

Why Nyarota was fired

SAMUEL Nkomo, the Executive Chairman of Associated Newspapers of Zimbabwe (ANZ), has disclosed the reasons for the dismissal of The Daily News' founding Editor-in-Chief, Geoffrey Nyarota.

It had been speculated that Nyarota had been removed for political expediency - that it would have been easier for the ANZ and their journalists to register with the Media Commission without a figure as outspokenly critical of the ruling party - but Nkomo was quick to dismiss these suggestions.

He said in a meeting with journalists: "The facts are that on 19 December 2002, two days after ANZ workers embarked on an illegal job action, management took a decision to suspend payment of the December salaries until 31 December.

"Geoffrey Nyarota was part of the team that took the decision to pay the workers on 31 December. However, on 24 December Geoff unilaterally took a decision to pay the striking workers without authority. He told the workers that he had made these personal arrangements to pay them because he supported their action."

Nyarota was handed a letter of suspension without salaries and benefits. Afterwards he handed in a letter of resignation from AnZ addressed to Strive Masiyiwa, ANZ's major shareholder. "Technically, he had not resigned from ANZ," said Nkomo.

Evidently Nyarota had clashed with ANZ management before on a number of issues. "This particular action was the culmination of a series of actions by Nyarota which went against almost all principles of good and ethical management.

"We painfully avoided parting ways with Geoff for sometime, but the paralytic effect that the strike had on the company and Geoff's unfortunate decision to support this action ... was the one which left us with no option but to let Geoff go."