

BA 305.405 SPE
S.88/126
7 AUG 1990
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SPEAK

1990

R1.00

No. 30



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Letters to SPEAK

Dear SPEAK

I am a black female aged 20, doing matric. I am a member of COSAS. I regard myself as a member of society before I am a student. I believe that I have to contribute constructively towards the welfare of our society. Women are a part of society, therefore we should also strive for the removal of oppressive laws, and march forward in the struggle for liberation and in defence of working people. To strive towards free and compulsory education for the betterment of our society. As I have mentioned earlier I am a member of COSAS.

I recommend the 'Women's Charter', because females are still undermining themselves. As a result, the number of men who are in the struggle is much bigger than the number of females. We are trying hard to organise the females in our schools. We appeal to them to join the struggle.

We therefore resolve to establish 'women's committees' in our schools. We want them to share the cares and anxieties imposed by poverty and its evils. To create a spirit of trust and co-operation amongst ourselves. To create responsibility, understanding and creative companionship amongst ourselves. To become theoretically and practically involved in projects to the improvement of South Africa. To strengthen the relationship between us. The unity of the society is the vital key to the realisation of our objectives.

Yours faithfully
Zsazsa N. Mhaga

Dear ZsaZsa, thank you for your letter. We hope young women will feel inspired by your letter, and join in the struggle, so they can play an equal role in building our new South Africa. Without the contribution of young women and people from all sectors of our society, the struggle will surely be held back - SPEAK Collective.

Cover drawing by Charlotte Schauer. Design by SPEAK. SPEAK has offices in Durban and in Johannesburg.

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Johannesburg: Suite 7, 17th Floor Conlyn House, 156 President Street, Johannesburg, 2001. If you want to write to SPEAK, please write to SPEAK, P.O. Box 45213, Mayfair, 2018, Johannesburg, South Africa. SPEAK Collective members are: Gill, Helen, Jacqueline, Karen, Nise, Phumelele, Shamim and Vanessa. We welcome Phumelele's new baby, Lunga, into the world. We are sad to lose Jacqueline as a SPEAK employee, but we wish her all the best in her studies.

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Dear SPEAK

I hereby wish to extend my salutes to the hospital workers. Their struggle was not an easy struggle. It is encouraging to realise their victory in:

- * the recognition of NEHAWU
- * an end to racial employment
- * an end to temporal employment
- * no to privatisation

We are aware that the apartheid regime and the capitalists want to keep economic power through privatisation. They want to privatise organisations like:

- * hospitals
- * post offices
- * railways
- * power stations

The racist regime has destroyed our lives. The rate of poverty is high because of starvation-wages created by the apartheid regime. For too

long the bosses and their disciples and semi-bosses have been enjoying the people's wealth, while the people who create the wealth are condemned to slavery.

Lastly I wish to advise the disciples of apartheid, semi-bosses and the capitalists, that neither the apartheid system nor capitalism has room in our struggle. Until then, the struggle goes on. Every worker a union worker!

Viva the spirit of no retreat!

Viva the spirit of living wage and decent housing!

Viva and long live COSATU!

Viva Comrade Nelson Mandela!

Amandla! Victory is certain!

Yours in the struggle,

Morgan Gomati

Meadowlands

Dear Morgan, many thanks for your letter. We hope that many NEHAWU members will read your letter of congratulations and support - SPEAK Collective.

THE LIE OF THE LAND...



SOURCE: AGROFORESTRY, IN DRYLAND AFRICA! ICRAF, NAIROBI, 1988. COURTESY OF ICRAF. ADAPTED FOR SPEAK BY CHARLOTTE SCHAEER 1990.

ANC Women's League South African women march to freedom!



There was a warm welcome at the rally at Jabulani Amphitheatre for the ANC women who returned from many years of exile.

Photo: SPEAK

There was joy and celebration at the Jabulani Amphitheatre in Soweto on Sunday 17 June 1990. Women leadership of the ANC in exile had returned home after many years. They were welcomed by thousands of singing and toyi-toying and cheering women and youth. The women leaders introduced themselves one by one. Two women had worked for Radio Freedom. One was a chief representative of the ANC in Madagascar. Another was a member of the ANC's legal department, and was convenor

of the Commission on Women, Children and the Family. Three women were on the ANC's highest decision-making body, the National Executive Committee. Many of the women had worked underground. One had worked with MK. The people listening felt great pride. Here were women who had freed themselves from the sink and kitchen. They were an important part of the ANC, holding responsible positions. They had proved that women can achieve a lot if given the chance.

This delegation of ANC women have come home to help set up the ANC Women's League inside South Africa. These women have already helped organise the ANC Women's Section in exile. They have fought to keep the struggle for women's rights alive within the ANC. They believe that South Africa cannot be free until women are liberated.

The women told the people at the rally of their programme of action to set up the ANC Women's League. They spoke of the workshop in Lusaka in May 1990 to discuss the formation of the ANC Women's League. The workshop was attended by ANC women from inside South Africa and from exile. They elected a core group of ten women - five from inside South Africa and five of the exiles - to work on the internal launch of the ANC Women's League. The core group is headed by Comrades Gertrude Shope and Albertina Sisulu. In addition to the core group there are ANC women organisers in different regions to work on the launch. They plan to launch the ANC Women's League on August 9 this year. They plan to hold a conference of the Women's League in October 1990. They are calling on women to join the ANC, and the ANC Women's League in large numbers. One of their first campaigns is to collect women's demands in a Women's Rights Charter.

SPEAK talked to three of the ANC women comrades from exile. It was an exciting meeting and we had many questions to ask.

We met comrades Baleka Kgositsile, Thembi Majola and Mavivi Manzini. Comrades Baleka and Mavivi are both on the core group to set up the ANC Women's League.

Comrade Baleka left home in 1976 when she was 26 years old. She has five children and has been able to continue being active in the struggle because her husband has shared in the responsibility of child care. Her youngest child, who is three years old, came with her. Baleka was born and grew up in Durban, although her family are now living in the Transkei. Baleka taught at a junior secondary school just before she went into exile. In exile she worked on Radio Freedom and for the Women's Section. She also worked in cultural structures of the ANC. She lived in Tanzania,

Kenya, Botswana, and most recently Zambia.

Thembi Majola left South Africa in 1970 with her mother when she was seven years old. Soweto was her home. Her mother had to flee or face a long jail sentence. She said: "I was born in the struggle and I have grown up in the struggle." She has come home with her breast-fed baby of a few months old. Thembi went to school in Botswana and Zambia. She studied in Cuba and qualified with a Masters degree in civil engineering in 1986. She worked in Tanzania and Angola as a projects manager.

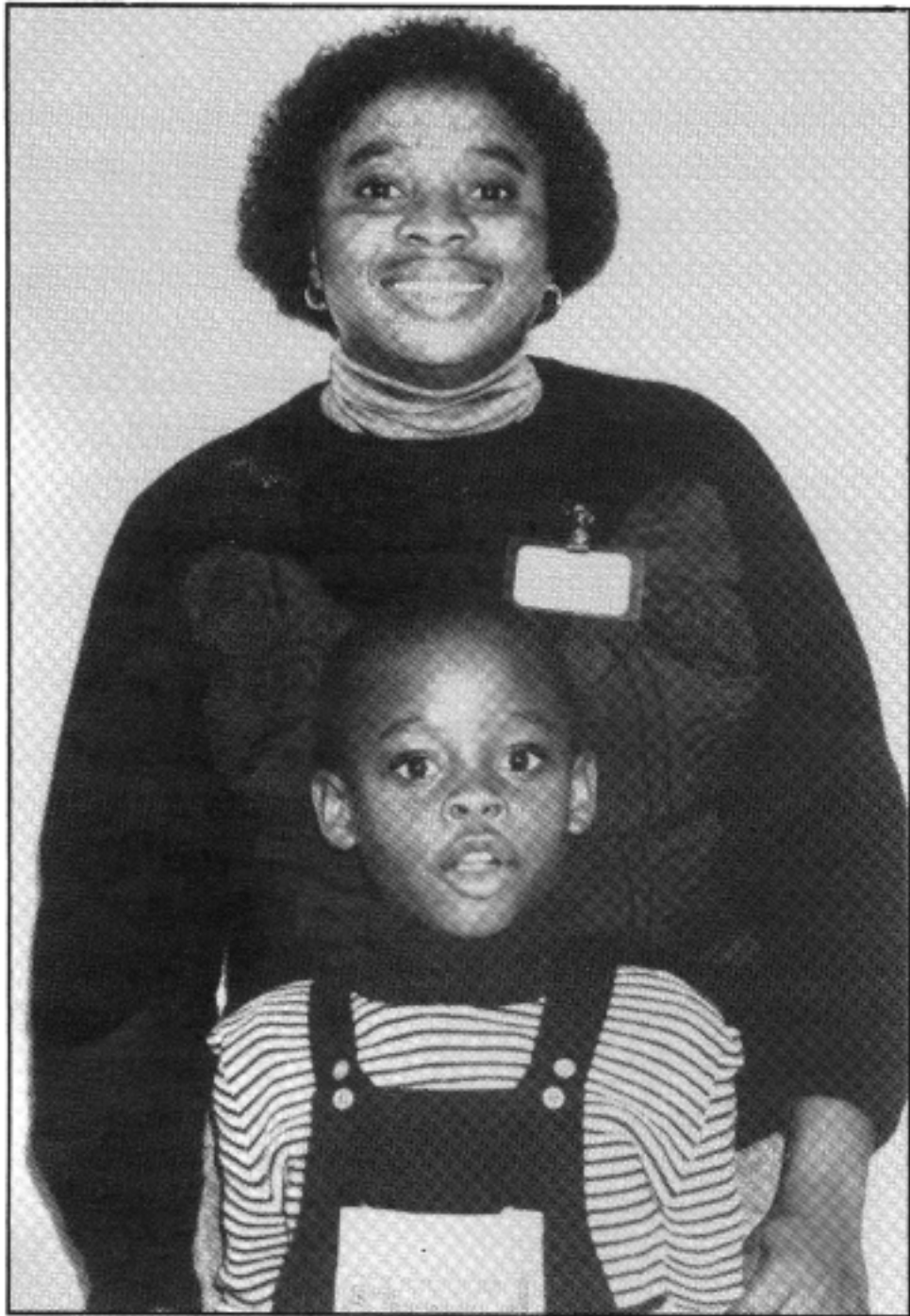
Mavivi Manzini left South Africa in October 1976 when she was 19 years old. She was a student at the University of the North. She lived in Soweto although her home was in the Northern Transvaal. She has one child who is six years old, and who has returned with her. She studied in Holland where she qualified with a Masters degree in sociology looking at women and development.

A long struggle

We asked Baleka, Thembi and Mavivi about the ANC's policy on women.

They said: "The ANC believes that society cannot be free unless women are liberated. The question of women's emancipation is part of our whole struggle. If more than 50 percent of the people are still oppressed, what liberation will there be?"

They spoke about the long struggle ahead to liberate women. They said: "We have a lot to do as women. The ANC has policy statements on women but a lot still needs to be done in practice. There is a big difference in what is in the documents and what happens in practice." But they felt there had been some progress over the years. This could be seen in the growing number of women in positions of leadership and responsibility. They said: "We had only one women on the NEC for a long time. Now we have three women in the NEC. We have women in second and third levels of leadership. There has been an increase in the number of women as chief representatives. We have seven women chief representatives at present." The chief representatives represent the ANC in other countries, serving almost as



Comrade Mavivi Manzini with her child, Sipho.

ambassadors of the ANC.

More Women in the ANC

The women comrades told us that there was a need to recruit more women into the ANC. "In December we had a seminar, and we did a survey to assess the percentage of women in the ANC. We found that there are 10 times more men than women members in the ANC." "Women cannot be members of the Women's League unless they are ANC members. Our drive is to mobilise women into the ANC. From there we can draw in women into the ANC Women's League. There will be no separate joining fee."

They spoke about the Women's Charter. "We are working on demands for a Charter. This Charter has to be part and parcel of the ANC constitution. We hope women all over the country, in townships and rural areas, will be able to raise issues that affect their lives."

The struggles within the ANC

We asked the comrades what the position of the

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Comrade Thembi Majola with her child, Nompikazi.

ANC Women's League was within the ANC. They told us of the struggle by women in exile over the years to get greater recognition within the ANC, and about the struggle they fought to include women's liberation on the agenda. They said: "The League was formed in the 1940's. At that time ANC women acted informally. ANC women accepted a supportive role and just worked for all people of South Africa. They did not see the emancipation of women as a priority. In practice, they tended to address the other two forms of oppression, as black people and workers. In exile, the Women's Section had to develop from the tradition of not being able to make decisions on our own. Over the years we fought for the right to take our own decisions. We have suggested that the Women's League should be an autonomous body. We must be able to draw up our own programme of action. We must be able to make our own decisions, have our own rules and regulations and our own banking account."

Women involved everywhere

We asked the comrades whether the formation



Happy to be home! and ready to fight for women's rights. Photos: SPEAK

Comrade Baleka Kgositsile with her child, Neo.

of the Women's League would not keep women out of other areas of the ANC, like important decision-making structures. The comrades answered: "No, women will not be left in the Women's League. The Women's League will be a strategising forum, to train women, to build confidence. We come from a background where we as women are expected to be quiet. We need to build confidence. Not all of us who have come as part of this delegation work in the Women's Section in exile. The Women's Section worked as a broad mass structure not as a department. Women worked in the various departments of the ANC. And this must continue."

We asked the comrades how they could ensure that women would be participating in ANC structures. For example at the ANC conference in December this year - if we went by merit alone, would we not see only men attending the conference, and only men being elected to positions? Because men are more skilled than women at the moment and have more experience and confidence.

The comrades replied: "We must have affirmative action. By that we mean at least 30% of delegations or leadership must be women. We had a lot of discussion on this. Some felt it should be 50%, but we decided we were not there yet. For the present we should look at 30%. This is in line with what is happening in places like Uganda, where representation of women is consciously worked at to make sure that there is a certain percentage of women in all structures."

No to tokenism

We asked the comrades about the problem of tokenism - of women being put into positions but not being taken seriously. The comrades said: "We have stressed there should be no token representation. A woman has to work three times as hard as a man to be his equal, because of women's triple oppression. The ANC must work to improve women's lives, so that women will be in a position to get the training and skills. Our women in leadership, for example Comrades Ruth Mompoti and Gertrude Shope, stood on the NEC in their own rights.

The whole organisation elected them for what they had to offer the organisation.”

Learning from other struggles

The women have learnt a lot from living in other countries which have already won independence. They said: “We have seen in some countries that although national independence has existed for 25 years, the position of women has not necessarily improved. In some cases it has got worse. For example, women’s employment and women’s health status has got worse in some places. It is not automatic that women will win rights after independence. We are lucky as we have other countries to learn from. When we look at other countries we see clearly that if we don’t address all problems now, then no way can we address them afterwards. The task then will be to defend the revolution. If you raise an issue that was not raised before it will be seen as divisive. Women’s issues must be taken up now, not later.”

The comrades believe that an important part of the struggle for women’s rights is fighting attitudes. “We need to address people’s attitudes. You might have the law. But who will see to the implementation of that law? It’s a question of attitudes, and how we bring up our children.”

A women’s alliance

To ensure women’s rights, the comrades believe women should be organised at all levels. They see the formation of a broad alliance of all women’s organisations as important to bring about unity among South African women. Such an alliance would bring church women, union women, women from various political organisations, and women who do not belong to any political organisation into a broad alliance. At government level they think a National Commission of Women should be set up to monitor the development of women in South Africa in the future.

Nothing wrong with feminism

The comrades believe that the terms non-sexism and feminism are important in our struggle. They said: “Feminism has been misinterpreted in most third world countries. In

our seminar held in December 1989 we discussed ‘what is feminism’. We saw that there was nothing wrong with feminism. It is as progressive or reactionary as nationalism. Nationalism can be reactionary or progressive. We have not got rid of the term nationalism. And with feminism it is the same. We have tried to use feminism to suit our conditions.”

Men are not enemies

The comrades talked about how they saw men. They said: “Just fighting men is not what we are about. It is crucial not to see men as enemies. We should see them as comrades.”

But this did not mean that the Women’s League will not take up issues like sexual harassment from male comrades or the beating of wives and girlfriends.

They said: “Wife battery has been taken up through structures in the regions. We took this to the NEC, and policy has been passed that those who beat their wives or children will have serious action taken against them. But this depends on the extent to which women bring these things out. The ANC has a Code of Conduct drawn up in 1985, which mentions sexual harassment.”

Ma or comrade?

We asked the comrades how they believe older women in the organisation should be addressed. They said: “This cannot be solved overnight. We need to talk about this. We have had discussions in some regions. We are all equals as comrades. Outside the organisation we can use terms of respect for age. For example, as one woman comrade insisted we should call her comrade Flo in a meeting, but outside we could call her Ma Flo. We are working together and should disregard age in the organisation. If we address older people differently we will be giving them the right to put down younger people simply because of age.”

A new language

Often speakers from platforms refer to all women as mothers. We asked the comrades their views about this. They said: “This does make youth feel left out. We need to raise this with our older women. We must not assume that every woman is a wife or mother, or that she intends to be a wife or mother. This is a

weakness. It arises from our tradition. In politics we must be sensitive. We must see the harm and adapt a new language that suits the people."

Men and child care

The comrades told us that in exile the South African men in the ANC had taken care of children and shared with the housework and that this had made it possible for the women to be active. We wondered if the men comrades from exile would continue to do these things. The comrades said: "This depends on whether we live on our own or with in-laws. On our own it will continue, but if we live with in-laws then men will go back to old roles."

The women comrades believe that the ANC should pay attention to issues like the sharing of child care and housework. They said: "The question of parental care must be addressed by the ANC Women's League. Unions in South Africa have been addressing this issue. It must be taken up as it will allow women to participate in the struggle."

Here are the meanings of some of the words used in this article:

- * constitution - the laws which say how a country or organisation must be run.*
- * convenor - someone who calls a meeting*
- * emancipation - freedom*
- * policy - ideas that are agreed on in an organisation*
- * autonomous - free, being able to make decisions*
- * strategising - planning*
- * skills - knowing how to do things*
- * affirmative action - action that makes sure you put your ideas into action*
- * tokenism - not taking something seriously*
- * non-sexist - to be against ideas that oppress women*
- * feminism - the struggle for women to be equal with men*
- * reactionary - against change, clinging to old ways*
- * progressive - move ahead, willing to change*
- * participate - to take part in*



Comrade Mavivi Manzini speaking at the welcome home rally at Jabulani Amphitheatre. Behind her sit, from left to right, Comrades Gertrude Shope, Albertina Sisulu, Ruth Mompati and Mita Masperepere.

Photo: SPEAK



Photo: Afrapix

Welcome Mama Africa!

Welcome Mama Africa! South Africans all over the country were filled with joy to hear the news that Miriam Makeba had come back home. She was hugged and kissed as people greeted her and welcomed her home. She cried with those who wept tears of joy to see her.

A very short stay

But her fans were disappointed. Her stay was a very short one. And even more disappointing was the news that Miriam was not going to sing. The main reason for her visit was to visit her mother's grave. She told a press conference that she was thankful to the ANC for making it possible for her to come to see the grave. She said: "I was happy because we believe that wherever her soul is, she knows."

The cultural boycott

It seemed that confusion about the cultural boycott was the reason that South Africans could not hear Miriam sing. Miriam said she is not sure when she will be coming back. She said: "That depends on the Cultural Desk. There is confusion as far as we South African artists are concerned. We seem to be placed in the same spot as foreign artists who have been asked to respect the cultural boycott. Our people at home and abroad are confused by this. I believe, as a South African, the cultural boycott does not apply to me. I did not decide not to come back. I was banned from my country. Therefore, I feel my people cannot tell me that I can't come back. We are all waiting to be told: 'now you can come back home and sing'."

Happy to be home - but little has changed

Miriam was happy to be home, even though it was for a short visit. She said: "I am happy to see the places I saw when I was a child. To talk to the people who made me, and whose culture I have used. I am happy to use my language without translation."

But she felt very little has changed. "I see we are sitting here without police. That is something. But let me say this: I believe that the fundamental things are still there. Apartheid is still there. I still cannot vote. The Land Act, the Bantu Education Act are still there. The Group Areas Act is still there. Those who stay in town know that they do this illegally. To me there is very little change. If I have to take the train and go to Mzimphope to my brother's house it is still there. It has not changed. It is fantastic that our leaders are out of jails to speak for us. But, really, the pillars of apartheid are still intact. We want to see them crumble like the Berlin Wall."

I sing the truth

Miriam's life has been about politics, and she sings about politics. She said: "I have no gold discs. Fingers are pointed at me. 'That one sings politics.' I sing the truth. I was made by the people here. I have gone all over the world singing your music, which is mine. It would be a shame for me to die tomorrow before I sing for you. It is something I look forward to the most." We also look forward to that.

The Natal war must end!

The war in Natal must end! This call has been made again and again by the people of Natal and by their organisations, the UDF, COSATU and the ANC. Since 1985, more than 3 000 people have been killed in this war and many thousands more have suffered. People desperately want this war to end.

The Joint Working Committee (JWC) was set up in Natal by UDF and COSATU to try to work for peace in Natal. The ANC has added its voice to the call for peace. The campaign for peace is gaining strength.

The government must act

In June 1990 the JWC and the ANC issued a call to the government to act to end the war. They called on the government to:

- * disband the KwaZulu police
- * lift the State of Emergency in Natal
- * arrest and prosecute the warlords
- * appoint a judicial Commission of Enquiry into the role of the KwaZulu Police and the South African Police in the conflict
- * ensure that the security forces play an effective and impartial role as peace-keepers
- * guarantee freedom of political activity to all parties

International campaigns

COSATU has also started an international campaign to tell the world what is really going on in Natal. COSATU wants the rest of the world to know the facts about the war so they can put pressure on State President F.W. de Klerk and his government to help to end the war, and so that the international community can put pressure on Buthelezi and Inkatha to stop the violence. COSATU believes that Inkatha and Buthelezi will not stop the war



Refugees from the Natal war.

Photo: Afrapix

unless they are forced to. They believe the international campaign is one way to try to stop the war in Natal. As part of this campaign COSATU sent representatives to Europe and the U.S.A. The representatives met people from trade unions, the governments of countries and anti-apartheid groups. They also met people from human rights organisations and church leaders. One representative also spoke to the United Nations Special Commission Against Apartheid. In all these meetings the COSATU representatives have highlighted the role Inkatha, the SAP and the KwaZulu police have played in the war.

So far the response from the international community has been very positive. Letters of support have come from many countries to COSATU and the JWC. These letters will be sent to de Klerk. COSATU, UDF, SAYCO and the ANC are holding a national week of action in the first week of July. The action will include a stayaway and mass meetings to highlight the effects of the war. The call from the organisations is: Stop Apartheid's War - Defend Natal!

The ANC Women's League is also taking the war in Natal seriously. It was announced at a Soweto welcome home rally for the ANC women from exile that the Women's League will be sending representatives from Natal overseas to raise awareness about the war.

Enough is enough!

Thousands of cleaners go on strike

More than 2 500 cleaners from all over Natal, from Port Shepstone to Stanger, went on strike on 22 May 1990. By 28 May, when the strike ended, there were 8 000 cleaners on strike. They have had enough. Day after day, night after night they clean in office blocks, in schools, in factories, in shops. They work long hours, they earn very little and they get very few benefits like leave or provident funds. The cleaners are members of the Transport and General Workers Union. Most of the cleaners are women. They were angry and decided not to take any more. So they went on strike.

Treated like dogs

Cynthia, Grace and Bernard were some of the workers on strike. They told us: "The bosses treat us like dogs. Some of us are being paid R378 a month for an 8 hour day. Workers in Hammersdale get paid only R200 a month. We work overtime, plus Sundays and public holidays, and we don't get paid for this. How can we live on what they are paying us? Some people can't get married because of the small amount they are paid. If you talk to bosses they fire you. We have to be united with all the workers in other cleaning firms so that we can talk with one voice. We are asking for R800 a month for an 8 hour day, plus overtime."

The workers refused to speak to their individual bosses. They knew they would have greater strength if they joined up with workers from other cleaning firms and put their demands to all the bosses with one voice. So, workers from eleven companies went on strike together. The workers met at Curries Fountain in Durban. And they put their demands to the bosses' organisation - the regional Natal Contract Cleaners Association.

The strike grows

More and more cleaners joined the strike. By the end of the strike there were 8 000 cleaners on strike. The workers representatives met with

the bosses, and presented their demands to them. The demands included R800 wages, 6 months paid maternity leave, 4 weeks annual leave, provident fund, full-time shopstewards. The bosses have asked for time to consider the demands, and at the time of writing this article the union was still waiting for an answer.

Security guards and cleaners march

The cleaning workers protests did not stop with the end of the strike. On the 1 June 1990 cleaners and security guards marched together through the streets of Durban, Pietermaritzburg, Vereeniging, Cape Town and Johannesburg. They presented their demands on wages and working conditions in the cleaning and security industries to the Minister of Manpower.

Workers demands

The demands put to the Minister of Manpower by cleaners and security guards included:

- * R1 000 a month wages
- * a 40 hour week
- * overtime pay
- * an end to the 12 hour shift
- * a restriction on part-time and casual work
- * six months paid maternity leave and two weeks paid paternity leave with job guaranteed
- * proper health and safety on the job
- * one months annual leave



Cleaners in a militant mood and on strike at Curry's Fountain in Durban.

Photo: SPEAK

Woman don't cry, speak out!

Every day, all over the world, women are beaten and ill-treated by husbands, lovers, fathers or brothers. These things have been happening for many hundreds of years. Women are treated in this way because men dominate in most cultures, women are seen as inferior, and have hardly any rights. These crimes against women are being brought out into the open. Women are organising to put an end to the violence they face. Women all over the world decided to name November 25 as International Day for an End to Violence Against Women. On this day, women make the community and authorities aware of the violence they face as women. They also remember that as women they share these problems with women in other countries all over the world. Chile, Mexico, Bolivia and Brazil are all countries in South America where women have taken action on this day.

Women from other countries take action

On 25 November 1989, women from 35 women's organisations joined the campaign to end violence against women in Chile. More than 200 women marched with slogans and banners in the capital city of Santiago. The women collected signatures in support of their campaign, and they handed out leaflets and badges in market places. The slogans on the badges said: 'Women don't cry, speak out.'

A group of women journalists sent information to the newspapers, radio and television on violence against women. In this way they were able to get newspapers, radio and television to do stories on this problem. In another city in Chile, called Talca, 56 women marched in solidarity with women all over the world. Their placards said: 'No more beatings', 'Women, let's join hands' and 'Women open your eyes, live your life'.



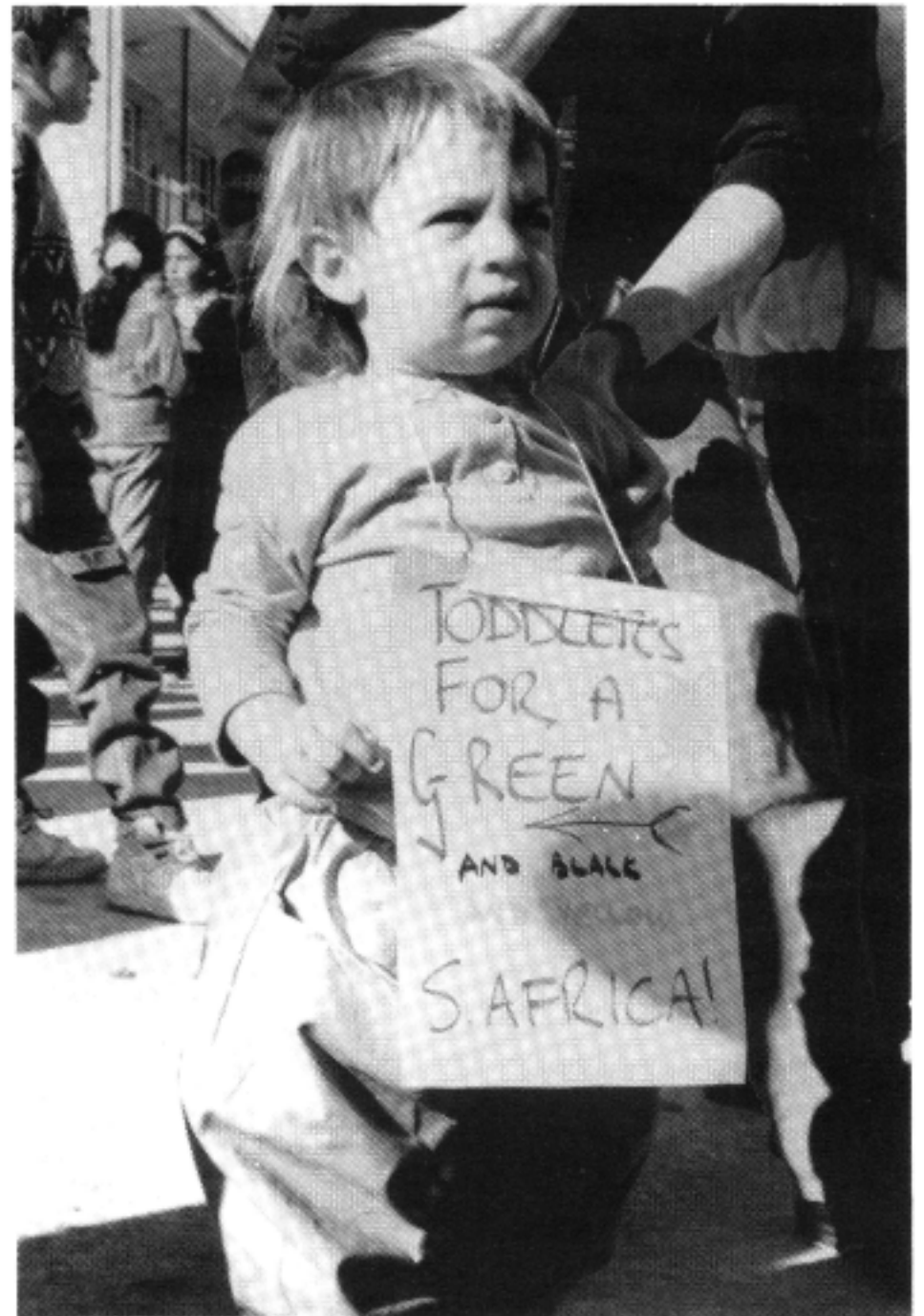
In Mexico, women from nine Mexican shantytowns came together on the Day for an End to Violence Against Women, to form the National Network Against Violence Against Women. This Network will help women who have been beaten, raped or harassed. In Bolivia, a group called Women's Coordinator, which runs a number of women's projects, is trying to get the police to set up a women's police station for women who have been raped, beaten or harassed. In some South American cities like Lima, Buenos Aires, and Sao Paulo, the women have already won this.

Research on violence

Isis International, a women's information service, has started a study on violence against women in South America and the Caribbean. The study will look at how women see this problem and will come up with ideas for what can be done. Violence against women is a problem in South Africa, like everywhere in the world. Organisations like People Opposed to Women Abuse (POWA) and Rape Crisis offer support to women who have been raped or beaten. These organisations need support. We need to bring the problem of violence against women in South Africa out in the open. And we need to take up the struggle for an end to violence against women in a fighting spirit, as we move towards the new South Africa. We can learn from our South American sisters, 'Woman don't cry, speak out!'

This article was taken from Isis Women's Health Journal.

2 June, Internatio



Photos: SPEAK

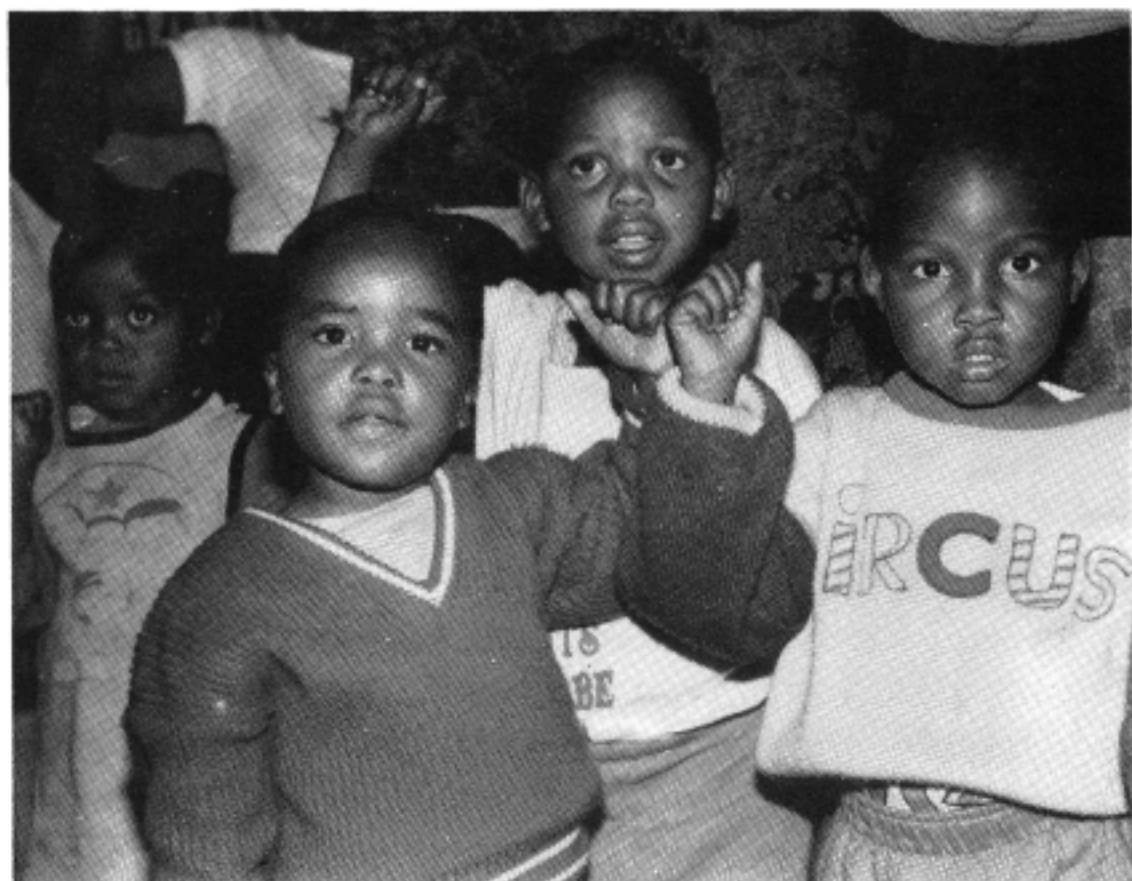
International Children's Day

The Campaign for Children's Rights organised a meeting at the Johannesburg City Hall to mark International Children's Day. Preschool children from Federation of Transvaal Women (FEDTRAW) preschools, children from the Open School, and other cultural groups performed songs and sketches. Speakers were Comrades Albertina Sisulu, Ahmed Kathrada and Sister Bernard. The National Campaign for Children's Rights was set up in May 1990. The Campaign organisers say: "Children in any society are the most weak, most easily manipulated, and the ones who need the most protection from society." They plan to highlight the plight of children in apartheid South Africa and to fight the harm apartheid does children. So that we can move toward a non-racial South Africa where children have the protection they need.

To celebrate International Children's Day, the Fordsburg Women's Group organised a march of children, followed by an afternoon of songs and sketches in a park, where children from the Open school performed. The banners carried by the children said - 'We want more nursery schools', 'I want to school near home', 'Non-racial education now', 'Throw Rubbish into dustbins' and 'Toddlers for a green and black and yellow South Africa'. A child speaker talked about the new South Africa children would like. He said: "We want a new South Africa where there is no rich and poor, where the colour of your skin does not matter, where women and girls are treated equally as men and boys, where everybody earns a living wage, and a South Africa which is green."

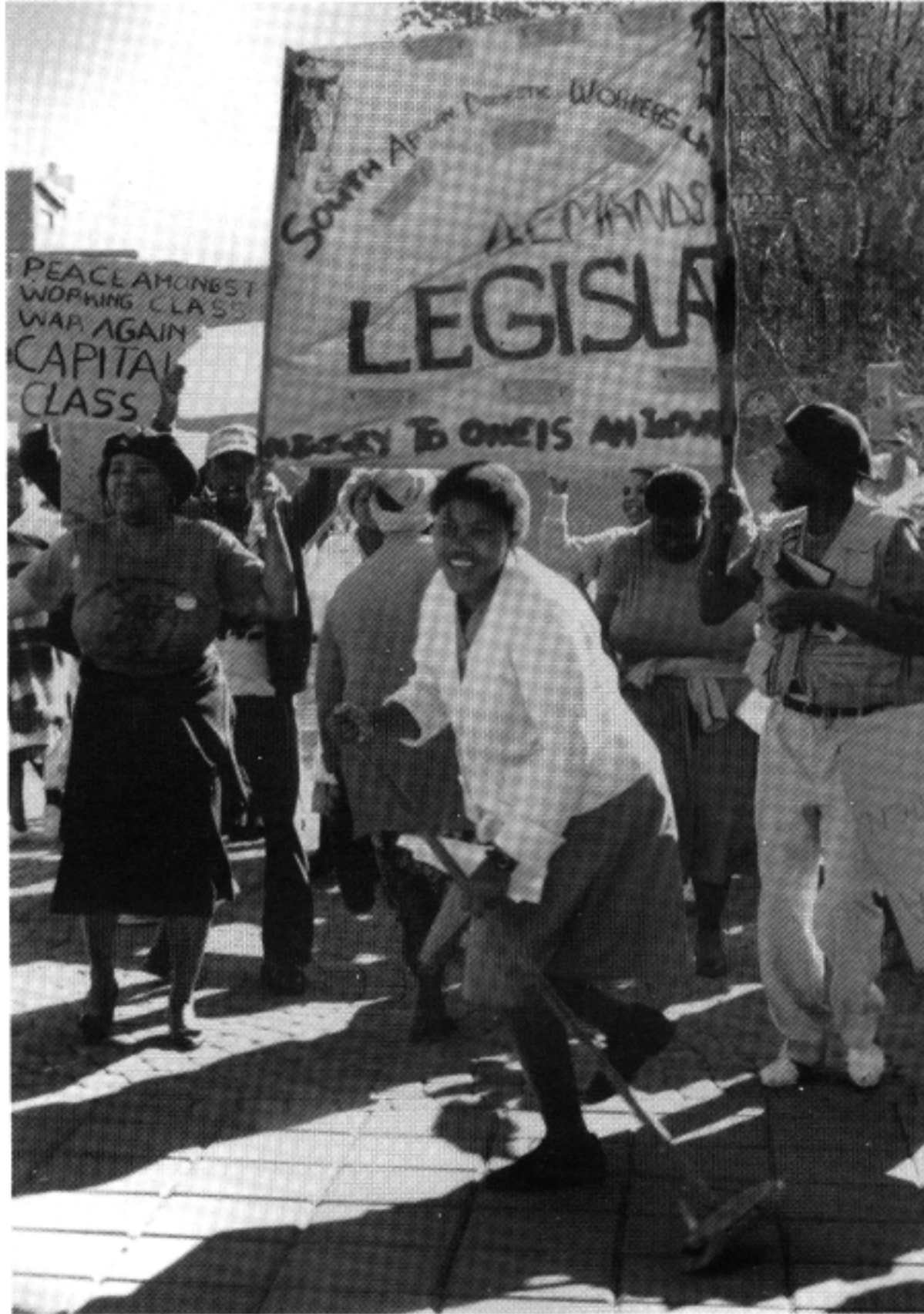
On the left: International Children's Day, organised by Fordsburg Women's Group, an affiliate of FEDTRAW.

On the right: Campaign for Children's Rights day at the City Hall in Jo'burg.



Photos: Afrapix

We are fighting for our rights!



Domestic workers took to the streets of Jo'burg West to make it clear that they are ready to fight for their rights. Photo: SPEAK

The battle of domestic workers to fight for a decent life came alive on Saturday 9 June as more than 200 domestic workers marched with mops, buckets and brooms through the streets of Jo'burg West. Domestic workers made history as they marched through Fordsburg, Mayfair, Homestead Park, Mayfair West and Brixton. There were cheers and vivas from workers who came out of the shops along the main road to see the marchers, while some of the shop owners and employers looked a bit shaken as they read the demands on the pamphlet that marchers handed out.

A difficult task

When the marchers reached Brixton they clearly saw that their struggle was not an easy one. Angry white people shouted and swore at the marchers. These white people were clearly racists who could not accept that black people should have rights. At the Brixton Police station the marchers faced a group of right-wing men. They held up a small placard saying: "They steal R400" and they jumped up and down as if they were baboons. Four white comrades who were marching with the domestic workers were accused by these men of being "white kaffirs". One white woman comrade on the march was told she would get AIDS. Later the right-wing men tried to assault one of the white comrades. March marshalls and the traffic police were able to stop this.

"I feel sorry for the domestic workers who work for these people," said one of the marchers.

Making history

The marchers were joined by more domestic workers all along the way, and as one marcher said: "The Jo'burg West domestic workers have made history. The last march here was probably by the white workers in 1922!"

Margaret Nhlapo who works for South African Domestic Workers Union (SADWU) went on the march. We spoke to her to find out what she thought about it. "It was a historic march, it really was. It is the first march of that kind where domestic workers took to the streets on their own. They knew what they wanted and they knew what to do. They had the spirit. They boldly marched in the streets. I think its going to inspire and influence domestic workers in other areas. After the march, I went to a meeting in Germiston where domestic workers were talking about the march. They want to march now as well. We have failed to make a regional march. But now, seeing the Mayfair march, this will inspire domestic workers to march in their areas. The domestic workers who marched were very brave. Even when people in Brixton tried to intimidate them they didn't care."

A new SADWU branch

The domestic workers in Johannesburg West have been meeting regularly for 3-4 months. Meetings have been well-attended by up to 200

domestic workers. They say that most of them earn between R50 and R150 per month. They work a 6 or 7 day week, starting early in the morning and working until late at night. They are not allowed to have anyone visit them in their rooms, and the rooms themselves are in a bad condition. They are also trying to organise a drama group, a literacy group and an advice office for domestic workers. The domestic workers are all members of the SADWU.

The demands of the domestic workers are that:

- * the ANC makes their demands law the minute it wins power in our country.
- * all MDM organisations support their demands and fight to make sure every domestic worker is a member of SADWU.
- * employers form organisations in areas to negotiate with SADWU.

The demands of the day's march were:

- * a minimum wage of R400 per month
- * a 46 hour working week
- * the right to receive visitors in their rooms
- * decent accomodation
- * that domestic workers be covered by the Basic Conditions of Employment Act and the Labour Relations Act
- * decent maternity, UIF and pension benefits.

The battle goes on

Farmworkers and domestic workers are still not protected by the law of basic minimum wages and conditions of service. The battle to be seen as workers and to be covered by laws has been waged by domestic workers for many years. It is a battle that domestic workers are determined to continue fighting until their demands are met.



SADWU on the march in Brixton.

Photo: SPEAK

Street Sleeper
by Roseline Naapo

Ask me why
Before you call me
a street sleeper.

Then I'll answer
Oppression and depression
made me a street sleeper.

Ask me why
Before you condemn me
For apartheid and capitalism in this country
caused unemployment.

Ask me why
The smile has faded from my face
I cannot smile for I smell blood
on my nose.

Blood of my brothers and sisters
Blood of our children streaming in the
streets.

Ask me why.

Parental rights and PAP smears

Foschini workers have declared a dispute with their bosses. Mediation has failed, and the union, South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers' Union (SACCAWU) has applied for conciliation. If the Conciliation Board fails to resolve the issue, the workers will have a strike ballot at the end of July 1990. This is the first time ever in South Africa that workers are prepared to go on strike for parental rights and over the issue of pap smears.

We've had enough!

Foschini workers have had enough of their bosses' attitude. They believe very strongly that the bosses must recognise the right of parents to be parents, and that workers' children should be cared for.

SACCAWU says: "For too long, bosses have ignored the fact that we have children, but now is the time to start demanding our rights as parents. To have children is natural, and employers must accomodate this and take some responsibility for parents and their babies. It is up to bosses to ensure there is job security for workers who leave to have or to look after babies; that there is sufficient money to care properly for the child; and that parents spend enough time with the child before going back to work. Men are discriminated against and are not given the chance to be fathers. This has a bad

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effect on the relationship between fathers and their children, as well as being a burden for the working mothers."

Parental rights are basic human rights!

SACCAWU is fighting for 6 months paid maternity leave at 30%, 3 months at 75% and one month unpaid leave. They want parents to receive a R200 gift voucher, and the company to pay medical aid. This would also apply to mothers who adopt babies under one year - either formally or informally. If you are not paid while on leave, then you are forced to leave the baby and come back to work. It is the baby who suffers - no breastfeeding, no love and attention, dangers of sickness and even death.

SACCAWU is fighting for fathers to be able to take more responsibility in the home. The company has agreed that fathers should get five days paid leave, plus an extra five days if there are medical complications with the mother or child. The union also wants an option of fathers taking six months unpaid leave, or sharing mothers paid leave if she also works at Foschini, and for fathers also to be able to use the extra five days paid leave to take the baby to the clinic. Men should also receive a gift voucher of R200. The union believes that men must be given a chance to be active fathers.

The fight against cervical cancer

The workers are also fighting for the right for women workers to have time off to have PAP smears. Cancer of the cervix causes the death of many women in South Africa. It is a cancer that can be cured if treated in time. If women have regular PAP smears to check for cancer of the cervix, more women's lives will be saved.

SACCAWU believes that women workers should have the right to two days paid time off a year in order to go for regular PAP smear tests. Women workers would have to show proof that they did use the time to have a PAP smear test. The company is refusing this outright. The union cannot understand why the company does not want to be part of the campaign to try to prevent women from dying from cervical cancer.

So far, SACCAWU and Foschini management have only reached agreement on one important area- job security. But there are still other important areas where SACCAWU does not agree with the company. These issues that are being fought for are new issues and Foschini workers feel strongly about them. They are concerned that parents should be allowed to be parents. And they are demanding that the importance of pap smears for women workers be recognised.



Foschini workers prepare for tough negotiations with their bosses.

Photo: SACCAWU

Busi's Story



Busi came to work feeling miserable. Once again she looked like she had come from a war. Her lips were swollen. Around her eyes were ugly black marks. There were marks on her arms and on other parts of her body that could not be seen.

She tried to put the night of beating out of her mind. She got on with her work and hoped the other workers would not ask about her bruises.

There was one friend she could talk to - Kosi. Busi worked on, waiting for the lunch break when she could at last talk with Kosi and share her pain.

Kosi was worried. She cared for Busi. But she was also angry - angry with Busi's husband and with Busi, for putting up with this life. She said to Busi: "Oh Busi! Not again. What are you going to do? You are so strong. You could manage

well without him. Why do you let this man treat you like this?"

Busi felt weak. She looked at her friend and did not know how to answer. She knew she would be better off without this man. He gave her no money. He did nothing for her or her children. But she felt trapped.

She remembered last night. She had screamed in pain and fear. He had said he would kill her. And she had believed she would never see another day. She had known she would get no help. Her in-laws could hear everything through the paper-thin walls. They could hear as clearly as she could hear their talking. They could hear him swearing he would kill her. They could hear each blow. But they did not come. No-one came.

Busi said: "I don't know why I let him treat me like this, Kosi. I don't know why I still stay with him. I have been having this problem for the last 16 years. Ever since my first-born. And my life has just got worse.

"My husband started his first affair when I was at my parent's home after giving birth to our first child. He spent most of his time with this other woman. I did not like this. We were always fighting. He made me feel unwanted. And that was when he started hitting me. I hoped he would change and become the man I had fallen in love with. I tried hard to make things work but things only got worse.

"Soon this other woman fell pregnant. I was very angry. He told me he loves her and can't leave her. Six months later he fetched the baby to live with us. He did this without telling me. We were living with his parents and I hoped they would not agree. But they were too happy to have the child. I cared for the baby. I washed nappies and did everything you do for babies. But he did not appreciate this. He carried on his life with other women. He had many affairs. When I asked about them he would assault me. But I still stayed with him. I don't know why.

"We had our second child. Then he was arrested and convicted for 5 years. I stood by him. I still had hope things could change. I

visited him in prison. I arranged his parole. But when he came out things were worse.

"He had another baby from another woman. And again when I asked about it he assaulted me. But I hung on to him. I sometimes took fed-up leave. I went to my mother's place. He would fetch me. And I would go back. Still he did not change.

"All this time I was working and taking care of the home. He didn't give me any money. He said I am working. I must use my money. I stopped asking him for money. I stopped asking about his affairs. But life did not get any better. He started running around with school children or very young girls who could be his children. And he started hitting me more often.

"He would say I think I am too educated and too clever. I realised he had a complex. He thought I wanted to dominate him. I was running the house and paying for our children's school. And I never asked him for any help. I tried to make my life better outside home, at work and with friends.

"Then he had an affair that really made me feel degraded. This woman would phone him at home. He gave her our car to drive whilst I couldn't use it even though I had worked to pay for it. I was being treated like a piece of rag. I was very angry and I left him. After six weeks he came to fetch me. I went back home.

"I have thought of divorcing him. But he has begged me not to. He went to the complaints office to say that I had deserted him. They sent us to the marriage guidance counsellor. He said he wanted me. They advised me to go back to him. Later when I asked him why he wanted me back he said I have a lot of money and he is going to suck it out of me. This made me very upset, but, the funniest thing is that I am still hanging around this man who is like a maniac. Who is a sadist and selfish."

Busi and Kosi looked at each other. Busi felt better from talking to her friend. Kosi felt Busi's pain. They both knew Busi had to find a way out. They both thought how hard a woman's life is. Somehow there had to be a way.

Has socialism failed?

- some ideas from Joe Slovo's paper

After many years of being banned and forced into exile, the South African Communist Party (SACP) will be launched on the 29 July 1990. The launch will take place at a time when people are asking many questions about socialism. The Communist Party in the Soviet Union has seen the need to make changes to their system of government. More recently communist governments in Eastern Europe collapsed when the people in these countries demanded change. Does this mean that socialism has failed? In South Africa we have often heard it said that socialism should not be talked about now, because the struggle is about ending apartheid first. What does the SACP say about socialism today?

Joe Slovo, the General Secretary of the SACP, wrote about his ideas on socialism and the SACP today in a paper called "Has Socialism Failed?" Slovo wrote these ideas for people to discuss and debate. In the article that follows are some of the main points Slovo makes in his paper. We have also changed the words to make it easier to read.

Has socialism failed?

In 1989, most of the communist party governments of Eastern Europe collapsed. Their downfall was brought about by the masses of the people who rose up against these governments. It seemed that socialism had failed. Many people who supported socialism began to doubt whether socialism can work at all. The SACP firmly believes in the future of socialism. But it is necessary to look at the mistakes and problems with socialism in the past.

The problem of Stalinism

A big problem with communist parties and governments all over the world is the problem of an undemocratic style of working. This is called Stalinism - taken from the name of a communist leader in the Soviet Union, Josef



Comrades Raymond Mhlaba, Joe Slovo and Mac Maharaj at the press conference where they announced that the SACP will be launched on 29 July.

Photo: Justin Sholk, Daily M

Stalin. Stalin's style of work was not democratic. Under his rule people who did not agree with the party line were expelled from the party, dealt with very harshly, and sometimes killed. At this time communist parties all over the world, including the South African Communist Party, took the lead from the Soviet Union. Communist countries in Eastern Europe set up their governments along Stalin's lines. The communist parties in these countries might not have been as brutal as Stalin's rule, but they practised socialism without democracy. It is this that has led to the socialist world standing in tatters today.

Communists need to guard against these undemocratic styles of work which were found in all communist parties, including the SACP. The question must be asked why so many communists were blinded for so long? And why they behaved so harshly to comrades who had even the smallest doubt about Stalin's brand of socialism?

Socialism and democracy

The problem in the communist countries was that there was socialism without democracy. Newly created communist countries had the job of building democracy for the majority of the people. These new governments had to defend themselves against uprisings within the country and against interference from the capitalist world. But what happened was that while they were busy doing this, other important questions were not asked. Questions about the place of the workers and people in the revolution were not given much attention. The crushing of the exploiters was followed by the state becoming stronger. There was no democracy for the majority of the people, including the working class. As time went on the gap between socialism and democracy grew bigger.

Elected bodies and mass organisations

Organisations which could have allowed the people and workers to make their voices heard had no power at all. The people had no right to chose their leaders. There were no elections. And the majority of the people had no say in how the country should be run. Trade unions, youth and women's organisations had

no power. They were turned into bodies that simply said yes to decisions that were taken elsewhere by the state and the party.

The trade unions came under the control of the party and the state. Workers had very little say in deciding their top leadership. The trade union leadership answered to the party. And workers did not have the right to strike.

Like the trade unions, women's and youth organisations were also turned into support organisations for the state and the party. They did not take up the problems of women or youth. So, for example, women's organisations did not take up the problem of women being treated as unequals to men. Men continue to dominate in the family and in all structures of political power in these socialist countries, even more than they do in the west. This has not been taken up by women's organisations in the socialist countries.

The Party

In communist countries the single party state became the way of government. It became law that the party should govern. The party did not have to get the support of the people to be in power. And it did not have to compete with other parties for the right to rule. Within the party itself there was no democracy. The party was now controlled by a Political Bureau or a single all-powerful leader. The Party Congress, which was supposed to be the most representative meeting of the party, was in most cases controlled from above. Anyone who held a view that was different from that held by party leadership was silenced. The way forward is through democratic socialism. This way can only be taken by a party which wins and earns its support from the people. It is not something that should be claimed.

A look at ourselves

The SACP also took the lead from Stalin's style of undemocratic and top heavy leadership. And the SACP played a part in spreading Stalinist ideas. It will not be easy for the SACP to throw off these unhealthy ideas and practices from their past. But the SACP is trying to deal with this. At their 7th Congress, the members of the SACP stressed

the need to guard against undemocratic ideas and practices within the party. They said that some of the undemocratic ways of operating from the past could still be seen at times. For example, throwing out views that did not go along with those of the SACP. The damage done by Stalinist practices is not yet understood in the same way by all in the SACP. The SACP needs to continue the search for a better balance between putting forward party policy and allowing ongoing debate and constructive criticism.

The change in the SACP towards democratic socialism owes a lot to the opening up in the Soviet Union with glasnost and perestroika - the taking back of power by the people. And it owes a lot to the democratic spirit in the trade union movement of the 1970's in South Africa. The change in the SACP can be seen in how the party sees its role as a working class vanguard; in how it relates with mass organisations; and in its approach to democracy in a post-apartheid and future socialist South Africa.

The Party as a vanguard

The SACP has always believed that the working class must have an independent political structure. This structure will make sure that workers play a leading role in the democratic revolution. And it will eventually lead the working class towards a classless society, free of exploitation. But such leadership must be won and earned, rather than be imposed. The SACP claims to represent the hopes and wishes of the workers. But this does not give the SACP the right to lead the working class or to exercise control over society as a whole in their name.

Relations with fraternal organisations

One of the most serious problems in the gap between socialism and democracy in the communist countries was in the relationship between the ruling parties and the mass organisations. To prevent this happening in a post-apartheid South Africa the SACP has, for example, said in its draft Worker Charter that: "Trade unions and their federations shall be completely independent and answerable only to the decisions of their members and

affiliates, democratically arrived at. No political party, state organ or enterprise whether public, private, or mixed shall directly or indirectly interfere with such independence." The SACP does not see the trade union or national movement as places where party policy must be pushed and passed. The SACP does not want to get its policy pushed through by undemocratic practices. The SACP's relationship with these organisations will be based on complete respect for their independence and democracy. Old habits die hard. And among the worst of these is the idea that all those who do not agree with party are enemies of socialism. This leads to name calling and insults, instead of healthy debate.

Democracy and the future

In a post-apartheid South Africa, the people must elect their representatives who will serve in a government made up of many parties. The SACP believes that if there is real democracy in a post-apartheid South Africa the way will be open to the SACP's ultimate objective of a socialist South Africa. Socialism can be made to work without the unhealthy practices which took it away from democracy in the past. The lessons of the past have to be learnt. We have to make sure that socialist democracy holds its rightful place in all future practice.

Some words used in this article

** democracy - rule by the people for the people, with people having a real say.*

** socialism - a stage before communism. A system where workers control the government of the country. Through the government workers will own the factories, mines and farms. Under socialism workers will have control over what is produced, how it is produced and how wealth is distributed. There will still be different classes under socialism.*

** communism - a system where there is no more exploitation and where there are no separate classes (for example no bosses and workers). The workers will control the government and will have full control over what is produced, how it is produced and how wealth will be distributed.*

Discharge - finding out if we're okay

Many health problems can arise from having sex. These infections are called sexually transmitted diseases (STD's). It is important to know about these diseases so we can protect ourselves and our partners. In this SPEAK we look at discharge - the fluid that comes out of a woman's vagina or a man's penis. To understand what discharges are and what causes them, we have to talk about our bodies very honestly. If we are too shy to do this, we can never protect ourselves from catching a disease.

If treated early, the disease causing the discharge might not cause any damage, if it is left untreated, it could cause harm both to the man and the woman. Sometimes these diseases can stop you from having children. The best thing to do if you have an infection is to go straight to a doctor or clinic. You may feel shy, but there is no need to. Doctors and clinics treat many people every day for these infections.

Women and discharge

Women normally have some discharge. You may have noticed how your discharge changes during the time between your periods. The discharge gets thinner and there is more discharge in the middle of the month. This is the time that an egg is released. Sometimes it is see-through and runny, and other times it is a milky colour and sticky. It does not have a bad smell. There is no need to worry about this normal discharge. It is a fluid that keeps the vagina wet and it also washes out the vagina and keeps it clean and healthy. Some women have more natural discharge than others.

But if your discharge smells bad and is thicker than normal, or is a yellow, brown or green colour, you may have an infection. This is caused by germs. Some of these germs are sexually transmitted, and some are not.

Women and the infections that cause bad discharge

In women, the germs that cause abnormal discharges live in two different places. Some germs live in the vagina and on the cervix (the neck of the womb). Other germs live inside the womb and the tubes.

Bad discharge that comes from the vagina

Bad discharge that comes from the vagina smells bad, is heavy and may make your vagina feel itchy or sore. It often makes having sex painful. Having a discharge caused by an infection can make you feel very uncomfortable, depressed and irritable. The most common kind of discharge is called thrush. The thrush germ lives in a woman's vagina all the time, but sometimes it grows very fast and causes discharge and itching. The discharge is white and looks like 'maas'. It can cause burning when you wee. Some things can make this germ grow more quickly, for example, the contraceptive pill and antibiotics. Other women find that they get thrush at particular times of the month. For example, they get repeated attacks before their periods. Sometimes you can get thrush from sex. Thrush is very uncomfortable, and can make you feel like screaming because of the itchiness. Thrush can be easily treated with creams or pills.

The next common germ that infects a woman's vagina is called trichomonas. This causes a fishy smelling yellow discharge. It also causes itchiness and discomfort, and it can be painful when you have sex. Trichomonas can also be treated with cream or pills.

Bad discharge that comes from the womb

The other kinds of germs live inside the womb and the tubes. These germs are passed by having sex and are called gonorrhoea or chlamydia. The problem with these germs is that they can be in your womb and tubes for a

long time without you knowing. It is a bit like a silent disease. If you have had sex with a man who had a discharge you should go for treatment. The kind of sickness that gonorrhoea and chlamydia causes is called Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID). PID can be very serious. It causes pain in the lower part of your tummy. The pain can be so bad that you have to bend over when you walk. You have a fever and you shiver. If the infection spreads to the tubes or ovaries, then you can become infertile. This means that you cannot have babies, because the tubes are blocked with the discharge. The tubes carry eggs from the ovary to the womb. If they are blocked the egg can't reach the womb and you cannot fall pregnant. These diseases can be easily treated with pills or injections. If they are treated early they will not cause too much harm to your body.

Other things that cause bad discharge in women

The contraceptive loop causes a lot of normal discharge that doesn't need treatment. But women with loops are more likely to get an infected discharge than other women. So if you have a loop and your discharge gets smelly or is a bad colour, or you get pain, you must get treatment straightaway.

Men and discharge

Men do not normally have any discharge from the penis. The only things that come out of the

penis in a healthy man are clear sperm or wee. In men, a bad discharge is often yellow or white, and makes the penis sting when he wees. He may also wee more often. The disease is called gonorrhoea, and sometimes we call this 'the clap' or 'the drop'.

In men, the discharge comes out of the penis, but it can also spread back to the testicles. The discharge may narrow the hollow tube inside the penis. This means that the man cannot wee easily. It may spread backwards to the prostate gland which is inside the body between the back passage and the bladder. Once the germs are in this gland, they can keep coming back to give the man a burning feeling when he wees. Germs in the prostate gland can be difficult to get rid of, and you often need many courses of medicines to clear the germs away. It is very important to go to a doctor if you have a discharge. When you go to the doctor, the doctor will examine your penis, and put a finger up your bottom to check the gland behind the penis. Having this done to you may not be pleasant, but if you have gonorrhoea and you do not treat it, you may never be able to have children. And you will be infecting your sexual partner.

Be honest and open with your partner

If you have a bad discharge you must tell your sexual partner. This is so she or he can be treated as well. Gonorrhoea may take years



before showing any signs in a woman's body. By that time it may have spread to her tubes and womb, damaging them and making her unable to fall pregnant. If a woman has sex with a man who has a discharge, she should get treatment for it even if she cannot see a discharge from her vagina.

Getting treatment

You may feel shy to go to a health worker when you have a problem with discharge. But remember, many thousands of people all over the world suffer with these infections, so you are not alone. The important thing is to get it cleared up so you feel better. You should go to the doctor or clinic for treatment when you have a bad discharge so they can see which infection you have and treat you for the right one.

It is important to talk to your partner about your infection so he or she understands what you are going through. It is better not to have sex when you have an infection because this can be very sore, especially for women, and it might also make the infection worse. If you are going to have sex, try to use condoms because your partner can carry the infection. Even if you treat yours, you could catch it again from him or her. Sometimes the doctor will want to treat your partner as well because of this. Vaginal infections can be avoided if male sexual partners' private parts are clean. Germs can get into the vagina and cause infection if they are

not.

How do we avoid STDs?

STDs are very easy to catch. If you have sex with a person who has an STD you will get it from him or her. You can avoid getting STDs by not having sex with a lot of different people. The more people you have sex with, the more likely you are to sleep with someone who has an STD. Even if you don't sleep around, but your partner does, your partner may get an STD and then pass it on to you when you have sex together.

People are often too shy to talk about sex or to ask their partners if they have an STD. This is understandable especially if you have a new boyfriend or girlfriend who you don't know very well. But try to ask. If you see that your partner has sores or a discharge you should not have sex with that person until they are treated. And although it is not easy, try to talk to your partner about using condoms. A bit of embarrassment now, will save you serious problems later. And with AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases on the increase, more and more wise and careful women and men are using condoms when they have sex to protect themselves and their partners.

We have taken some of the information for this article from an article that appeared in the New Nation.



OK

STOP

APARTHEID'S WAR



OUR DEMANDS:

- * Disband KwaZulu Police
- * Arrest the warlords
- * A neutral peace keeping force
- * An end to the Emergency in Natal
- * Freedom of political association
- * A commission of inquiry into the police

Forward to national mass action

DEFEND NATAL!