

## **AN EVALUATION OF WORKERS' REAL PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING AT ENTERPRISE LEVEL**

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IN 1980 WORKERS' participation in decision-making was introduced in line with government's desire to create a 'democratic, egalitarian and socialist society' (Zimbabwe, 1981a). Workers' participation organs, in the form of workers' committees and works councils, were to be established 'at the workplace and the shopfloor and in all government and parastatal operations and in private activities' (Zimbabwe, 1982). The government expressed its intention that workers' participation would develop into worker self-management. By mid-1981 the Riddell Commission found that most medium- and large-sized enterprises had established workers' committees (Zimbabwe, 1981b).

Ten years later the workers' participation organs are still in place but little progress has been made towards worker self-management. No incremental changes have been effected to the workers' participation organs to give workers a more meaningful role in decision-making at enterprise level. Thus instead of workers' participation organs leading the transformation to worker self-management, they are now supplementing weak trade unions. The government is now fully committed to collective bargaining within a tripartite system, even though the socialist rhetoric is still heard now and again. No workers' committees have been established for civil servants.

This article analyses the efficacy of workers' participation in decision-making at enterprise level through a case study in 1988 of the same parastatal as that studied by Shadur slightly earlier. I attempt to explain why there has been no progress towards more effective workers' participation. In order to attain this goal, purposive sampling was carried out to ensure representation of all categories and grades of workers. A sample of 75 workers was chosen, comprising 38 ordinary workers, 18 members of the workers' committee, 6 members of senior management, 2 controllers and 8 supervisors. Two questionnaire schedules were used, one for workers and another for management. In-depth interviews were also held with members of the personnel department, the chairman of the workers' committee, some heads of departments and skilled workers, and with the head of the Industrial Relations Department of the United Food and Allied Workers Union (UFAWU), to which the workers in this organization were

affiliated by 1988. I also attended two meetings of the workers' committee and undertook a content analysis of all the minutes of the workers' committee and works council meetings since November 1981. 'Parastatal's' Trade Employment Regulations and Grievance Procedures were also carefully studied.

The aim of the study was to examine the extent to which the government's objectives in introducing workers' participation have been realized. More specifically, the study attempted to assess the workers' participation organs' ability to bring about better worker-management communication, increased productivity, effective handling of grievances, industrial peace and industrial democracy. Nangati (1987), in a similar study carried out in this country, concluded that private ownership of the organization, among other things, was a major obstacle to worker participation. Maphosa (1985) concluded that the existence of the Companies Act (*Chapter 190*) makes ownership and control synonymous. Makanya (1987) argued that private capital tends to be authoritarian and intransigent in its relations with workers. A parastatal corporation was therefore chosen to find out how government's policy would be implemented in its own backyard, where there are no obstacles of private ownership. It was assumed that a government committed to socialism would want its parastatals to set an example in personnel practice. (Countries like Malta and India introduced workers' participation into parastatals first, to avert opposition from the private sector.) The study hypothesized that workers' participation in the parastatal in question would lead to industrial peace but not democracy. The responsiveness of parastatal management to government directives would contribute mainly to good worker-management relations.

The efficacy of workers' participation is largely determined by the level, scope and degree of participation allowed by the participation organs — i.e. implementation of policies should result from workers' influence rather than managerial goodwill. Workers' participation in Zimbabwe is limited to the shop-floor. It is concerned with trivial welfare issues rather than important ones such as personnel, wages, production, technology, etc. The degree of influence granted to workers is only consultative, not co-determination or worker self-management. Workers have no right to information and they have no veto power.

Stevens (1980) states that workers' participation structures can have a transformative or integrative function. Those with a transformative function facilitate the gradual transfer of power from owners to workers until the achievement of worker self-management, in which workers have full control of the decision-making process at enterprise level. Workers' participation that has an integrative effect facilitates acceptance of the existing system by the workers. An examination of the workers' partici-

pation organs in Zimbabwe shows that they lead to integration of the workers into the existing system, because they do not allow any meaningful participation of workers in decision-making at enterprise level, even though the Transitional National Development Plan (Zimbabwe 1982) presented workers' committees as one of the means of transformation from capitalist to socialist relations of production. In spite of government's announced commitment to transformation to socialism, the worker's participation organs that were provided were more concerned with the realization of industrial peace and productivity rather than with democratization of the decision-making process at enterprise level.

### THE ORGANIZATION OF PARASTATAL IN 1988

Parastatal was formed in 1952 as a state trading corporation, and is today both a business and a development organ of government policy. Parastatal falls under the direct control of the Agricultural Marketing Authority (AMA). At the time that the research was carried out, the now-defunct Parastatals Commission was still in operation. Its duties included the appointment of members to boards of parastatals, as well as general managers and their deputies, and the general control and supervision of personnel issues in all parastatals. The chain of command, as Shadur has already indicated, is quite long. At Parastatal, it started with the Cabinet Committee on Parastatals and went down through the short-lived Parastatals Commission, which dealt with personnel issues, through the Ministry of Agriculture, which set selling and buying prices, through the Agricultural Marketing Authority, which controlled capital expenditure, through the AMA Committee which dealt specifically with this industry, to the general manager of Parastatal, his deputy general managers, assistant general managers and regional managers.

This lengthy chain of command had serious implications for workers' participation in decision-making, since different decisions were made at different levels. Before the establishment of the Parastatals Commission, all personnel decisions were made by the AMA, which also controlled the capital budget. Overall authority lay with the Cabinet Committee on Parastatals. The pricing of Parastatals' products was determined by the Ministry of Agriculture. Workers participated in decision-making only at regional level: they met only with the regional manager or his representatives. But the regional manager was only an executant of decisions made elsewhere. The important question, then, is: to what extent could workers influence decision-making in their workplace when decisions were made several rungs above the highest level at which they could operate (i.e. in the works council)?

## WORKERS' PARTICIPATION STRUCTURES

Workers at Parastatal participated in decision-making in several forums. The workers' committee and the works council were established in 1980. There were also two suggestion boxes strategically placed in the canteen, one for general issues and another for occupational safety. Workers at Parastatal were also represented at the National Employment Representative Meeting, which consisted of the workers' committee chairmen of the six separate processing plants. They met up to three times a year, with expenses met by Parastatal, to discuss issues common to all six plants. The six workers' committee chairmen also attended an annual conference, usually held at one of the tourist resorts (e.g. Nyanga), at which regional and general management discussed annual plans and any projects in the pipeline. The workers' committee chairman at the Harare plant also attended Friday management meetings. On the surface, then, it appears that Parastatal's workers had many opportunities for participation and access to considerable information, but, in most cases, this information concerned decisions that had already been taken.

The structural limits to participation through the workers' committees and works councils have already been discussed. At the Harare processing plant workers were allowed to raise any issues pertaining to their welfare and the operations of the organization. An analysis of the minutes shows that workers' committees asked for annual bonuses, protective clothing for certain categories, a pension scheme, medical aid, overtime pay, acting allowances, regular working hours, a canteen, the introduction of long-service awards, an increase in the number of leave days, the abolition of two separate conditions of service (for established and non-established workers), wage increases, and so on. These demands were raised in the works council, and management representatives patiently listened and assured the workers that, as decisions were made elsewhere, regional management would forward their demands to the relevant authorities. Most of these demands were, in fact, later implemented. But what was notable about proceedings in the works council was that management did not remind workers' representatives that their demands were outside the jurisdiction of the participation organ, as provided for by the workers' committee guidelines, as was the case in the organizations studied by Maphosa (1985) and Makanya (1987). Most of the time, however, the workers' committee dealt with complaints about acting allowances, job grading, disciplinary cases, etc.

The workers' committee chairmen at Parastatal often ended their meetings by asking representatives to encourage workers to work harder and refrain from indiscipline. Though relations in the works council were cordial, the workers actually had no more power to force the implemen-

tation of their demands than workers in other organizations did. In other words, workers' participation remained consultative. They had no right to information (though it was given to them, mostly after the decisions had already been made). They had no veto power. The suggestion boxes presented even less opportunity for meaningful participation than the workers' committees and councils. Workers could make demands or express their dissatisfaction in these ways but it was up to management whether to respond or not. In fact, the benefit to management was greater than to workers, because management got to know workers' feelings and problems through this one-way communication. The only advantage to workers was that a management keen to improve industrial relations and worker morale might decide to take note of workers' demands and act upon them.

Workers' representatives at Parastatal did negotiate wage increases in the earlier absence of a trade union in the organization. Agreements were reached but were overtaken by national wage increments as a result of the onerous decision-making process within the parastatal. The long bureaucratic ladder proved an obstacle to worker participation.

The presence of the workers' representatives at the annual conference was more a goodwill gesture on the part of management than anything else. Delegates at the meeting discussed plans that had already been made. Information is power, and the week-long annual conference could certainly have benefited workers had they been able to understand the proceedings. As it was, workers' representatives stated that most of the issues discussed were well beyond their comprehension, except for discussion on personnel and other welfare issues, so they did not attend most of the sessions because they found them too technical yet they continued to be invited. The calibre of the workers' representatives (as Maphosa also notes in this volume) was, therefore, a hindrance to participation. None of these representatives had more than eight years of education (i.e. Standard Six).

Participation at the weekly management meetings, to which the workers' committee chairman had access, was also hindered by his inability to comprehend the proceedings, which he described as highly technical. To that extent, workers' participation in these meetings was again a goodwill gesture by management, of which workers were not able to take advantage.

Workers' representatives at Parastatal also participated in the job-evaluation exercise. Again, this was pseudo-participation. Paterson (1972) recommends that workers' representatives be present during job evaluation so that they can explain queries to workers; in other words, workers' representatives are used to sell the controversial results to workers. Because of their participation in the exercise, which they do not fully understand themselves, they have to abide by the results and encourage

other workers to accept them as well. The popularity of a workers' committee often depends on the workers' reaction to job-grading exercises, for participation in this forum benefits management more than workers since workers' representatives do management's work for it by 'selling' the unpopular job-grading to workers.

### WORKERS' PARTICIPATION IN PRACTICE

As stated earlier, one of the main objectives of this study was to examine the extent to which workers' participation had actually brought about industrial democracy, better communication between workers and management, an improvement in worker-management relations (industrial peace), higher productivity and an effective grievance-settling machinery. I shall now examine my detailed findings on each of these aspects in turn.

#### **Industrial democracy**

Many changes have taken place at Parastatal since Independence. Both ordinary workers and members of the Harare workers' committee attributed these changes to the efforts of the workers' committee. The changes included: the standardization of regular working hours; the provision of protective clothing; acting allowances; overtime payments; formal job evaluation; the adoption of formal grievance and disciplinary procedures; bonus payments; the building of new canteen; an increase in leave days for non-established staff; an end to abrupt dismissals; a pension scheme; medical aid cover; and a base wage for commission workers. These changes have greatly improved the lot of workers. But, despite the popular view, the implementation of these workers' demands was not really a result of the workers' participation in decision-making since they had (and still have) only consultative competence.

What appears to have happened is that the workers' demands coincided with the decision to rationalize and humanize personnel policies in keeping with the new political climate. If the AMA had not decided to implement these changes, not even Parastatal's management could have done much about it as they cannot effect such major changes. Thus the real credit should go to the AMA, rather than to either management or, least of all, Parastatal's workers' committees. While the central workers' committee did raise these issues with management, if an inflexible and unresponsive management had refused to listen, the workers would not have been able to force the implementation of their demands without the power to do so. Most workers, however, were not conscious of this fact. They were of the opinion that an aggressive and dynamic workers' committee chairman could force the implementation of workers' demands. Workers were consulted and management certainly allowed them to make

suggestions, but the ultimate decision lay beyond management, though as a state corporation it had to be seen to be doing away with obvious racist and exploitative tendencies. Management was aware that improvements were necessary for good worker-management relations and increased productivity. The workers' committee, no matter how dynamic, had only consultative powers and management was not obliged to implement workers' demands.

In reality, workers' influence has remained minimal and confined to trivial issues. Workers' participation at Parastatal was no more meaningful than in other, privately-owned organizations precisely because of the degree of control specified by the state in the worker participation organs. Parastatal's workers' committees were operating in a relatively friendly atmosphere, and certainly had access to a lot of information which workers elsewhere might not have been privy to, but they could not use it to best effect because of the low level of education among the workers' representatives. So my conclusion is that there was effectively no industrial democracy at Parastatal. The long, state-bureaucratic chain of command effectively removed decision-making from any forum in which the workers actually participated.

These workers' participation organs also afforded participation in decision-making only to the unskilled and semi-skilled portion of the workforce and excluded skilled, clerical, secretarial and supervisory workers. Their grievances could be dealt with by the workers' committee but they had no input into its day-to-day operations. Until 1986, the policy of Parastatal had been that these workers could not join the workers' committee. In 1986 a memorandum from the head office specified that any workers who were not in managerial positions or who were not secretarial staff handling confidential material could join the workers' committee; all other workers could stand for election to the workers' committee. But this information had not been relayed to workers up to 1988, when this research was carried out. However, the committee itself allowed only unskilled and semi-skilled workers to vote for or be voted on to the committee. This was most unfortunate indeed, for those who were excluded would have been in a better position to use the information provided and to challenge some of the decisions and might thus have been able to participate more meaningfully.

My conclusion regarding industrial democracy, then, is that the participatory organs had, in fact, played a divisive role among the workforce, which benefited management's interests. Moreover, the ease with which management manipulated and co-opted members of the workers' committee (detailed later, under Worker-Management Relations) also explains why management was strongly opposed to trade unionism within Parastatal. In negotiations with a trade union some of the representatives

would have been outsiders who could not have been bought off using internal resources, in the way that some members of the workers' committees were, in order to limit the extent of workers' real participation.

### **Communication between workers and management**

At the Harare plant, the workers' participation organs certainly provided a channel for communication between management and workers. The works council met every month. Workers' committee chairmen attended the weekly management meetings. The chairman of the workers' committee also had access to the general manager at the annual conference. In any case, the regional manager had an open-door policy where workers' committee members were concerned. Members of the workers' committees did not need to make an appointment to see him if they needed to. Both workers and management agreed that the workers' committee provided a channel for easy access to management, but this applied only to the lower-paid sections of the workforce, the non-established workers, as noted earlier. In most cases, the skilled, supervisory, secretarial and clerical workers went to the workers' committee only to complain about their subordinates, not with their own grievances. The workers' committee was not seen as providing these groups with a channel for communication with management.

The groups that were excluded were dissatisfied because they could not air their grievances through the workers' committee. The established workers stated that they liked the idea of a workers' committee, but they preferred sectional representation, otherwise they would not stand a chance at elections since they were a minority. They also felt that the calibre of the workers' committee members was not sufficient to articulate their problems. The skilled workers in particular had no mouthpiece through which to articulate their dissatisfaction with management. They did not even belong to a trade union and stated that they were very vulnerable to the individual whims of their immediate bosses who could demote them or deny them promotion.

As a special category of skilled workers, supervisors were especially bitter and dissatisfied because they heard of organization plans from their subordinates on the shop-floor who were on the workers' committee and attended either the works council or the weekly management meetings. They pointed out that workers were confined to a small task on the shop-floor while management were locked up in their offices. Supervisors, they insisted, were the only ones with an overview of the whole organization, yet no one wanted to hear their views. The supervisors' denigration of workers' participation organs was to be expected because they lost the most from the establishment of the workers' committees and felt that their positions were being subordinated to those of the workers' representatives. Skilled workers and supervisors had formed their own staff



association, but this did not survive as it was not provided for by law. In any case, management concentrated on the workers' committee.

My assessment, then, of the effectiveness of the workers' participation organs in providing a channel of communication between workers and management at Parastatal is that they were very effective but only for certain levels of workers: those who were most likely to strike and whose withdrawal of labour was likely to hit the enterprise hardest. The type of workers' participation organs provided, enabled workers to overlook the imbalance of power between themselves and management, giving a semblance of equality where there was none. Provision of such organs of workers' participation represents a typically ameliorative 'human relations' approach which believes that conflict is a result of poor communication. In fact, the name 'liaison committee' (by which workers' committees were initially called by the then Minister of Labour, Manpower Planning and Social Welfare) should have been maintained, as it is more consistent with their functions.

#### **Worker-management relations**

Both workers and management at Parastatal stated that their relations were good. Those few workers who stated that worker-management relations were bad had just been downgraded in a recent job-evaluation exercise. All the workers interviewed stated that relations were certainly much better than before Independence. They stated that they regarded the organization as a good employer compared to others in the private sector. However, relations between skilled workers and the rank and file were not very good. Unskilled workers expressed the view that most of their problems were caused by the skilled people under whom they worked and for that reason they opposed their inclusion in the workers' committee. That workers' participation had brought about good worker-management relations is shown by the fact that there had not been a strike or threat of one since 1981, even though these workers had been the first to strike after Independence. Judging from the minutes of the works council which were analysed, these meetings were characterized by mutual respect between the two sides.

Shadur (this volume) attributes these good relations to the workers' committee and the realization by workers that government would not support them in a fight against management. My study, in contrast, attributes the good worker-management relations to a number of different reasons. Firstly, the workers and regional management did not have much to fight over as all important decisions were made elsewhere. All potentially contentious decisions of any importance were made outside the enterprise and workers were well aware of this. When the workers met management with demands, management was very understanding and sympathetic and

workers understood that management at enterprise level was almost as powerless as they themselves were. A former chairman of the workers' committee stated that initially he had been really 'hot' and had thought that he could force the implementation of workers' demands, but he had later realized that he was not given the power to do so by the workers' committee guidelines which were later embedded in the Labour Relations Act. He said that he had realized that implementation depended on the goodwill of management and so he had set out to cultivate good relations and had concluded that management in the enterprise was receptive to reasonable demands. Ironically, he was voted off the workers' committee by workers who felt that he had sold out to management.

Secondly, worker-management relations were good because the members of the workers' committee were not sufficiently knowledgeable, to question those decisions that were taken by regional management, such as the acceptance of annual plans and other financial and technical decisions. The workers' committee members were also unable to understand many of the technical and financial issues, thus lessening the risk of acrimony. But, in addition, management had manipulated this situation by deliberately keeping secret its own memorandum allowing other, more educated workers to join the workers' committee. For example, skilled workers and supervisors wanted to know the criteria used for granting personal loans. They stated that some people had been given these loans several times yet other applications were consistently rejected. This issue was not raised by the existing workers' committee representatives because at their job level they did not qualify for such loans and many therefore did not appreciate the other workers' grievance. This issue was one that management could not have ducked because such decisions were made at enterprise level. This denial of a forum to knowledgeable, established workers thus helped to suppress potential conflict.

Thirdly, managers had also co-opted the workers' committee members through contrived personal contact. Senior management at Parastatal had invited some of these workers' representatives to their homes at weekends. One former workers' committee chairman nostalgically recalled how a former general manager had often invited him and the secretary of the workers' committee to his house at weekends for a whisky. None of the other levels of workers were so privileged. Workers' committee members also attended the annual Christmas party without paying while everyone else, including the regional manager, paid. The invitation to the tourist resort for the annual conference for a whole week was also intended to promote goodwill, and (as I have already indicated) did not require on the workers' full attendance at all sessions.

Fourthly, as Shadur (this volume) also notes, two outspoken workers' committee chairmen had in the past been promoted to Parastatal's

personnel department. Paradoxically, these examples encouraged other workers' committee members to be less vocal so that they might also be promoted. During the course of this research, the post of assistant personnel officer fell vacant and the then chairman of the workers' committee was one of the contenders for the post. He did not have the paper qualifications that were asked for, but he thought his position in the workers' committee would be adequate, not least since no acrimonious issues has been raised while he was in office. Other workers accused him of not taking up issues with management because he did not want to spoil his reputation. The possibility of promotion had therefore resulted in the modification of his behaviour by this chairman, and possibly also by management.

Fifthly, while worker-management relations undoubtedly improved as a result of the removal of the overtly racist and authoritarian tendencies of the former White management, there is no doubt that the new Black management was very responsive to government directives. A management manual in Parastatal describes one of the policies of the organization as that of 'developing and maintaining a sound industrial relations policy that is consistent with government policy'. Accordingly, management was prepared to concede to workers' demands which were within their sphere of authority and which did not involve large costs. Workers at the Harare plant were not often reminded of the limits of their influence, as was the case in the organizations studied by Maphosa (1985) and Makanya (1987).

Clearly, the effects of worker participation on worker-management relations at Parastatal had been largely positive. Management and workers covered by the participation organs both rated their relations as good. Other indicators also show that relations were, indeed, good and definitely much better than they had been before Independence. The workers attributed this improvement to the workers' participation organs which facilitated communication between the two parties, enabling them to sort out any issues before they became serious. However, the relations between management and skilled and supervisory workers were not so good, mainly because of the lack of a forum in which the latter could express their views. Supervisory workers were especially unhappy because they had been marginalized. Workers' participation had, therefore, only partly fulfilled its function. To what extent these organs would still have brought peace if all workers had been included is debatable. Possibly relations would not have been so good, since skilled workers and supervisors were capable of challenging management knowledgeably whereas the calibre of the workers' committee at the time of my research did not present a challenge to management.

### **Productivity**

Parastatals' management stated that productivity had gone up and attributed

this to hard work on the part of its workers. Managers stated that the amicable relations facilitated by the workers' committees were responsible for the increased productivity. Workers also agreed that they were working harder than before, but could not understand why there was a growing deficit. Each workers' committee meeting called on workers' representatives to encourage workers to work hard and to refrain from theft and indiscipline. Periodically, the workers' committee chairman and secretary were provided with a company car and a driver to visit all depots in the Harare region to deal with grievances and to promote production. The workers' committees became so committed to these managerial priorities that they named 1983 the Year of Higher Productivity and 1985/86 the Year of Cost-Cutting (Shadur, 1989). Membership of the workers' committee appears to have instilled in workers what management would call a responsible attitude, indicating that workers accepted managerial priorities.

Training also seems to have played some part, as shown by a letter written by one of 'Parastatal's' personnel officials to Silveira House, which provided the training: 'There is no doubt the delegates to those courses have changed their approach to management. Productivity is slowly improving which is a result of the mutual understanding between worker and management.' From the above statement, it appears that these training courses have had more of an integrative than a transformative effect. Workers' representatives attending them promoted management's priorities, instead of attempting to increase workers' influence in Parastatal.

### **Grievance-settling procedure**

The workers' committee at the Harare processing plant played a significant role in handling workers' grievances. The workers' committee chairman was called out to different departments as often as five times a day to hear a complaint either from a supervisor or a worker, or just to be present while a worker was being warned or disciplined. As early as 1982, workers requested management to release one of the workers' committee members to deal with workers' problems on a full-time basis. They also asked management to provide a room for this purpose but management turned down this request. The rate of consultation continued and the chairman of the workers' committee stated that he was not able to finish his formal workload and often came in on Saturdays to finish it off. As Shadur (1989) noted, this workers' committee was indeed supplementing a weak (or, rather, non-existent) trade union.

The effectiveness of this system caused both workers and management to state their preference for workers' committees rather than for trade unions. For management, there was the added benefit that workers' committees were easily manipulated as all their members were workers within the organization. On the part of workers, this preference was firstly

due to the ineffectiveness of the trade union to which they were nominally affiliated; but most importantly it was due to their ignorance of the functions of trade unions.

### CONCLUSIONS

Workers' participation at Parastatal showed that some of the government's objectives had been realized through the workers' committees which had provided a channel for communication between workers and management, which in turn had led to the improvement of worker-management relations in the whole enterprise. Even management's manipulative strategies were successful only because of the existence of the committees. Better worker-management relations had led to higher productivity. The operation of workers' committees as an informal grievance-settling machinery had deflected potential conflict which, if left unattended, could have interfered with production in the workplace. Both workers and managers benefited from the presence of these participation organs. Workers worked in a friendly environment, with a management which was as responsive as could be expected of one trained to lead workers expected to obey. Everyone in Parastatal expressed their desire that workers' participation should continue. Workers had gained invaluable experience of interacting with management and expressed their desire to participate in more important issues such as salaries, production levels, etc. Whether it was a result of their ignorance of the provisions of the legislation or of their dissatisfaction with their present degree of influence, workers undoubtedly wanted an extension of their influence in the workplace.

My detailed examination of workers' participation in Parastatal has shown how powerless Zimbabwean workers really are. Their post-Independence gains have resulted from the goodwill and responsiveness of management, directed by the state, rather than from their own influence in enterprise decision-making. Parastatal management generally had to set an example in industrial relations in line with government directives. Studies carried out in other organizations thus present a more direct reflection of the real balance of power between management and workers.

Little progress has been made to bring about more meaningful workers' participation, largely because of government's lack of political commitment and the existence of private ownership in the Zimbabwean economy. For example, government has no policies to strengthen the existing participatory organs. The level, scope and degree of control has remained the same in ten years. Stevens (1980) states that for consultative participation to lead to more meaningful participation there is a need for strong and ideologically committed trade unions which can mobilize workers for participation. Such trade unions have not materialized, partly because of

the internal weaknesses of the trade union movement in Zimbabwe but also because of government's inertia. Government has not adopted the various policies recommended by the Riddell Commission, such as the introduction of an automatic check-off system, the setting-up of a Trade Union Education Authority, or the establishment of an Economic Advisory Committee comprising workers' organizations, employers and government. Legislative curtailment of the strike weapon has seriously reduced the workers' power to the extent that future collective bargaining may not succeed, as both sides are aware of the workers' lack of ammunition with which to push for a more favourable settlement.

The various statements that have been made by government lead one to conclude that it has no clear conception of workers' participation. In 1981 government announced its intention that workers' committees should eventually become self-management committees. That, as explained earlier, would represent a transformative process towards worker self-management, in which enterprise ownership may be divorced from its control. But in the same year, 1981, the then Minister of Labour expressed his commitment to the ILO principles of collective bargaining within a tripartite system. Clearly, collective bargaining is incompatible with worker self-management, because collective bargaining presupposes capitalist hegemony. In 1986, at a May Day rally, the then Prime Minister announced his commitment to both collective bargaining and worker self-management, possibly as a result of a confused conception of participation. This supposition of a lack of conception of workers' participation is not too far-fetched, considering that some speeches for the Minister of Labour are known to have been lifted verbatim from a pre-Independence Minister of Labour's speeches (Wood, 1987). Alternatively, this contradiction could be due to what Ake has termed 'defensive radicalism', in which a leader continues to spout socialist rhetoric while implementing reactionary policies. The socialist rhetoric, Ake insists, is intended to confuse and soothe the radicals (Ake, 1978).

The Zimbabwean government has now shown clearly its commitment to collective bargaining. Government's past inability to pass legislation supportive of worker self-management has not only been due to its lack of political commitment but also to objective constraints such as private ownership of the means of production. It seems that any future attempt to increase the influence of workers in decision-making will be strongly resisted. In any case, laws such as the Companies Act will have to be radically amended before meaningful participation can be effected. Thus the government's lack of political commitment to socialism and fear of antagonizing the private sector have led to its adoption of a pragmatic stance, that is, collective bargaining at the expense of meaningful workers' participation.