In conclusion, in dealing with the mining industry in Northern Rhodesia, a reading of Butler clearly indicates that the role of the Colonial Office was often secondary to that of the mining industry and other ministries in the imperial government. Indeed, this reader could not escape from the impression that there was a certain amount of *Schadenfreude* on the part of Butler with regard to the inability of the Colonial Office and its officials in both Northern Rhodesia and London, to gain control of and rein in the mining companies to the benefit of Northern Rhodesia proper. Butler notes early on in his book that

> it has long been acknowledged that tensions are evident between the Colonial Office … and expatriate firms, reflecting a fundamentally unsympathetic attitude among civil servants towards business, derived from snobbery, distaste for the world of commerce, and a paternalistic ethos of 'romantic anti-capitalism'. (p. 8)

In completing his book, Butler effectively shows up the inefficacy of the Colonial Office and hammers yet another nail into the coffin of the mythical monolithic imperial state.

A word of caution: this is not a book to be taken lightly; readers will not dip into *Copper Empire* for a spot of light reading. The book is not an easy read, does not suffer fools lightly and does not allow for selective reading or the culling of single chapters. Butler has marshalled an impressive amount of archival material and sought to make the evidence speak for itself. Unfortunately, he has not sought to draw out or make his arguments explicit and his densely written history is essentially the presentation of one damned thing after the other for 306 pages. Nevertheless, anybody dealing with Zambian history, whether they like it or not, will have to deal with *Copper Empire* – it is quite simply the standard work on the economic history of the Zambian Copperbelt during the colonial era, and all future economic histories of Zambia will be measured in terms of their position vis-à-vis *Copper Empire*.

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ORGANIZED MINE-LABOUR IN INDEPENDENT ZAMBIA

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Mineworkers in Zambia: Labour and Political Change in Post-Colonial Africa. By MILES LARMER. London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2007. Pp. viii + 270. £47.50 (ISBN 978-1-84511-299-8).

KEY WORDS: Zambia, labour, mining, trade unions.

Organized labour, regarded as an important player in many nationalist struggles in Africa, has been widely dismissed in the postcolonial period by scholars, government bureaucrats and development specialists as apolitical, privileged and reactionary. The Zambian copper miners and their powerful union, the Mineworker's Union of Zambia (MUZ), have been a poster child for this argument. The union's demands for increased wages in the years after independence have been seen by many political scientists and development economists as proof that the mineworkers were a privileged elite, selfishly putting their own demands above the needs of state-led economic growth and social development. In the 1980s, international financial institutions and their academic and policy allies dismissed

the mineworkers as consumption-oriented elites, determined to resist the 'necessary' liberalization of the economy. The capitulation of some MUZ leaders to the corporatist agenda of the ruling United National Independence Party (UNIP) in the 1970s only strengthened these arguments. Larmer launches a well-documented, carefully researched challenge to these assumptions.

Situating his analysis in copper's crucial role in the Zambian economy and development planning, Larmer traces UNIP and state efforts to control mine revenue and contain mineworker demands. The creation of the government-dominated Zambian Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), and the capitulation of some key MUZ officials to this corporatist strategy, have been held up as proof of the mineworkers' apolitical position. Larmer challenges this extrapolation of worker consciousness from the attitudes and behaviour of union leaders, arguing that it obscures a consistent commitment to worker rights and democratic processes among mineworkers and many union leaders. Drawing on 62 interviews with national and local MUZ leaders and extensive archival research, Larmer concludes that the rank and file, along with many branch leaders, condemned this co-optation and quickly sought to replace these officials with more committed and independent leaders. Moreover, the mineworkers and MUZ played important and influential political roles in the drive towards multi-party democracy and the triumph of the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD) in the polls in 1991, further demonstrating their political awareness, commitment and engagement at both union and national levels.

The mineworkers' demands for better wages and working conditions in the face of massive national development challenges have been regarded as proof of mineworker privilege and self-absorption. Yet Larmer's informants demonstrate the broad social and political concerns embedded in mineworker and MUZ demands, including:

> an aspiration for relative equality of consumption and sacrifice, a demand for the adequate valuation and compensation of hard and hazardous work; an expectation of the public accountability of political and labour leadership to their constituencies; and a desire for natural and human resources to be utilized for the improvement of society as a whole. (p. 197)

While these concerns fuelled demands specific to the miners, such as better wages and working conditions, they also demonstrated a broader concern with and critique of widespread corruption, ineffective governance, the refusal to invest in the country's major resource (copper) and the terrible costs of structural adjustment policies. These concerns reflect the mineworkers' values and their grounding in both the workplace and the mine communities. Indeed, community members increasingly joined labour action, particularly the wives, and the workers sought a 'social wage' that could ensure family and community well-being. These demands resonated with the widespread disillusionment in the 1980s, increasing the popular support and political leverage of the unions in the struggle to dislodge UNIP and the one-party state, and to replace it with multi-party democracy.

Larmer's call for a reassessment of the labour aristocracy thesis, with its assumption of privilege and selfish, apolitical absorption among elite workers, is timely and well argued. His in-depth analysis of internal trade union politics and their focus on accountability is also well documented. However, the argument about the role of the mining communities in worker consciousness and collective action would have been strengthened by more attention to the particular character of mine communities and more research on ordinary women in those communities. Larmer has interviewed a few women union leaders, but the voices of housewives

in the mine townships are notably absent. Yet these very women marched in strikes and shaped worker demands. More use of existing literature on gender in the mine townships, as well as female informants, would have strengthened his argument. This is not an easy task. Indeed, the absence of Copperbelt women's voices in other key texts, such as Ferguson's excellent *Expectations of Modernity* (1999), suggests that a gendered analysis of the Copperbelt will not be an easy task.

Moreover, the book acknowledges the impact of Chinese and Indian ownership on the Copperbelt, but draws deeply pessimistic conclusions about the future. Larmer argues that the MUZ has been hamstrung by its political involvement with the MMD – even suggesting that the way of life he has described may soon disappear. Yet, at another point, Larmer points to the key role of the mineworkers and the MUZ in the opening-up of democratic space for challenges by civil society. It seems to me that this resilience and the refusal of mineworkers and the MUZ to accept the 'party line', despite intense pressures, suggests the possibility of a more hopeful future, one 'built upon the legacy of the mineworkers' considerable contribution to post-colonial political change' (p. 200).

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AN IMPORTANT DOCUMENT ON POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN ZIMBABWE

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Gukurahundi in Zimbabwe: A Report of the Disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands, 1980–1988 (Introduction by ELINOR SISULU). London: Hurst & Company, 2007. Pp. xxxii+440. £19.99, paperback (ISBN 978-1-85065-890-0).
KEY WORDS: Zimbabwe, postcolonial, politics/political, violence, war.

This in-depth report, originally written and published in 1997 by the Zimbabwean Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) and the Legal Resources Foundation, remains an amazing testament to those who worked, with very little support and at great personal risk, to document the atrocities carried out by the ZANU-PF government against the people of Matabeleland and the Midlands in Zimbabwe. The legal nature of the document provides a thorough examination of the political context in which the killings of thousands of civilians, the beatings of entire villages, and the rape and torture of many innocent individuals were carried out as part of a planned strategy. The 'Historical overview' section (pp. 42–134) remains a comprehensive historical account of the Gukurahundi and should be required reading in African studies courses. Students would gain from it an appreciation of how to carefully build an evidence-based narrative with legal ramifications, and gain an understanding of the indisputable similarities between the implementation of the Gukurahundi and the deployment of political violence against civilians and domestic opposition since the early 1980s, including the 'war' against the Movement of Democratic Change (MDC) and its supporters, particularly during the summer of 2008.

The Gukurahundi, which translates from chiShona as 'the early rain which washes away the chaff before the spring rains', was a military campaign launched in January 1983 against the civilians of Matabeleland South, Matabeleland North, and Midlands provinces by Robert Mugabe and others in the ZANU-PF leadership.