Nationalism and Labour in Salisbury 1953-1965*

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I. Introduction

A comparative survey of South Africa and Zimbabwean historiography would clearly reveal a more developed literature on the "working class" in South African than its counterpart in Zimbabwe. From the 1970s the emergence of Social History in South Africa has moved the analysis of workers from studies on the labour process and labour institutions to broader issues of the culture and community of working people.[1] In discussing the broader social processes that have influenced the production and reproduction of African workers, South African historians have also begun to analyse the varying influences of agrarian history on urban struggles. Bozzoli has observed that:

> the prior processes of dispossession rural reconstruction and community - formation underlie the creation of all strata of the urban working class, and research into urban groups may be pursued by working "backwards" into the rural mainsprings of their march into the workforce.[2]

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[1] John Lewis, "South African Labour History: A Historiographical Assessment" in *Radical History Review* 46/7 Winter 1990, 213-235; Bill Freud, *The African Worker*, (Cambridge 1988).

[2] Belinda Bozzoli, "Class, Community and Ideology in the evolution of South African Society", in B. Bozzoli (Ed) *Class, Community and Conflict - S.A. Perspectives*

Yet it is also true that radical historians in South Africa have only recently begun to turn their attention to rural struggles and the land question.[3] Moreover there is some truth in the assertion by Neocosmos that South African historians 'are still very much under the spell of the linear proletarianisation thesis'.[4]

By contrast Zimbabwean historiography has produced some rich studies of agrarian struggles.[5] However, the importance of these studies, and the growing corpus of work on agrarian history in Southern Rhodesia in understanding the experience of the cities has only been glimpsed intermittently in the work of historians examining the "struggle for the city". Since the late 1970s there have been isolated attempts to understand the struggles of structurally vulnerable workers in the cities of Southern Rhodesia, in the context of an uneven process of transformation both within the confines of the settler colonial state and in surrounding territories. Long distances and differential rural fortunes have been shown to affect the nature of the responses of varying groups to the pressures of proletarianisation, and in particular the lived experience of ethnicities in the world of migrant labour. More recently work on the importance of gender struggles in the city, and the links between these 'negotiated spaces and contested terrains' in the

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(Johannesburg 1987) 21, see also Phil Bonner, Isabel Hofmeyer, Deborah James, Tom Lodge, (eds) *Holding their Ground* (Johannesburg, 1989); Shula Marks and Richard Rathbone (Eds), *Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa: African Class Formation, Culture and Consciousness 1870 - 1930*, (London 1982); Gary Minkley "Class and Culture in the Workplace: East London, Industrialisation, and the Conflict over Work, 1945-57" in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 14, 2 (1988), 739-760.

[3] William Beinart and Colin Bundy, *Hidden Struggle in Rural South Africa* (London, 1987); Helen Bradford, *a Taste of Freedom: The I.C.U in Rural South Africa 1924-30*, (New Haven and London 1987).

[4] Michael Neocosmos, "The Agrarian Question in Southern Africa and `Accumulation from below" in *The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies* (Uppsala, 1993), 44.

[5] Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe. A comparative study* (Harare 1985); Norma J. Kriger, *Zimbabwe's Guerrilla War: Peasant Voices* (Cambridge, 1992); Jocelyn Alexander, *The State, Agrarian Policy and Rural Politics in Zimbabwe: Case Studies of Insiza and Chimanimani Districts, 1940-1990* (Oxford University Ph.D thesis, 1993); Ian Phimister, "Rethinking The Reserves: Southern Rhodesia's Land Husbandry Act Reviewed" in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 14,2 (1993) 225-239; Idem, 'Commodity Relations and Class Formation in the Zimbabwean Countryside 1898-1920, *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 13,4 (1986) 240-257.

rural and urban areas, has begun to transform our understanding of the African experience in the city.[6]

Prior to the emergence of this later work, some of the major monographs on Nationalism in Southern Rhodesia, merely indicated some of the implications of the rural-urban linkages for the nationalist movement, without further exploring the complex effects of this process on the growth of nationalism in the city. The effects of the uneven growth of capitalist relations on class, enthicity, gender and the idea of the nation, were often precipatenly submerged beneath more general discussion of nationalism. This tendency is apparent for example in the work of Shamuyarira and Bowman. Shamuyarira, for example, while acknowledging 'the dangers of an outburst of tribal feeling' avoids any serious discussion of the subject and concludes that, 'Our people are happily finding a new force for cohesion in nationalism'.[7] Bowman in turn although pointing out that the African Nationalists in Southern Rhodesia faced organisational problems 'including those of ethnic conflict, of linking rural and urban discontent, and of overcoming the political indifference of non-indigenous migrant workers', quickly concludes that, however these difficulties 'paled beside the overriding factor of European resistance and repression'.[8] As a result of this hasty marginalisation of the contradictions within the African population, such analyses have often underestimated the problematic and often fragile nature of nationalist hegemony.

Ranger, in reviewing Ian Phimister's *Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe*, has observed that while the latter effectively describes the "objective" situation of African peasants and workers, it is less successful in understanding 'the complex and

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[6] Ian Phimister and Charles Van Onselen "The Political Economy of Tribal Animosity; A Case Study of the 1929 Bulawayo Location 'Faction Flight" in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 6,1, (1979) 1-43; Steven Thornton, "Municipal Employment in Bulawayo, 1985-1935: An Assessment of Differing Forms of Proletarianisation" in *Collected Papers*, 4, (University of York, 1979); Richard Parry, "Murder Migrants and the Salisbury Municipality 1907-1912" in *Henderson Paper*, 57 (University of Zimbabwe 1983); Tsuneo Yoshikuni, *Black Migrants in White City - A Social History of African Harare 1890-1925* (University of Zimbabwe D. Phil Thesis, 1989.); Idem, *Town-Country Relations in African Urban History: The Case of Salisbury and Bulawayo, Before 1950*, History Department. *Seminar Paper* (University of Zimbabwe, 1993); Elizabeth Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders and Wives: Shona Women in the History of Zimbabwe, 1870-1939*, (London 1992); Teresa A Barnes, 'The Fight for Control of African Women's Mobility in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1900-1939, *Signes*, 17,3, (1992).

[7] N. Shamuyarira, *Crisis in Southern Rhodesia*, (London 1966) p 185,

[8] L.W. Bowman, *Politics in Rhodesia: White Power in an African State*, (Cambridge, 1973) p 45.

ambivalent ways in which that situation was translated into consciousness'.[9] It will be the major aim of this paper to analyse some of the ambiguities of nationalism and labour in Salisbury, arising from the central fact of continuing urban-rural linkages in the formation of African politics and organisation in this city between 1945-1965. So often organisational histories of trade unions, [10] accounts of strikes[11] and surveys of nationalism,[12] while empirically recording the importance of this linkage, have failed to understand its resonance. Yet in attempting to understanding issues, ranging from the origins of nationalism to the limitations of trade union activities, the implications of the relationship between the country and the city need to be more clearly articulated. Within this context, one is better able to understand the differentiation within the African population and in particular the growth of an African petty-bourgeoisie with a mission education background.

II. The Post 1945 Economy and African Politics

With the coming of World War II, there were some dramatic changes in the economy and demography of Salisbury. Estimates of the African population in Salisbury place the figure at 22,126 in 1936, 28,119 in 1941, rising to 45,993 in 1946 and to 75,249 in 1951.[13] In terms of the percentage of Africans who worked in the principal towns in the colony, Salisbury represented 46.2% in 1946 and in 1951.

Manufacturing establishments in Southern Rhodesia grew from 299 in 1939, to 325 in 1940, increasing to 435 by 1946. By 1952

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[9] Terence Ranger, "Review of Ian Phimister, An Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe, 1890-1948: Capital Accumulation and Class Struggle", (London 1988), in *Times Literary Supplement* Feb 10-16, 1989.

[10] Brian Wood, "Roots of Trade Union Weakness in Post-Independence Zimbabwe" in *South African Labour Bulletin*, 12, 6/7, (1987); D.G. Clarke, "The Underdevelopment of African Trade Unions in Rhodesia", (Unpub. Mimeo 1974).

[11] Nelson Sambureni, "The African Response: Labour Unrest in Southern Rhodesia 1940-1955", History Department *Seminar Paper* 83, (University of Zimbabwe 1991).

[12] Ngwabi Bhebe, Benjamin Burombo: *African Politics in Zimbabwe 1947 - 1958*, (Harare, 1989).

[13] T. Yoshikuni, "Black Migrants in a White City", 272; *Official Year Book of Southern Rhodesia* No. 4, (S.R. Central African Statistical Office (1952)) 198.

the number of such establishments had increased to 724.[14] The intervention of the colonial state through financial assistance, protection and fiscal incentives facilitated the process of industrialisation. Moreover other factors which contributed to the growth of manufacturing were the decline of competition during the war period and the rapid expansion of internal demand.

The latter was as a result of the growth of the urban population, the expanding numbers of white immigrants and the relative increase of the incomes of black industrial workers in the twenty five years after 1946.[15] By the latter year most African employees in the manufacturing sector were working in four major sub-sectors, namely food, drink and tobacco, the area of metal manufactures and repairs, clothing and bricks, tiles and lime.[16]

As the number of African employed in Salisbury expanded after 1945, many of these workers came from the northern territories outside of Southern Rhodesia. By 1947, one source estimated that of the total of 36,873 Africans employed in the city including the commonage area. 41% were from Southern Rhodesia, while 59% were "non-indigenous".[17]

This trend continued through the 1950s. By 1956 the situation was reported as follows:

> Examination of the city working population shows that approximately 40% only are from Southern Rhodesia, and that while 20% are from Nyasaland 40% came here from P.E.A. When those of the two latter nationalities leave home their possessions are limited to the few rags in

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[14] Nelson T. Sambureni, "Industrial Development in Southern Rhodesia: A Case Study of Salisbury 1930's-1955" (unpub. mimeo, University of Zimbabwe History Department 1991).

[15] Peter Harris, "Industrial Workers in Rhodesia, 1946-1972: Working Class Elites or Lumproletariat?" *Journal of Southern African Studies,* 7,2, (1975), 144. Although as Jonathan Hyslop has noted, "this was a relative improvement; the wage gap of 1945 was a chasm, and big percentage increases in African wages could still amount to a pittance." - in "Trade Unionism in the Rise of African Nationalism: Bulawayo 1945-1963", *African Perspective,* 1, 142, 1986, 36.

[16] *Official Yearbook of S.R.* No. 4., (1952) 202; The Report of the Urban African Affairs Commission, 1958, 8.

[17] Report of the Director of African Administration for the year ending 30th June 1967,2.

which they arrive, and a pot in which to prepare
their food.[18].

Among the Salisbury Council Labour Force, the number of
"non-indigenous" workers was even greater. In 1952, 80.74% of
the council's labour force was from Nyasaland and P.E.A.
Between 1952-1956 this labour force which fluctuated between
3000 - 6000, constituted an average of 81% northern territory
workers; between 1958 - 1965, this average declined to 72%.[19] The
hostels provided by the council, were also dominated by "non-
indigenous" workers in the 1940s and 1950s, for example
providing 67% of occupants in 1955, and 63% in 1958.[20] Amongst
this council work force there was a very high turnover of labour.
In 1952, 40.44% of Africans employed by the council had been in
the employ of the latter for more than twelve months, while the
remaining 59.56% 'turned over one and two thirds times during
the course of the year'.[21] Moreover in an analysis of 348,000
Africans working in the city between 1953-1957, 70% of the men
concerned worked an average of only 5.3 months for one
employer before leaving the city.[22] Thus during the 1940s until at
least the mid 1950s the working African population in the centre
of Salisbury contained a large percentage of "alien" workers,
many of whom had a high rate of labour turnover, particularly in
the council labour force.

It was as a result of changes in land policy in the 1950s that
politics in Salisbury began to take on new dimensions. Up until
the end of the 1930s the situation for the Shona was characterised
by general survival, and in some cases, expansion of agriculture.
During this period there was in Rangers words, 'a postponement
of the question of compulsion' on the land.[23] Many indigenous
workers would thus straddle their rural and urban lives, using
wages earned in Salisbury to strengthen their rural basis and to
fight off permanent dependence on wage labour. Up to the late
1940s with less than half of the reserves having been centralised,
peasant resistance developed in "highly idiosyncratic" ways, with

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[18] Idem, 1. July 1955 - 30th June 1956.

[19] Calculated from the reports of the Director of Native Administration 1951/1952 -
1965.

[20] Idem, 1954/55 - 1957/58.

[21] Idem, 1 July 1951 - 30th June 1952, 41.

[22] Idem, 1 July 1956 - 30th June 1957, 10.

[23] Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War*, 88.

peasant resistance varying over space and time, depending on such factors, as the manner in which local representatives of the settler state intruded into their lives, population pressure and market availability.[24] Then in 1951, following recommendations from the 1944 Godlonton Commission on Native Production and Trade, the government introduced the Native Land Husbandry Act. (N.L.H.A.) While many of the provisions of the act extended earlier policies on the land with regard to the centralisation of settlement patterns, destocking, grazing and conservation, the major difference with the N.L.H.A. was its attempt to halt labour migration between the rural and urban areas and to place strict controls on future settlement in the reserve areas. This was to be carried out through land sales and the issuing of stock rights to those considered permanent African farmers.[25] As Alexander has shown the Act was uneven in the nature of its implementation and impact. This was largely due to varying levels of African resistance, technical flaws in the act itself, and the lack of staff to ensure successful implementation. This often resulted in situations where 'chiefs and headmen were given far more latitude in implementing the act than intended'. Summarising the effects of the N.L.H.A. Alexander concludes that the latter

> succeeded in intensifying resistance in some
> areas, in undermining the fragile relationships,
> N.C.s had built with local leaders, and in creating
> disaffection and insecurity even where it was not
> in the end implemented. However the extent to
> which the act achieved its ostensible goals was
> limited.[26]

Similarly Phimister concludes that as the implementation of the N.L.H.A. was confined to about 42% of the reserves, 'the actual impact of the act was rather less severe than previous writers have claimed'. Moreover Phimister makes the point that since 30 percent of African producers in the reserves were working 63 percent of all cultivated land towards the end of the

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[24] Phimister, *An Economic and Social History*, 275.

[25] For a recent clear analyses of the N.C.H.A see J. Alexander, *The State, Agrarian Policy and Rural Politics in Zimbabwe......*(Ch 2).

[26] Ibid.

life of the N.C.H.A, the latter actually increased differentiation in the reserves.[27]

In terms of urban politics the major effects of the N.L.H.A. were firstly to increase the flow of indigenous Africans into cities like Salisbury, although the extent of migration from the rural areas differed, according to the varying effects of land legislation in each area. Secondly it greatly affected the changes in political leadership in Salisbury, by broadening the debates around territorial nationalism and an extended national identity. From 1946 until about the early 1950s Charles Mzingeli and the Reformed Industrial and Commercial Union dominated African politics in Salisbury. Mzingeli was one of the most remarkable figures of African politics in Southern Rhodesia. With a limited formal education, Mzingeli developed a formidable presence in Harare politics, which he dominated until at least the early 1950s. Known socially as the "Mayor of Harare",[28] Mzingeli campaigned over several areas of interest including: the development of trade unions, the problems of African business men and women, the rights of women in the city; the restrictions on the sale of liquor to Africans; the housing crisis; participation in local government; and the development of a unified national movement. Mzingeli also developed regional and international links ranging from being a contributing editor to the S.A. communist organ Nkululeko, and a correspondent with the Guardian, a socialist paper in Cape Town, to an occasional contribution to the monthly journal of the Fabian Society.[29] Born in 1903 in Embakwe in the Plumtree district of Matabeleland, Mzingeli moved to Salisbury in 1939, having also worked in Bechuanaland and, for the Railways in Northern Rhodesia. By 1945, Mzingeli owned a grocery shop from were he carried out his political activities.[30] Even though the more perceptive of the C.I.D. officers doubted whether Mzingeli would describe himself as a communist,[31] he was nevertheless considered, 'a leader in all African organisations of a subversive

[27] I. Phimister, "Rethinking the Reserves: Southern Rhodesia's Land Husbandry Act Reviewed", JSAS . 19,2, (June 1993) pp 236-237.

[28] A.W. 1/2/56.

[29] NAZ. ZBZ 1/1/1 Commission of Enquiry into Native Disturbances 1948. Evidence of Charles Mzingeli.

[30] Ibid, see also Lawrence Vambe, From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe, p 94.

[31] NAZ, ZBZ 1/1/1 Evidence of Captain Robert Hugh Borland, C.I.D.; See also T.M. Mapuranga, L.C. Mzingeli: His Role in and Contribution to the Wakening of African Trade Union and Political Consciousness in Rhodesia (Unpub Mimeo 6.9.71).

nature'.[32] Understanding the demise of Mzingeli, from being in near monopoly control of African politics in Salisbury during the 1940s and early 1950s, to the period of the bus boycott in 1956 which represented the "death knell of Mzingeli",[33] necessitates an understanding of the changing social and economic basis of the African population during this period. Increasingly harassed by the settler state and opposed by the young Turks in the Youth League, Mzingeli became increasingly embroiled in quarrels on all sides, displaying intolerance and fear of the growing opposition to this leadership.

Launched in June 1946, the first major oppositional campaign undertaken by the R.I.C.U. was a protest against the promulgation of the Native (Urban Areas) Accommodation and Registration Act (1946) which placed further controls and limitation on Africans in urban areas. By 1948, apart from Mzingeli's involvement in the R.I.C.U. the campaign against the Urban Areas Act, and his ambivalent involvement in the 1948 strike, he was participating in several organisations. He was a member of the African Advisory Board which was dominated by the R.I.C.U., from which platform he increasingly came into conflict with the paternalism of Ibbottson and the African Welfare Society. Mzingeli was also chairman of the African Branch of the S.R. Labour Party, the Salisbury African Vigilance Association and the New Era Fellowship Society, which aimed at linking up with other racial groups in the colony. The range of involvement of leaders like Mzingeli in the 1940s reflected the compressed nature of the social structure of African in the Urban Areas. Members of an aspiring elite were frustrated in their aspirations for advancement, by having to live in conditions little different from the poorest among the Africans in the city, and by the constraints on occupational progress. As Mzingeli himself would later describe it 'most people capable of leadership were in a delicate economic position!'[34] Thus Mzingeni's organisational involvement varied from working with unions, to contesting for a place on the limited local government structures provided for Africans, reaching further for a broader alliance with white and "coloureds" in the colony, and with progressive organisations in South African and on an international level. However, the influence of Mzingeli and the R.I.C.U. was limited to the inner

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[32] NAZ F248 CAL/2532/SEC/G/ (JNT), Native Unrest 1948.

[33] Interview with Lawrence Vambe 8/11/93.

[34] A.W. 23/1/52.

part of Salisbury in terms of African residence. As Yoshikuni has written:

> Salisbury's urban environment was featured by a sharp social and cultural gap between the inner and outer town, the former largely representing the alien and marginalised while the latter the indigenous and "respectable". The gap was reflected in two different and sometimes even competitive African political traditions in Salisbury. The inner town (especially the municipal locations, in the Harare Township) was a focus of Black workers struggle over survival issues, and this culminated in the R.I.C.U led militant urban social movement after World War II. On the other hand the outer town (especially private locations on farms) became a cradle of African elite politics as exemplified by the Rhodesian Native Associated (founded in 1919) and the S.R. Bantu Congress (founded in 1936). But such elite politics had little influence on the social conflicts of the inner town...[35]

The demise of Mzingeli's varied interventions was thus an important development, signalling a break in a certain form of urban politics, and the emergence of more national, combined rural-urban forms of political organisations. This new nationalist mobilisation, even as it registered unprecedented form of mass participation, also brought with it new tension and silences which were to have future ramifications. It is to these development that we now turn.

III. The Changes in the Urban Population and the Rise of the Intelligentsia

The boom of the Federation period from 1953 to 1957 has been viewed as the phase during which the S.R. government was able to "buy off" most sections of the white and black opposition, and to undermine African Labour protest due to a relative increase in

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[35] T. Yoshikuni, *Town-Country Relations in African Urban History.*

wages of the unskilled[36] and the expansion of the Southern Rhodesian economy, with an annual G.D.P. growth rate of 9.3% between 1953 and 1960.[37] With the number of manufacturing enterprises increasing from 700 in 1953 to 1300 in 1957[38] and the total employment in manufacturing rising from 35,000 in 1946 to 70.000 in 1953,[39] the sector expanded as a result of a combination of import substitution, domestic demand and export growth.[40] The 1950s certainly experienced the expansion of opportunities for small sections of the elite. However towards the end of the decade, the limitations of such opportunities for advancement became increasingly apparent, and the emergence of a more countrywide national movement lead by a new intellectual elite marked a new stage in African politics. In Salisbury underlying these political changes were important demographic shifts in the city's population, reflecting the increasing influx of indigenous African into the urban area, and the development of a more organic link between urban and rural politics in Mashonaland. As Ranger has written, in the 1950s 'a sense of shona cultural identify belatedly emerged and this interacted with yet more intense peasant grievance to give the main impetus to African nationalism'.[41] However despite the growth of a national consciousness articulated by an increasingly assertive intellectual elite, there were internal struggles continuing in the African community based on such issues as the claims of trade unions, and gender with conflicts.

At the beginning of the decade in the aftermath of the events of 1948, the activities of the R.I.C.U. were increasingly centred on the politics of the Advisory Board, provided for in the Urban Areas Act of 1946. The 1950 Advisory Board election was contested by the R.I.C.U and the Harare Residents Party. Leading members of the latter party included B.J. Mnyanda, and J.H. Samuriwo, both active in either the Bantu Congress or the Rhodesian Native Association (R.N.P) dominated by a rural elite.

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[36] David Birmingham and Terence Ranger, "Settlers and Liberators in the South" in David Birmingham and Phyllis M. Martin (eds), *History of Central Africa* Vol. 2, (London 1983) 363-364.

[37] D. Wield 'Manufacturing Industry' in C. Stoneman (Ed) *Zimbabwe's Inheritance* (Harare 1981), 154.

[38] Ibid, 154.

[39] Roger Riddell, 'Zimbabwe', in Roger Riddell (ed) *Manufacturing Africa*, (London 1990), 338.

[40] Ibid, 341.

[41] Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War*, 137.

At this stage the link between urban and rural politics was still the elite Native Association, as the following examples show. The N.C. in Mrewa reported in 1951 that opposition to the Land Husbandry Bill in the area was mainly influenced by the 'Bantu Congress in Salisbury through their member chiefs in the reserves'.[42] In Mazoe the N.C. reported in 1951:

> At least one of the Chiweshe Reserve Chiefs and some of the Councillors are members of one of the African associations with Headquarters in Salisbury.[43]

Similarly, the N.C. of Sipolilo reporting on the annual meeting of the local branch of the R.N.A., presided over by I. Samuriwo complained:

> The man is a menace and should be debarred from entering all reserves except his own.[44]

R.I.C.U. won the 1950 election, which was reported to have had the "flurry" of an American Presidential election with an "avalanche" of election manifestos, pamphlets and other paraphernalia. On his election victory Mzingeli was,

> born aloft in a chair, manned by four strong men, very much like His Holiness the Pope, while the Sena reed players blasted a tune behind.[45]

The R.I.C.U completely dominated the Advisory Board until 1955 when four of the eight seats on the Board which had come up for elections were lost to the Civic Association, a breakaway group from R.I.C.U. S.M. Mbirimi, an ex-member of R.I.C.U and now with the Civic Association, criticised the R.I.C.U. in a manner that reflected the increasing discontent over Mzingeli's leadership in the townships:

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[42] NAZ., S2827/2/2/1 Vol. 1 Internal Affairs Annual District Reports 1951-52, *Annual Report Mrewa 1951*.

[43] NAZ S2827/2/2/2 Vol. 1 Annual District Reports 1952 Mashonaland North, *Report of the N.C. Mazowe District* 31/12/51.

[44] NAZ., S2827/2/2/3 Vol. 1 *Annual District Reports 1955*. Report of the N.C. Sipolilo 31/12/55.

[45] A.W. 20/12/50.

> R.I.C.U is an organisation which is in the hands of
> businessmen who have no real interest in the
> workers.[46]

There is a little doubt that African businessmen became
prominent in the affairs of the Advisory Board, and that the tone
of R.I.C.U. politics increasingly reflected Mzingeli's involvement
with multi-racial societies such as the Inter-Racial Association.
After the Second World War there as a slow growth of African
business from 337 in 1946 to 511 in 1959.[47] By 1950 the business
profile of the African townships looked as follows: 41 groceries,
general dealer stores and butcheries, 11 wood vendors, 1 hot dog
stall; about 6 wood workers, 5 laundries, and a small number of
bus operators.[48] Mzingeli increasingly stressed the need for
Africans to stop thinking about the "reserves" and to 'improve our
home in Harare'.[49] The needs of the older long terms residents,
including the aspiring elite were foremost on his agenda.
Representatives of other organisations such as the Congress in
Salisbury also stressed that Africans were becoming 'impatient
and vociferous' in their demand for the creation of a middle
class.[50] The Native Administration Department was also aware of
the criticisms of the aspiring elite. The Director of the Department
reported that,

> the time is now here when measures should be
> introduced under which Africans who attain a
> pre-determined standard of culture may acquire
> the status of the French colonial "evolue" and the
> Portuguese "assimalados" and by doing so gain
> emancipation from all statutory disabilities which
> better-class Africans presently feel to be
> personally irksome.[51]

This aspirant elite was determined to define itself in several
ways. Firstly education played a large role in defining the status

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[46] A.W. 28/12/55.

[47] V. Wild, "An Outline of African Business History in Colonial Zimbabwe",
Zambesia (1992) XIX (i), 36.

[48] A.W. 11/10/50.

[49] A.W. 3/3/54.

[50] A.W. 24/6/53.

[51] Annual Report of the Director of Native Administration 1/7/53 - 30/6/54, 75.

of the elite, because despite the obstacles of colonial structures, it offered better opportunities for individual advancement.[52] Secondly, this group repeatedly sought ways to distinguish themselves from the rest of the community. Through the formation of dance, choral and debating clubs, this emerging class sought to develop forms of entertainment more suitable to its status. Thus for example the Salisbury African Culture Club was formed in 1955, from which two further break-aways clubs were formed, namely the Gamma Sigma Club and the Cultural Syndicate. The object of these clubs was 'to improve the cultural life of the African in Harare'.[53] Graduation parties were formal affairs designed to celebrate the addition of a new member to a growing elite. At a reception held to celebrate the graduation of the African community's first medical doctor, Parirenyatwa, the invitation in the press read as follows:

> All University graduates are asked to appearing academic dress. Non-graduates are asked to appear in evening dress or as close to that as possible.[54]

The African press became an important vehicle in the public sphere through which this elite sought to recognise itself and to define its problematic status. In numerous interventions there were repeated objection that,

> the requirements of African teachers, social workers, businessmen and now lawyers and doctors cannot be said to be the same as those of an untutored African sitting by the fire in the reserve.[55]

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[52] As David Moore writes: "Education, that centre of the state's ideological apparatus, was a primary factor in the creation of a Zimbabwean State Policy and its initial will to power. Education thus also became an elemental characteristic of the ideology of rule" in *The Contradictory Construction of Hegemony in Zimbabwe: Politics, Ideology and Class Formation in a New African State* (D. Phil York University, 1990), 47.

[53] "A Study of the Life of the African at African Townships" in *Central African Journal of Medicine*, Vol. 7, No. 6, June 1971, 220.

[54] *African Daily News* (A.D.N) 26/12/56.

[55] A.D.N. 22/12/56.

As Michael West has correctly observed this quest for respectability was 'one of the enduring themes in the formation of the educated African elite in Southern Rhodesia'.[56]

However, the obstacles to the consolidation of an African middle class were to prove too large for the emergent elite. Increasingly in the post 1945 period African businesses were driven out of the central business district to the townships, where they had to face the harsh regulations of the Municipal Native Administration, resulting in major setbacks to the growth of an African business community.[57] More fundamentally the inability of the Southern Rhodesia Economy to broadly stabilise the reproduction of labour in the cities, provided a general environment of instability for the urban population. As Bond has written, regarding the relationship between housing provision and labour stabilisation, the problem was 'the lack of capacity of either industrial or financial capital to provide sufficient conditions for an urban revolution'.[58]

As the impressive growth of the federal economy began to slow down by 1956, with the fall in the price of copper, the rate of growth of the Southern Rhodesian economy began to fall. Unemployment amongst African workers increased, despite the government attempt to prevent foreign workers from entering the colony, through the Foreign Migratory Labour Act introduced in 1958.[59] Politics moved from the squabbles amongst Africans over Federal nominations,[60] to the radical Populism of the Youth League. As leaders like Mzingeli, Samkange and Savanhu became embroiled in their participation in Federal politics, a new, young leadership of George Nyandoro and James Chikerema emerged in Salisbury.

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[56] Michael Oliver West, *African Middle Class Formation in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1890-1965*, (Ph.Dissertation. Harvard University, 1990), 72.

[57] Volker Wild, "Black Competition or White Resettlement? African Retailers in Salisbury 1935-1953" in *Journal of Southern African Studies*,Vol 17, No. 2., (June 1991). 177-190; Michael O. West, "Pan Africanism, Capitalism and Racial Uplift: The Rhetoric of African Business Formation in Colonial Zimbabwe", in *African Affairs* (1993) 92, 263-283.

[58] Patrick Bond, *Finance and Uneven Development in Zimbabwe and South Africa*. (Ph.D. thesis, Johns Hopkins University 1992), Chapter Five.

[59] Duncan Clarke, *The Unemployment Crisis*, (Salisbury 1978) 6.

[60] At one meeting in 1953, held to discuss the Federal nominations of Stanlake Samkange and Jasper Savanhu, it was reported that, "tempers were frayed and Mr. M.S. Mbirimi moved from his seat and struck Mr. G. Nyandoro several blows", A.W. 7/10/53.

The City Youth League was started in August 1955, to challenge both the dominance of an increasingly conservative Mzingeli on the Advisory Board, and the leadership of the intellectuals who were participating in multi-racial organisations such as the Capricon Society and the Inter-Racial Society, dominated by white liberals.[61] Many of the intellectuals also had contact with the anti-communist' Moral Re-armament Movement during this period. In September 1956 the Youth League organised a Bus Boycott against the United Transport Company, because of the latter's decision to raise bus fares, in a situation where workers were already spending between 18 and 30 percent of their wages on transport costs.[62] An Action Committee, formed in August 1956, had presented the government with a 44 point memorandum outlining their grievances. This Action Committee set up sub committees in New and Old Highfields, Harare, Mabvuku, St Mary's and Epworth, to coordinate the activities of the boycott. On Monday 17th September 1956, the boycott began, on the recommendations of the Action Committee. The boycott was widely supported particularly in Harare and Highfield. During the course of the boycott violence erupted at the Harare markets, resulting in the stoning of a bus and cars, and the destruction of a waiting room for passengers.[63] During the violence two incidents in particular, indicated the struggles going within the African community. The first was the attack on the Carter Girls Hostel, leading to the rape of 16 women at the hostel, which displayed the hostility of men towards the assertion of women's autonomy in the city. Commenting on the implications of this action for the Nationalist Movement Scarnechia observes that:

> The conjuncture of Nationalist protests......with this overt act of violence against women by men did not forbode well for the future relation between Nationalist strategies and the advancement of women's independence.[64]

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[61] Ian Hancock, *White Liberals, Moderates and Radicals in Rhodesia: 1953-1958*, (London 1984) 39-56.

[62] "Walk - don't ride; Part Two: The Struggle within the Struggle", *Read On* (Nov. 1991) 34.

[63] A.W. 19/9/56.

[64] T. Scarnechia, *Residential Segregation and Protest in Harare African Township and New Highfield, 1946-1956: The Politics of Gender and Class Accommodation.* (unpublished mimeo, University of Zimbabwe, 1992).

The second incident related to an attack on a prominent businessman, James Chiweshe,[65] characterising the conflict resulting from that increased differentiation amongst the Africans in the 1950s.

While Mzingeli supported the boycott[66] he criticised the Action Committee for its lack of responsible leadership.[67] However the boycott effectively signalled the marginalisation of Mzingeli and the R.I.C.U group in the leadership of Salisbury African politics, and the rise of the Youth League. This change of leadership was confirmed in the December 1956 Advisory Board elections in which the Youth League registered a sweeping victory with Mzingeli himself losing his seat for the first time.[68] Underlying the demise of the "Mayor of Harare" was a more general demographic shift in the African community in Salisbury, resulting from changes taking place in the rural areas. By 1958 the number of indigenous Africans working in the city surpassed that of foreign migrants, a process which had been unfolding since the mid-1950s. The newer townships of Highfield and Mabvuku, established in 1952 to provide married accommodation, were, in particular, the main destination for Africans from the colony. For example, in 1958, 59.27% of families and 74.99% of lodgers in Old and New Highfield were from Southern Rhodesia.[69] In Harare, where the hostels provided accommodation for foreign migrants, the latter still represented a high proportion of the population. However even in Salisbury's oldest African townships 59% of the males and 88% of these females were born in Southern Rhodesia.[70] The increasing number of local Africans entering the urban areas was directly linked to the large scale clearances of African families from land designated as "European" under the Land Apportionment Act which was implemented with increasing vigour after World War Two. In addition as populations in the reserves grew, compulsory destocking was implemented pushing more people off the land. George Nyandoro, born in the Chiota reserve in 1926, the son of a chief who was deposed in 1946 for opposition to the settler

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[65] A.D.N. 18/9/56.

[66] A.D.N. 15/9/56.

[67] A.D.N. 3/10/56.

[68] A.D.N. 29/12/56.

[69] Annual Report of the Director of Native Administration 1937/58, 17.

[70] A.D.N. 16/7/59.

authorities,[71] was aware from the early 1950s of the need to link up urban and rural struggles. As Ranger has noted in a discussion on the effect of Mau Mau on Zimbabwean Nationalism, while Mzingeli 'constantly brought in the South AFRICAN dimension... George Nyandoro insisted on the relevance of Kenya'.[72] Even as Mzingeli was sending greetings to 'all progressive movements throughout the world' on May Day celebrations organised by the R.I.C.U. on 1953 and 1954,[73] Nyandoro was pondering the more appropriate lessons of rural struggles.

It was clear therefore that broader continental experiences were also influencing the views of the younger leadership in Salisbury in their attempts to grapple with the effects of land legislation from the mid 1950s. As the Director of Native Administration observed:

> Current affairs in the other territories in Africa have an undoubted influence in this colony and, with the increasing degree to which radio news broadcasts are now being listened to on privately owned wireless sets, and particularly in the Harare Townships, news of unrest is soon widely disseminated.[74]
> Added to this was the influence of the increased air travel, resulting in more Africans gaining experience of places, peoples and conditions in other part of the world.[75]

In September 1957 the City Youth League in Salisbury and the largely inactive Bulawayo based African National Congress, formed the first country wide nationalist movement, a renewed African National Congress under the leadership of Joshua Nkomo. By early 1958 the Congress was making a 'determined effort' to increase its activities in the Chinyika reserve in the

[71] Robert Cary and Diana Mitchell, "African Nationalist Leaders in Rhodesia" in *Who's Who* (Bulawayo 1977), 41.

[72] Terence Ranger, "Mau Mau and the Rise of Zimbabwean Nationalism: The Rhetoric of Extremity, 1952 to 1954", (Unpub. Paper 1993).

[73] A.W. 6/5/53; A.W. 5/5/54.

[74] Annual Report of the Director of Native Administration. I July 1955 - 30 June 1956, 107.

[75] Idem, 1st July 1951 - 30th June 1952, 57.

Goromonzi area.[76] By 1959 the Security report on ANC activities in Salisbury read:

> in and around Salisbury Congress generally succeeds in attracting large crowds who applaud the extreme statements of speakers.[77]

Newspapers increasingly found their way to the rural areas carrying information on the activities of the ANC. As a result, as the N.C. for Mazoe observed, 'the average intelligent individual in the reserve is fairly well acquainted with current affairs'.[78] Some workers in Salisbury appealed for a greater symbolic unity between the city and the surrounding Mashonaland countrywide, in the form of changes in the names of schools and streets. A letter from M.J. Kapunga complained:

> Most Bulawayo townships and schools are named after people who were considered important in the Matebele tribe unlike most of the Salisbury schools that are named after animals... I suggest that the school (New Highfield) be renamed with a name that will serve to teach our children the history of the country of Mazezuru... Names such as Egypt, Lusaka, Canaan, Engineering and Jerusalem in New Highfield are annoying and irritating.[79]

The Congress dominated the Advisory Board election in Harare in 1957 and 1958, the Mabvuku Advisory Board had a close relationship with the congress, and in Highfield three quarters of the 18 member Ratepayers Association were active A.N.C. members.[80] In cases where local businessmen refused to assist the congress they were moved from membership of the Highfield Trading Association and replaced by people more sympathetic to A.N.C. objectives. Moreover people were told not

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[76] NAZ S2827/2/2/6 Vol. 1 Annual District Reports 1958, Report of the N.C. Goromonzi 31/12/58.

[77] NAZ F120/725/L343/1 Security Situation Reports 30/12/59.

[78] NAZ S2827/2/26 Vol. 1 Annual District Reports 1958, Reports of the N.C. Mazoe 31/12/58.

[79] A.D.N. 10/8/58., see also A.D.N. 7/10/58.

[80] A.D.N. 18/3/58.

to purchase goods from shopkeepers who were not members of Congress.[81]

Garfield Todd's removal from the leadership of the United Federal Party (UFP) in February 1958 for his liberalism towards African advancement signalled the decline of the period of limited reforms. A state of emergency was declared in February 1959 and 307 Congress members were arrested. At this stage most of the intellectual elite remained aloof from nationalist politics. As Bernard Chidzero described them in 1959, they were 'half-trusted and half-respected by the African masses and half-feared and half-accepted by the European Society'.[82] Following the banning of the ANC the National Democratic Party (NDP) was formed in 1960. A significant aspect of the formation of the N.D.P was the stronger representation of the intellectual elite within its ranks. Men like Bernard Chidzero, Enock Dumbutshena, Herbert Chitepo, Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole, Robert Mugabe and other became prominent in the leadership. The major reason for the move was the rightward drift in white politics after 1958, and the decreasing space for a black elite to develop in the colony. In Chidzero's words it was time for the middle class, to

> realise that it has a vital role to play in the destiny
> of the Africans - it is the spear head and the tool
> of the masses, and must never lose sight of the
> fact.[83]

The N.D.P grew rapidly and by February 1960 Salisbury was already regarded as the stronghold of the party.[84] In December 1961 the N.D.P. was banned, and a short time afterwards the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) began its activities. By the middle of 1962, the presence of ZAPU in the townships in Salisbury was clearly apparent. As the Director of African Administration complained:

> there has been a pronounced upsurge of politics
> on an unprecedented scale. Methods have been
> practised on a mass bases where the image of the

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[81] NAZ F120/725/L343/1 Security Situation Reports 30/12/59.

[82] A.D.N. 8/8/59.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Ngwabi Bhebe, "The Nationalist Struggle 1957-1962" in Canaan S. Banana (ed) *Turmoil and Tenacity in Zimbabwe 1890-1990* (Harare 1989) 72-73.

> ruling African Nationalist Party and its political
> beliefs and dogmas have been insinuated into
> almost every facet of Township Administration,
> and has been such that it has permeated into the
> lives of the whole community. Advisory Boards,
> were all affected in one way of another and this
> was achieved by establishing unauthorised Civic
> and Tenants Associations. Trade Unions were
> similarly loaded with politics and it is a sad
> admission that even certain religious
> organisations were also subjected to political
> pressures.[85]

With the suspicious death of the Deputy President of ZAPU,
Dr. Parirenyatwa, there was a spread of "the petrol bomb war"
and 'for the first time in the history of the country acts of arson
became prevalent in the European area.'..[86] In addition to such
protests the Nationalist movement threatened rent boycotts and
created community schools in Harare and Mabvuku. The latter
were composed of school dropouts and those considered to be in
the city illegally, and became fora for nationalist mobilisation
amongst the youth.[87]

With the rise of a new intellectual elite to dominate in the
nationalist movement[88] other voices of protest were
subordinated. In 1954 the Southern Rhodesia Trade Union
Congress (S.R.T.U.C.) was formed with Nkomo as the President.
By 1961 with Nkomo's involvement in N.D.P., the leadership of
the S.R.T.U.C. passed to Reuben Jamela, a Salisbury based
unionist. Jamela's ambivalence towards the N.D.P. and his loyalty
to the conservative I.C.F.T.U.,[89] brought him into increasing
conflict with the Nationalist movement.[90] In 1962 Z.A.P.U.
supported Josiah Maluleke's challenge to Jamela. As the police
report noted:

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[85] Annual Report of the Director of African Administration for the Two Year
Period Ended 30/6/1962,3.

[86] Idem 30/6/63,2.

[87] Ibid, 43.

[88] David Moore, "The Ideological Formation of the Zimbabwean Ruling Class" in
Journal of Southern African Studies, 17.3. (1991) 472 - 495.

[89] C.M. Brand, "Politics and African Trade Unionism in Rhodesia Since Federation"
in *The Journal of the Central African Historical Association* 2, (1971) 96.

[90] NAZ F120/L343/2 Vol. 3, Security Situation Reports June 1961 - March 1962.

> Z.A.P.U. youths handed out T.U.C. circulars at
> beerhalls throughout the African Townships in
> Salisbury. These circulars, written in the
> vernacular, attacked Jamela... for accepting police
> protection and blame Jamela for the banning and
> downfall of the N.D.P. Readers were urged to
> "Kill Jamela" drive him away - the sell out'.[91]

The formation of Maluleke's Southern Rhodesia African Trades Union Congress (S.R.A.T.U.C.) confirmed the increasing subordination of trade union activities to nationalist politics. This was because of two major reasons. Firstly, the leadership of the trade unions moved between the activities of the latter and the nationalist movement. This mobility reflected the continued instability of leadership in both the trade unions and the nationalist parties, who were continually caught between the aspirations of the new elite and the obstacles to their fulfilment. As an editorial in the Daily News expressed it, these individuals were 'all things to all men... politicians, aspirants of culture, trade unionist, church workers and what have you'.[92] Secondly the nationalist movement, and other mutual assistance organisations, spoke to the continued rural linkages of workers in a way that trade unions were not doing so.

The contribution of African women to African politics in Salisbury has been significant. The 1958 Urban Affairs Commission estimated that in the early 1950s there were between 15,000 and 20,000 women in Salisbury's townships. In addition to contributing to the major movements of the day, many women challenged the settler definition, of acceptable use of space, patterns of movement, and provision of suitable recreation. Large numbers of women rallied behind the R.I.C.U., who held meetings to oppose such issues as the arrest of women in the township.[93] The R.I.C.U. Women's Club was formed:

> to foster unity among the women-folk in Harare,
> to instil a sense of responsibility and dignity in
> African women and to find means whereby the

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[91] Ibid.

[92] A.D.N. 8/5/57.

[93] A.W. 6/6/51., also Terri Barnes and Everjoyce Win, *To Live a Better Life*, (Harare 1992).

evils of townlife to which African women have
fallen prey can be combatted.[94]

In such organisations, the R.I.C.U men sought to impose their
own definition of "responsibility and dignity" and disapproved
strongly of women being allowed 'to loiter in the Harare
Township and earn their living by unlawful means'.[95] Teresa
Barnes has shown that issues which concerned gender relations,
and problems of the reproduction of urban Africa, were regularly
presented as part of the demands on the settler state in the 1940s
and 1950s. The content of such demands thus demonstrated the
effects of women's struggle on men's intervention, whether they
were on strike or involved in various forms of community
organisation. In Barnes' words:

> African women often challenged the forces of
> patriarchy: they travelled, absconded, used the
> colonial courts, earned their money, and talked
> back to their elders....they contributed to the
> shaping of urban society not so much by
> confronting patriarchy head on, but rather by
> persisting in developing and performing tasks
> that enabled them to further the cause nearest to
> their heart: the survival and hoped for prosperity
> of the coming generations. By the mid 1950s
> when the winds of nationalism were starting to
> blow over S.R., a model of appropriate behaviour
> for urban African women had been constructed in
> which they could pursue their interests, although
> not without cost to themselves in terms of
> independence and mobility.[96]

In the 1950s and early 1960s, women were active members of
the Congress, N.D.P. and Z.A.P.U. However, as England has
noted, participation in protests, boycotts and informal political
fora did not result in more meaningful female involvement in

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[94] A.W. 16/1/82.

[95] A.W. 9/1/52.

[96] T. Barnes, *We Women Worked to Hare; Gender Labour and Social Reproduction in Colonial Harare, Zimbabwe 1930-56*, (University of Zimbabwe D. Phil. thesis, 1993) Pp 446-447.

formal political structures.[97] Even as the Nationalist Movement sought to address some of the problems of women in the city, the subordination of these issues in the struggle was already apparent. This position coincided with the legislation relating to African women in the townships which gradually began to manipulate custom and tradition and to define women's positions rights and duties inside the evolving institutions of marriage in order to move African family relationship into line with the new capitalist economy.[98]

The split in the Nationalist Movement in 1963 resulted in a decision between ZAPU and the new Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) led by Ndabaningi Sithole. Just as the ambivalent intellectual leadership in Salisbury was beginning to develop more substantive connection between urban and rural politics, they became involved in a bloody intra elite conflict which was in part based on the fragile basis of the emerging middle class and its shifting allegiances. Ethnicity which had played a contradictory role in the life of city's workers, was henceforth increasingly harnessed by the intellectual elite and deployed in the destructive form of "political tribalism" in the battles within the Zimbabwean elite which were to plague the Nationalist Movement throughout the anti-colonial struggle. After the Rhodesian Front came to power in 1962 resulting in the decisive proscription of nationalist activities in the cities, the liberation struggle moved from the early 1970s, to the rural areas. As the Director of African Administration reported seven months after the Declaration of U.D.I. in November 1965,

> the year under review has been one of the most tranquil for over seven years.[99]

This social and geographical shift of the terrain of struggle would effect the nature of urban struggles, in the 1970s and the force of labour's demands in the post-colonial period.

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[97] K. England, *A Political Economy of Black Female Labour in Zimbabwe 1900-1980*, B.A. Honours Thesis (University of Manchester 1982) 129.

[98] T. Barnes, "Ideologies and the Construction of Class Amongst African Women in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1930-1960", unpublished paper (University of Witwatersrand 1992).

[99] Annual Report of the Director of African Administration, 30th June 1966, 1.

IV. Conclusion

In sum the period between 1945-1965 saw different layers of experience entering the politics of Salisbury, resulting from the changes on the land and the resultant demographic and social effects on the city. From 1945 until about the mid 1950s there was a distinction between the urban politics of the R.I.C.U., in a city largely dominated by foreign migrants, and the rural elite politics of the Rhodesian Native Association. From the mid 1950s with the increasing movement of indigenous Africans off the land and into the Salisbury area there was an increasing linkage between the rural and urban struggles of the Mashonaland areas. Accompanying this development was the rise of anew intellectual elite in the 1950s, who, especially through the N.D.P., forged closer linkages between rural struggles and the politics of the city. In the process, both the struggles of trade unions and women, that made important contributions to anti-colonial protests, were subordinated to a problematic nationalist hegemony. Most importantly in trying to assess the relationship between nationalism and labour during this period, it is vital to remember that workers responses to urban movements and protests were as much about securing their places in rural social relations as about the struggle for space in the city. In Lonsdale's words,

> workers have fought as much to protest their rights to membership in a "tribe" - a community whose imagined value was enhanced by the threat of exclusion from it-as to create rights in the entirely new community of their class.[100]

At a more general level, the process has important implications for the project of nation building. It implies a diversity of interests and layers of consciousness within the urban classes, which do not necessarily follow a linear path into national consciousness. The growth of a national loyalty has to be fought for, and adherence to nation - building agendas depends in crucial ways on the continuing capacity of national movements to develop sufficient conditions for a regenerative national project. No doubt the anti-colonial struggle produced a strong impetus and momentum for common interests. However the

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[100] John Lonsdale, "African Pasts in Africas Future" in Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley*, Book One, (London 1992) 214.

latter, for the most part, did not result in a unanimous triumphal nationalism, but in repeatedly interrogated allegiances.