

Editorial comment: harassment of SALB staff

At 2 am on May 7 1987 Labour Bulletin research officer Jabu Matiko's home in Alexandra was destroyed by petrol bombs. On the same night the offices of COSATU were bombed. Fortunately Jabu was able to escape this attack and ran outside while huge flames gutted his house, also destroying all his clothes and possessions. The editorial board is deeply disturbed by this attack on a member of our staff.

Jabu joined the Bulletin at the beginning of 1987 after serving for three years as an organiser in the Metal and Allied Workers Union.

Our managing editor, Dr Jon Lewis (who is a British citizen), has been ordered to leave South Africa. We deplore this arbitrary intervention by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Jon Lewis first arrived in South Africa as a research student from the University of Cambridge in May 1976. His research on South African trade union history culminated in the publication of his book Industrialisation and trade union organisation in South Africa. He was appointed editor of the SALB in February 1984.

Under Jon's editorship the SALB successfully recorded and analysed the major developments in the labour field. In this regard we would point to the growing politicisation of trade unionism and the Bulletin's recording of this development. Jon was a founder member of the Labour Monitoring Group which played an important role in recording the re-emergence of stayaways since late 1984.

During Jon's editorship the circulation of the SALB more than doubled and the sale of Bulletins at union meetings became a regular feature.

Jon brought to the Bulletin a particular combination of academic scholarship and political commitment to the labour movement. This was reflected in the pages of the Bulletin and the expanded international coverage over this period.

He leaves behind in South Africa his wife, Savetree, and a two-week old child, Leila, both South African citizens who will join him later. The editorial board wishes Jon and his family the very best for the future. We look forward to their eventual return.

Meanwhile, Shamim Marie has resigned from the Durban committee of the Labour Bulletin, having now left the area. The editorial board wishes to thank her for her efforts on behalf of the Bulletin. Her contribution reflects her interests and commitment: her research into Natal's divided working class and her involvement in a women's group and journal in the Durban area. In particular Shamim helped prepare the focus edition on Natal published last year. We hope to maintain contact in the future.

The Durban committee however regains Charles Meth who is rejoining the editorial board. Charles' contribution to the Bulletin in previous years is well known (see SALB 10.1).

The Cape Town Committee is also enlarged with the addition of Di Cooper to the editorial board. Di has worked as an organiser since the late 1970s for first the General Workers Union and then for Transport and General Workers Union. The board sends congratulations and best wishes on the birth of her daughter, Tara.

Editor's note: This edition was completed in a short space of time under difficult circumstances. If the number of errors is greater than usual we ask your indulgence. Special thanks to Jeremy Krikler who typed in his own article.

When I first arrived in South Africa in 1976 it was to undertake academic research in labour history. In the few years since then we have witnessed labour history being made, and on a grand scale. It has been a unique experience to be a part of that development through my work on the Labour Bulletin, and a privilege to have met and talked with trade unionists from amongst the tens of thousands of workers, shopstewards and officials who are building a South African labour movement.

The nature of that movement - based on grass roots organisation and mass democratic participation - has ensured its survival in the face of state repression and make it uniquely qualified to take up a leading role in the struggle for a democratic and egalitarian society. It is in this spirit of optimism that we leave South Africa.

Particular thanks to editors and friends who have assisted us during recent months and to the many people who made representations on my behalf to the authorities (from both sides of the class divide it should be added).