

HARARE,
ZIMBABWE
5-9 DECEMBER
1983

**REPORT OF
THE ZIDS SEMINAR ON:
THE TRAINING AND RESEARCH NEEDS
OF TRADE UNIONS IN ZIMBABWE**

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**The Relevance of the National Manpower Survey (NMS) for the Labour
Movement**

by
Brian Raftopoulos, Acting Director
Research and Planning, Ministry of Manpower Planning and Development

INTRODUCTION

At one level the relevance of the NMS for the labour movement in Zimbabwe can be measured by the somewhat hysterical response it elicited from the business Press in the country. On 26 August 1983 the Financial Gazette printed a Comment provocatively entitled "The Product of Pseudo Experts", referring of course to Volume I of the NMS. While the Comment conceded the existence of a wealth of statistical material in the NMS, it demurred that the latter was nevertheless "somewhat schizophrenic in nature". The schizophrenia, it appeared, stemmed from the dichotomy between the objective assessment of the past and present in statistical terms, and the interpretation of this past in the "Introduction" of the NMS which, according to the Comment, was "no more than political and racial polemics". Thus, the Comment proclaimed:

The basic underlying theme is correct. Black Zimbabweans have been denied access to skills on a consistent basis, dictated by the unacceptable racial attitudes of past governments. But the manner in which these facts and the recommendations are presented indicates a desire to maintain, or even heighten, a conflict with the alternative to Marxism.

While it was safe to merely empirically record the overt characteristics of the problem, it was nothing more than "political and racial polemics" to question the basic workings of the exploitative system which generated those characteristics.

From this reaction to the NMS, it can be seen that a vital part of the *raison d'être* of the survey was to provide a radical interpretive framework in which the wealth of statistics produced could be analysed more effectively. A great historian of the Russian Revolution, E.H. Carr, once wrote that "a fact is like a sack; it will not stand up unless you put something into it".

Merely to record facts in a narrowly empiricist fashion is not to eschew theory, but to utilize a theory which fails to elucidate the underlying movements in a given situation. The NMS sought to provide an analytical framework, which transcended a mere technical empirical approach. The elements which characterized this approach were:

- an analysis and clarification of the precise conditions which characterized colonial capitalist penetration into Zimbabwe, and the ways in which such penetration determined the utilization of labour in the economy. In this way, the forms of labour categorization which were, and indeed continue to be, utilized, could be better understood within the context of the social relations in which they emerged.
- to outline the obstacles to manpower development imposed by such forms of labour utilization.
- to formulate alternative strategies based on a clear conception of the problems of labour utilization within a society dominated by the private appropriations of wealth, the forces in society who generate those problems, and the organizational and training structures required to overcome such problems.

Therefore, the first issue of relevance in the NMS for the research needs of the labour movement is to base its research of labour problems within the context of a comprehensive understanding of the labour-capital relation in the economy, within the peculiar conditions of settler colonialism in Zimbabwe.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

To give concrete form to this statement I will summarize aspects of the NMS Introduction which sought to provide an historical background against which the statistics produced in the survey can be understood.

The origins of the current manpower situation in Zimbabwe must be located in the nature of colonial penetration into the country. Zimbabwe was colonized as part of the imperialist expansion of Southern Africa in the 1890s in the belief that the country would be a "Second Rand" with enormous mineral resources.

Within three years of the colonial occupation of 1890, the Ndebele Kingdom had been destroyed, and the resistance of the Shona and Ndebele uprisings of 1896/97 brutally suppressed.

Thereafter a framework of colonial administration was established in the country, which relied on white immigration for manning the administration in general, and for supervising and controlling African labour in particular. This was a process of colonization which could be described as "direct rule", as opposed to "indirect rule" (as had occurred in many other parts of Africa) which did not base its rule on a large white settler population. There developed at any early stage, therefore, not only a greater white settler element than the average colony in Africa was to experience; but also a class structure within that white population which, because of its economic privileges and political ambitions, would prove equally more resistant to African aspirations. For example, the white wage workers, attracted to this country by the offer of high wages, selfishly protected their trades against African advancement, and became one of the major classes supporting the racist policies in the colony.

This white immigration policy had significant implications for the colonial manpower structures and policies. There developed in the colony a dependence on immigration for formal skills, which in turn undermined the development of a comprehensive system of vocational training in the country. The limited vocational training that did take place at what was then the Salisbury Polytechnic (1964), the Bulawayo Technical College (1952), and through the apprenticeship training system, was for the most part confined to the small white population, and remained secondary to immigration as a supplier of formal white skills. Training for high-level manpower was largely left to the universities in Britain and South Africa, while enrolment at the local university remained restricted during the colonial period. Institutions like Domboshawa (1920) and Tsholotsho (1922) were established to train Africans in manual and industrial skills, inferior in content to those provided for whites, and designed so as not to pose a threat to white skills on the job market. Under such conditions Africans had to look elsewhere for formal vocational training and higher education. It has been estimated that in 1980 there were approximately 6 000 - 8 000 Zimbabwean Africans in institutions of higher learning in various countries of the world out of an estimated total of 12 000 exiles excluding the thousands of civilian and military personnel in the liberation movement.

Within this background of colonial manpower policies there also developed a system of labour categorization which depended more upon race than actual skill levels. Thus, according to the whites, the African people were supposed to be mentally and physically suited to unskilled labour; the person of mixed race, i.e. "Coloured", to semi-skilled work; and the white person to professional and skilled work.

As incorrect as this view was in practice, it nevertheless guided the colonial policy with regard to vocational training, manpower utilization, salaries and wages for virtually the entire colonial period. This method of labour categorization according to race had two major effects:

- By underestimating the actual level and value of African skills, the interests of white workers were protected, and employers could increase their profits by paying low wages to what was regarded as cheap "native" labour.
- Large wage differences developed between most of the whites earning high salaries and most of the blacks earning low wages.

It is important to realize that such labour categorization is a product of the capitalist system, i.e. that in order for employers in the capitalist system to maintain and increase the rate of exploitation of workers, it is necessary for them to underestimate, deliberately, the level and value of skill of the workers.

Despite the lack of formal vocational training facilities for blacks, and the incorrect method of labour categorization based on race, Africans nevertheless developed skills both formally and informally. Formally, many Africans came out of the school system and these would have competed with the white skills on the job market were it not for the racist system of labour categorization; informally as a result of the development of skills that naturally take place during the course of the work process, in the mines, factories, and on the farms.

Moreover, during the colonial period many Africans in the so-called "semi-skilled" category developed to artisan level without being recognized as skilled workers. Indications of this development can be traced from the following characteristics:

- The large numerical disparity between, on the one hand, the professional and skilled categories, and on the other hand the semi-skilled, within a relatively sophisticated economic and industrial infrastructure, is in itself a fair indication that there is a greater number of objectively professional and skilled personnel in the system.
- The movement of many whites, formally categorized as professional, into supervisory positions, while the operational levels were increasingly dominated by the so-called "semi-skilled".
- The decline in the number of employer requests for permission to recruit from abroad, during the period 1981-83. This is partly the result of the more vigorous screening being carried out by the MCFR (Manpower Committee on Foreign Recruitment). In consequence of this, employers have been encouraged increasingly to look to their own reservoir of "semi-skilled" for the replacement of emigrant skills.
- The success of the upgrading programme has also demonstrated the wealth of skills to be tapped in the economy; of the 1 637 semi-skilled who were trade-tested during the period August-December 1 1982 almost 50% attained artisan status. To summarize this historical sector, three major issues have characterized the manpower legacy in Zimbabwe:
 - The limited development of formal vocational training facilities, because of the colonial regime's reliance on immigration for the supply of most of its formal skilled labour requirements.
 - The growth of a system of labour categorization designed to maximize the rate of profit for employers, through a classification of labour which had more to do with the protection of racial privileges than objective skill levels and productive

performance. In consequence of such categorization, there developed throughout the economy large wage/salary differentials between blacks and whites.

- The importance of the "semi-skilled" as the disguised operational backbone of the economy.

NATIONAL MANPOWER SURVEY: ITS FINDINGS

The empirical statistical basis of this historical analysis can be found in the NMS findings which revealed, in an unequivocal manner, the major features of the labour profile in Zimbabwe. This profile has provided the labour movement with a vital statistical base for its own policies as well as indicated areas for further research both by Government and the labour movement. The findings also indicated the major areas in which firm Government policy is required to begin to redress the imbalances of the manpower legacy in Zimbabwe. A summary of the major findings includes:

- Of the total 806 038 persons covered in non-educational establishments 36 898 (5%) were professional, 87 509 (11%) were skilled, 173 984 (22%) were semi-skilled and 507 647 (63%) were unskilled.
- Despite constituting only 3% of the total population, whites dominated the professional and skilled categories, particularly the more specialized occupations (e.g. accounting, architecture, engineering) and services sector (electricity, finance, insurance, real estate and business services).
- The majority of employed persons were Zimbabweans (84%). Non-Zimbabweans can be divided into two groups: Europeans who dominated the more specialized occupations and industries, and Africans, mostly from Malawi and Mozambique, who were restricted to the semi-skilled and unskilled categories.
- Though the unskilled and semi-skilled constitute 80% of the total labour force (TLF) they receive less than 50% of estimated total salaries and wages. On the other hand the skilled and the professional who account for 20% of the TLF receive 51% of salaries/wages. Moreover, the wage differentials in the economy are substantial. For example, in the public sector the wage difference between a Permanent Secretary and the lowest paid was 1:75.
- Major shortage areas in the economy are in: administration and management, agriculture, engineering, medicine.
- Women, despite being more numerous in the total population than males, are fewer in number than the latter in all three labour categories (i.e. 21% of professionals; 15% of skilled; and 11% of semi-skilled). African women comprise 95% of the female population yet constitute only 39% of the trained female workforce. European women who constitute 2,9% of the female population comprise 54% of the trained female workforce. Moreover, women are concentrated in the services sector, while their participation at management and decision-making level is minimal. Within races female workers received lower incomes than their male counterparts. However, white females often receive higher incomes than African males in similar or comparable occupations.
- It is estimated that between 1982-85 there will be approximately 250 000 school-leavers from Forms II and IV (assuming a 10% dropout after Form II).

Given these kinds of disparities and problems in the manpower situation in the country, the Government and the labour movement are clearly faced with serious obstacles to be tackled.

- The first major obstacle is the disparate distribution of skills between races, and the existence of shortages in certain areas. The historical reasons for this have already been outlined (the settler reliance on immigrant skills, the failure to develop a comprehensive training infrastructure in the country, and discriminatory restrictions on the recruitment of blacks). Some of the consequences of the "White Immigration" policy have been pointed out by Clarke. He observed that:

This policy, of "White Immigration", exists primarily for socio-political reasons. Whilst some skilled workers do enter the economy at low cost in this manner, many immigrants are directly competitive with local work seekers in trades and occupations to which many Africans not only aspire but are wholly capable of undertaking even at existing levels of training. The policy effectively blocks or reduces upward occupational advancement, helps confine the upward mobility that does take place to a narrower range of sectors of the labour market, and further widens wage and salary differentials.¹

Along with such policies went a plethora of racist rationalizations concerning the lack of entrepreneurship, initiative, mechanical ability, etc. among Africans which thereby necessitated the need for an inflow of European labour.²

GOVERNMENT ACTION IN RESPONSE TO NMS

To begin to tackle these problems the Government, on the basis of information revealed in the NMS, embarked on a series of measures:

- The upgrading of semi-skilled workers which has already been alluded to. This was a major step in releasing the trapped reservoir of skills which had accumulated during the colonial period, as a result of discriminatory job reservation policies. Employers, when they did show an interest in skill mobility, were more interested in job fragmentation, in order to reduce labour costs. Moreover, the only areas where blacks were indentured in the past were in such industries as construction, in which immigration and local white recruitment were not sufficient to meet local demands.
- To meet immediate shortage areas, the Government still relies on foreign recruitment, but now has stricter control over the latter. Foreign recruits are now brought in only to take up positions in defined shortage areas, and for limited two-year periods, which are subject to renewal. Moreover efforts are being made to ensure transfer of skills to local workers through the monitoring of training programmes. Also in the short term, Zimbabweans are being sent abroad for training in defined shortage areas.
- In the long term efforts are being made to expand local training facilities (e.g. through the expansion of existing technical colleges, and the development of vocational training centres in which upgrading of workers will take place on a more comprehensive and systematic basis). In addition efforts are being made to ensure a re-orientation of training in the country, in a scientific technical direction (i.e. the NMS revealed that only 36% of total enrolment at UZ in 1981 was in scientific/technical fields.) MMPD is now represented on the Triennial Review of the University, and has advised on the direction of future enrolment based on areas of shortage defined by the NMS.
- Bonding: In order to stop the outflow of skills and ensure that Zimbabwe is not used as a training base for other countries (e.g. South Africa), bonding measures were

introduced. The loss of skills had gone on at an alarming rate. Thus from a total number of 13 663 journeymen in the country in 1976 the number was reduced to 11 955 in 1978, and 9 024 in 1980. The dominance of whites in apprenticeship training was also an alarming factor at Independence. In February 1981, out of a total 5 103 apprentices, 56% were Europeans, 26% Africans, 7% Coloureds and 1% Asians. In line with Government policy in training Zimbabweans, the 1982 apprenticeship intake reflected the new situation. Of the total 1 712 apprentices, 1 059 were Africans, 54 Europeans, 88 Coloured and 19 others.

- Africanization: The Presidential Directive was introduced soon after Independence, and although it was not directly related to the NMS in seeking to speed up Africanization in the running of the country, it nevertheless related to issues of concern to the NMS. The steps thus far taken, in attempting to execute a manpower strategy to deal with such obstacles, have not been without their problems. The upgrading programme has faced difficulties, not only a shortage of technical staff to realize such a programme, but also from employer resistance. Often employers feel that upgrading programmes raise their wage bill, and so reduce the profits for capital. This situation is exacerbated during periods of economic recession, as is the case in the world economy at present. Thus as a representative of EMCOZ commented at the NMS Seminar:

Upgrading of semi-skilled should ... only be undertaken with the economic restraints that the economy can afford without an over-emphasis of the faults, real or imagined, of the previous wage structure. The faults of the past cannot be remedied by implementing an upgrading structure that leads to the granting of a wage to workers who were previously described as the semi-skilled, that cannot be met in the present economic climate. The results of that will be a large-scale curtailment of employment opportunities in an economy that is already unable to keep pace with the number of job-seekers coming into the market.³

The case against upgrading could also come under attack from those international organizations whose well-known monetarist, deflationary package of policies could be antithetical to such regrading of skills due to their increase in the national wage bill.

The control of foreign recruitment also recently elicited a vehement response from the Chief Economist of the RAL Merchant Bank. He was recently reported as saying that he hoped:

the Government would see that its policy regarding the inflow of skilled manpower was entirely out of keeping with the country's development needs.

The claim that the country should discriminate regarding investors and skills was correct. But Zimbabwe needed just about all of them it could get and just every skill there was (*Financial Gazette*, 25/11/83).

Contrary to these assertions, the NMS revealed that Zimbabwe does not need to import just about all skills. The survey revealed a reservoir of skills, as well as defining specific areas of shortage.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

It would be nothing short of recklessness and irresponsibility for the Government to follow an open door, *carte blanche* policy on foreign recruitment. The experiences of other developing countries in the field of expatriates have revealed the following:

- In most developing countries foreign recruitment has been carried out on an unplanned, ad hoc basis with little or no monitoring by the government.

- There has usually been an absence of clearly articulated plans for the understudying of expatriates by locals. The result has usually been the perpetuation of dependency on foreign recruitment, and the undermining of efforts to train and utilize local labour.
- The ideological disposition of most expatriates is usually antithetical to the long-term developmental objectives of countries seeking a radical transformation of their economies.
- In those countries where transnationals are dominant, expatriates are usually brought in to fill key positions in the technical, financial and administrative fields. In such positions they often devise ways of transferring surplus from the developing countries to the headquarters of the TNCs in the developed world.
- Often expatriates are a necessary part of technical aid agreements, entered into by developing countries often in desperate need of foreign assistance.⁴

More research needs to be carried out by both Government and the labour movement to devise ways of recruiting and monitoring expatriate workers, during the period when there is a need for such labour.

Such methods must seek to employ this kind of labour on a basis that will neither perpetuate dependence, nor undermine attempts to develop local training. Moreover, in identifying development projects the Government should carry out such projects which can be sustained by the local generation of manpower resources rather than those which are accompanied by a dangerously high component of foreign skills. The private sector in this country has been historically locked into an "import skills" syndrome, for reasons which extended beyond the economic. That indiscriminating attitudes towards this phenomenon are still rampant amongst important sections of the private sector is evidence of the resonance of the residual effects of this syndrome. As in other cases such attitudes have displayed a less than responsible attitude to the importance of developing a national economy. This attitude has also been reflected in the slow pace of Africanization at the decision-making levels in the private sector. As the Director of the NMS observed, "the managerial and decision-making positions in the private sector constitute a white laager".⁵

There have been shortages in the past in this country and these have been related to the shortsightedness of colonial manpower policy. Currently shortages in Zimbabwe are directly related to the expanded demand of the Government development projects. While a breathing space is needed to accommodate the manpower requirements of these projects the Government should not be panicked into adopting the open-door policies of free market pundits.

In addition to the unequal distribution of skills, the problem of unequal income distribution amongst the skill levels and races also raises important issues for the Government and the labour movement. That 20% of the working population should receive 51% of the wage bill is clearly an indication that those who are producing the wealth in Zimbabwe are receiving an inadequate percentage of the remuneration.

However, this has implications beyond the fact that those who are operational are receiving a disproportionately low part of the wage bill.

The technology policy of a country is greatly influenced by the demand structure of an economy. Often in a situation where effective demand is concentrated amongst an elite, this demand will in most cases be met best by goods produced with imported technology, often controlled by TNCs. As Mkandawire has written:

The technology will be capital and import intensive, absorbing little labour and intensifying the country's technological and import dependency. The strategy will also tend to reproduce the structure of income distribution. The overall effects of the implicit technology policies will then be greater dependency, skewed income distribution and increased unemployment - effects which were completely unintended in the explicitly stated policies.⁶

Unco-ordinated recourse to external aid programmes, which often bring with them a compulsory skill/technology import component, could also have disastrous effects on the establishment of a local skill/technology base.

Often such programmes undermine the industrial base of the national economy, if the latter is not systematically protected against the predatory attacks of international capital.

An additional aspect of this demand structure is its effect on local production. In a situation where purchasing power is eroded through various deflationary measures, the effect is often a decrease in productivity, closures, unemployment, and with it a wastage of skill utilization. Part of the problems in industry in Zimbabwe at present are due to the weakening consumer demand.

A final point about the issue of unequal income distribution is the fact that Africanization is proceeding within these structures. The socio-economic and political implications of this practice are of more than a little consequence.

Thus the labour movement needs to look more closely into:

- The effect of imported technology on the various sectors of the economy, as well as on efforts to develop a local science/technology base. Here the emphasis needs to be placed on developing ways of increasing control over the development and reproduction of the labour force and technology in accordance with defined social goals.
- The effects of change in the local demand structure on productivity, employment, and the utilization and development of skills. This in turn raises questions about the current structure of the economy, i.e. whether it is developmentally more beneficial for Zimbabwe to remain subject to the imperatives of largely export-oriented growth; or whether such exports should grow out of a restructuring of the economy, with economic expansion, based to a large extent on domestic needs and domestic demand. On this dilemma Ndlela observes that:

With regard to the problem of alleviating the pressure on foreign exchange, an inward-looking industrialisation strategy is the most realistic way of dealing with foreign exchange. It is true that the country will try its best to promote exports but such wholesale promotion of exports as suggested in the World Bank report Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa is not a solution to the problem. Foreign exchange should not be regarded as an end in itself, relegating local production to a residual of participation in the external markets.⁷

There are vital issues which have various implications for the development and utilization of manpower. For example, the problem of the under-representation of women in the trained labour force of the so-called "modern sector" is one that both the Government and labour movement must attend to more seriously. As one researcher has recently written:

Discrimination on the basis of sex affected all women but European, Asian and Coloured women would, to some extent, escape from the structure of constraints imposed upon them by their sex by virtue of their positions in the racial hierarchy. Their urban location, their access to education and training facilities and, most importantly, the availability of cheap domestic labour to relieve them of child care responsibilities and the tedium of domestic chores facilitated their entry into the labour market.⁸

In the long term, to facilitate the entry of women into all levels of the trained labour market, the preconditions for such entry (e.g. child care facilities) will have to be made available on a much more comprehensive basis. In the meantime, at least on a theoretical level, all vocational/technical training is now open to women. In addition there has been some discussion on the possibility of introducing "positive discrimination" for women in technical scholarship programmes. However, this has raised objections about tokenism and means are still being sought to increase the percentage of trained women in the economy. This is an area where much work remains to be done.

Finally, the problem of school-leavers should be of concern to the labour movement. The "modern sector" in Zimbabwe has, because of the nature of its structure, always failed to expand adequately to meet the employment needs of large numbers of school-leavers. It has been estimated that 11% of blacks out of school each year between 1960-78 were unable to find employment.⁹

Moreover, in 1982, while there were 80 000 school-leavers approximately 10 700 jobs were created. This raises serious questions about the wastage of manpower resources, and for the labour movement, an increasing number of people who are not being involved in the education and experiences of trade unions. It also highlights the fact that while the State in Zimbabwe has a large degree of control over the supply side of manpower (i.e. schools, university, technical colleges, scholarships), it has much less control over the demand side of the equation. In particular, and especially in developing countries, it has a generally weak and indirect control over two important determinants on the demand side, i.e. investment and technology.¹⁰

If socialism is to become a reality in Zimbabwe, the issue of planning of production in the economy, in the long term, must be given increasing attention.

CONCLUSION

Several concluding remarks need to be made about the relevance of the NMS for the labour movement:

- It provides the labour movement with an informational basis and a radical analysis of its objective positions in the Zimbabwean economy. In this sense the NMS was primarily of interest to the workers of Zimbabwe, and therefore represents an integral part of that research foundation necessary to inform the policies and actions of the labour movement towards socialism.
- It revealed the major problems of manpower utilization and development in the economy, and put forward policies which could begin to overcome the impediments of Zimbabwe's manpower legacy.
- It has been a lesson for both the Government and the labour movement in the problems of implementing measures which need to be established as preconditions for socialism. As was noted at the beginning of this paper, the business Press in Zimbabwe expressed a quite hysterical response to the analysis in the report. Equally vehement was its negative response to some of the measures recommended to introduce a greater element of planning in the training and development of manpower (i.e. foreign recruitment; central recruitment of apprentices). It appears that unless one pays homage to the pantheon of free market deities, one will be dismissed in the most

pejorative terms and treated to a diatribe on the utopia of socialist policies and the "realities" of free market economies.

In a situation such as the one in Zimbabwe where the agenda is firstly to establish a national economy as a precondition for socialism, the Government has the problem, *inter alia*, of mediating the conflicts between labour and capital without undermining the initiatives required for a transition to socialism. While certain manpower measures adopted have already evoked the now predictable "loss of confidence" cries, increasing pressure can be expected to persuade the Government to "discipline" labour in a manner more conducive to the accumulation of profits. Under such pressures, clarity of goals and strategy will become increasingly important. Petras' warning on such situations is of interest. He writes:

Any socialist investment policy which pursues methods and goals divorced from the organized working class risks confrontations and ultimately political defections. This proposition is especially relevant in times of deepening economic crisis that may require an austerity programme. The imposition of austerity measures (restraints on wages, state spending, imports, etc.) without compensatory measures will alienate substantial sectors of the mass base of the Government.¹¹

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