

# TRADE UNIONS... TRADE UNIONS... TRADE

There is growing interest in Inkatha's involvement in the trade union movement.

In its August edition, Road and Transportation magazine put a series of questions on the issue to the Secretary-General of Inkatha, Dr O D Dhlomo.

The article in Road Transportation followed the affiliation to Inkatha of the National Sugar Refining and Allied Industries Employees' Union.

Clarion Call reports Road Transportation's questions and Dr Dhlomo's replies.

**RT:** Does Inkatha view this first association as an encouragement to other unions in the relevant area, or with an appropriate Zulu membership, to also tie in with the movement?

**Dhlomo:** Yes, Inkatha views this first union affiliation as an encouragement to other unions also to affiliate. However, since Inkatha is a black, and not a Zulu liberation movement, we are not necessarily looking at unions 'with an appropriate Zulu membership.' On the contrary, any union whose members are Black, is free to affiliate with Inkatha.

**RT:** Is any plan being made to further encourage other unions to associate?

**Dhlomo:** No overt plan is being made to actively encourage other unions to affiliate with Inkatha. Although the constitution of Inkatha allows for the affiliation of Trade Unions, we prefer to allow unions themselves to decide whether or not they want to affiliate with Inkatha. We maintain that Inkatha's political action programme speaks louder than any aggressive campaign on our part to woo unions to affiliate with us. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that the majority of Inkatha members are workers who belong to a variety of Trade Unions that exist in South Africa. For that reason we claim that we already have a strong Inkatha presence in the Trade Unions.

**RT:** The Secretary-General of the National Sugar Refining and Allied Industries Employees Union has been publicly quoted as saying that the association his union with Inkatha supplies the movement with an "official labour arm". Will this "labour arm" have any official power as a centralised negotiating body in labour matters?

If so, what?

**Dhlomo:** In terms of the Inkatha Constitution, any union that affiliates with Inkatha, does not then lose its character, leadership structure or freedom to act collectively as a union. All that happens is that Inkatha lends its support to leaders and members of such a union in the same way as happens with other members of Inkatha. Mr Nsibandé is therefore correct in the sense that whatever negotiations his union enters into with management,

they will always enjoy the full backing and protection of Inkatha as their umbrella liberation movement. For instance, Mr Nsibandé's union has recently negotiated successfully with the Tongaat-Hulett Group with regard to a new retirement benefit provident fund for its members. Chief Buthelezi as President of Inkatha was always kept informed during these negotiations and he no doubt exercised his influence for the benefit of members of the union, who are also members of his liberation movement.

**RT:** Does Inkatha now have an intention of being actively involved in labour matters? If so, what form will this take?

**Dhlomo:** The aim of Inkatha is to look after the needs and aspirations of its members and as such Inkatha will always be involved in all matters that affect the welfare of its members, be it in the field of labour, politics, economics or social welfare. In the case of affiliated organisations, Inkatha does this through the elected leadership of such organisations. If for instance, the National Sugar and Refining and Allied Industries Employees' Union, which is an affiliate Inkatha, has problems with workers' conditions of service, then Inkatha will assist the leadership of N.S.R.A.I.E.U. to negotiate a better deal with the employer. The same will apply to any other organisation affiliated with Inkatha.

**RT:** What powers will the union representative have in the committee seat on general Inkatha policy, particularly with effect on labour policy?

**Dhlomo:** The union representative already has a seat in the National Council and General Conference of Inkatha both of which are supreme policy-making bodies of the movement. This means that his views are already heard and seriously considered at the highest leadership levels of the movement. For that reason he has every democratic right to influence Inkatha policy on labour matters.

**RT:** Why have no unions joined up with Inkatha so far?

**Dhlomo:** I am not able to answer the question why unions have not joined up with Inkatha so far. The

unions themselves can possibly answer that questions. Inkatha policy is to accept and welcome those bodies that affiliate with it and not to ask those that do not why they are not affiliating. A possible reason could be that thus far Inkatha has not had a deliberate policy to woo Trade Unions to affiliate with it.

**RT:** What is Inkatha's overall standpoint on industrial labour matters?

**Dhlomo:** Long before the South African Government recognised Trade Unions for Black workers, Inkatha called for the granting of Trade Union rights to Blacks. The Inkatha Statement of Belief, drafted almost 10 years ago when Inkatha was founded, specifically calls on the Government to allow Black workers to participate in Trade Union activities.

The President of Inkatha, Chief Buthelezi, has even a longer association with the struggle to afford Black workers Trade Union rights. It was in recognition of his contribution to this struggle that the A.F.L.-C.I.O. (the biggest federation of free Trade Unions in the western world) awarded Chief Buthelezi the George Meany award in 1983. As will be recalled, the first recipient of this award was Lech Walesa of Poland who leads the workers' movement of that country known as Solidarity. Chief Buthelezi was a joint recipient of the award with the late Dr Neil Aggett.

Inkatha believes that in a democratic society workers have an inalienable right to involve themselves in collective bargaining with whosoever wants to utilise their skills, with a view to securing the best possible working conditions. Inkatha further believes that the concept of industrial labour relations does not involve a one-way communication process whereby the employer decides unilaterally and the workers obeys without questions, even when the employer's decision is detrimental to his welfare. Inkatha, through its membership, wishes to encourage a climate of give and take in industrial labour relations where the workers own needs and aspirations will be taken into serious consideration when corporate decisions affecting his welfare as a worker are taken.

On the other hand, and this is equally important, we are constantly impressing it upon our worker members that they should move away from the notion that a Trade Union is a mechanism to assist workers to go on strike at the drop of a hat. We always

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people who wish to improve their skills in the field of Industrial Labour Relations. Although we would naturally regard this as a service to our affiliated Trade Unions first and foremost, the ultimate objective is that a scheme of this nature should be available to any Black person regardless of his political affiliation.

**RT:** *Have any other unions made an approach to associate with Inkatha. If so, which ones?*

**DHLOMO:** *No other unions have made an approach to association with Inkatha in the sense of formally affiliating with Inkatha, but Inkatha has enjoyed cordial relations and has*

*emphasise that a Trade Union is a democratic medium whereby workers can negotiate with their employers on an equal basis with a view to achieving a healthy balance between the employers legitimate expectation to make a profit, and the workers equally legitimate expectation to earn a living wage.*

*Lastly, now that Black workers are equally allowed to participate in Trade Union activity, we in Inkatha feel very strongly that Black people need thorough training as labour organisers, administrators and negotiators. Consequently, Inkatha has used its labour contacts overseas to try and secure scholarships for aspiring Black*

*associated with some unions. for instance when the Zululand branch of Fosatu was inaugurated in 1983, members of that branch invited Chief Buthelezi to inaugurate it.*

**RT:** *Who will take control of the union section of Inkatha?*

**DHLOMO:** *For some time now the Central Committee of Inkatha has been toying with the idea of appointing a labour officer whose main function would be to liaise with labour unions. As yet no suitable person has been found for this post. Now that a labour union has formally affiliated with Inkatha, we will have to intensify the search for such a person.*

## SCRAP THIS MEANINGLESS CONSTITUTION

For me constitutions are not experimental things. They are not party political footballs. Constitutions for me enshrine the most valued things any society could possibly possess.

I see the new constitution simply as a party political experiment in a desperate attempt by Whites to perpetuate real White power over the control of 87 percent of the country of my birth.

The new constitution must and will eventually be scrapped and it must be replaced by a constitution of lasting merit capable of consolidating the country into a single purposeful whole.

I believe that there are various constitutional models among which we can choose. I believe that our choice, and the adaptation of the model of our choice to suit our circumstances, must be a product of real political process in this country, as Blacks seek to accommodate Whites in their future and as Whites seek to accommodate Blacks.

The constitution we finally end up with will be the final product of a long process of negotiation.

If I see an alternative and lasting constitution in this light, I must necessarily avoid being prescriptive in my thinking.

At this point in time, I would say that the constitution Black South Africa will eventually support will be a constitution which accepts one South Africa, with one Government and a single destiny for all its people.

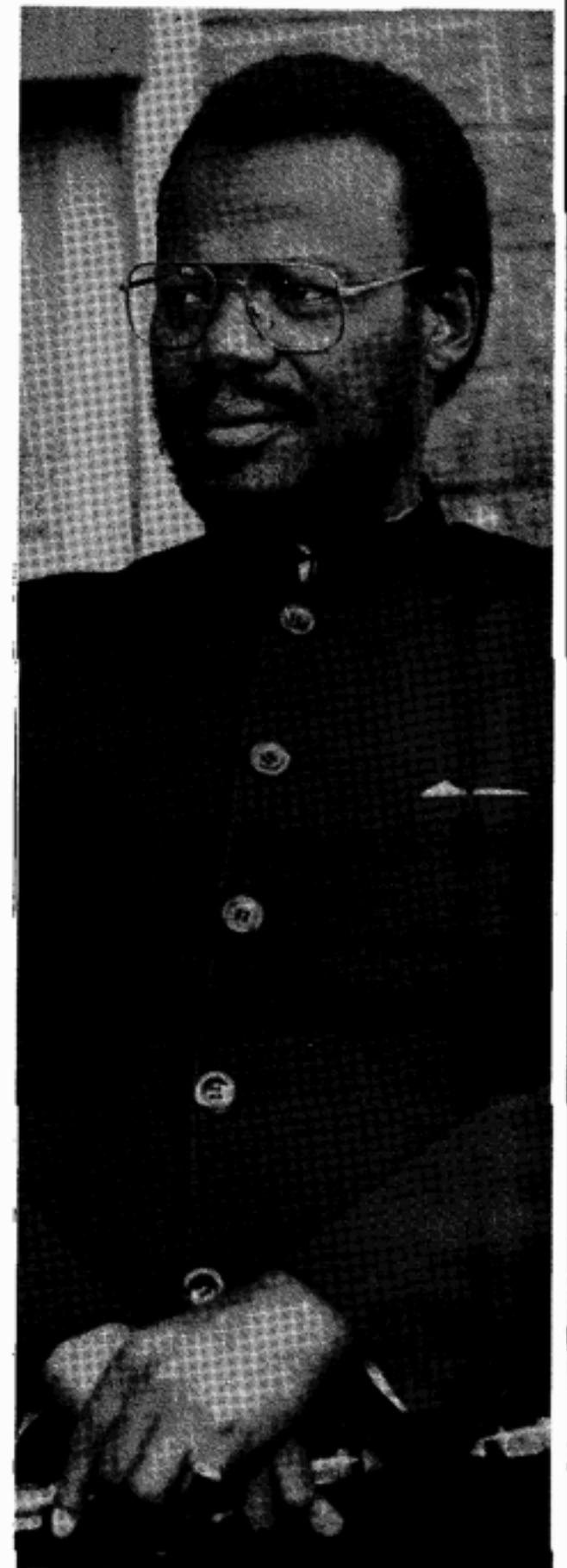
Whether that constitution will be the constitution of a unitary state or a constitution of a federation of South African States is for me not that important.

I myself am inclined to believe that there may be a great deal of merit in exploring a federal future for this country.

One-man-one-vote in a unitary state with political institutions in which the winner-takes-all principle is operative, will I fear be more than the White electorate could swallow in the very foreseeable future.

Blacks would continue to reject any form of confederalism as far as and beyond any of us can now see.

If we are to reject a confederal formula as Blacks, and if whites are to reject a one-man-one-vote unitary state, then it would appear to me that the principles of federalism are invoked by reality as containing the kind of flexibility within which negotiations can take place, and within which compromises can be made.



Chief M G Buthelezi