

Press Politics, Class and Contested Notions of the Public: The *African Daily News*' Coverage  
of the Railway Strike and the Bus Boycott of 1956

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**Abstract**

*This article examines the African Daily News' coverage of two key events that took place in 1956 in Southern Rhodesia; the bus boycott (in Salisbury) and then the railway strike (in Bulawayo). These two events took place in September 1956. The article discusses the relationship between the social movement leaders who instigated the railway strike and the bus boycott by examining its content: news coverage, editorials, and letters to the editor. The two events under discussion and the way the newspaper covered them brought to the fore the conflict between African elites as leaders of trade unions and African elites as journalists at the newspapers; as well as ordinary readers (publics) and the colonial government. The article discusses the multiple layers of interest in the story coverage, its impact on politics as well as the interests of the different classes affected. It argues that the African elites and the colonial government sought to use the press to control the African readers and shape their politics through the press. This article focuses on the formative years of the African Daily News. I intend to answer a number of specific questions: What was the aim of this newspaper? Who were the proprietors of the newspaper? Whose voice did it project? What political stance did the newspaper take and how did the various stakeholders react to this? These questions help to account for the manner in which the African Daily News covered the two key events in the country during this period.*

**Key words:**

Bus Boycott, Railway strike, Action Committee, City Youth League

**I. Introduction**

The *African Daily News* was the country's first independent newspaper in 1956. It was owned by a South African company called African Newspapers Limited. It was an offshoot of the weekly newspapers, viz, the *Bantu Mirror* and the *African Weekly*, which had operated in the country since the 1930s. The *African Daily News* operated for nearly eight years and, during its lifetime, the newspaper transformed itself from a mouthpiece of the government to being anti-establishment, supporting the nationalist parties. This culminated in its banning in 1964.

The year 1956 was a tumultuous one for the colonial government in Southern Rhodesia. It was so because there were two incidents that threatened to shake to the core the colonial establishment. The events were the bus boycott in Salisbury (organised by the City Youth League), and the railway strike in Bulawayo. This article focuses on the newspaper's formative years, when it was soundly against African trade unions. The relationship between the private press and the trade unions is important in informing our understanding of the direction the *African Daily News* took in this period. How was the paper perceived by different publics within Southern Rhodesia? Before examining the abovementioned trajectory, the article first chronicles the birth of this daily newspaper, and also offers an overview of how it was viewed by ordinary readers, from its inception to its closure. This latter discussion is meant to act as a counterpoint to the perspective of African political elites and social movement leaders who, for all intents and purposes, believed they monopolised public opinion during this era. The African elites at the time needed the press as an ally (they were weak politically and ideologically) and not a competitor, to buttress their position in society in controlling fellow Africans. What the owners of the *African Daily News* believed they represented, within the dispensation *vis-à-vis* the expectations of the African elites, is also important to consider here. In capturing these class dynamics, this study lays a foundation for an analysis of the performance of the newspaper, and how it was perceived by the major political actors.

Theoretically, this article deploys the agenda-setting theory of the media developed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in the 1970s. The authors argue that the media are persuasive in focusing the attention of the public on issues, events and personalities, and in determining the importance people attach to public matters. The agenda-setting theory assumes that because of the media, people are aware or not aware, pay attention or neglect, play up or neglect specific features of the public scene (Shaw, 1979, p. 96). As further

applied by Christopher Green-Pederson and Rune Stubager, agenda-setting theory assumes that the mediatisation of politics is due to the fact that the media has the power to generate interests on particular issues for political groups (Stubager & Green-Pederson, 2010, p. 663). It is believed that politicians depend on media exposure and have an incentive to attempt to frame the public debate, and are therefore likely to respond to the media agenda. This theory has been challenged at various levels, and one such argument is that it focuses more on the elite agendas whilst ignoring the public agendas. Walgrave and van Aelst suggest that the mass media impact on macro-political agendas is conditional on a number of factors relating to the mass media input as well as the political context, such as whether election times or routine politics are studied (Walgrave and van Aelst, 2006, p. 88). However, Newton (2006, p. 209) intimates that, as far as the political impact of the mass media is concerned, they are generally a weak force in politics and government. He contends that even if they can and do exercise some direct and independent influence over some aspects of political life, and can even exercise a strong or crucial one under certain circumstances, normally their impact is mediated and conditioned by a variety of other and more powerful forces (ibid). While Newton's work is relevant for the European and American political environment, this research tests the theory within a Zimbabwean context where political leaders have been making a lot of noise clamouring for access to the media especially during election seasons, whilst others have been resisting calls for media reforms. The agenda-setting theory, though it has been challenged, will be tested on the 1956 events in colonial Rhodesia.

## **II. The Birth of the *African Daily News***

The *African Daily News* was published in Salisbury by African Newspapers Limited from 10 September 1956 (*Southern Rhodesia Legislative Assembly Debates*, 1964). On 11 May 1960 the newspaper was registered as the *Central African Daily News*, though it continued to be published under the title *Daily News* (ibid). African Newspapers Limited was

acquired by locally registered companies, although it maintained Bertram and Cedric Paver as its nominal director and manager, respectively. However, the fact that Bertram Paver was now the director of African Newspapers Limited presents us with a unique problem in trying to explain the birth of a daily newspaper in Southern Rhodesia. In March 1956, Bertram Paver was sacked for believing that it was counterproductive to launch a daily newspaper in South Africa (Manoim, 1983, p. 60). However barely six months later he launched the *African Daily News* in Southern Rhodesia. What could have happened to drastically change Paver's strong opinion that had apparently cost him his place in the Bantu Press of South Africa? Economically speaking, populous South Africa, with its lucrative advertising possibilities, seemed a better bet for a daily newspaper, compared to Southern Rhodesia. Something had happened in Salisbury that dramatically changed Paver's stance.

Looking at the social climate in the 1950s, there are possibly two or three reasons that pushed Paver to begin a daily newspaper. The first reason was that in 1953 the Federation of Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland was formed on the premise that there would be equal partnership between black and white stakeholders. In addition, the architect of the Federation was Godfrey Huggins who was close to Paver. Thus the *African Daily News* was very likely formed to market the idea of a Federation to African subjects who had opposed it.

A second reason may be that the colonial authorities made an undertaking that they would covertly give Paver the funds for the endeavour, with the understanding that African Newspapers Limited would project the voice of the government in support of a Federation. This seems plausible since the Federal Government's propaganda newspaper, called *FACT*, had failed to alleviate the African public's misgivings over the Federation. In addition, the popularity of African Newspapers Limited meant that it was likely to be a more successful channel for state propaganda. In this vein, Michael West argues that the idea of a Federation

had been backed by a propaganda offensive, including advertisements in Southern Rhodesia's African-oriented press (West, 2002, p. 183).

A third reason Paver may have decided to launch a daily newspaper has to be located in the context of the events of 1956, when Africans in the major towns of Salisbury and Bulawayo initiated boycotts of buses and railways, claiming they were becoming more expensive whilst their wages were too low to accommodate the increases. As the boycotts spread, violence accompanied them, and they became increasingly political in nature. This directly threatened the colonial political establishment. It was agreed in parliament that Africans had reacted in such a way because they lacked information on a daily basis. Prime Minister Garfield Todd, a liberal like Bertram Paver, thought of starting a daily newspaper.

In a debate in the Legislative Assembly, Todd showed that the year 1956 presented numerous problems for the government as they could not agree with workers on wage issues. The most vocal group of the time was the Rhodesia Railways who kept demanding higher wages. Railway union leaders kept referring to 1956 as a brother to 1948 (*Southern Rhodesia Legislative Assembly Debates*, 1956).<sup>1</sup> Fearing a repeat of 1948, the government decided to open negotiations with railway workers. However, these negotiations, according to Todd yielded nothing as "union leaders had pitched the demands so high that it was going to be very difficult for them to draw back without losing a great deal of prestige" (ibid). Todd went on to point out that:

When the government realised that there was going to be a strike action, we began to make arrangements to contact with the African people ... made arrangements with the Federal Government to begin broadcasts on the Federal Broadcasting Station specifically for the Africans. The idea simply in opening up channels of communication was to get the real news, the facts of the situation, across to as many

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<sup>1</sup> In 1948 there was a general strike in Southern Rhodesia that was radical and it had united the African workers to collectively demand better wages.

Africans as possible. Also arrangements were made to purchase space in the African Newspapers Limited and when events began to happen quickly, the African Newspapers Limited themselves decided to issue a daily paper. We were very grateful for that from our point of view because it meant that the ordinary news service was available to the African papers, and any news which came through Government sources, and it was available both to European and African Newspapers and it would be able to put across daily and available to African readers. These two things, the broadcasts and the daily newspapers, were actually functioning by Tuesday, 18 September, which was the day after the riots at Harari [bus boycott] (ibid).

It seems from the perspective of Todd that the birth of a daily newspaper for the Africans was necessary to keep them informed and to counter the increasing threat of workers unions. But the statement by Todd infers that it was the initiative of African Newspapers Limited to start a daily newspaper. However, Nathan Shamuyarira points out that the project of starting a daily newspaper for Africans was funded by Todd's government and that this was kept a secret. Cognisant of the fact that the colonial administration would not agree to such a project, Todd is said to have secretly called Paver in and asked him to start a daily newspaper which the government funded for a few years.<sup>2</sup>

The *African Daily Newspaper* was named such because it was born to inform the Africans as they were hitherto not catered for by state aligned newspapers for white settler publics like the *Rhodesia Herald*, the *Bulawayo Chronicle* and the *Sunday Mail*. The *African Daily News* announced that its duty was to promote the political, economic and spiritual advancement of the African people (*African Daily News*, 1958, February 14). The newspaper also sought to "put forward the rights and wrongs of our multi-racial system so that the public

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<sup>2</sup> Interview with Nathan Shamuyarira (10 June 2012). This information was confirmed in an interview with Bill Saidi (15 April 2013) who argued, with the benefit of hindsight, that the only reason why the *African Daily News* front paged Garfield Todd's 1958 elections was because his government funded the paper.

can judge for themselves and to present the African point of view in the best manner possible" (ibid). The Editor-in-Chief of African Newspapers Limited, Lawrence Vambe, noted that "their policy was to promote an understanding and mutual respect between the Europeans and Africans in this country, and to emphasize the positive efforts of the African people" (*African Daily News*, 1956, November 9). In elaborating on this point, Vambe said that this

did not mean that we must paint the African as an angel, but whenever possible we endeavour to inspire the African with confidence in himself so that he can make maximum use of any opportunity that comes his way and thereby earn respect and recognition in the country of his birth (ibid, p. 5).

Patrick Keatley (1963, p. 304) described the newspaper as a professional, well-edited paper which accurately transmits the various currents of African opinion.

Besides catering mainly for an African audience, James Coltart, the Managing Director, claimed that the *African Daily News* was not a racial publication as it sought to appeal to the other communities besides Africans. In spite of this, white Rhodesians, according to Keatley, were not interested in buying the paper. Keatley argues that various attempts were made to set up vendors at street corners in central (white) Salisbury without success. However, by the time the newspaper was closed it had a readership of about 20 000 of which 5 000 were white readers. In spite of the close relationship with the Government and the fact that it was primarily a paper for the Africans, the *African Daily News* claimed it had the ability to uphold journalistic principles of an independent press by refusing "to pander to anyone, officials or otherwise" (*African Daily News*, 1958, February 14).

African Newspapers Limited had been owned by the Paver Brothers. In 1956 with the birth of a daily paper, African Newspapers Limited was sold to a consortium of companies operating within the Federation. Thus African Newspapers Limited was now funded by four

wealthy companies, namely Anglo American Corporation (with copper mines in Northern Rhodesia and gold mines in South Africa), the Rhodesia Selection Trust (with mines on the copper belt), the British South Africa Company (which owned mineral rights in Northern Rhodesia) and the Imperial Tobacco Company. These big industrial concerns operating in Central Africa provided financial assistance to African Newspapers Limited through an organisation known as Kachalola Company. Its directors were B. G. Paver, F. L. Hadfield, A. F. Pearce and C. A. G. Paver (as Managing Director).

By 1957 these companies attempted to sell African Newspapers Limited to the Westminster Press of Britain. However, the sale did not go through as the federal Prime Minister, Sir Roy Welensky, is reported to have blocked an attempt by the Westminster Press to purchase the African Newspapers Limited after he consulted European politicians (*Chapupu*, 1957, June 8). The reason, as noted by *Chapupu*, was that Welensky felt that “newspapers read by Africans should not be controlled by too liberal people overseas” (*ibid*). The object of keeping out ‘liberal people’ was to combat communism and the ‘subversive’ influence of ‘African nationalism’ (*ibid*). The Prime Minister dissuaded management of African Newspapers Limited from “entertaining the idea of selling out to an overseas newspaper group who have not an experience of African journalism required for dealing with present day African Nationalism” (NAZ S3269/60/30, 1957).

It is also interesting to note that the British South Africa Company and the Imperial Tobacco Company had insisted during the negotiations that in the event of African Newspapers Limited being sold to the Westminster Press a local board was to be appointed to control the newspaper’s policy. This was rejected by the Westminster Press. It is reported that the Westminster Press had offered about 90 000 GBP, an amount which represented the money the other proprietors had already put into the venture (NAZ S3269/60/30, 1957). Whilst the deal seemed close, negotiations collapsed due to the demands by the Westminster

Press to have their representative in a superior position to that of C. A. G. Paver (NAZ S3269/60/30, 1957). Analysing the reasons behind failed sale, *Chapupu* pontificated that “African Newspapers are published to achieve a specific purpose namely to counteract African Nationalism and to confuse the African public with propaganda aimed at attempts by them to unite and demand their rights” (*Chapupu*, 1957, June 8). The foregoing is necessary in the final analysis of how the newspaper performed and whose interests it represented. It seems that although the newspaper was supposedly for the Africans, its editorial policy was indeed dictated by the benefactors of African Newspapers Limited. Thus, in its formative years, the *African Daily News* supported the establishment although it claimed to be for the Africans.

In 1961, however, Thomson Newspapers, Rhodesia (Private) Limited purchased the whole of the share capital of Kachalola Limited, giving Roy Thomson controlling interests in African Newspapers Limited and the Blantyre Printing and Publishing Company Limited (*African Daily Newspaper*, 1957, June 9). Roy Thomson owned the Thomson Newspaper Group which was reported to own about 100 newspapers in Canada, Britain, the United States of America, Trinidad and Nigeria (*The Montreal Gazette*, 1961, October 20). The deal to buy papers in Southern Rhodesia was described as “the biggest newspaper deal ever in Central Africa” (*The Montreal Gazette*, 1961, October 19), and African Newspapers Limited was described as the largest publishing house for newspapers aimed at African readers. By this time African Newspapers Limited was not only printing and publishing the *African Daily News* but also some 13 weekly, fortnightly and monthly newspapers and magazines, which circulated throughout the Federation. Following the purchase, the Board of Kachalola resigned and Roy Thomson became the new Chairman with James Coltart and Gordon C. Brunton joining the boards of African Newspapers Limited and Blantyre Printing and Publishing Company respectively. The agreement covering the purchase of Kachalola

Limited ensured that very substantial additional cash resources would be available from the United Kingdom for both the re-equipment and the development of African Newspapers Limited and the Blantyre Printing and Publishing Company. There was also an added incentive of being closely associated with a well-known newspaper and publishing group. It was hoped that the purchase by the Thomsons would greatly improve both the welfare of the staff and the future progress of the newspapers and periodicals as capital resources and technical experience would be injected. By 1961, the Thomsons had invested over £300 000, and were employing close to 131 Africans and 21 Europeans. In addition, the Thomsons also bought a new printing machine worth £100 000. However, the coming of the Thomsons at first had a destabilising effect on the running of the *African Daily News*. It is argued that the new Managing Director, Deryk James, began a massive recruitment of British journalists and this led to divergence of opinion on what the editorial policy was meant to be. This led to the resignation of Nathan Shamuyarira, who felt that the recruitment of white editors to the editorial staff was contrary to the original set up under the Paver Brothers.<sup>3</sup>

Roy Thomson expressed the view that his paper in Rhodesia would develop “an awareness among Africans of the security, enlightenment and understanding which was their heritage as citizens of democratic countries” (*The Montreal Gazette*, 1961, October 19). In the same vein, James Coltart argued that their role at African Newspapers Limited was to “educate, inform and create an understanding of community objectives and civic consciousness as the basis of democracy and social progress” (Coltart, 1963, p. 203). It is not clear how the democracy mentioned by Roy Thomson and James Coltart articulated with that imagined by the Africans at this time. In Rhodesia, this period is commonly conceptualised as the proto-nationalist phase whereby Africans were generally thinking in terms of improving their conditions under white rule. For example, Bill Saidi argued that Africans seemed more

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<sup>3</sup> Interview with Nathan Shamuyarira (16 March 2013). See also Eugene Wason (1976, p. 46) who argues that the coming of the Thomsons at first led to confusion on the editorial policy as the “African editor was pulled first one way and then the other.”

vocally concerned with being allowed to drink European beer and light wines than being independent.<sup>4</sup> Thus one would assume that the democracy referred to was that which merely entailed the removal of segregationary laws that crushed the social esteem of Africans.

In a comment the *African Daily News* stated that the coming in of Thomson complemented a policy which they had pursued since the inception of the paper in 1956. The commentary further stated that

whilst we are not ashamed of our record, and acknowledge the assistance and backing which we have had from our shareholders in the past, we do admit freely that we have a long way to go before the quality of production will reach the standard which we require. Now that the resources we lacked will be made available, nothing but the best will be acceptable. We are on the threshold of a new era and we enter it fully confident that as a member of the Thomson Organisation, our many weaknesses and shortcomings will disappear, and we will set ourselves a task of not only providing our readers with a better newspaper, but a striving to establish standards which are second to none (*African Daily News*, 1961, October 20).

What the *African Daily News* lacked in terms of reporters was adequately covered by their main editorial team. The newspaper employed African editors who were highly educated, and all but one were Africans from Southern Rhodesia. The first African Editor-in-Chief at African Newspapers Limited was Jasper Savanhu. He was replaced by Lawrence Vambe who had obtained his matriculation certificate at Saint Francis, Marianhill in South Africa in 1943. Vambe was Editor-in-Chief from 1956 to 1959 when he became the first African to be appointed Information Assistant in London (*African Daily News*, 1961, January 9, 'African Newspapers chief appointed to London'; *NAZ ORAL/233*. (1983, June 13). *Lawrence Vambe interview by I. J. Johnstone*.). Vambe was later knighted by the Queen for

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with Bill Saidi (15 April 2013).

his services to journalism in Southern Rhodesia and the Federation. When he left African Newspapers Limited, Vambe was succeeded by another highly educated editor, Nathan Shamuyarira, a trained teacher who was described by Harvey Greenvill Ward as “an opportunist who was very much influenced by white organisations and white women” (*NAZ Oral/246*, 1984, October 17). In 1953 Shamuyarira joined the Inter-Racial Association, an organisation that sought to promote tolerance and co-existence in Southern Rhodesia. Shamuyarira and other fellow educated Africans in such associations as these were seen as the best hope for a mixed society like Rhodesia. On 5 May 1953 he joined African Newspapers Limited as a cub reporter and he rose steadily in the company, becoming the first editor of the *African Daily News* in 1956 (Mitchell, 1980, p. 59). From July 1959 until September 1962 he was Editor-in-Chief of African Newspapers Limited, a post from which he resigned over various policy issues. Between 1961 and 1963 the newspaper was edited by Philip Mbofana who was succeeded by Willie Musarurwa, the last African editor of the *African Daily News*. Like most editors, Musarurwa was a highly educated teacher who had obtained a journalism degree from the University of South Africa. He became the editor of the *African Weekly* in 1958 and of the *Bantu Mirror* in 1959. In 1960 he was editor of the *African Parade*, and from 1961 he became the editor of the *African Daily News*. The last editor of the *African Daily News* was a British trained journalist by the name of Eugene Wason who worked with other British journalists like Mark Davidson and Bill Mclean from Dundee. It was these editors who shaped the trajectory taken by the *African Daily News*. However, other factors like management, ownership of the paper and the changing politics in the country also played a fundamental role.

The *African Daily News* was published in four languages: Shona, Ndebele and Nyanja, with English as the main language. In terms of its operations, it followed closely the

lines taken by its predecessors, the *Bantu Mirror* and *African Weekly*. Concerning these early newspapers, Savanhu noted that:

Most of the news edited was freely contributed and we selected some who received a small payment for their contribution. We of course had a lot to do correcting English, presentation and omitting numerous libellous statements. Most of the news was contributed freely by the reading public from all parts of the country, some sent along with their news 20c to pay for its publication and we had to take this money and return it all and ask them whether it should be part of their subscription to the *Bantu Mirror*, we had to educate our public of the duties of newspapers. Some would write the editor to thank him for presenting the news (AOH/5 Savanhu, 1977, 28 February).

Perhaps what marks out the *African Daily News* from the earlier papers was its use of the ordinary citizens in the gathering of the news – what has been termed recently as citizen journalism. It would use ordinary correspondences for a pay of about £5 for a good story. In an editorial, the newspaper stated that:

We rely heavily on Africans in the professions and those engaged in responsible positions to supply us with factual information of events in their districts. We instruct them to regularly and strictly not make any comments of their own, if they do, they know their comments will not be published and may themselves be removed from our list of correspondents. We cannot employ staff men in the smaller centres, no newspaper can afford that, even 'The London Times' has to rely on what are called 'stingers' in the smaller centres (*African Daily News*, 1961, October 16).

This way of getting news from the people seems to have been popular with contributors, as some would write to register their disappointments when their stories were published late or were not published at all. For example, S. W. Kanengoni (a reader) wrote to

the editor complaining that his story appeared in the press several weeks after sending it. He argued that

many people do not buy newspapers because of this reason as they are being discouraged by not seeing their news items published in papers. When we come to views, we only read those views sent in by leaders of various organisations (*African Daily News*, 1956, December 19).

In spite of such disgruntlements, the *African Daily News* appears to have been received with pleasure by the majority of the reading African public and African organisations, and to be claimed as an emblem of African cultural 'advancement'. A. Mwamuka, Chairman of the Southern Rhodesia Chamber of Commerce said

the *Daily News Bulletin* which came into existence during the disturbances meets a need which has long been felt, for an African paper which could give fresh news of the events occurring in Central Africa. It would seem advisable to the Press now to switch its services off from a weekly to a daily paper. Both from the point of view of literacy among the Africans, information and encouragement of a daily paper seems most necessary at this stage of our development, what is important is to develop a reading culture in the African people. From the point of view of advertisers, instead of waiting for a whole week, daily adverts would become a feature (*African Weekly*, 1956, October 4).

The Reverend Canon Chipunza, priest-in-charge of the Methodist Church, concurred with Mwamuka as he also believed there was no need to continue producing the other weekly papers. He held that consideration should be given to the possibility of dropping the *African Weekly* which, according to him, was publishing very stale news. He however suggested that "the *Bantu Mirror* be retained to continue to cater for people from Matabeleland, whilst the *Daily News Bulletin* would continue publishing in Shona and Nyanja" (ibid). Some readers

suggested that the new newspaper should carry short educational news items. Due to financial constraints faced by Africans, some readers suggested that the *African Weekly* should remain as there were people who could not afford to buy a daily paper. Others were of the view that the use of vernacular language was important in African papers, arguing that there was a tendency to get a more 'honest' view from a translated vernacular news item than from an English one. Some prominent personalities, such as J. M. N. Nkomo, believed that it was a good thing that African Newspapers Limited had started a daily newspaper which kept Africans informed of the latest news. He was convinced that it would get more support from the Africans with time (*African Daily News*, 1956, October 18). However, other readers, like A. Kachikoti, a clerk at the Native Affairs Department, did not like the *African Daily News* because he felt that the Weekly City Late Editions (*African Weekly* and *Bantu Mirror*) were the best at giving a wider coverage of news of the week (ibid).

### **III. The African Daily News' Coverage of the Bus Boycott and the Railway Strike**

The year 1956 was a momentous year for Southern Rhodesia. That year saw two key events in 1956 that plunged the *African Daily News* into the politics of Southern Rhodesia. The first event was a bus boycott in Salisbury; the second, a railway strike in Bulawayo. The Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia, Garfield Todd, responded to these two events by declaring a state of emergency. During this period the *African Daily News* depended on some form of funds from both the government and a consortium of local companies. This affected the way in which the newspaper handled the bus boycott and railway strike. This section starts by looking at the coverage of the bus boycott and the railway strike before moving to discuss the various perceptions of the coverage and the conflicts they generated.

On 17 September 1956, the African people of Mbare and Highfield locations in Salisbury undertook a boycott of the bus transport operated by a monopoly company called the United Transport Company. This boycott was organised by the City Youth League under

the banner of an organisation called the Action Committee. According to Martin Loney, the formation of the City Youth League and the Action Committee came as a challenge to the African elite who had adhered to the politics of partnership by responding to the strategy of the white political leadership to foster the emergence of an African middle class (Loney, 1975, p. 101). Michael West argues that – except for its leadership – the City Youth League was dominated by the lower middle class with most of its members educated to the upper primary school level. There were few rank and file white-collar professionals and university educated Africans, as many had opted to join the pro-partnership organisations such as the Capricorn Africa Society (CAS) and the Inter-Racial-Association of Southern Rhodesia (IRA). The City Youth League was anti-Federation and it attacked the idea of partnership as well as CAS and IRA for seeking to “control, suppress and keep down the Africans forever” (West, 2002, p. 205). In 1956 the City Youth League organised a protest against the two pence increase in bus fares (Wood, 2005, p. 12). The bus boycott was led by educated professionals, including James Chikerema (an insurance salesman), George Nyandoro (a bookkeeper) and Edson Sithole (a clerk). These leaders of the bus boycott also belonged to the City Youth League. The Action Committee was responsible for organising the boycott. The Action Committee justified the boycott strategy by pointing out that bus fares had become excessive and beyond the earning capacity of ordinary workers. The plight of Africans was described by the Action Committee in their memorandum to the Minister responsible for transport. They said:

The minimum unavoidable transport expense for the people living in Highfields is £4/month and about £3 for those in Harare and Mabvuku. In our opinion, this unavoidable expenditure is too high when compared with the average wage of £7 to £10. It becomes impossible to maintain a family as the cost of education, living and

everything has gone up at a faster rate than the rise of African wages (*African Daily News*, 1956a, September 18).

According to reports in the *African Daily News*, the bus boycott was 90 percent effective in the African locations of Harare and 75 percent in Highfields (ibid). Highfields and Mbare were the first two locations that were set aside for all Africans working in Salisbury. The geography meant that Africans had to commute to work. The locations had become the home of all groups of Africans: the unemployed and the employed, the old and the young, as well as single women and men. The bus boycott degenerated into lawlessness when waiting rooms were destroyed; cars stoned and there was looting in the townships. The *African Daily News* reported that a number of women were raped when the rioters broke into a female hostel near Salisbury. This gender-based violence was embroiled in the nexus of class-war and patriarchy: young women who stayed at female hostels situated between the two locations and the city centre had ignored the boycott by opting to pay higher fares. According to West, the sexual violence associated with the bus boycott is best explained within the City Youth League's undisguised masculinist demeanour, which created a socio-political context that had no tolerance for defiance by women (West, 2002, p. 205). Timothy Scarnecchia saw the rape as a form of punishment on the women for disobeying calls to support the boycott (Scarnecchia, 2008, p. 79), whilst Nathan Shamuyarira argues that the women were raped because they had acted as sell outs in disobeying calls for the boycott (Shamuyarira, 1966, p. 70). Although there is no evidence to support the culpability of the City Youth League in the rapes, the City Youth League is blamed by West for espousing politics that reinforced masculine dominance in the public domain, which in a way helped to create as well as maintain, a political climate in which such acts would occur (Scarnecchia, 1996; West, 2002, p. 206). Timothy Scarnecchia also points to the fact that although the bus boycott was originally planned as a peaceful protest against high bus fares and rising prices

of other consumer items, it became violent as young men broke into the female hostels where they stole money and personal belongings before proceeding to rape about 16 women (Scarnecchia, 2008, p. 79).

As Joshua Nkomo recalled in his autobiography, the events of 1956 greatly demonstrated the power of the African people and took Europeans by surprise, as they had apparently believed Africans were incapable of organising a rebellion (Nkomo, 1984, p. 70). In reference to the boycott and the resultant violence, which was labelled as 'riots', Wood observed that "this was the first civil commotion to be experienced in Salisbury in 55 years" (Wood, 2005 p. 12). The bus boycott lasted for three days. In an attempt to separate this consumer-based action from politics, the organisers of the boycott refused to meet the Chief Native Commissioner (CNC) for Salisbury arguing that boycott was not against the government but purely grievances against the United Transport Company. In a report by the *African Daily News* of 20 September, the CNC condemned the leaders of the Action Committee for failing to stop the riots and for "refusing to broadcast an appeal to the rioters to disperse" (*African Daily News*, 1956, September 19, 'Trade union leaders condemned'). However, the *African Daily News* of the previous day had quoted Chikerema discouraging people from engaging in any form of looting and rioting. In reporting on the boycott and the rioting that ensued, many ordinary residents blamed the leaders of the Action Committee for the looting and rioting by unemployed youths – evidence of broader tensions between generations. For example the *African Daily News* quoted one resident of Mbare saying that he blamed the leaders for organising "these open air meetings where many of the audience are spivs and loafers means that people who hardly understand what the speakers are driving at become restless which results in lawlessness and hooliganism" (*African Daily News*, 1956b, September 18). Another resident was quoted asking, "raping my daughter, is that the bus boycott?" whilst another resident equated the hooliganism that characterised the boycott to

acts of savagery (*African Daily News*, 1956, September 20). Others pursued a xenophobic logic, trying to lay the blame at the feet of the migrant labourers from Nyasaland for the violence because “people heard Nyanja language from the shouting when people passed through the locations” (ibid).

The boycott ended when the government, through the CNC and the ministry of transport, agreed to appoint a commission to “investigate a number of problems affecting the urban African, including transport difficulties” (ibid). The government also promised that an African would be appointed to serve in the commission (that African was Joshua Nkomo). The leaders of the Action Committee agreed to call off the boycott pending the outcome of the deliberation by the commission. Just as the Salisbury bus boycott was being resolved, other tensions were brewing in Bulawayo, where African Railway workers were striking for higher wages.

The railway strike brought the railway system in both Southern and Northern Rhodesia to a standstill. This strike was organised by Knight Maripe, General Secretary of the Amalgamated African Railway Workers Union, which had about 22 000 African workers in both Rhodesias who were expected to go on strike for a period of five days. Other trade union organisations involved in the railway strike were the Railways African Workers Union led by Maripe and the Reformed Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union led by Charles Mzingeli. The Prime Minister stated that railway workers were demanding “...150 percent increases on their basic wages; in money increases this was ranging from £2.10s./month; £3.10s./month and as high as £6 depending on the general grades running from 10s. through 12s.6d to 15s./month” (*Southern Rhodesia Legislative Assembly Debates*, 1956). The railways refused to increase the ration allowances but agreed to raise the family allowances from 27s.6d. to 30s./month; a position African labour representatives accepted before later

reversing this decision at their next meeting (*African Daily News*, 1956, September 19; *Southern Rhodesia Legislative Assembly Debates*, 1956).

After the railways had failed to strike a deal with the unions, the government decided to step in and appointed a formal committee to deal with this issue. The Harragin Committee approved an increase of £1.2s.6d./month on the commencing wage to all employees in the lower ranges, and the starting wage of the middle range was to be increased by 15s./month whilst senior staff got an increase of £2.5s./month (*Southern Rhodesia Legislative Assembly Debates*, 1956). However, Knight Maripe is said to have demanded that the government add a further 5s. to all the workers so as to stop the strike action. The railway leaders rejected the Harragin award. In response, the government threatened the workers with prosecution, dismissal, and loss of benefits and rations for heeding the call to strike. The government quickly declared a state of emergency ostensibly to maintain law and order in the country. The same happened in Northern Rhodesia. Gatherings of any sort were banned and Todd's government quickly sent out the police to disperse the railway workers with tear gas when their leaders attempted to address them. The police raided the headquarters of the African Railway Workers Union as well as the house of Maripe where they confiscated union papers, letters and telegrams from other branches (*African Daily News*, 1956, September 23).

In reporting on the railway strike, the *African Daily News* focused on the confusion surrounding the Harragin award and what it meant as far as the strike was concerned. It offered the view that Maripe and his 'henchmen' in Bulawayo had taken a hasty step in calling for a strike barely 48 hours after the award had been announced. The newspaper quoted several African leaders disapproving of the strike action. One such leader interviewed was Chingattie, who argued that the "railway union should accept the award as a temporary measure and focus on getting the administration to offer more advanced jobs to Africans" (ibid). Another individual called Chigwida noted that while the award could have been made

slightly higher, he still believed that negotiations and striking would bring the best results to the Africans (ibid). The newspaper also interviewed the ordinary workers concerning the award and what they thought of the strike. The paper reported that in Gwelo people had “turned a deaf ear to the Secretary General of the union when he addressed us about the strike”, while in Salisbury the newspaper reported that African Railway men “were really satisfied about the Harragin award”. Even the Prime Minister stated that “generally speaking, right down the length and breadth of the rail, the African people were satisfied with the award” (*Southern Rhodesia Legislative Assembly Debates*, 1956). The fore-going wrongly assumes that the railway strike was a non-event.

The *African Daily News* offered an analysis of the bus boycott and the railway strike. In the first instance, the newspaper pointed out its disapproval of strikes as a weapon by the workers. In the editorial of 17 September the editor asserted that:

It will be a sorry day if the people of this country resort to boycotts and strikes as the only way to put things right. Such a method is costly economically, politically and racially – for these reasons we call upon all those concerned to get down to constructive thinking and action (*African Daily News*, 1956, September 17, ‘Editorial Comment’).

The above statement touches on key issues that affected the Africans during this period. Economically, there was the thinking that the better the economy performed, the more the benefits accrued to the Africans which would in the long run improve their standards of living. Therefore strikes were seen as retrogressive to the economy. Politically, strikes were also seen as backward ways of addressing worker grievances, and that the country would be better off in the ‘civilised’ hands of the whites. Strikes meant that Africans were not yet ready to govern on their own. Racially, it has been pointed out that the Federation was formed on the false idea of racial cooperation. The fact that such strikes were organised by the Africans

suggested that they were not prepared to work with the whites in the economic development of the country.

The *African Daily News* in this vein laid the blame for violence on the ordinary people who supposedly were not educated enough to make independent decisions. In another editorial on 24 September entitled "Wild Rumours", the newspaper blamed the new arrivals by rural migrants in the urban areas for being manipulated into doing things they didn't understand. They concluded that "unless these Africans can be taught to read books, newspapers and magazines intelligently, the twin problem of disseminating true information and checking wild, unfounded and ill-informed rumours assumes large proportions" (*African Daily News*, 1956, September 24).

Concerning the railway strike, the *African Daily News* commented that the decision of the railway workers' union to go on strike would have far-flung repercussions (*African Daily News*, 1956, September 22). The newspaper editor believed that, by striking, African workers were negatively affecting the 'healthy' relationship the workers had with the government. This claim by the newspaper was premised on the promise by the government to include Africans in future commissions to look into the plight of urban Africans in general, and transport workers in particular. It would seem that the editors at the newspapers (Shamuyarira and Vambe) were afraid that if the strike went ahead, the government would reconsider its position on including Africans in such commissions. It may also be speculated that the editors at African Newspapers Limited feared that such strike actions and boycotts would be construed as anti-colonial, thereby leading to violent crackdown by the colonial authorities. The African professionals at African Newspapers Limited clearly harboured the belief, similar to the white liberals, that it was not yet time for the Africans to launch for independence. But one trade union leader, Charles Mzingeli, accused the government of

“encouraging Africans to act unconstitutionally” by turning a deaf ear to the genuine grievances by the Africans (*ibid*).

The *African Daily News* picked up the arguments raised by educated Africans like Chingattie who argued that, instead of clamouring for better wages, African unions were supposed to concentrate on getting Africans advanced jobs which would bring higher salaries. This assessment was challenged by evidence which showed that black Rhodesians were paid lesser wages than white Rhodesians, even for similar jobs. Although it was not mentioned what the Africans were earning and what they wanted<sup>5</sup>, Joshua Nkomo in his autobiography gives us an insight into how low the African wages were. He pointed out that with his degree he was paid about £12 per month, whilst a white welfare officer without a degree was paid £100 (Nkomo, 1984, p. 42). Therefore the problem was much deeper than merely the issue of job advancement proffered by some Africans and supported by African Newspapers Limited. Mzingeli noted that, besides the issue of wages, Africans had deep-seated grievances emanating from discriminatory treatment at post offices and other public offices, yet the government was not taking any action. There was now a growing belief amongst the Africans that the only language that the government understood was that of boycotts and strikes.

The railway strike also resulted in the muzzling of the press as the government was eager to control the transmission of information. Although there were spirited efforts to deny this, it took the efforts of legislator A. D. H. Lloyd who accused the government of muzzling the press as they attempted to cover the strike. In supporting his allegations, the legislator stated that:

The Public Order Bill was used to muzzle the press. A Press representative who was sent to No. 5 compound with the specific purpose of reporting on the proceedings

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<sup>5</sup>The Action Committee seems to suggest in their memorandum to the Minister of transport that the average wage for unskilled Africans ranged between £7 and £10 per month.

there was denied admittance. I can see no democratic reason why the Press representative should have been so prevented and I understand that the press representative has resigned from his paper because a stand was not made on his behalf. I support my statement that the Press was muzzled because all the news of the strike in Bulawayo was released by the Public Relations Officer in Salisbury and these reports came through from the security officials in Bulawayo, and he was responsible for deciding what he would hand to the Press (*Southern Rhodesia Legislative Debates*, 1956).

The statement above by A. D. H. Lloyd contradicts the words of the Prime Minister, who argued that “great care was taken to hand over at every possible occasion, the fullest news that came our way to the press. We have had no complaints from the press regarding the difficulty of getting news” (ibid). Lawrence Vambe, who covered the strike as a representative of the African Press (generic term for all newspapers for Africans) said that although he and two other members of the staff of African Newspapers Limited encountered certain difficulties in reporting events in Bulawayo, he however could not explicitly say that the government had put certain restrictions on the press (*African Daily News*, 1956, October 5, p. 3). He noted that the police had tried to stop them from covering mass meetings and demanded press cards, of which failure to produce one resulted in being sent away. The police also requested written permission from the Commissioner of Police, whilst almost all photographers were turned away (ibid). Whilst the title of the news suggested that Vambe was commenting on Lloyd’s remarks, he however could not deny that the press had been muzzled. It can be speculated that Vambe knew that the press had indeed been muzzled but faced with the choice of contradicting the Prime Minister and the legislator, Vambe decided to remain ambiguous. Although it is not known which company the journalist who resigned represented as a result of the treatment by the police, the fact that the legislator was from

Bulawayo makes it highly probable that he had first hand information on the muzzling of the press by the government. In addition, Todd never denied that information that was sent to the press came from the security officials in Bulawayo through the Public Relations Office in Salisbury. Chances for that information to be distorted by governmental biases were very high. Whilst Todd and the *African Daily News* reported that African workers were ignoring the trade union leaders, they did not account for the fact that the strike action was successful.

Besides having problems with the colonial state, the way in which the *African Daily News* covered and commented on both the bus boycott and the railway strike was met with anger and disillusionment from the Action Committee leaders as well as the Trade Union Congress. The Action Committee called for a public meeting at the Luna Park in Salisbury on Sunday 7 October to discuss the boycott and its aftermath. At the meeting James Chikerema, the Chairman of the Action Committee, alleged that much of what was given prominence by the press was not true, while the truth was either distorted or suppressed. For example, Chikerema argued that the claim by the *African Daily News* that the bus boycott had faltered on its own was not true, as it was the Action Committee that encouraged the people to stop the boycott. He also claimed that his statement calling for an end to the boycott which should have appeared in the Friday edition was only published the next day when the boycott was already over (*African Daily News*, 1956, October 8). The most outspoken person at the meeting was George Nyandoro, a founding member of both the City Youth League and the Action Committee. He was reported by the *African Daily News* to have “used the most derisive, derogative and belittling Shona terms” in his diatribe against the African Press. Labelling the African Press a mouthpiece of the government, Nyandoro moved a resolution to boycott the papers if the African Press did not change its policy (ibid). According to a report in the *African Daily News* of 8 October (1956b), the mass meeting passed three resolutions, of which the one

which received greatest acclamation was one warning the Management of the African Press (publishers of the *African Daily News*) that unless they modify their policy whereby they conducted themselves in a manner prejudicial to African interests the African people would be compelled to alienate their support which they have hitherto given" (ibid).

The belief that African Newspapers Limited in general, and the *African Daily News* in particular, was a government mouthpiece was also raised by Federal Legislator from Nyasaland, Chirwa. He pointed out that because the *African Daily Newspaper* was owned by Europeans, opinions expressed in the leading articles of the newspaper were not necessarily those of the African editor, but those of the proprietors (*Federal Legislative Debates*, 1958). To buttress his argument, legislator Chirwa stated that he had worked for African Newspapers Limited as a clerk in the circulation department for about 13 years and, as such, he knew "what orders are received from the proprietors" (*African Daily News*, 1958, July 12). The *African Daily News*, however, rejected these allegations, pointing out that such accusations were an insult to African journalists as the accusations suggested they could not write what they believed.

Another African group that was politically suspicious of the conduct of the African Press was the Trade Union Congress, a grouping of African trade unions. Unions reflected critically on the policy of the African Newspapers Limited at their inaugural congress of the all-African Trade Union Congress which was held in Gwelo in 1957 (a year after the railway strike) when Reuben Jamela, General Secretary of the Southern Rhodesia Trade Union Congress, accused the African Press of not representing the interests of Africans. The *African Daily News* quoted him saying that the African Press

was African press by word, but in deeds it was not because it did not ventilate truly and correctly the opinions of African people. It is working to a certain direction – a

direction I do not know, but am sure it is not working for the interests of the African people. It is anti-African people in its approach to important problems facing Africans and distorts news items. I think it is our duty to bring in a new press that can work for and with Africans. I would have suggested to boycott its publications, but I realise this is impossible (*African Daily News*, 1957 April 9).

The above quotation raises a number of points worth interrogating in as far as the issue of representations of the African people was concerned. Jamela suggested that the *African Daily News* was anti-African in both its coverage and analysis of the railway strike as it was biased towards the government. In other words, Jamela was questioning the claim by the newspaper that it was a newspaper for the African majority. If the *African Daily News* furthered the interests of Africans, as it claimed, then the trade unions expected it to echo their own political views. The clash between the newspaper and the trade unions must also be seen in the light of the emerging competition between the two middle class contingents for a monopoly of influence over African workers. The question at the end of the day was one of representation: who is the true spokesperson of the African worker? The *African Daily News* answered this question by noting that the resolution which received the "greatest acclamation" from the African workers was one which called for the boycott of African newspapers.

Although Maripe, the General Secretary of Rhodesian African Workers Union, thanked the African Press for publicising the Trade Union Congress and conveying the necessary information to all the delegates, he criticised it for the way it handled news reporting during the railway strike. He claimed, without giving evidence, that the *African Daily News* gave a wrong picture of what was happening by leaving out news that was of benefit to the Africans. Another delegate, Maluleka said, "the government must be having a hand in this Press, hence the refusal of Sir Roy Welensky that an overseas company buy the

African Press".<sup>6</sup> He said methods and ways must be found to establish a press that would give the "correct slant" to the news pointing out that "the African Press has and is doing us harm". The Trade Union Congress therefore suggested that it send a delegation to interview the management of the African Press. It is not clear whether such a delegation was sent and, if so, what was agreed upon.

Unions threatened to boycott African Newspapers Limited. But was it really possible to boycott the only newspaper that provided the Africans with relevant news? Did they have an alternative in the event of the boycott? Or it was just a threat to force the management of African Newspapers Limited to change their editorial slant? How then did other Africans and the owners of the newspaper react to such threats? What was the result of such threats?

The call to boycott African Newspapers Limited got mixed reactions from some professionals. Whilst partially acknowledging that the *African Daily News* was biased against the trade unions, Canon Chipunza of the Methodist Church blamed the Action Committee for the way the newspaper reported on the bus boycott, as they failed to furnish the newspaper with correct information. He stressed that since this part was not played it was unfair for the Action Committee to blame the African Press for publishing what it took for granted during the boycott. Chipunza however went on to suggest that "since the African press exists for African people it would be a very good thing if it does not take sides in matters of this nature" (*African Daily News*, 1956, October 12). He argued that the press in any society should always be impartial, and that the reason why the African Press appeared biased was that the government had kept it informed and the Action Committee should have done likewise. He suggested that instead of boycotting the paper "which would do nobody good" it was wise to rather 'purge' it and see that it publishes what the people want" (ibid). Although what he meant by "purge" is not clear, it may be assumed that he was referring to the African

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<sup>6</sup>African Press criticised at TUC Congress, 9 April 1957. It has been claimed by John Parker that a number of mining companies were funding the *African Daily News* at the instigation of Roy Welensky, thus it seems plausible that he would refuse to have an overseas company buy African Press.

editor – although there is no evidence to support this proposition. Chipunza's arguments are also worth noting in that he brought a new dimension to the whole debate of the impartiality of the press. However, because of the prevalence of inequality and segregation in Rhodesia, Chipunza noted that the liberal argument advocating for neutrality was untenable.

Even more scathing in analysis were the views raised by Samkange who once worked for the *Bantu Mirror*. He claimed that the *African Daily News* enjoyed a great deal of goodwill from the Africans, but that goodwill had been squandered by "attempts to show in news report the bias of the management" (ibid). Samkange's accusations have to be seen in light of the fact that the *African Daily News* was white-managed but black-edited and, as such, management (Paver Brothers) may have prevailed upon the editors to cover and report the boycott and the strike in a way that played down the role of the trade unions. Samkange went on to observe that even the paper written for and read by white Rhodesians had handled the coverage in more equal terms:

Many Africans believe the *Rhodesian Herald* was much fairer than the African Press in its handling of the boycott. If the African Press adhered to the policy of describing with religious accuracy the events which took place in their news columns and then criticise as pungently as they like the actions of the people in their editorials much of the dissatisfaction with the African press would not be in existence. One does not like to be unfair to the African press, for it has a difficult task. But I do not believe that they are doing everything to make their task less difficult. They seem to be courting trouble and criticism even when they could easily avoid it (ibid).

Whilst Samkange noted that reporting such issues was always difficult as the interests of the trade union leaders, the government and capital were always different; he still believed that the newspaper should have been able to separate news from opinion.

However, other prominent Africans civil servants were against the boycott of the press. For example Jerry Vera, a Welfare Officer in Bulawayo, pointed out that Africans were sufficiently educated to be able to make informed choices. According to Terrence Ranger, Jerry Vera took no part in trade union activities including the bus boycott and the railway strike and, when the new and more militant Southern Rhodesia ANC was founded in September 1957, he left nationalist politics (Ranger, 2010, p. 191). He supported the idea of an independent press operating without interference, stating that the African Press and every other press had the right to publish anything it likes or dislikes, whatever the case may be, and it was not the business of Nyandoro to stop the press from publishing what he himself did not like.

All Mr. Nyandoro can do is to stop buying the African Press instead of going around inciting people to stop the means of keeping the Africans in touch with his own affairs and the only organ which he can express his opinion. We cannot boycott the African Press without any substitute. I would like to make it abundantly clear that we shall continue to enjoy reading a copy of the *African Daily News*, *African Weekly* and the *Bantu Mirror*. As a matter of fact, the African Press should be congratulated for their recent establishment of a daily paper for Africans: 'Masiye Pambili' African Press. Pay little attention to these wild statements and continue to advance with our paper (*African Daily News*, 1956 October 12).

For its part, the *African Daily News* responded to criticisms with defensiveness. It asserted the principles of press independence, flatly refusing to change its policy. It stated, moreover, that any newspaper "can be pro-government, pro-communism, pro-African, pro-anything it likes" (*African Daily News*, 1956b October 8). Their policy, the editor claimed, was approved by "thousands of Europeans and Africans who read our papers" (ibid). It was up to readers to consume those newspapers they wanted and to leave on the shelves those

they did not. The leadership at African Newspapers Limited suggested that it was wrong for aggrieved individuals to dictate how newspapers reported news. The implication was also that claims, by the likes of George Nyandoro, to represent the interests and views Africans were manipulative and heavy handed and that the reading public was sufficiently 'mature' in making up its own mind about news and its content. Suggesting that their position of putative 'neutrality' was a complex but important feature of civilised society, they claimed that they had a responsibility to the uneducated majority of African readers who were exposed to the manipulation of the trade union leaders.

Should we present many disabilities and grievances of the African people regardless of our responsibilities to a community which has many people who through no fault of their own are unable to judge the pros and cons of the many vexing problems which civilisation has brought about? Would we be acting in their best interests if we fostered discontent and bitterness among a section of the population who so badly need help and guidance to a better way of life. Some of our readers forget that making ourselves as popular as possible with the large majority of the African people would be very easy and profitable as our circulation would increase and advertisers would pay us much more. To our way of thinking, this would be nothing short of exploiting the ignorance of the masses that are not in any way to blame for their ignorance (*African Daily News*, 1956, October 2).

The newspaper continued to defend itself by reminding its detractors that in the past it had also received severe criticism from the European officials and politicians who accused them "of teaching Africans, and making them politically conscious" (ibid). The *African Daily News*, in a way, believed that there would be no 'sacred cows' in their reporting and analysis as they would attack both the Africans and the Europeans.

But what can be made of the newspapers' publication of the critical voices that were attacking it, especially from the African trade unions? The *African Daily News* may have wanted to portray these African as harbouring anti-press attitudes which could be extended to all facets of political life. In advancing this view they got the support of other educated Africans, like Jerry Vera, whom the newspaper described in its editorial of 13 October 1956 as a leader who "really understands the basic requirements for a truly democratic society". The newspaper further noted that the ability to criticise such leaders as Nyandoro represented a shift in the thinking of the educated Africans as they no longer feared to be labelled "Capricorns, stooges and sell-outs". The name 'capricorn' was used in derogatory meaning to those Africans who were members of the Capricorn Africa Society, an inter-racial group formed by Colonel David Stirling. Africans who joined this inter-racial group were seen to be promoting the maintenance of white rule in Southern Rhodesia. According to Nathan Shamuyarira, the phrase 'capricorn' was commonly used to mean a sell-out; a collaborator with colonialism or settlers (Shamuyarira, 1965, p. 20). For the *African Daily News* there was nothing to be ashamed of in being labelled a 'capricorn' as it's ideal of promoting inter-racial relationship was seen as noble during the Federation years.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

This article has shown that African-oriented media during the colonial period was tightly controlled by the politicians. Such control impacted the coverage of issues so much so that the African elites at the time took exception to such coverage. This generated conflicts between the African elites aligned to trade unions and those who worked for the colonial government. What emerges from this conflict was a desire by both the colonial government and the African elites at both ends of the spectrum to control the African readers to suit the interests of the respective groups. African elites aligned to trade unions felt that ordinary readers ought to listen to the union leaders whilst those at the press together, with the colonial

government, argued otherwise. Therefore, the struggle to control the African publics led to the labelling of African journalists as stooges of the colonial government. As a result, the *African Daily News*' coverage of the 1956 events was interpreted differently by various African groups with the aim of silencing other interested African groups.

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