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ZCTU (Zambia) TRIBUTE TO NEWSTEAD ZIMBA

Former Secretary General of the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) Newstead Lewis Zimba died on 22 June 2021, after a short illness. He was born on February 9, 1937, at Lundazi, Eastern Province, near the Malawi border.

Mr Zimba's career as a trade union leader and politician who held positions of Information Minister and Labour Minister, spans decades. He later retired after serving as Zambia's Ambassador to Sweden.

The late Zimba was educated from 1950 to 1956 at Eliphase Elementary School, Mankaka Primary School, Mwase Middle School and Chasefu Upper School. In 1957 he went to Katete Secondary School.

After his teacher training course at Katete he started teaching in 1959 at Kaloko Primary School and moved in 1962 to Fibobe Primary School. In 1965 he went to Ndola Main School where he became headmaster in 1967.

As a member of the United National Independence Party from 1960 and a member of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) since 1962, he was always active on the political front. In 1971 he became full-time president of the NUT and later that year acting president of the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions.

In 1974, he was elected Secretary General of the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions and while at the helm of the labour movement, he served as a Worker Member of the of the Governing Body of the International Labour Organisation. In 1991, Mr Zimba joined full time national politics following the opening up of political space in Zambia and the ultimate defeat of the United National Independence Party (UNIP) by the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD).

Newstead's was a vigorous defender of workers' rights who was prepared to confront government each time these rights were attacked.

A series of conflicts between government and the unions in the early 1980s would confirm ZCTU led by Newstead Zimba as Secretary General and Frederick Chiluba as Chairman General as the most significant opposition force at the time.

Newstead and Chiluba condemned the IMF for pitting government against its people and the ZCTU called for a wage increase to be fixed against the US dollar.

The ZCTU, led by Newstead, provided a national administrative structure and the critical popular support that gave the MMD legitimacy as a political party.

His desire to free the Zambian workers from untold misery from the UNIP economic policies made him unpopular with the ruling class but he soldiered on until the one-party rule was outlawed in 1991. This is the kind of man we have lost.

He showed strong will and courage. He was always admired for his frankness and lucidity. He was a man of integrity and was committed to his beliefs. Newstead always went out of his way to promote trade unionism in Zambia and for this, he will be greatly missed.

When news of Newstead's death broke out, we were all shocked because he was a man of exceptional qualities within the trade union movement who always led by example. This is what earned Newstead great respect, nationally and internationally.