



CaM/033/0012/15

Canadians Concerned about Southern Africa  
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Special Meeting of CCSA Executive with Zola Zembe, Treasurer General of SACTU, held on Tuesday, June 30, 1981.

Present: Zola Zembe - Treasurer General of SACTU  
Joanne Naiman, Joan Bhabha, David Leadbeater

Also in attendance: Brenda Wall, Ken Luckhardt, Jane Armstrong

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Zola Zembe: John Gaetsewe called last Friday and said that I should try and find out what happened to that letter. John wanted acknowledgement that the letter had been received. I wanted to pay a courtesy call and to tell you why I am here.

Brenda Wall: Zola Zembe - a militant who worked in South Africa for 30 years. Worked in the railways and organized workers in the docks and railways. Formed a union which became part of SACTU. Zembe became local secretary of SACTU in CapeTown area and leader of the ANC in Western Cape. Arrested in Treason Trial, and was forced to work underground. Zembe banned from trade union activity in 1961. He was forced to work underground in South Africa and it was finally decided by the movement that he should go outside the country and do international mobilization of the working class in support of SACTU. He is SACTU's national treasurer co-ordinating funds to go inside the country. He is in touch with the underground network inside the country. I have great pleasure in introducing him as one of the respected leaders of African working class.

Ken Luckhardt: Had meeting with TCLSAC and churches about two weeks ago but was unable to contact CCSA.

Zola Zembe: Important to say something to people who have been supporting our people over the years. SACTU and ANC are forced to fight a very difficult struggle in South Africa because South Africa is one of those very rich countries which multi-nationals have incorporated into their bases and are not prepared to give it to anybody. People forced to go underground.

General Malan made a statement which relieved me from questions that are embarrassing at times and said that the battle in South Africa is no more confined to the borders of that country. It has moved into the labour arena and the culprit for that kind of thing is the ANC and SACTU. It was very important that sort of statement - he was addressing the employers' association and he was calling upon them to resist this onslaught on the society of apartheid. They have gone into action and since then they have arrested a lot of leading trade unionists.



Yesterday it was reported in the papers the arrest of certain leaders.

SACTU a year ago decided that Canada is important, particularly when it comes to the working people. We have here a funny situation where multinationals of both South Africa and Canada are crossing. We have headquarters of the factories in South Africa here, we have headquarters of the mines in Johannesburg and SACTU decided to form a committee here and that committee has been functioning for 13 months and it has done a good job to educate the workers here and other people interested.

At the instructions again of SACTU a tour has been organized and I have been going around across Canada from east to west with very warm welcome from the trade union movement here and some of them surprised me that I lost my tongue. When people out of the blue give you \$2,000 to push into South Africa, when people don't only say that an move a motion and say that this union will give SACTU \$5,000 every year until that situation changes, well, I have never heard it, I have been in the trade union movement, I have never heard it, to me it is history.

When you are able to reach the top people without proper arrangements - they always say you have to arrange outside the country and I have been able to see McDermott and he has given a message on tape mentioning SACTU by name, calling on the black workers of South Africa to struggle and they are not alone and the workers of Canada will do something. That helps our people. It helps even more when it comes from the western world because the struggle in South Africa is complicated by the fact the me and other ordinary people see oppression as coming from white people western people particularly and the first job of a white man in South Africa is foreman to a black man and that affects our people. When you hear a good word, a good message from a leader from the western worlds saying they are not repressing us, it is encouraging, it helps those people who see politics more than racism that there is more behind racism and one can mention a lot of these instances of good trade unionists. Bob White, he is piloting the trade union movement here about SACTU recognition here. He phoned from Vancouver last night to say goodbye. He is a leader of a big organization but he sees that he must make time to greet people of South Africa through SACTU.

Friends, I have said too much. I must say I feel very unhappy. I don't know why people like you who have been dealing with...don't see the problems of getting another copy from John. I will be seeing John on August 8

Joanne: A letter without a signature becomes useless from your end. If you leave that letter even with your signature on it...

Zola Zembe: I don't accept that. I am the Treasurer General of SACTU and I cannot carry fake letters around.

Joanne: We put this letter in our files - without a signature on the letter it is useless. If you put your signature on it that's fine with us. As long as there is somebody's signature on the letter, I have no problem with that.

Zola Zembe: I don't need security for SACTU. The reason I am put in a bit of a quandry and I am a sensitive person, The western world do have problems with some organizations and the police do grab these things and I thought this copy here would be accepted and because John has been here



just a week before I was here. John met with the ANC and had a meeting with them and that's why I am a little puzzled about the legalistic way of dealing with SACTU here. I don't understand why, it makes me feel very hurt indeed and I mean here is John, the founder and the person who roamed around this country ...I am the Treasurer, my job is to collect money.

David: I am from Edmonton and I came to Toronto a year ago September. I don't know all the history in depth about all the issues but my understanding and I think this discussion about the letter is a reflection of that, there is a problem between CCSA, SSC and ANC. The problem is one of defining authority, jurisdiction and the relationship between various organizations and I think that that really is what important and the source and origin of this whole issue. You are obviously aware that there is a problem and I just wondered what you feel about this.

Zola Zembe: I didn't know that the problem was with you people here. I thought there was a slight problem with the ANC, not even the ANC, it is the individuals within the ANC who don't understand the policies of the Congress movement.

The National Executive of SACTU does not take instructions from the ANC. They do their own thing independently. They are a trade union and that's it. They are allied to the ANC and John spoke to the ANC on that. The National Executive of SACTU formed this committee and have not come to argue here, not to negotiate, I have come to tell you that it has been formed, it is working, please support it. If you don't support it, don't interfere with it.

I didn't know about any problem with you. I don't think there is a problem with you. I don't think there should be a problem with you.

David: I think you should be aware that saying that the problem is particular individuals....

Zola Zemba: The unity of ANC and SACTU was cemented by the blood of our people. It can't be destroyed. That's why John came here specially, because it is shocking to us, it can't be done by anybody in the ANC because they know the relations of SACTU.

Joanne: It's clear that the main reason why Zola wanted to address us here today was to present this letter which we had not received and I think it is up to Zola what he wants to do with the letter. If you want to leave it we can deal with it...

Zola Zembe: I am a poor worker and I don't understand these legalistic things and so on. It frightens me.

Jane Armstrong: He is here as a representative of SACTU. He is here to say that there is a committee here to represent SACTU, that we are doing work and that we..

Ken Luckhardt: This committee that exists in Canada is not the only committee that SACTU has created. There is no problem in any other country. It is only in this particular country and the history of the last



13 months that has emerged - the question of the status of our committee. We appeared at the CCSA general meeting. We were under the impression that it was accepted. We have still had the question raised behind our backs of the status of our committee, yet to our knowledge, and I asked John when he was here if he had received a letter from Canada regarding the mandate of this Committee, he said no he never received a letter. The purpose of the meeting, besides the question of the documentation itself, is to make sure that the status and mandate of our committee is once again stated and that should be the end of it.

The tour has been an encouraging tour. There have been developments in the trade union movement that we did not expect. We have three times as much work as we can take care of with the personnel and resources. We don't want to have to deal with the status of the committee any more. We don't want any more questioning of who we are and what we are supposed to be doing. The letter is up to Zola to decide what to do.

Joanne: We certainly have not had any problems dealing with SSC which CCSA endorsed at its founding and some clarification of some potential problems that were addressed at that time. The problems that arose this year did not originate with CCSA. The problem was as to whether it was a solidarity committee or whether it was SACTU.

CCSA is a solidarity movement and has no framework of being a support movement for the liberation of Southern Africa and because of that we seek consultation and advice from the liberation movement with particular emphasis on the leading arm of the liberation movement and so when CCSA takes decisions, it does not take them independently. We take all important decisions in consultation with the ANC. Therefore, when there was some question as to the exact status and the relations, we said we would seek a temporary hold on relations with SSC which we were not in a position to seek from John Gaetsewe, but we take our direction from the ANC. The information as far as we are concerned did come to us at the beginning of May and that's why the letter is important because we don't have anything in writing.

In consultation with the ANC in early May we were advised that there had been clarification from John Gaetsewe that SSC was to be considered a solidarity movement in Canada and we were glad this was clarified. This letter is all new to me. There was no problem. We have never not recognized SSC, it was just a matter of clarification.

Ken Luckhardt: The question of clarification of status. At one point I was phoned by a member of one of your affiliates in this country who informed me that a statement with regard to relations with our committee should be broken off until...should be suspended until the matter was clarified. It seems to me that if one recognizes the history of SACTU and the alliance of SACTU and ANC, there is absolutely no problem in sending a letter to the National Executive of SACTU. It is an essential point in the understanding of SACTU. If there ever will be a question of the work of our committee, my understanding of the history of the NEC of SACTU, such enquiries should be directed to SACTU.

Joanne: CCSA understands there are many component parts in a liberation movement but in that liberation movement there is an arm that takes a leading



role and we certainly understand SACTU's independence and accept and agree with it but our position has historically been that the ANC is the leading arm of the liberation movement. There is always a risk of internal struggles within the liberation movement itself. Therefore there is never a guarantee that the elements within the liberation movement are permanently of that liberation movement so that CCSA takes a position as a general procedure because of that potential of internal pro-imperialist, that it takes its guidance from the present leading arm of the liberation movement, the ANC. That does not mean that we don't have dealings with other organizations. We must take guidance on political questions from the ANC and will continue to do so and if SACTU or any other group disagrees with it.... We take guidance from SACTU but our leading direction must be from the ANC and that's why this question arose.

Zola Zembe: I am worried about the phraseology. SACTU is not an arm of the ANC. SACTU is allied to the ANC, not an arm. They have their own right to decide what they want and they consult. It gives the impression that you don't want to write to John because...There are numerous offices of the ANC - what surprises me is that you have to stick to this office. It is unfair to John.

I will do anything possible to help. I am an executive member of SACTU. You have already discussed and this committee has been accepted. I don't think it will help to meet with the ANC office. I was instructed to pay respects to the Party but have not been able to contact anybody. We respect people like you and the Party, though our specialty is the trade union movement. They have supported us and will continue to support us until the country is free.

When this letter was written I was not around. I know nothing about it. It is John's letter.

Joanne: Without the letter we have nothing in writing. I will leave it to you and again I hope you understand why CCSA...

Ken Luckhardt: Zola met with ANC units across the country and they accept the position of SSC.

David: We don't consult with the units. I think it would be wrong to make the assumption that it is so simple. What specific things are going to be done...maximum unity in solidarity work essential, agreed specific form of co-operation...

Brenda Wall: The point is the letter is clear, recognition is simple...