

# BOYCOTTS TICK

On these pages we publish an assessment of the meat and bus boycott by a community worker who was closely associated with both.



A 'pirate taxi' loads passengers during the bus boycott.

## Understanding the bus boycott

IN MAY, the City Tramways announced that they would increase bus fares by between 40 and 100 percent. The people worst hit by the increases were the people who had been forced to move to areas far from their workplaces. Before the fares were increased, representatives from 41 community organisations met and decided to boycott the buses until the fares were reduced.

When the boycott started on June 2nd the schools boycott was already six weeks old. This meant that communities were deeply involved since there had already been mass meetings in almost every community. Quite clearly, the Tramways could not have chosen a worse time to increase the fares.

### SUCCESS

The boycott started with almost 100 percent success in most areas. Every community was a hive of activity with people walking and hitching, with lifts being organised and meetings being held. In areas where some people were still using buses, there were many reported incidents of stoning.

The City Tramways were taken by surprise. At first they released figures of the success of the boycott but soon put an end to releasing any information. They introduced "a service on demand." In some areas this meant no bus service at all. They refused to discuss the matter at all, hoping that people would believe that the boycott did not affect them. A Tramways spokesman said that the company would not suffer because all losses would be passed on to

bus users. The City Tramways were forced to act desperately by attempting to use their employees to convince people that the boycott was over — not even this method worked!

### TRAINS

During the boycott, people were using trains. The Railways promised to improve their train services by providing more trains. Instead, people found that the overcrowding worsened, and that there were numerous delays resulting in people arriving late for work. To many bus boycotters, this was seen to be an attempt by the Railways to force people to use the buses.

After the first week of the bus boycott, pamphlets were dropped all over the Cape Flats by helicopter. These pamphlets urged people to stop boycotting buses. This was later found to be the work of the Department of Information. The State also immediately imposed a ban on all meetings.

### STAYAWAY

After the stayaway of June 16 and 17, people in some areas slowly started using buses again. This was largely due to confusion since all meetings had been banned and the same spirit could not be maintained. Also, people were afraid because hundreds of people were in detention and the riot police were everywhere.

In Langa, Nyanga and Guguletu, the boycott continued to be 100 percent. Here the fight with the Tramways was much older since a decent bus service to these townships had

never ever existed.

The people had remained true to the call that they would not return to the buses until the fares were reduced.

To assist people who normally had to use the buses, taxis operated to the nearest stations on the Suburban railway lines, namely Mowbray, Claremont and Bellville. The State stepped in and indiscriminately victimised people who were offering lifts. Drivers were handcuffed when arrested and their cars were impounded.

### IMPOUNDED

The Attorney-General issued an instruction that all cars impounded would be held until the end of the trial. In certain cases, it appears, that these vehicles will be confiscated. We saw at that time, that pirate taxis operating around the night-clubs in Cape Town were given spot-fines of R25 while "pirate" taxi drivers assisting bus boycotters were arrested and given fines of up to R200 00.

The police and heavily armed officials of the Road Transportation Board were used to intimidate the drivers. This was the repressive state machine at work to break the boycott.

The bus boycotters were strong — not even all this intimidation could drive people back to the buses. When all "pirate taxis" were prevented from operating, the people walked to and from the townships. The spirit of the people must be saluted. It is this determination and sacrifice that is necessary to bring about change.

## Post victory points way

THE victory of newspaper workers at Post, Transvaal, has been described as being of major significance to other professional associations planning to become trade unions.

In at least two other professions, the teaching and social service professions, discussions have been taking place to turn their associations into fully-fledged trade unions.

The Writers Associations of South Africa (Wasa), formerly a body for black journalists, photographers and writers, decided at its last congress to become a trade union and open its membership to all workers in the newspaper industry.

It was Wasa's editorial chapel at Post, Transvaal, which spearheaded the pay victory of workers there after an eight-day strike which led to Post not being brought out for a few days.

The Transvaal region of Wasa gave Grassroots a full report on the eight day strike at Post.

The significance of the Post strike is that management were forced to negotiate with the elected representatives of the workers. The strike started on July 29 and ended on August 5 with the Post management conceding to all the demands made by the workers.

Ironically, the strike came a week after staff at Post had been given

increases. It was largely the cause of the strike.

Because of the haphazard pay structure at Post, journalists had no idea of their pay scales and whether increases were given on merit or because of favouritism.

When the increases were given a number of people were left out. A meeting was arranged and when management heard of this a further pay increase was announced. But instead of diffusing the situation, these increments aggravated it.

There was an obvious disparity in salaries because the increases were not given on merit or length of service. At a meeting it was decided that all workers would provide details about salaries and years of service. . . . The information was analysed and a memorandum was drafted which was presented to the management.

Management responded by saying it was prepared to enter into a pay agreement with the workers and even set down a day. The workers were not satisfied.

They accepted management's offer to enter into pay agreements, but they wanted an immediate redress of the pay disparity.

They were told by the management the increases could not be afforded and it would mean increasing the price of the newspaper and a retrenchment of

staff.

The workers rejected this and refused to produce for the next day.

It was, however, produced by the editor and three black executives.

The next day the editor and his workers met. He would see the Argus management the next day. Instead of a settlement he had an argument with the manager and the executive. They were warned that the paper would close if the matter was not settled immediately. They were also promised a hearing if they went back.

This was rejected by the workers. That afternoon the management made an offer with a condition that it would be disclosed once the workers were back at their desks. The strike continued because nobody believed the bosses.

A warning was issued that if the pay demands at Post were not settled other newspaper workers at other papers would join and the community would be called in to boycott the paper.

An acceptable offer was made to the journalists, but not to the other workers. The next day after the workers decided to continue the strike an offer was made to the other workers. The strike ended when all the demands of all the workers had been met. It was a victory.

## NEW TEACHERS' BODY EXPLAINS ITS POLICY

ENLIGHTENING: Educative. Exciting. This is how those who attended the central workshop organised by the Teachers Action Committee described it.

Those who found the workshop (discussion group) stimulating already are thinking of it as the early milestone in the young life of the TAC.

The subject? Education — yesterday, today and tomorrow. An appropriate subject to start with, the TAC thought, because that's where it all began four months ago — with education. What education was and is and what people who were concerned believed it ought to be.

The TAC was born of the need for alternatives — alternatives to the status quo — in the classroom, in the meeting place, in the community; the need for a new approach in teaching, for a programme of change in attitudes and activities.

The TAC is therefore a response — a response to those needs.

Teachers had come

A MEMBER of the Teachers Action Committee discusses the formation of that organisation in this article.

from all over the Western Cape to attend mass meetings (in their individual capacities) to verbalise that response, to voice their concern. They had come to identify themselves with the pupil cause, the school crisis, and to align themselves with the teacher reaction to that cause, that crisis.

The TAC was born of the need for a forum where the alternatives could be identified and debated and, when teachers were united and pointed in a new direction, created.

The TAC humbly believes it can and must contribute in some modest but meaningful way to the achievement of those changes and fully realises that while there is much to be done at school and in the community in the short term, much of what it hopes to make a contribution to will not be realised overnight.

We have been asked: Are you a boycott organisation? The answer is simply no. The TAC was established (after three mass meetings in Athlone) during the pupils' boycott, yes. The TAC identified with the reasons for the pupils' boycott and their demands, yes. But its establishment was coincidental, inevitable.

The mass meetings recognised the need for a TAC.

So it is clear that the TAC's fundamental aims are simple and clear-cut and relevant, but there is much to be done, a long road ahead.

And the beginning of that road is the workshop and the classroom where teachers will first have to recognise how enslaved we have become to the system so vehemently exposed and rejected by the pupils and where they'll first have to free themselves and their pupils of the shackles of that system.

(To page 14)