

Lobengula Causes Stir in Parliament

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A ZANU PF legislator stirred a hornet's nest on Tuesday when he dragged into Parliament the name of Ndebele king Lobengula – whom he said sold the country to the British over a century ago.

The statement, which some MDC legislators' felt had damning ethnic connotations, immediately courted their ire. The opposition MP then threatened to walk out of the august House during debate on the Constitutional Amendment Bill (No.17) if the government backbencher did not withdraw her statement.

While contributing to debate on the proposed appointment of six chiefs to the Senate, Zaka West MP Marble Mawere said: "The white colonialists stole our land from the time King Lobengula sold our country..."

MDC legislators then viciously objected to the assertions arguing that the Zanu PF parliamentarian's statement smacked of tribalism before threatening to march out of the House unless Mawere revoked her innuendo.

MDC Hwange East MP Theminkosi Sibindi said: "Madam Speaker, that is a misrepresentation of facts and an insult to Ndebeles and the honourable member should withdraw her statement."

Zanu PF Gwanda South MP Abednico Ncube also disputed Mawere's claims. He said such careless statements were responsible for the Gukuruhundi massacres that rocked Matabeleland region soon after independence.

However, Mawere refused to withdraw her comments, saying that was what people were taught by the colonialists. Glen Norah MP (MDC) Priscilla Misihairabwi-Mushonga also urged Mawere to retract her statements saying: "As female MPs, we have agreed that we would not respond to what a colleague says but I hope that the honourable MP will withdraw her statement. We want to build unity and not say anything that will insult other tribes."

The topic for debate, "the position of traditional chiefs in Zimbabwean politics", was introduced by the deputy Speaker of Parliament Edna Madzongwe after which the leader of the House Patrick Chinamasa was expected to respond to the concerns raised on Tuesday.

The debate was raised after MDC's Welshman Ncube accused Zanu PF of abusing chiefs in Parliament when voting on pieces of legislation.

"Chiefs should not see themselves as extensions of Zanu PF. They are used as voting fodder by Zanu PF," Ncube said. "Shifting chiefs from one House to another will not add any value to our political system."

Currently, Parliament has 10 chiefs selected by the chiefs' council and then appointed by the President.

Lobengula, of the Khumalo clan, had dominion over most of present day Zimbabwe when British imperialists colonised the country in 1890 which subsequently triggered uprisings in Matabeleland and Mashonaland culminating in the First Chimurenga of 1896-97.

Lobengula, whose whereabouts still remain a mystery after his warriors were wiped out at the Battle of Shangani, is believed to have died in the Zambezi Valley while fleeing capture and his remains interred at Pupu, Lupane in Matabeleland North. He was the last Ndebele king after succeeding his father, the State's founder King Mzilikazi kaMatshobana who trooped north after rebelling against fiery Zulu King Chaka - Daily Mirror

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