

1985 was a year of stoppages. I remember the day we said we were going to pray. It was the time when people were killed at Hlobani by the vigilantes - who we realised were sent by a government body to do that dirty job. We marched out of the company at 11 o'clock. We met the workers from Clover, Breweries and Hart Ltd. half-way, at King Edward. There was a prayer and we sang and toi-toied. Then we went to the company and went back to work.

There were also stoppages for the release of Mayekiso and his brothers. We negotiated with management but they said: "No. That is none of our business. The government always does these things because it is the government. If a person has done something wrong the government has a right to punish them".

We said: "You must talk to the government because you are part and parcel of the government. You create the laws together in parliament to oppress us. So go and tell the government that you support us when we want the release of Mayekiso and his brothers". The company said: "No way," so there was a stoppage.

In 1986 there was another strike, also around wages and working conditions. But this time they didn't want to dismiss us because the company had made a big loss by dismissing us in the first strike.

We demanded our pension fund and all our benefits back because we heard that the pension fund was controlled by the government to buy things to support the army. We opposed them using our money to buy weapons to kill us. They are fighting no war, but they are killing us in the townships, just as we go on our way, wherever they see us. We demanded our money back so we could put it where we wanted it. It was a real victory to get our money back. I put my money in the bank and fixed it there, for myself.

Instead of firing us they kicked us out of the factory, saying we were going to sabotage the machines. We told them: "We can't damage the machines because they belong to us. We are the ones who bought the machines with our sweat, our blood and our energy."

We didn't go to St Anthony's but changed the strategy to meeting three times a week. I was not a shop steward at that time, I had asked the workers not to elect me because I had other commitments to the organisation. I was busy up and down with my poems - reciting and encouraging other workers to write about their lives and experiences. We negotiated with them until they called us back again. It was a victory because we won some of our demands. We withdrew the demands that were not very important.

The management of Dunlop doesn't want to learn that the people of today are not like the people of long ago. They used to recruit people for their culture. There was a senior foreman called Mzimba from Umkhomazi who used to recruit people who knew how to dance the Zulu dance. The company used to enter competitions against other companies like Hullets, Hart, Lever Brothers and Clover to get money. This way they exploited people double-time.

At Dunlop one day's work is like two days work - you have to chase the electric rabbit. They want more production every day. If you managed to make 15 tyres a day, after a week they would want 20 tyres a day. If you managed to make 20 tyres then they would want even more. They'll never say this is enough. That is why they always have rejects - because workers are forced to work for the number of tyres not the quality of tyres. But when you made a lot of scraps they would call you to the office to be warned. They would always say it was because we didn't care, that we only worked to finish the day and to get our wages.

In 1987 there were more stoppages. They always tried to swallow their words, to go back on their agreements. They tried to score goals but there were many goalkeepers who stopped the ball and sent it back to them.

This is the kind of company I can never forget.

Today, even though I've left Dunlop, I am proud of the Dunlop Workers. They are an example to the militant workers in South Africa. I have heard that even when the company employed white scabs to replace the workers, some of the whites joined Numsa.

After forming Cosatu a few workers didn't come to the Cosatu May Day rally but joined the Uwusa launch at Kings Park. One argued that he couldn't come to our rally because his chief was going to be at the Uwusa launch - if the chief didn't see him there he would be charged.

There they buried a coffin on which was written Cosatu, Elijah Berayi, Jay Naidoo. They said today we are burying the Xhosa Elijah Berayi, the Indian Jay Naidoo, the South African Communist Party Cosatu and the ANC. After that we met at work and asked ourselves, how do we, as workers, see our organisation and how do we see this Uwusa, which wants to bury Cosatu. The question was: "Is Cosatu going to die or grow?" I am still asking that question today. Is it Cosatu or Uwusa that is dying? I still see that Cosatu is a giant while Uwusa is supported by pensioners. People were carried to the Uwusa launch by bus and train and came because they were being controlled by the chiefs.

I still praise Cosatu today and I will praise it until my bones are in the ground because it is an organisation and a half. It educates the workers from both sides, about the community and about the work place. But I haven't heard of even a single day that Uwusa had a sleep-in seminar to educate workers and have never seen them having a seminar for their shop stewards. The organisers, who are just Inkatha officials, just came to tell the company to deduct money from Uwusa members and send it to Ulundi.

Rallies, yes, they have rallies. That is where they plan to attack Cosatu. The end is the beginning of the attack. They meet to plan attacks,

not to talk about their problems at work. Their problem is Cosatu and the progressive organisations. I have never heard that Uwusa has won higher wages for workers. That is all I know about Uwusa. In fact there is no thing such as Uwusa, there is only Inkatha.

Uwusa will never have a chance at Dunlop, even though the management supports Uwusa. There are still only those 12 guys that are on the executive of Uwusa.