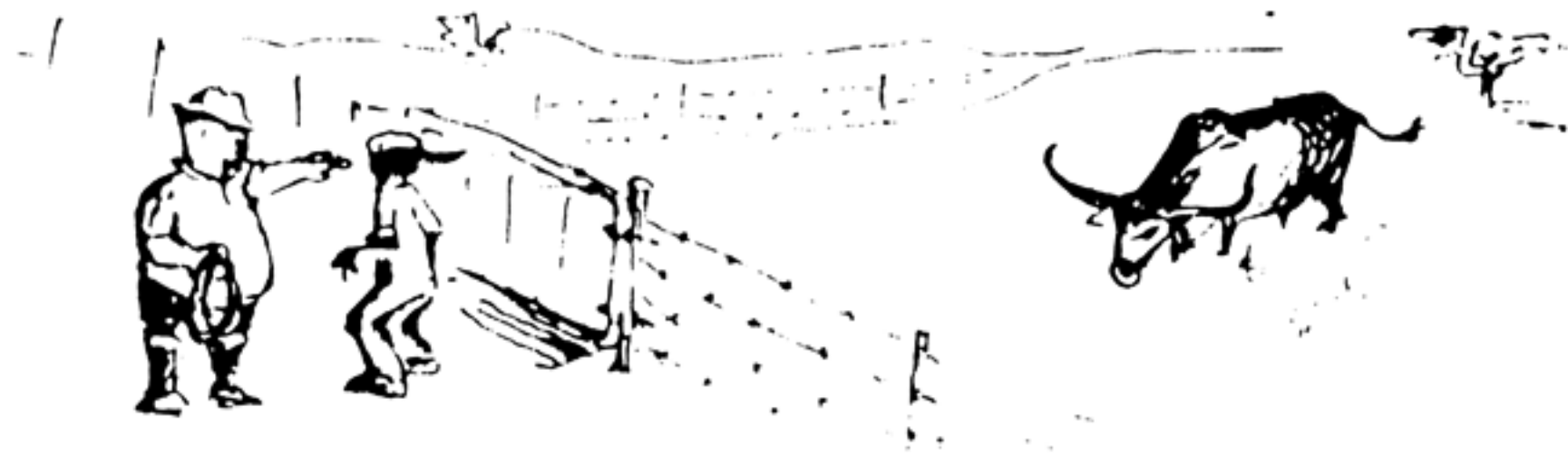


**THE
FARMWORKERS'
VOICE
SERIES**



Compiled by Nonzame

1992





I'm a farmworker in the E. Cape.

My name is Zwelakhe Bongwana.

I was born in or about 1912.

I'm married to Lawukazi and Nonduxu.

We've got 15 children.

I started work for Mr Dreyer in '79.

I was well over 60 by then.

We agreed on R30 a month,

and rations, one and a half bags of yellow mealies.

I asked Baas Paul on four occasions,
to increase my wages, but he refused.

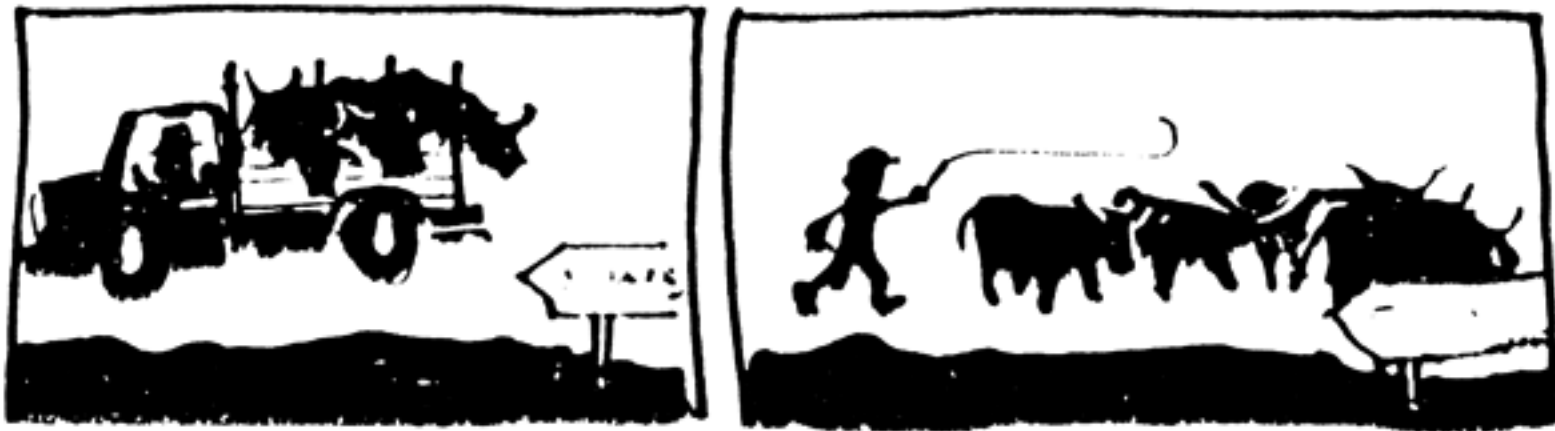
Instead, he said he would retain
R10,00 per month of my wages
and would give it as a lump sum in Dec.

However, he continued to pay me R30
a month and I was glad.

And he did indeed give me R120
at the end of each and every year.

As time went on he cut the mealies
down to half a bag.





Mr Dreyer said that my job would be
to look after the sheep and cattle.

I herded 1 000 sheep and 100 head of cattle.

In time he acquired 600 goats.

I was also responsible for the goats.

I worked from sunrise to sunset
everyday, seven days a week.

I also had to attend to the sheep,
goats and cows when they gave birth.

Although Mr Dreyer said he'd
pay me 20 cents for each delivery
of a lamb, he never did.

He said nothing about payment
when I delivered his goats and cows.

One day at the end of April,
he asked me to drive his sheep
from a kraal to the farmhouse,
on the following day.





I reminded him that I had to collect
my pension at the pay-out point,
9 kms away, on that day.

He insisted that I drive his
sheep to the farmhouse before
I went to collect my pension.

So I did. Next day he took me
to the pension pay-point in the truck.

He said I must get a lift back,
in the truck, to the farmhouse,
so that I could drive the sheep
back to their kraal. However, he did
not fetch us but asked Mr Robin,
his son, to pick us up at the pay-point.
I did not return as Robin left
me behind. I understand that when
Mr Dreyer asked where I was,
he reported to his father that
I was drunk. Do two bottles of
beer on pension day make a man drunk?





It was not in my mind that I was drunk. He told his father that he left me sitting on a rock at the pay-point. What rock?

I was not sitting on any rock.

On being asked by Paul Dreyer,

I disputed this report.

Mr Dreyer told me that he did not require my services any longer.

He said that the reason for this
was that the sheep under my care
were dying and had worms.



He then ordered me off his land
immediately.

"I am old." I said to him, "Where can I go?

Do I have money? Do I have cattle?"

He gave no answer.

However I did not leave immediately.

I had nowhere to go with my family.





All around there is land,

a great deal of land.

The cattle, the goats... they have

a place. We have none.

They have a kraal.

We have no place.

We have been stranded before.

This is not the first time.

Now we are stranded again.

Mr Dreyer says it is no concern of his.

But why are we treated like this?

We have no chief.

There is no headman.

We have no land. But my eyes

see a great deal of land,

but no space to put up a hut.

