspapers of the day tell story after story of Zembe's popularity with the black workers, especially the always militant Coloured women workers in and around Cape Town.

Zola Zembe was also a respected leader of the African National Congress(ANC) in the Western Cape during this period. The close harmony between SACTU and the ANC in this area was reflected in the fact that working class leaders formed the backbone of ANC work, even after the liberation movement was officially banned in 1960.

Brother Zembe served on the ANC Cape Provincial Executive during these years. He collected workers' demands for the Congress of the People at which the Freedom Charter was adopted in 1955. In 1956, he was one of 156 defendants in the infamous Treason Trial. In and out of jail, a constant thorn in the side of the authorities, Zembe continued to organize through the underground after receiving a 5-year banning order in 1961. He fled South Africa in the early 1960s to continue the work in exile.



**Zola Zembe, representative of the South African Congress of Trade Unions**

In exile, Zola Zembe has carried on the program of SACTU as a member of the National Executive Committee and now Treasurer General. He has travelled widely--to Australia and New Zealand, to North America, and throughout Europe and Africa--while fulfilling SACTU's role in the international workers' movement against one common enemy. While promoting international working class solidarity it is his responsibility to raise the political and financial support required to undertake SACTU's major task and priority--the organization of black workers into strong, democratic and independent trade unions.

The 1983 tour of Canada comes at a crucial time in the black people's struggle against apartheid. The upsurge in black trade union activity in the 1970s and early 1980s has challenged the cheap labour system as never before. Workers and their trade union organizations in Canada and throughout the world have a critical role to play in stepping up their solidarity actions to the level of the struggle being waged by black workers against racial capitalism.

The tour is organized by the SACTU Solidarity Committee(Canada), the representative body for SACTU in Canada.



South African Congress of Trade Unions  
Congrès des Syndicats Sud-Africains

SACTU Solidarity Committee  
(Canada)



Comité de Solidarité avec le SACTU  
(Canada)

An injury to one ...

... is an injury to all

October 11, 1983

TCLSAC  
427 Bloor St. West  
Toronto, Ontario

Dear Friends:

The SACTU Solidarity Committee(hereafter, SSC) has read with interest your three articles on the South African trade union situation which appeared in the August, 1983 edition of TCLSAC Reports. We assume that the views expressed in the articles are endorsed by TCLSAC as there was no disclaimer to the contrary. While it is not our usual practice to publicly critique the substance of other organizations' publications, we believe that these three articles deserve extensive comment. Please consider in particular the following points:

- (1) In the article entitled "S.A. Labour News", when discussing the General Workers Union(GWU), you state that the GWU is "...a union which was affiliated with SACTU when it was still above ground..."

This statement is factually incorrect and raises some important political issues. Insofar as SACTU was forced by the apartheid regime to convert to underground activity in the mid-1960s, how could the GWU, which emerged in the mid-to-late 1970s, be "affiliated to SACTU when it was still above ground"? The GWU, previously known as the Western Province General Workers Union(WPGWU) was formed in 1978 as an outgrowth of the Western Province Workers' Advisory Board(WPWAB) which in turn dates back to 1972 at the earliest. Thus, this statement reflects a basic ignorance of the history of the past two decades of trade unionism in South Africa.

The statement also poses problems of a security nature. One should never make public statements, especially in print, that link individual independent above ground unions with SACTU. Instead, one talks of policies, practices, goals, etc. being consistent between both above- and underground levels of trade union struggle.

- (2) A similar lack of concern for security bears upon the statement which appears on page nine of the article entitled "Towards Trade Union Unity in South Africa." Of what possible benefit is the bold statement that SAAWU "is close to the ANC"? Are you unaware of how such statements and such printed documents are used to hammer above ground trade unionists in the apartheid courts?

.../2



- (3) Turning now to the "Trade Union Unity" article more specifically, the characterization of different above ground union federations is, in our opinion, dangerously misleading. With regard to the Council of Unions of South Africa(CUSA), it is fair enough to raise questions about the lack of commitment to political struggle by CUSA to date, and it is equally fair to question the black consciousness orientation of the leadership which has led CUSA to maintain a priority for black leadership exclusively above other priorities, but these are not your points regarding CUSA.

Instead, you characterize CUSA as a "racist" federation whose unions, to use your words, "accept the racist and fascist regime's rule and which refuse to support illegal strikes." It is hard to comprehend why CUSA is subject to such a strident and erroneous attack insofar as it is organizing black workers into unions at a rapid rate and insofar as there is a debate within and between these unions which will, optimistically, lead CUSA to consistently progressive positions on crucial issues facing the independent trade union movement as a whole. Your characterization of CUSA glosses over any of these dynamics for reasons which are not made clear; a literal reading of your article would suggest that this is done to create a more favourable picture of FOSATU in the next paragraph. Speculation on this point aside, the point is that CUSA is not composed of parallel unions or outright dummy organizations and that is important to make clear. To underscore this point, CUSA has joined the United Democratic Front, no home for racist, pro-government unions!

- (4) The description of the Federation of South African Trade Unions(FOSATU) as a "rather militant" federation boggles the mind. Accepting that there are varying degrees of militancy demonstrated by action/inaction in specific settings, what is a "rather militant" union? Does this mean that there are different tendencies within FOSATU affiliates which range from militant to conciliatory, and if so, why not say so or better yet describe these differences?
- (5) You further say of FOSATU that it has "adopted a more flexible tactic by trying to operate within the legal framework". This presumably refers to FOSATU's decision to work within the industrial relations system as modified by the Wiehahn Commission and subsequent legislative changes. With all that has been written on the post-Wiehahn developments, the reader is surely entitled to a more analytical treatment than that provided by the term "flexible."

But the next sentence goes on to speak of "pro-government unions (which) have accepted the framework without objection, while receiving very important help from white trade unions and the ICFTU in addition to the American AFL-CIO." Since FOSATU is the largest recipient of ICFTU funding within South Africa, are you saying that FOSATU is a "pro-government" union? That's how it reads, and again confusion abounds.



**27 years of  
organising**

MARCH 5, 1982, marks the 27th Anniversary of SACTU, the first trade union federation in South Africa organised irrespective of race, colour or creed. Against all the odds and despite every conceivable obstacle placed in its path, SACTU's strength continues to grow.

Individual sacrifice, including death at the hands of the apartheid regime, only partly explains SACTU's support in the Black working class. More important has been the unswerving adherence to the progressive policies laid down 27 years ago, time-tested policies which guide the Black workers' struggle to this day:

- organising of trade unions irrespective of race, colour or creed
- combining the economic and political struggle
- forging working class unity
- organising the unorganised

Forced to work clandestinely since the repression of the 1960's, SACTU has built underground structures that are reflected in the militant and independent Black trade union movement that emerged above-ground in the 1970's. The ranks of this movement multiply with each passing month, from victory to victory, and the combined force of the State and the employers is failing to control or smash these unions. One does not have to see SACTU banners at the factory gates to identify SACTU policies at work. This is a reality which the regime itself has been forced to acknowledge.

As SACTU gains strength inside the country, international working class solidarity grows accordingly. Principled support and assistance from the socialist world is now added to with increasing political and material solidarity from workers and trade unions in the capitalist world as well. In the latter arena, workers realize that their interests and freedoms are closely tied to the victory of SACTU and the Black workers of South Africa. Similarly, all progressive-minded people the world over, know that only an ANC victory can ensure a peaceful, democratic South Africa.

In this 28th year, it is vitally important that international working class solidarity be raised to the level of the struggle itself. The war against racism, colonialism and imperialism in South Africa cannot, and must not, be fought by the Black majority alone. As long as transnational corporations, banks and governments actively support apartheid, workers and their trade unions in capitalist countries must act in ways that directly challenge the international nature of this one common enemy.

**An injury to one is an injury to all!**

# WORKERS' UNITY

Organ of the South African Congress  
of Trade Unions

"An injury to one is an injury to all"

Issue No. 30, April 1982

## 'DIRECT LINKS'-STINKS!

WE ARE NOT new to the struggle. We have a history. We have memories of battles – of those who helped us and those who betrayed us, and of those who tried to lead us astray.

There were people from England and from Brussels who asked us not to take part in politics and offered us money. We rejected them. So they used their money for big stooges whose names are remembered only by historians.

There are new visitors who offer money, education, help of all kinds if we will give up following the Congress movement. Over the years we have educated ourselves, we have tried many ways, many paths, our families have starved in order that we may organise ourselves, we have given up our lives to build the Congress movement, why should we give it up now?

A new tokolosh has appeared. This new voice is dressed in new clothes. It carries a red flag. It talks of Marxism. It cries revolution, but if you listen carefully, it sings the same tune – give up following Congress, follow us. They try to trick us with a new slogan 'direct links'. They say trade unionists from Britain, the Federal Republic of Germany and other capitalist countries should come to visit us in our South African prison and we should visit them in America or wherever.

The Special Branch stands at the gate of our prison – at the borders and the airport. All who enter or leave are controlled and followed. Rita Ndzanga and Emma Mashinini who travelled overseas and Sean Hosey who came to South Africa all ended in jail. It is true, not all who visit us are arrested but then we ask the question, why? It is because they are doing what the Special Branch wants them to do



Contact between SACTU and CGTP-IN (PORTUGAL) grows

and are acting as a lead to us in the underground or because your reformism does not threaten the regime. Why do you visit us? It does us no good and puts us and our organisation in jeopardy.

It is difficult for some to refuse your invitations to America or Britain. But what can we learn there? What can the AFL-CIO teach us about revolution. We don't need lessons in class collaboration!

'Direct links' an apparently reasonable slogan: in fact, in practice, we have already long-established direct links between the workers of South Africa and the world. There is hardly a country in the world that a SACTU speaker and organiser has not visited except those where the workers are not free to receive us, such as Chile or El Salvador. There is no trade union organisation from which support has been offered that SACTU has not channelled that support to the workers and their organisations in South Africa.

It is not that these new voices

want direct links, it is that they want to bypass the peoples' revolutionary organisations, the ANC (SA) and SACTU. Such actions can only create divisions. It is not SACTU that picks and chooses which strikes or trade unions to support in South Africa, it is those who call for direct links who pick and choose. It is well known that certain people, certain trade unionists, in South Africa are paid and supported by internal and external forces who are against our revolution. Lucy Mvubelo is only one such a person.

If overseas trade union bodies want to work for unity in South Africa then let them ensure that their aid, their money goes to all the trade unions not only those which accept their aid along with their reformist philosophy. Apartheid is beyond reform.

'Direct links' are nothing more nor less than a new form of colonialism in which the far Left joins the far Right in opposing the Congress movement in South Africa. ●



- (6) Still on FOSATU, you state that FOSATU was responsible for the unity talks in April, 1983. It must be pointed out that FOSATU is important to the unity talks, but it is only one of many independent unions deeply involved in creating a lasting and principled unity. Such a selective portrayal of the process of forging unity is precisely the strategy, best practiced by international organizations, which divides, not unites, the independent trade unions in South Africa. Such a statement also raises questions about the intent and motivation that underlies it.
- (7) It is further stated that independent unions which "refuse to participate with the government"(in terms of the legislation) are "technically speaking... illegal." This is simply not the case. The numerous unions which refused to comply with the legislation, most particularly their refusal to apply for registration under the Industrial Conciliation Act, were never declared illegal, technically or otherwise. Instead, their collective strength at the workplace and in the community led many of these unions to win important recognition agreements with the employers. They said, quite correctly, that a government-endorsed piece of paper is not the basis of a trade union, and they proved that to be the case.

The only and very recent exception is the banning of SAAWU in September, 1983 by the Ciskeian(read South African) regime. This legislative action was not ostensibly because of SAAWU's refusal to comply with labour laws, but rather because of its determined resistance to the entire system. When it comes to real, effective resistance, there is nothing that is "technical."

- (8) Moving on to what is introduced as a "post script" on page twelve(although we note that the original French edition in the CSN paper does not list it as such), the author raises the question of why SACTU has not been mentioned in the previous article. The obvious answer is that the author chose not to mention SACTU.

Nevertheless, let's consider the answer given. To quote: "those who work in South African, often harassed, arrested, or banned, create new organizations to avoid repression and replace groups which can only operate in secrecy". This statements makes absolutely no sense. Is it being argued that those who have suffered repression in their original organizations then "create new organizations" to escape detection? That's how it reads, but surely it is the opposite to that: once individuals have made the sacrifices and are silenced by the regime, the underground movement must produce new leaders to carry forward the open work either in the same organization or in a new one if that is deemed necessary.

This is no semantic objection. Rather, it points to the author's unwillingness or inability, or both, to assert that the two levels of workers' struggle are absolutely essential to effectively challenge the apartheid system.

- (9) In the next to last paragraph of the "post script", there is mention of ANC and SACTU militants engaging in the crucial debates in the trade union movement(e.g., registration, etc.) "without necessarily agreeing with everything". Again, what does this mean? Why are the well-known positions of both the ANC and SACTU on these crucial issues and debates not clearly spelled out for the reader?



- (10) Finally, the last paragraph raises a political issue that perhaps underpins the entire article and our critique of it. While mentioning support for the ANC and SACTU, the author then speaks of the "whole South African trade union movement" and the need to "see the whole process of organization and mobilization of workers."

Here the fundamental arrogance comes out fully exposed. The implication, scarcely subtle at that, is that only by making a trip to South Africa can one really discover the "whole" trade union movement and the process of organization and mobilization. In other words, support for the ANC and SACTU is fine, but, it is implied, such support does not really encompass the totality of the progressive resistance to apartheid.

It has already been shown in the comments above how erroneous, distorted and dangerous the type of analysis being projected in your articles really is. Beyond that, it is a shame that the author who made this trip does not spell out just how a stranger such as him/herself can walk into South Africa and discover the totality being described. Should South African trade unionists, for example, facing the daily wrath of the apartheid regime, take such a person into their fullest confidence and tell all they know or do? Of course not. And should anyone knowledgeable of South African realities or anyone truly supporting the ANC and SACTU then rely on this form of political tourism for correct information? The answer is again no in our opinion. This is especially the case when both ANC and SACTU officials have provided Canadians with the relevant information necessary for meaningful solidarity work.

The position of SACTU on this point is clear: direct links which bypass SACTU stink! Whether such links are initiated by international organizations whose objectives are to direct the trade union movement according to their own interests, or whether they are initiated by naive tourists, the effects are often the same--namely confusion in the analysis brought away and security risks left in the paths that have been trod inside the country.

In conclusion, the SSC finds these three articles very problematic. At a time when unity is most crucial in the trade union and people's resistance, and at a time when unswerving and principled support for the ANC and SACTU are needed most (a support which entails taking the direction from those organizations), this series of articles shows a basic ignorance of facts, a callous disregard for security and a shoddy analysis of trade union matters generally. We too believe that it is important to understand and crucial to support the "whole process of organization and mobilization" going on inside South Africa today. This is why we wholeheartedly support the ANC and SACTU, organizations in alliance since 1955. Any search for alternatives does a disservice to the fighting people of South Africa.

Fraternally,

The SACTU Solidarity Committee(Canada)

Enclosure: "'Direct Links'--Stinks", Workers' Unity(SACTU Publication), April, 1982

cc. SACTU Head Office  
SACTU London Office  
OXFAM Southern Africa Team  
OXFAM Regional Offices  
✓ ANC Office(Canada)  
SUCO

Jim Kirkwood, United Church  
Tad Mitsui, Canadian Council of Churches  
John Saxby, CUSO(Lusaka)  
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