

HEALTH CARE: FROM BAD TO WORSE

The latest government proposals to decrease the health budget for Natal provincial hospitals will serve to worsen an already precarious situation. Health care in Natal has always been inferior for the vast majority of the oppressed, and has for a long time been tottering on a shoestring budget and an inadequate number of medical, paramedical and general staff.

The latest cutbacks mean that more people than at present will needlessly die due to inadequate health care.

Only a government with absolutely no interest in the welfare of its people could introduce such rulings. Recently the state accused health workers who went on strike of callous disregard for the lives of their patients; yet the same state today finds it most opportune to deprive patients of medical care. This act will directly contribute to the deaths of more patients.

This is obviously a government that has utter contempt for the health and welfare of the oppressed. It knows that the health system will not collapse but merely worsen. After all, what does it care about a further increase in the number of people dying?

Any government that places the health and welfare of its people foremost will find the resources to care for its sick. Our demand is for a free and accessible health care system for all in South Africa. The only conclusion we can reach is that this government is unfit to rule.

THE ELLIS PARK INCIDENT

On Saturday 15th August 1992, seventy thousand spectators arrogantly sang "Die Stem" - their racist "national anthem" - at the commencement of the rugby test match between South Africa and New Zealand at Ellis Park. This rendition served to directly insult the oppressed.

We hold the National Olympic and Sports Congress (NOSC) and the African National Congress (ANC) responsible. From the inception of the NOSC (which was launched with the blessing of the ANC) a sellout on the sports front took shape. The ANC, in its haste to bring about a negotiated political settlement, sacrificed the oppressed sport persons by forging bogus unity in

the various sporting codes. Hence the rugby test match was staged by the South African Rugby Football Union which is ostensibly an organisation uniting the former all white rugby union and non-racial rugby body of the oppressed. After the singing of "Die Stem", false tears were shed by the former non-racial sports administrators who claimed that agreements entered into in good faith were reneged upon.

Steve Tshwete, the ANC's sports hitman, Aziz Pahad, deputy head of the ANC's international affairs, Carl Niehaus and Saki Macozoma, national spokespersons for the ANC, were present as guests in the presidential suite at Ellis Park. The questions we ask are:

1. When the country is gripped by violence, when daily, more widows cry and more children are orphaned, what were these "revolutionaries" doing in the presidential suite?
2. Why did they create the impression in public that all negotiations with the ruling class had been terminated and yet cosied up to the same ruling class at such a sports function?

When the Boipatong massacre occurred, the ANC issued bellicose statements that South Africa's participation in the Olympic Games, the Cameroon Soccer tour and all future sporting tours were in jeopardy. Such statements were issued more to appease the oppressed, who were rightfully upset at the sellout that occurred on the sports front, than as a real threat. After consultations with the white bosses and after having received certain phoney assurances, the ANC gave its blessings for all future tours.

Prior to this test match we were told that:

1. a minute's silence would be observed for the victims of violence;
2. notices would be plastered all over the stadium advertising the Peace Accord;
3. the "National Flag" would not be displayed and
4. the team would not be referred to as the Springboks.

All these conditions were completely ignored.

Despite receiving this hefty slap in the face the ANC/NOSC, having travelled so far down the slippery path of betrayal, consented to a further rugby test which was played against the Australians in Cape Town on the 22nd August 1992.

The oppressed have been abused. At Ellis Park their dignity was assailed. All this was done with the co-operation and assistance of the ANC/NOSC.

We must expose as fraudulent the unity which the ANC/NOSC claim has been achieved. The only beneficiaries of this bogus unity are the white sports persons who have been guaranteed international tours. No real benefit has filtered down to the oppressed masses. Nothing has changed. The real nature of the unity between the South African Rugby Union and the South African Rugby Board stands exposed for all to see.

We must go back to basics. Only the democratic resolution of the political struggle will liberate our sportspersons. The sports' struggle cannot be isolated from our broad struggle for liberation. Our problems cannot be sorted out piecemeal. The sellout of the sports struggle is part and parcel of the sellout that is taking place on the political front.

VAT - ANOTHER GOVERNMENT BLUNDER

When VAT (Value Added Tax) was introduced last year it was met with hatred by the oppressed people. And with good reason - VAT has hit the poorest the hardest. Experience has confirmed this for every worker.

At the time that VAT was introduced, the government and its backers trumpeted VAT as a more efficient tax. Their argument was as follows:

VAT was to replace GST (General Sales Tax) which was inefficient when compared to VAT. In particular, GST allowed for tax evasion - that is, illegally avoiding payment of tax. (As the worker had no way of avoiding paying GST, the cheating had obviously to be on the part of the rich businessmen and their cohorts in the government). VAT was going to change this. The favorite government analogy was that of the dripping tap - the dripping water was GST and it represented wastage. VAT was to stop the dripping. It therefore represented a saving.

The distinct impression was created that by collecting tax more efficiently ordinary people would benefit.

True to form the government bungled yet again. In August they quietly announced that from April to June 1992 they collected 21 percent *less* VAT than they did GST in the same period last year. This represents a loss of about NINE HUNDRED MILLION RAND. In other words VAT, the