

IZWI lase TOWNSHIP



Unity is strength. BARLOWS workers united in struggle.

STRIKE AT BARLOWS

In the first week of July, the workers at Barlow Manufacturing Co, Kew, came out on strike. They demanded increases of 50c per hour. Management offered only 15c.

Ten workers did not join the strike and continued their work. Strikers tried to persuade these 'scab' workers to join the union (MAWU - Metal and Allied Workers Union) and to support the strike. But they were unsuccessful.

Being angry, strikers later chased these 'scabs' to their homes in Alexandra, beat them, and broke some of their windows. The scabs then joined both the strike and the union!

However, police were called in by management at the factory, and 12 men were arrested, charged with assault and then released on bail. About a week later, all workers having returned to work, these 12 plus a personnel officer were fired by the company.

Management's view

The point of view of management is that they reject what they call 'intimidation'; this being when (as they put it) 'the freedom of the individual to associate or not to associate is endangered.' That is, workers must have the right to decide for themselves, as individuals, whether they want to join any worker action or not.

Opposite view

The point of view of workers, is that scabs weaken the unity of workers, and prevent them realising their objectives. This is what some workers told us:

'We were very angry. We chased them home and hit them and shouted. We broke their windows, their plates and cups and saucers. They must learn, they must join the union.'

'They don't understand what is happening inside the factory. A strike is not to say we don't want to work. We want to work, we only want better wages, better treatment.'

'They are stealing our jobs and our wages.'

An injury to one is an injury to all

When the 13 were dismissed, Barlows workers again downed tools, and requested a meeting to get reasons from management and to decide what action to take on behalf of their co-workers. Rejecting this meeting, management gave an ultimatum: 'Back to work in seven minutes, or everyone is fired.'

The workers refused to go back to work, and all 450 were fired.

The following day negotiations were reopened, and the workers were re-hired, except for the 13. On their behalf the union decided to proceed with charges of **unfair labour practice**, in that they were dismissed before charges against them had been proved. The union demands their reinstatement.

"Scab" labour

The question of 'scabs', protected by management and by the police, but condemned and attacked by striking workers, reveals dramatically some of the conflicts within capitalism.

ABOUT "SCAB" LABOUR

Strikes occur nearly every day in South Africa. What is unusual and important about this strike at Barlows, is that 'scab' workers were dealt with violently. What are 'scab' workers; and why were they beaten up?

As we know, under capitalism there are two classes; capitalists who own factories, mines, farms etc, and workers who own only their labour power. Capitalists make money by hiring workers to produce; while workers survive by getting jobs for a wage. To make the highest profit possible, capitalists offer low wages, while on the other side workers want higher wages in return for their labour.

The strike weapon

Through trade unions workers unite to improve their conditions but ultimately the only way workers can force capitalists to pay up is by threat of a strike or by actually striking; that is, refusing to work until their demands are met. Without workers, capitalists cannot make profits, so that a strike is a powerful weapon in the hands of organised workers. Still, a strike can only succeed if production is really halted: if the capitalist finds alternative workers, to replace the strikers, a strike will fail. It is those who agree to work in the place of strikers, who are called 'scabs'.

Capitalists have many weapons at their disposal. They get assistance from the police. They interfere with workers who try to persuade others of the need for unity in a strike — this they call 'intimidation' or 'incitement to strike', which is judicially an offence. Perhaps their key weapon is their ability to hold out for some time during a strike, and not be ruined. They have enough money saved to enable them to endure longer than most workers can. Nevertheless, if the strike does go on for long, and if they cannot find replacement labour (scabs), eventually they must give in, or at least make concessions.

Strengths and weaknesses

Workers are weak under capitalism. A strike often means losing wages during the dispute, or even losing jobs. Without jobs and wages workers and their families

suffer greatly. Thus, because wages are the life-blood of workers, they are a means of controlling and disciplining them. Workers have to think carefully about the risks involved when deciding whether or not to strike.

Insecurity squeezes the workers

Unemployment itself is a means of disciplining workers. There are about 3 million workers unemployed at present in South Africa. Thus there is competition for the limited number of jobs available. This means there will always be workers wanting to enter employment, and possibly willing to replace strikers.

Solidarity means sacrifices

Here we can see how capitalism creates divisions within the working class, in this case between employed and unemployed workers. It also divides those who are employed. Many workers are afraid of making the sacrifices necessary for the success of a strike. They fear to lose wages and even their jobs; and they know how difficult it would be to find other work.

We can now understand why some workers are not keen to join a strike: and equally we can understand why some workers are willing to take the jobs of strikers. They are desperate for work, even if the wages are low.

Unionised workers regard scabs as their enemy, as 'sell-outs'. This is because they weaken their unity, thus allowing bosses to break strikes, and keep workers down. Hence the terrible anger scabs arouse in striking workers.

Who is the enemy?

Scab labour is obviously not acceptable. Nevertheless, the reasons behind it must be understood: especially the fact that it is a creation of capital. Scabs are human; they fear greatly for their livelihood. In the end it is not the scab who is the enemy, but capitalism: and organised workers must realise this, and not vent their anger on individuals.

We can understand the anger and frustration experienced by the strikers at Barlows; but we are now in a position to see that beating up scabs and breaking their windows and their cups, is not the answer to the problem.

Two democracies

There is a difference between capitalists' democracy and workers democracy. Capitalists want workers to act as individuals and only look after their own interests. They will say, 'Worker so-and-so was fired, that is his problem, not yours. Why must you strike for his sake?' Workers reply must be, 'Today you fire so-and-so, tomorrow you may fire me. How must we live without jobs and wages? We will support our co-worker and demand his reinstatement.' This kind of solidarity among workers is what worker democracy is all about, making sacrifices in the interests of a common good.



Unity is strength

When all workers are united, not only in one factory or in one industry, or even in one city, but across the whole country, they can demand an end to low wages and unemployment. It is then that we will be rid of scab labour.

As we have seen that capitalism needs low wages and unemployment in order to secure high profits, it cannot meet these demands. The workers struggle therefore is a struggle to replace capitalism with an economic and political system that can guarantee jobs for all and improved living and working conditions with workers themselves having control over all aspects of their lives.

"PROGRESSIVE" MEANS WHAT ?

A CONVERSATION

There was a lively conversation in a yard, 7th, off Selborne. Two men were discussing the correct line of action to follow during the long wait until the day the liberation movement sweeps into the country to take power in the Peoples' name. One speaker held the view that everybody should keep fit and ready – "Ons moet gym!" The other took a more subversive line, saying "Nee – nie gym, ons moet steel."

The vision of rescue, to arrive at some future date, bringing liberation, is a myth. Or perhaps it should rather be said that, whether or not it happens actually isn't much use to us. Our task is with the present, inside our country. But what is significant about this conversation, is that even the most ordinary persons, even the least politicised, feel the need to puzzle out the options open to them – options of resistance to the doomed but still dangerous 'system'.

Strategies

A large number of different strategies of opposition are being practiced in South Africa from the isolated rural development schemes, food and water distribution schemes, vegetable growing co-ops and so on, all the way to the explicitly political 'parties' and 'fronts'.

Theory of opposition

What is lacking, however, is a coherent **theory of opposition** which would enlighten people about the logic of resistance, its purpose, its scope, its practicability, its weaknesses. In the absence of such a theory the differences and quarrels between opposition groups are quite unproductive. Here is Tutu saying, "The struggle is for our total liberation . . . to live in a South Africa where the rule of law obtains, where all have full

citizenship rights and obligations. Is that not what we are all striving for?" It is a childish view of the problems of society, which sees liberty just over the horizon, ready-made, if only we could get there.

It is also a useless view. Struggle among opposition groups is necessary: it is in this very struggle that freedom or its opposite is produced, and its structures worked out. The future is being constructed right now, in the cradle of opposition politics: and the kind of future it will be depends on theoretical and practical struggles taking place at this very time in homes, locations, area committees, trade unions, cultural groups and political organisations.

About "freedom"

Freedom is not an object or a destination. It is something constructed stage by difficult stage, in the struggles of the masses to set up self-governing democratic organisations, later to be linked in national unity. For this reason, the precise way each opposition group formulates its policy and conceives its task, is crucial. The behaviour of these groups is a sure sign of their nature and of their intentions. We must be critically aware of these features; we must not imagine that all opposition organisations are alike, or that they all want the same thing.

Many such groups don't like being examined in this way. They have a certain self-importance that is inclined to reject the implication that they might not be perfect. Well, too bad. The editorial group of IZWI LASE TOWNSHIP considers that open and clear discussion is needed and useful; and we intend to subject every political direction to critical analysis.

The articles in this issue, and in those to come, will be based on an implicit questioning of opposition, as well as of ruling, ideology and strategy. We will attempt to establish some base-line that might help individuals decide what may be done, and how to do it.

WHERE TO BEGIN

Opposition to the 'system' starts from a criticism of that system. That means an analysis and a clear statement of how it works, and what is wrong with it. This is a hard task. You cannot tell from the dial of a watch, how that watch works. If you wish to repair it when it becomes inaccurate, it would be useless to adjust the hands: you would have to understand the levers, spring, gears, fly-wheel, pivots and so on. Those in South Africa who blame low wages or racism and try to change these things, are like the person who tries to fix his watch by changing the hands. Racism and low wages are not the mechanism – they are **effects** of the mechanism.

A great deal of study is needed for one to understand the pivots and levers of capitalism (ours is a capitalist society). Therefore, study is the first duty of everyone who opposes the oppressive South African 'system' – study, study and yet more study.

The system

It can be said that the present 'system' offends the people in two ways:

1. It has taken away from people their control over their social lives.
2. It has taken away from workers their control over their production.

Two mechanisms

Thus there are two mechanisms that have to be studied. Firstly, the mechanism of the State government, which uses the police, courts, commissioners, admin boards, prefects, homeland stooges and even parliament, to control people and push them around.

Secondly, there is the mechanism of Production, otherwise called the economy, which does not allow workers the right to direct production, but forces them into the position of being the slaves of bosses and of machines.

Clearly these two mechanisms are damaging. Society is for the benefit of people, and should not be turned into the benefit of a dominant group, with their police and their stubborn rules and regulations. Work and creativity are necessities for mankind. People need to express themselves in terms of production. But they must be responsible for what they produce, they must not be forced into labouring mindlessly for another man's profit.

Two tasks

Once we understand what is wrong with the 'system' (ie not that wages are low or that there is racism; but that it interferes with the full human development of people) we can then see what direction to take in our opposition to the system.

1. In that it takes from people their full participation in social life, we should try by all means to restore to them their participation and control.
2. In that it takes from workers their participation in organising production, we should try to restore to them their control over their work conditions and their product.

In this way, an understanding of the faults of the system, leads to a clear idea of what would be an acceptable social structure. We can determine from this, what action is progressive and leads in the right direction, and what is not progressive, but holds society back in the trap of social tyranny and worker exploitation.

Understand – Act

Just to understand is not enough. Since understanding shows clearly that society should be transformed, it follows that

one must organise and act in order to transform it. Understanding and action go together. To act without understanding is blindness; to understand without practical action is idleness. This raises the very hard practical question, "What then may be done? What can I do?"

Progressive

There is no clear and obvious way to transform the conditions of the working masses. The state, having created these conditions deliberately, obviously tries to prevent them being altered; hence suppression of political opposition. So the question must be put like this: in what ways can progressive action be taken, either despite the state, or within the limits of its repressive obstacles?

Such action inevitably calls for struggle. In some circumstances the opportunities are favourable, though success is never easy. For example, in recent years the independent trade union movement, representing black workers, has gained important rights for its members. It has become possible for these unions to organise openly, to bargain with employers and to influence state policies towards workers. In this way a certain space has been gained, in which workers and their organisations may exist, safe from direct violence and harassment of the police. This is not to say that such workers organisations are entirely free of harassment. It is not only Neill Agget who has suffered terribly at the hands of the police. But nevertheless, workers unions can hold meetings, can discuss their common problems, can negotiate and can even (by strike action) force recognition of their demands.

Many of these unions have taken advantage of this opportunity to develop genuinely democratic structures. Instead of the unions being controlled by officials who sit in central offices, power to determine overall policy and even day to day matters has been put in the hands of the masses of workers who join these unions. (It is important here to note that for democracy to function there must be appropriate structures, ie voting procedures, procedures for meetings, and so on. Democracy is not something that happens by magic. It has to be **constructed**.)

Workers have been able to win concessions from the state because they are essential to the continued well-being of the state. Without workers, no production. The entire system would fall apart if production were not maintained. Since they are essential to the profits of capitalism, workers have a corresponding strength, which they can use if they are organised and united.

Apart from the trade union movement, there are many community organisations, and there are a few political organisations; some of these being progressive, others not. What one has to determine, when examining any of these groups, is whether they are really in opposition to the system, or whether they themselves indirectly support it.

Insincere opposition

If an organisation, no matter whether it calls itself an opposition movement permits arrogance, paternalism or domineering, it is not progressive and ought **not** to be supported. If an organisation does not recognise the predominance of workers interests, as the nucleus of a producers' society, it is **not** progressive and ought not to be supported. If an organisation is sexist (regards women as inferior), or racist (differentiates on grounds of colour), it is no different from the present system, and ought **not** to be supported. And finally, if an organisation is secretive, discourages discussion, claims unauthorised rights in the 'peoples' name, or suppresses study and thought – such an organisation cannot be tested, cannot be guaranteed progressive, and ought **not** to be supported.

It is for each and everyone to decide what to do: not to wait for rescue, but to contribute continually to the process of transformation in peoples ideas and in their forms of organisation – but contribute in progressive terms.

What is so special about the working-class?

Many people who are not themselves workers nevertheless support the struggle of the working class. Why? What is special about the working class? There is no place for sentimentality here. As individuals, workers are not different from people in any other class. Some are reasonable, some unreasonable: some are fair-minded and democratic, others like to bully and rule: some are self-disciplined, others are not. But it is not with individuals that we are concerned here; it is with classes, ie masses that consist of people with the same position in the process of production. The working class includes all those who sell their labour power: it differs in this way from the bourgeois class (capitalists) who own factories, property and so on, and who employ labour.

There are two things that must be emphasized about the working class. Firstly it consists of people who experience work as **material production**. Secondly, it is the only class that is **necessarily opposed to the capitalist class** and can develop a form of society different from capitalism. Let us take these two points in turn:

1. In capitalism many people are not productive, but make money in various strange ways. For example, some get a living by **speculating**. This means that they buy things when they expect prices to rise, and then they sell, making a profit. There are speculators in property, who buy up houses and buildings, leave them empty until property prices have gone up, then they sell these properties. Another group of unproductive workers, especially numerous in South Africa, is the bureaucracy, that is, people who are employed in state departments — Administration Board officials, police, homeland authorities, social workers etc. Their main function is to keep the working class subject to the bourgeois class: and they will disappear when the workers them-

selves make their own social arrangements.

On the other hand workers actually **produce**; it is on their labour that the real wealth of a nation depends. All other forms of income are indirect results of real production. It is in this sense that we say that workers experience work as production (rather than the mere gaining of an income, by whatever means). The truth about the wealth of society depending on production, can be grasped easily by workers. Other classes tend to be confused about where wealth comes from. And for this reason, in any future society that will not be based on the exploitation of some (as workers) for the benefit of others (as speculators, officials etc), the entire population will have to be seen as **producers**, and the interests of these producers will have to be paramount. Thus, the present working class is the basis of a future society of producers, and for this reason, the interests of the working class can be seen to be of primary importance, in social struggles taking place today.

2. It may be said that the working class is the only class that is **necessarily** revolutionary, since it is the only class whose interests necessarily conflict with those of the bourgeois class. We show in other articles how the working class is created by expropriation (theft of land and implements) and how it is continually exploited (theft of surplus labour) to provide profit for the bourgeoisie. This being so, workers interests will only flourish when the power of capitalists has been broken. Either the capitalists gain at the expense of workers, or workers overthrow capitalists and organise society according to their own interests. There can be no half way solution to this conflict. People in the so-called middle class, that is, teachers, officials, shop-keepers, police, lawyers, advertising people,

journalists etc, sometimes benefit from the capitalist class, sometimes from the working class. They are a floating class. They do not always support the bourgeoisie, but on the other hand, they are not necessarily opposed to that class. For this reason, their interests cannot form the basis of a new society. They have no necessary interest in changing anything. Their overall tendency is one of adaptation. Reformism is their policy.

Possibly at present workers do not realise that they are **necessarily in conflict** with the capitalist class. The bosses and the state use propaganda to calm the workers and give them other things to think about. They use newspapers, radio and TV, to distract workers and they hypnotise them with material things, things they can buy. In this way, the attention of workers is diverted from major struggles over economics and politics, to private worries about HP, fashion, entertainment and so on.

The capitalist system itself created the working class. Under capitalism the working class develops in size and in character. It becomes the largest group of people in society: and it develops co-operation because workers actually do combine to make things (they are unlike the old-fashioned craftsmen who individually carried out all the steps in making an article). The larger the working class becomes, and the more it learns about co-operative labour, the more it realizes its future role and importance in society. It realises above all, that the basis of a new society has been securely laid in these two characteristics of being producer and of working co-operatively. It might even be said, that the new society already partly exists, in that there is a massive working class of people who produce co-operatively together.

The present system (capitalism) is based on class divisions. One class exists at the expense of the other. But it is becoming clear that, though this has been in some ways a productive arrangement, it is no longer necessary, and that the class division is destructive. The way the working class will develop is, by abolishing the class that oppresses it, the bourgeoisie, and establishing one class only, the working class, or as it is sometimes called, the proletariat, which will organise society. This then would be a classless society. It would not include class-conflict or class division, or class exploitation. It would be a society of producers, the masses themselves in control of their social lives, producers themselves in control of their production.

Two things must be clear from this analysis.

1. The movement for social change is not a game. It is not a desire for change for the sake of change, nor is it a chance for new people to get the power that they are at present

denied. It is a movement based on the fact that society actually **must** change, because it is unable to survive on the present basis of class conflict.

2. The change itself cannot be arbitrary, it cannot be made in just any direction. Change is determined by what actually exists. At present there are two forces at work, the repressive forces of the capitalist state, and the co-operative and democratic forces of the working class.

There can be change in one of these two directions. Either there will develop a massive military dictatorship, similar to that of Nazi Germany, which will in fact be the capitalist class armed: or there will develop a democratic workers state. The importance of the working class, is that from this class and its interests, the one line of change is established. And anyone, whether he be a worker or a member of the middle-class, or even a bourgeois, is in the end obliged to choose which direction he wishes to take. If he

chooses the democratic direction, and throws in his lot with the working class, then he is part of the working class struggle.

At the same time we must be aware that the working class is presently unorganised (except for a small percentage in unions), and that workers are often uninformed and confused about the social forces they are affected by. Also, among the unions there is rivalry and even hostility. The working class consists of men and women whose personal lives are for the most part chaotic, their families divided, their relationships difficult and often unpleasant. Their education has been neglected, their culture has been plundered, their personal safety is insecure. The class includes many exceptional, active and courageous people: but in general there is little 'class consciousness', and little chance that the working class will take a united role in the struggle for a few years yet. Indeed, the struggle at present is probably mostly a matter of organising and educating this mass of people into becoming, fully and consciously, the class of producers who will ultimately take control of all national affairs.

C.O.S.A.S.

Interview with Tshidiso Matoma, National Organizer

IZWI: Is COSAS a progressive organisation?

COSAS: Yes, COSAS is progressive. It has actually seen itself progressive from the day of its formation. Maybe I have to explain why I say this. We say we are progressive because we subscribe to the principle of non racialism. We even align ourselves with other parts of the world like Nicaragua where people are struggling. In fact we identify ourselves with people who are fighting oppression and exploitation throughout the world. That is why we are progressive.

IZWI: By progressive you mean those organisations which are looking forward to a non racial South Africa?

COSAS: Yes, and which also use non racial means towards that goal. We believe that every human being regardless of colour has a role to play in the realization of the new society ie non racial democratic South Africa.

IZWI: Being a Student Organisation do you impart these ideas to students at schools?

COSAS: Yes, we have had discussions with the students on a number of occasions about the principle of non racialism, what it really entails. I can assure you to a very large extent students know that COSAS is non-racial. Although in certain moments there is a sort of controversy surrounding this whole thing of being non racial, which is caused by confusion between nonracialism and multiracialism. Some people say that if COSAS is non racial and progressive, why doesn't it include whites within its ranks? You know, we have always accepted that under the present conditions we can't

have whites participating in our organisation, because the law doesn't allow that under the Political Interference Act. Besides, you will realise that our communities are separated ie between whites and blacks and privileged and underprivileged. Also, because of racial oppression which has been invoked by apartheid throughout the years, people generally have an ill feeling towards whites. So that we don't think that whites can play an effective role in our community; we believe rather that they should organise along separate lines.

IZWI: Don't you think by merely saying you are a non racial organisation, you are giving people the wrong impression that you have whites in your organisation?

COSAS: Of course people have been asking what we really mean by saying we are non racial whereas we seem to be racial by not having whites. But as I have explained this is because South Africa is a very different type of situation from maybe Nicaragua. Here we are fighting race and class oppression. We believe that Africans as an oppressed community must be organised to be in the forefront of the struggle. I think whites who are prepared to participate in the struggle can do so in their own way and own organisations and areas, if you get the point.

IZWI: Is COSAS established at schools or is it just outside schools?

COSAS: COSAS as a students organisation must definitely be established within the schools. But at the moment we are not really established in schools, because of various problems, the first one being the repression we are subjected to as an organisation. We see our repression as being similar to Trade Unions operating on the factory floor. Because of our beliefs the state is inevitably going to clamp down on us, as it has done already. For instance, 6 months after the formation of COSAS almost its entire National Executive was detained and released after five months, except Ephraim Mogale (first president) who is presently serving a five year jail term on Robben Island. And as a result, COSAS suffers the stigma of being a political organisation. Also principals in their own way discourage students from joining COSAS. They intimidate students saying COSAS is a political, boycott organisation and students who join will be de-

tained and all that kak. So principals have also made it difficult for COSAS to operate. I know of some COSAS members trying to operate at schools who were actually expelled or victimised in a number of ways like being failed, sometimes the principal called police to arrest them at school. Like I have said COSAS developed a stigma and students are scared to join. Although they know the relevance of COSAS, students are really afraid to participate, and as a result COSAS is not established at schools. But in the Eastern Cape we have succeeded in taking COSAS within the schools and people have been using a number of strategies, which we are trying to apply at the present moment here, like organising extra lessons.

IZWI: Don't you think that by being subject to intimidation, harassment etc which makes it difficult for you to function, you are out of touch with students?

COSAS: Yes, we are. For instance the first year after its formation COSAS operated as a political organisation by openly taking up political issues like rents, and also participating in workers strikes through boycotting products eg Wilson Rowntrees. And as a result we were divorced from school, and we later realized that we have to go back to the school where the students are.

IZWI: What you are implying is that after you have gained a majority of students you won't meet any repression at all, when you try to operate at schools?

COSAS: You see the repression that we are subjected to is two-pronged. We experience repression directly from the state, through detentions, harassments of our members, breaking of our meetings and intimidation. We also experience the repression from schools which is meted out by the principal. This principals repression we believe we can do away with as long as we get the majority of students on our side. Just like Trade Unions - they have managed to win recognition from the employers because they have the majority of workers on their side. So we believe that those petty repression we can get rid of. But the point I would like to raise is that of state repression. I believe that at the present moment we cannot do away with state repression, as this has been there since mankind started struggling. To summarise : to do away with state repression we have to do away with the state.

IZWI: Does COSAS approve of Bantu Education?

COSAS: In the first place we in COSAS are not the first generation to struggle. We recognise that people in the past have been struggling against oppression. We recognise that in 1955 people struggled against Bantu Education, so we see ourselves as part of that struggle and we are not a different generation. We have actually taken up from where our forebears left off. As such we are totally opposed to Bantu Education. We reject it completely, we don't regard it as a proper system of education. We regard it as evil.

IZWI: So if you reject it completely then why do you encourage students to continue with its syllabus?

COSAS: We believe that we can't challenge Bantu Education if we are out of school where it is practised. We believe that students can challenge and frustrate the methods, aims and principles of Bantu Education if they are at school, just like the workers who fight for higher wages, better working conditions at the factory. So the school, just like the factory, is our centre of struggle. Also we believe that the education we are receiving presently will be necessary to build a future democratic South Africa. So on that basis we don't discourage students to go to school but they should put the little education they get to more constructive use than what the oppressor wants.

IZWI: Do you think students do get education at school?

COSAS: Well academically they do receive education although it is limited and the principles on which it is based are actually against our interests. But we do believe that for instance they learn mathematics and can use it constructively, also we came out of school being literate. Although it doesn't develop our potential to the fullest, we believe that the very lessons we are offered can be developed further and we have to use the present education to build a better education.

IZWI: What do you visualise as better education?

COSAS: Our understanding of a better education is the one which is non racial and democratic. This is the education that will serve the interests of the majority of the people. This is the education

that is committed to the development of mankind unlike the present one which is there only to boost the present exploitative economy which is capitalism. We believe education should serve the poor people, the oppressed people. This is why we call it education for liberation, education which is decided upon and structured by the very people, ie parents, students and teachers all have a role to decide what is to be taught, and how it is to be taught and where. We believe that the content and structure of the present education must change completely and new education decided by all people who live in South Africa regardless of colour.

IZWI: What is COSAS's relationship with community organisations like Soweto Civic Association?

COSAS: As I have indicated before that we see ourselves as progressive and this means that we are in the struggle together with other people who are also in the struggle to build a new society.

IZWI: How do you think the Civic Association is aiming at changing the society?

COSAS: Of course we believe that the Civic Association is committed to change the society. Although they say they are struggling for the betterment of the living conditions of our people, we recognise that this will not be possible in the present society which is based on the expropriation of the bulk of the country's wealth by the few, and that very wealth is necessary to improve the conditions of our people. Until the economic system creates equal distribution of wealth, our conditions will not change, and in the final analysis we regard the Civic Association as struggling to change the whole economic system which is capitalism.

IZWI: You mean the Soweto Civic Association, by saying they support private enterprise (capitalism), want to do away with the 'whole economic system'?

COSAS: I think there is a contradiction in the SCA supporting private enterprise and at the same time being committed to bettering the conditions of our people. There have been such community organisations in the past. What history tells us is that these organisations were involved in negotiations behind closed doors leaving the people behind. So at the present the type of civic associations that we are supporting are those that are democratic.

IZWI: What you are implying is that the SCA is progressive?

COSAS: Yes, like many other civic associations they are part and parcel of this struggle to transform society into a more democratic and free society.

IZWI: But you have said two things which you terms a contradiction within the SCA, ie supporting capitalism and wanting to better the conditions of the people. But what is it really for, because we have two contradictory things?

COSAS: Actually the Civic Associations I am talking about are those which emerged after the 1976 uprisings. You will realise that many of community organisations sprung up which saw themselves as participating in the struggle like Durban Housing Action Committee, SCA, Cape Action Housing Committee, Mohlakeng Civic Association, etc. These Civic Associations have actually proved that they are involved in the struggle for liberation of their people. Though they organise around civic issues, but in a long term they are part and parcel of the whole liberation movement.

IZWI: It means that COSAS can support the PFP, because they say they

want to see the conditions of people being improved, and on the one hand, they support capitalism?

COSAS: We believe that the people themselves have to participate and the people themselves are their own liberators. In fact we reject the PFP because we see it as part of the oppressive system and it is not our organisation, because people don't determine the policy of the PFP. In fact we believe that by supporting private enterprise they support the conditions which they claim to be against.

IZWI: But this applies also to the SCA. How do you argue this point then?

COSAS: Like I have said the SCA is a people's organisation. At the moment there are efforts to try and bring it down to the grassroots level and no one individual decides the policy of the Association, in fact people themselves decide. The SCA is not the individuals, but people who participate at the grassroots, and for that reason we support it as a people's organisation.

IZWI: Actually whom are you referring to as the 'People'?

COSAS: I am referring to community residents, the people who suffer poor housing, high rents, disenfranchised majority. . .

IZWI: You include people like Maponya and others?

COSAS: We believe Maponya has a role to play in the struggle to better the living conditions of the people of Soweto because he is discriminated against on the basis of the colour of his skin. We know that he is a petty-bourgeois but he has a role not of leadership. I mean he can organise people, playing a more grassroots role.

STRIKE AT CROWN GOLD

Recently there was a strike by women workers at Crown Gold, a factory in Wynberg. The workers were demanding higher wages, better treatment from the boss, and that they should be registered.

Why the strike?

What actually provoked the strike was that their boss declared a deduction of R5 from their wages.

The day before the strike, the boss called the workers and showed the jewelry (produced at the factory) wrapped in a cloth and he accused workers of a theft attempt. He went on to say that, as he was not able to pinpoint the 'culprit', the whole workforce should suffer the consequences, and he was going to deduct R5 from each of their wage packets.

Workers viewed this as unfair and consequently decided not to work on Friday, as their labour was not going to be paid for on that particular day. Rev Buti's help was requested. He helped prepare placards and called the press to come and witness the demonstration.

Later Rev Buti negotiated a settlement with the boss of the factory. The settlement reached was that the boss promised to give higher wages, that he would treat his workers better and finally that he would register all unregistered workers.

Buti's paternalistic action

Though Buti might have been of immediate help to the workers, we still have to question his approach to the settlement which reflects his lack of understanding of the real issue involved. His approach was basically wrong in that he did not involve the workers in the negotiation of settlement.

This is important because the workers approached him because they lack negotiating skills through no fault of their own but through the way the whole society is structured by the system to de-

prive workers of the initiative. His approach was basically wrong in that he did not involve any worker in this important process of negotiation; which means that he and the boss themselves came to a decision, while the real voice of the workers was blocked from being heard.

What he should have done was involve workers, chosen by the work-force to represent them, and thereby restore initiative to the workers; something that the state and bosses in general try to prevent.

That theft does take place at the factory was admitted by one worker in an interview. She said that workers steal in order to supplement their wages, and pointed out that she has made R55 on one weekend from stolen goods - a really large sum when you compare it with an average wage in that factory of R25 a week.

About theft

Though acknowledging the fact that theft is a form of protest against low wages, and that it is an obvious option

open to workers to supplement their poverty wage, theft should by no means be encouraged because in the long run it works against the interests of the working class. Also, if a worker is found red-handed, the whole might of the bosses is brought to bear, and she gets dismissed or put into jail. But the main objection is that it does not throw light on the problem of low wages or on the question why workers are paid such low wages.

Individual action

Theft is a secret and private protest in which a worker engages as an individual, whereas the appropriate form of struggle must be open and class based, on all issues that agitate us, low wages, unjust dismissal, bad working conditions etc.

Theft does not only limit our understanding of the problems of the working class, it also limits our capacity to fight out these problems.

Collective action

As we all know, bosses employ us as individuals. But we face common problems, we come from the same working



class and from the same townships, face the same unemployment, high cost-of-living, high bus fares and the same housing problems.

At the factory we face the same working conditions and get poverty wages. These are problems which must bring us together into a strong force with one voice.

The union makes us strong

The strike action at **Crown Gold** partly fulfilled these conditions and was therefore an encouraging event. It shows that workers are coming to terms with the fact that they can and must improve

their lot by engaging in collective struggle. This necessarily means that all the workers had to sacrifice their little differences and individual interests, to reach common decisions and make common demands to further the collective interest of the whole workforce.

It is obvious that the strike action is limited to solving immediate problems and to winning immediate concessions. This action must be followed up, therefore, so as to preserve the spirit of defiance and resistance in the hearts of workers. This goal can best be served by trade union organisation.

Democracy in unions

Today throughout South Africa there are 300 000 workers united in a strong trade union movement. These unions fight for furthering and protecting the interests of workers. Most of the unions are well established on the factory floor, with shop-stewards who are worker representatives from each and every department. They have regular meetings where workers discuss their problems and work out strategies for overcoming their hardships. Workers get to know the importance of organisation, they learn organisational skills and progress in organising other workers.

TRADE UNIONS AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

In traditional African society a division between where people live and where they work was unknown. The social and economic life of people was inseparable. This was partly due to the fact that there was no private ownership of the means of production (ie things necessary for producing goods). The chief means of production was land, to which every family had access.

Also production for profit was unknown. Production took place in every family unit. The family had its own tools, cattle and household goods that enabled people to live without working for others. The chief was both economic and political leader: thus there was no separation between the economic and social life of people.

Capitalism, introduced through white colonialism, drove people off the land, and later to industrial areas. This (capitalist) economic system, based on private ownership of the means of production, production for profit, and employment of wage labour, brought with it the division between the working and social life of people. To put this in another way, it has brought the division between the economic and political aspects of life of a people. This is not a natural division. It has been created by capitalism in its effort to turn people from producers into wage labourers.

Because of this division between the work-place and the living-place, the community, there is at present an intense discussion in all working-class organisations, as to whether trade unions should concentrate all their energies on struggling only in factories, or whether there should be joint struggles, linking community and trade-union activity.

Community or factory struggle

A trade union is an organisation of workers whose main function is to organise workers at factories to fight for better wages and working conditions. There are many trade unions today, spread over the major industries and industrial areas of this country. They are, as we have said, mostly concerned with the economic struggles of the workers.

There are also community organisations, which engage in housing, rent and bus-fare struggles. These organisations are less well organised than trade unions, and there are fewer of them. It is actually hard to sustain organisations of this kind, as in communities there are many different interest groups (people with different and sometimes conflicting interests) whereas in factories most workers have the same problems and are able to formulate demands that would bene-

fit them all. Where community organisations do find issues that will be supported by most people in the area, such as rent-rise protests, as soon as such an issue ends, either in solution or non-solution, the organisation ceases to be active.

In capitalism the purpose of production is not in the first place to make goods for use, but for profit. The bosses who own the means of production (factories, machines, money etc) when they open up a factory (a bakery, for example) do not do so because they are interested in producing bread, but because they expect the production of bread to bring them profits. If, then, the bakery ceases to make a profit, it will be abandoned, and the boss will take his money into some other enterprise where prospects for making money are better. Moreover, he employs labour from the non-owning class (working class), not because he wants to help people who have no other way of surviving, but simply because he needs their labour power to run his factory.

Those working to produce goods in this system, are exploited in the sense that they are paid less than the value that they produce. This is how the bosses make profits. They pay their workers just enough to enable them to survive and get to work each day.

But of course the survival of workers depends not only on his wage, but also on facilities such as housing, schools, hospitals, sewerage removal, water supply and many other things generally spoken of as 'community' things. These are generally provided by, or at least constructed by, local government bodies such as City Councils, Provincial Councils, Administration Boards and so on. It is not generally considered the duty of businesses to provide these 'community' facilities.

This brings us back to trade-unions. Workers have struggled for decades to get rights of free association. The struggle has not been an easy one. Today trade unions are engaged in tremendous work, not only improving the conditions of workers, but also educating workers about democracy and giving workers confidence that in their struggles they can force bosses and the government to meet worker demands. Unions serve as a forum of discussion of strategy and tactics. They voice demands; elect committees to attempt to achieve their demands.

We can see this as an area of struggle open to workers at this time: and workers must use this opportunity to the full. They must defend their rights and go further in extending them.

But there is still a problem here in that trade unions are really confined to economic struggles. The settlement of grievances and disputes is a matter of negotiations with the employers. Agreements are reached within the political framework of the present capitalist system.

Because the majority of workers in South Africa do not have political rights, they are not represented by any party in parliament and in fact are not allowed to develop a party of their own. This is one reason we find the political energies of workers concentrated in trade unions.

But in the long run this is not enough. Trade unions cannot fill the gap where there should be full political activity. We see this problem clearly in the case that we have mentioned, the separation

between trade unions and community organisations. Trade union struggle by itself is incapable of freeing workers from the yoke of exploitation.

The vital role of trade unions is to transform workers. It brings workers together, eliminates competition among them, eliminates the tendency to struggle as individuals, and gradually transforms the individual wage earners into a proletariat, that is, a class of people who understand that they belong together and have to fight together to overcome exploitation from the capitalist class.

In this way we see that trade unions should not be satisfied with the task of struggling for higher wages etc, but that they must help transform the system itself, so that class conflict and exploitation may give way to general co-operation in a society in which everyone is a producer. This will require that the means of production be owned by the people as a whole, not by one class of people, who use their ownership and the power that flows from this, to oppress and exploit another class.

Letters

Continued on page 16

IZWI

I wish to contribute to IZWI by commenting on the article entitled 'LEBIT-LA LA MOSADI KE BOGADI'. I think that the discussion on the position of women in society is important and that it should continue. I feel also that in your approach to this problem you have missed a few things.

Before looking at the position of women in terms of labour relations, I think you should try and look deeper into the question of the family. I think it will help if you look into this problem. One of the important things in the formation of a family is **bogadi**. This practice was not given enough attention, I feel, in the

article. A lot of people are worried by this, and have been writing to the newspapers giving their views. In one of the letters someone complained that his in-laws refused to accept **bogadi** for their daughter. He fears that his wife's parents do not want **bogadi** because they want to be his dependents in the future. This is an interesting situation when one considers the meaning of **bogadi** in the traditional sense. This man seems to want to pay lobola (**bogadi**) for his wife **once and for all**, and in this way cut his ties with the woman's family.

This leads me to say that the traditional practice of the bride and grooms families having mutual and continuous interaction and responsibility, has vanished.

Bogadi now seems to be a mere purchasing of women, and it affects the way men relate to women, and also the way women see themselves.

As I said, this practice is at the base of the formation of most families in our country. It makes it seem natural for women to be paid less than men, because their wage is a supplement to their husband's and not a full wage on its own.

I would be happy if you undertake to handle this problem because I have a lot of questions that I cannot answer, like — how does it come about that **bogadi** is still practiced and encouraged? Also, what is the character of the present family, is it something that has been shaped by this industrial society of ours?

A Reader.

OUR PROBLEM WITH THE A.L.C.

IZWI LASE TOWNSHIP has run into some trouble with the Liaison Committee. We have always considered that, as the ALC is responsible to the residents of Alexandra since it spends money that belongs to those residents, it must be available to answer questions and even to face criticism.

The Liaison Committee do not see it that way. Mr Magermann outright told our reporter, "Don't ask me questions" and Rev Buti himself has given misleading or even totally false answers to some questions. It is not just that these men are reluctant to give information; they are positively hostile and aggressive towards us.

Why? What has IZWI LASE TOWNSHIP done to deserve such treatment? The answer is simple, we have been critical — we have not knelt in front of these great men with cries of admiration.

Publicly, the ALC claims to keep an open door. They say that they are available to anyone who has questions to ask, or suggestions to make. On one occasion Rev Buti told our reporter, 'You are right to criticise. I don't say you are wrong.' And in the same interview he admitted that he was a mere mortal. 'We are not angels,' he said. 'We are human beings like everyone lese.'

But when the moment comes that we have questions to ask, suddenly the door is shut, we are **not** right to criticise and the ALC are no longer human beings, but great-men whom one is told not to question.

Does this behaviour have a meaning? Yes. It means that the members of the ALC are not trustworthy enough to hold public office in a democratic community. It means that they are arrogant in that they regard themselves as having superior rights to other people.

If anyone wishes to study the way 'opposition to the system' becomes 'a

part of the system', they should study the origins, development and present character of the Liaison Committee.

The letter printed below was sent to the ALC on the 20th May. Since no reply

has been received we are publishing the letter, that there should not be any darkness over our relations with this group of 'representatives' of residents in the township. Likewise, we will keep our readers informed of any further developments in this business.

Dear Sirs,

On Tuesday 10th of this month, a member of our newspaper team, who sought an interview with Rev Buti, was treated rudely and threateningly by a member of the Liaison Committee, namely Mr Magerman. We are writing to put this incident on record, and to ask if his behaviour has the sanction of the Liaison Committee as a whole.

We do not think that the incident itself need be disputed. Mr Magerman will remember it, and for our part we have a tape transcript. We do, however, request clarification on the significance of Magerman's attitude.

As you know, we produce a paper called Izwi Lase Township; and we like to interview and consult, to get our minds clear on issues of public concern. It was in pursuit of this aim that our representative was confronted and insulted.

It may be that Mr Magerman does not like our paper. On the other hand a growing number of people in Alexandra **do** like it. Whatever Mr Magerman's opinion, it does not entitle him to be personally rude and aggressive towards us, nor do we intend to tolerate this sort of behaviour. If Mr Magerman wishes to criticise us, or our 'objectivity' or anything we say in our paper, he is welcome to do so, either in his capacity as a member of the ALC or as a private person: but we require that he do so in an acceptable manner, and not as if he were a dictator. We address these remarks to the Liaison Committee as a whole, seeing that it was on ALC property that our representative was confronted, so that in a sense it might seem that Magerman spoke on behalf of the ALC as a whole.

Our paper has been appearing for over a year, winning friends and support all the time. It has not yet encountered any trouble that it has not overcome. We have encountered co-operation and acceptance, nor have we been harrassed in any way in the conduct of our business. If it so happens that we do now begin to experience harassment, as seemed to be foreshadowed by Mr Magerman, we would like the Liaison Committee to understand clearly that we will not hesitate to put these events openly to the readers of our paper.

It is our view, speaking generally, that one cannot look forward to rights or democracy in this country, if one cannot find leaders who truly value these principles, and do not merely make use of them for their own personal ambition. We see no difference between the arrogance of Mr Magerman and that of certain department beaurocrats who oppress the people of this country. What might be meant by the phrase 'Save Alexandra', if Alexandra is to be delivered from one authoritarianism, only to find itself hand-cuffed by another?

We require a reply,

A.P.Y.O.

A resolution was passed at the last congress of COSAS to look into the question of organising youth. This seems to have been a response to the Minister's remark that COSAS was not directed by students in its activities. This is true to the extent that not all members are students, some having left school some years ago but found no alternative organisation to be active in.

5th June

On 5th June, COSAS (Alex Branch) called a meeting to discuss the formation of a youth body. A number of people attended the meeting, and the idea was explored. This posed a serious question about the relationship of the new organisation to COSAS. On this there were different opinions. Some felt that the organisation should be an affiliate of COSAS since they initiated the whole thing. They felt also that such an arrangement might improve the efficiency of the youth group in that most of COSAS members are used to organisational work. However, the majority felt that such affiliation would hinder democracy in that people involved in the youth organisation might think that COSAS is responsible for everything happening, and this might discourage decision-making and responsibility from the youth members. A fundamental principle of democracy was involved. If COSAS initiated the formation of the youth organisation, then it was its duty to restore initiative to the members of the group. It was thus felt that the very people involved should be the ones to plan and direct the group, and that it should be autonomous and independent from COSAS.

On this basis APYO (Alexandra Progressive Youth Organisation) was formed. Its infancy was faced with a difficult task — to turn people, who have been socialised by society out of decision making, participation and involvement, into fully responsible participants who look on their participation and involvement as the basis of organised democracy. It is of course profoundly difficult to develop democracy within an undemocratic society!

Presently workers are struggling to drive home to the bosses and the state their right to form committees always respon-

sible to those workers. Their demand is not only for democratically elected workers committees, but also for democratic control over their own trade union organisations.

In places of learning, students' major short-term demand is for democratically elected SRC's (Student Representative Councils).

In communities, people are trying to achieve democratic control over the conditions under which they live; conditions they have no say in at the moment. Their struggles are about housing, electricity, transport, health and so on.

If we look at these organisations we see that what is common to them all is the general struggle for democracy, in the places where people live, where they learn and where they work.

Differing opinions and democracy

The same struggle is evident in APYO. As a body where people expect to learn and work, there should be democracy if the organisation is to remain firm in its stand. At the outset, members of APYO decided that since there was unity among them (meaning that even though there were disagreements, they were sorted out) then something should be done. Many felt that it was the duty of the group to respond to the demands and aspirations of the youth. This reflects the energy that is pent up in people. Because they desire to be active and not sit in idleness, most felt the group should engage itself in some work which is capable of changing our conditions — but what kind of work? What exactly was to be done?

This posed another problem. Even though we were energetic and aware of our conditions in the township, it seemed we did not understand completely what brings about our problems, what causes us to be in an oppressed situation. Basically this meant that we did not understand how our society functions.

Reason and action

Because of this ignorance, we felt it would be useful to declare our group a 'study group': but this would only serve as a preliminary activity, and would not limit the group's scope. Study would

serve the purpose of trying to find out what is wrong with our society, so that we may come to know reality and be able to act accordingly. Because no system of exploitation of man by man was ever removed by emotional anger alone, people should have a developed consciousness. The tendency to be swayed by emotions rather than reason, should not be sustained. When people reason they are better able to know what to do.

Presently our reading sessions are held weekly. No member is allowed to dominate the reading session. We choose new discussion leaders now and then. Usually chapters are not read right up to the end, because we often stop to discuss difficult new concepts and also try hard to relate what we are reading to our daily life, so that our activities are not separated from our day to day experience.

Postscript 18 July

Since the above article was written, events have taken a rather disturbing turn with APYO. These events have to be described here, else the given account would be misleading.

Be Charterist or quit...

Problems arose when the constitution was to be drafted on the 10th of July. A member from COSAS stood up and gave a command that "this group should become a Charterist group and if there are any members who are against the Charter they should quit or else the Charterist would do so."

The original plan

If we can trace back to when the group was started, it was felt then that it should be democratic; meaning that people involved should participate in decision-making. So what this COSAS member said was viewed by most of us as undemocratic, because he was instructing and not suggesting in order to open up a debate. To most members this remark was confusing since they felt that the group was no longer theirs but for people who have power to command.

In response to this statement people felt we should look into the question of the Freedom Charter seriously, for there are new members who don't understand it, some have neither read it nor seen it before. A decision was reserved until the steering committee was formed, and consisted of four people ie Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer and the organizer.

The meeting was adjourned to the 16th July with the new steering committee meeting early at 12 noon, while the general meeting would be late in the afternoon. At the general meeting the Chairperson raised the very same question of whether to follow the line of COSAS or not. The Chairperson insisted that we align ourselves with the Charterists. Other members felt we should bring the Charter in the meeting and discuss it critically before we faced the question of becoming Charterists or not, but others were not in favour of discussing the Charter, instead they wanted to impose it on members so that they should follow it blindly.

Comment

We may note that the Freedom Charter has two uses. On the one hand it is a set of ideas, embodying analysis of the social situation, and laying out principles on which a new order should be established. As a set of ideas, it is of great educational value, and is able to give a coherent picture of a just society, so that at very least the actual society (South Africa of such and such a date) might be seen clearly in its injustice.

On the other hand, it is an 'organising instrument'. This means that it serves very much as a flag: it enables people to identify themselves, group together, and act unitedly. The Charter has been used to great effect over the past few years, to mobilise people and get them to a common understanding of certain democratic principles, on the basis of which they have been able to form a large grouping of people in opposition to the South African state.

Idolatry

A problem arises, however, when the two characters of the Charter, its two uses, are not fully integrated. As a set of ideas, the Charter must be read, understood, debated, analysed and accepted. But if it is used as an organising instrument, without it being understood, then it becomes a 'sacred' document, a gospel, **which is contrary to its own principles**. Anyone who uses it in this way is not progressive, but authoritarian, and is in fact betraying the very spirit of the Charter.

There is only one way that the Charter can be used both as a certain set of ideas and as an organising instrument; and that is if its very ideas are the basis of unity.

It is only if people actually **share** the ideas, the principles set out in the Charter, that they can form united organisation on the basis of the Charter.

However, today one hears from all sides how 'charterist' groups are misusing the Charter by insisting on blind obedience to it as a holy document, as a magical talisman that will guide the blind towards the light.

No such thing. Used thus it will only keep the blind in a condition of even deeper blindness.

Latest news, 1st Aug.

At the meeting of 23 July, the chairman declared that he had written letters to youth organisations in Alex (including the Liaison Committee affiliated **Youth Council**) inviting them to join APYO. Some members objected that he had no right to take such action without discussion and agreement within APYO; because such unilateral action **was highly undemocratic**. The chairman agreed that he made a mistake and would rectify it.

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ITLHOKOMELENG

An old-age crèche

Black leaders yesterday reacted angrily to reports of the death of a 64-year old ailing pensioner who died while queuing for her bi-monthly pension in Soweto this week.

The publicity secretary for AZAPO, Mr Ishmael Mkhabela, said it was time community or political organisations took up the matter of old people in order to improve the situation.

(Sowetan 25 March '83)

What situation is he talking about? Thousands of old people queue all night in all weathers for their bi-monthly allowance, which most regard as too low in any case.

If it happens that you don't reach the pay desk within two days, you will only get your pension after four months.

This is the reason most give for waking early in the morning, or spending the night at the administration board offices, to get their pension as soon as possible. This situation prevails in most townships. It was the same in Alexandra until Ithokomeleng intervened. Physical violence was sometimes witnessed in the queue. The officials could not control the pensioners, because their system of payout was inefficient. The worst thing was the involvement of some in bribes and corruption.

They don't even care if we starve. In actual fact they want us to die and decrease the population.

This comment reveals some of the feelings pensioners had; and quite truly, many pensioners actually gave up their pay packet, due to this struggling in the queue. It almost seemed to be state strategy to discourage people from fol-

lowing up their pensions. This suspicion is supported by the fact that many old people have had to wait one or two years without hearing if their application for pension was successful.

What about in Alex?

In Alexandra an association which caters for pensioners and the disabled was formed under the name Ithokomeleng. This body was initiated by a senior social worker employed by WRAB, Miss Peggy Tladi, Mrs Makhudu, the teacher at Thabisong youth club, Mrs Margorie Manganye and a volunteer, Mr Simon Twala.

This group of people approached the Alex Commissioner and asked for the number of pensioners and their addresses, the main purpose being to discover the geographical distribution of pensioners, so that an efficient way of controlling the pay-day situation could be work-

ed out. Those portions of the township most densely populated by pensioners were identified (in fact much of this work was carried out by youths, who were incorporated from Thabisong Youth Club), and then the group approached PUTCO, asking them to contribute busses. PUTCO agreed to finance this out of their charity fund and thus an efficient system of transporting pensioners was established.

Alex was divided into three parts, and pay-day was correspondingly extended to three days. Busses would pick up pensioners at points established on the basis of the survey, each of the three sections on a separate day, and they would be taken to the office and later returned to their area. From the start pensioners were issued with cards, to be used for riding buses; and on this card was shown the date on which pensioners should expect to get their pay-packet.

From this time on there was no crowding at WRAB offices, and the pay-out is now smooth and efficient. The senior social worker has really done her job. Besides having remedied the situation, she has shifted the aggression of pensioners away from the officials.

First glance not enough

To end this account here would be a mistake, because in actual fact this was just the initial stage of Itlhokomeleng, the rudimentary form of the association being to improve the material conditions of pensioners. But the association has developed beyond that, and it is useful to study its activities closely to discover the forces behind it, and to ask whose interests it serves. In short, it would be useless to look at what Itlhokomeleng did at one stage without looking at how it progresses and what kind of changes are witnessed from its development. To understand this we must first of all not take Itlhokomeleng as a thing which is static, but as a process involving relationships between different kinds of people — pensioners, social workers and youth.

Different classes

In Alexandra, the home location of Itlhokomeleng, there are two classes of people, the middle-class and the working-class. Most pensioners belong to the working class, partly because they are from working class families, but also in that many or most of them have jobs of one sort or another. Many of the wo-



Old man outside his home.

men do domestic work (which is badly paid) and they are not registered due to legislation which prevents pensioners from entering into wage labour. On the other hand the organisers of Itlhokomeleng for the most part belong to the middle class. They are handy with administrative skills, they are articulate, educated, reasonably secure in their jobs. They favour the Liaison Committee, which is also a middle class body of people; and generally, their world outlook differs from that of the pensioners.

There is an emphasis on organising 'parties'. It is said that at one of these, the Mayor of Sandton spent more than R1 000; which seems a terrible waste when you think of the real material hardships pensioners face. A prominent executive member commented, 'By organising parties we want the Association to grow and its existence to be felt everywhere. Since we have been involved in these kinds of activities there have been reports in the press about us, and this is really encouraging.' The 'growth' of the organisation here means simply the popularity and fame of the organisers, their advancement in so-called community work. It is careerism, and not primarily in the interests of pensioners. To mention but one case, a certain Mr Mabasa, a pensioner, lives in a wreck car.

Mr. Mabasa stays home.

This has been his home for two years. The old man can't look after himself, and it seems that the people sharing the

same yard have taken the responsibility for him.

Suppress initiative

To conclude, the organisers of Itlhokomeleng have shown paternalistic attitudes towards pensioners. Their policy is not to change anything fundamentally, but to make conditions a bit more bearable. And in doing this they take the initiative and consequently, pensioners become dependent on them. For Itlhokomeleng to take the right direction, the organizers should try to restore initiative to the pensioners themselves, and make them understand the position they are in. A few parties now and then, handing out blankets, or soup once a week, such things are simply reformist, and hide the fact that the condition people find themselves in is caused by the exploitative economic order. The proper initiative dealing with problems of the aged can only come from a working class perspective. Indeed it would seem to us to be the duty of the working class to intervene in institutions that serve the function of preserving the established order.

Vehicle for organiser

Unless this is done, unless the ideas of the middle class organisers are questioned, Itlhokomeleng will remain what it is at present, a vehicle for the ambitions of the organisers, who will make their interests appear to be the interests of the pensioners themselves.

A.P.Y.O.

Continued from page 11

At the meeting of 30 July, however, the agenda contained an item 'Report back from meeting with youth groups in Alex'. The chairman and other members had defied the decision of the previous meeting. They went ahead meeting organisations even though it was generally agreed that such action should be discussed first.

On their side they claimed that action was needed and that those who insisted on discussion were retarding progress. On the other side it was felt that to take action without the involvement and consent of APYO members, made a **mockery of democracy**. Who was directing APYO, if the members themselves were not in control? It should be noted that, though democracy was stressed in the group, not all members acted democratically. Indeed, those who really felt that democracy was essential were labelled 'stumbling blocks'. For this reason, these members left the group, for they saw no chance of it being progressive.

At the same meeting, even the word 'Progressive' was dropped from the organisation's title. It is now called Alexandra Youth Congress (AYCO).

Letters

(continued)

IZWI

AS a thorough reader of IZWI I felt compelled to write this letter, for I appreciate your work. IZWI is a dynamic, educative newsletter — more than any other. I have bought every issue, which opened my mind from ignorance. I have realised from your paper how our society is divided and the way of the economic system works. And that racial oppression is not a curse to the so-called black nation. I have realised that racism is not something that comes with Boers because they are sinful, but is necessary for capitalism in order to exploit the workers.



A scene from the "colourful and fascinating township" — see letter from M.M.

The question I would like to raise is about pensions. Is this pension paid by workers during their active working times, or by the bosses or by the state? I raise this question because since my sister has been working there are deductions on her wage for pension funds.

And the other side, when a person is old it is difficult to get this pension, which was deducted from your wage. If at old age you could not get this pension, who takes it? Do most pensioners who were workers know that this pension fund is their own money; but they don't control it, and struggle before they get it?

S.T.

IZWI

Preparations are in progress for the forthcoming festival to celebrate the 70th anniversary of Alexandra's existence.

To get people in the right frame of mind for the occasion, the newspapers and the organisers are using 'poetic' language to describe Alex and its history. Romantic words such as "... the sadly neglected Dark City" (Star 19/7/83) are used in order to obscure the complex history of the township. It is simple for whoever

wrote the report to describe the township as such. Reducing the history of Alex in those few words relieves him of the burden of understanding the real history of the place and gives him time to write lies for the next day's publication.

The writer continues to say about the festival: "Among highlights of the activities of the festival will be colour slides of many facets of the colourful and fascinating township . . ." Anyone who stays in Alex and has good brains will notice that there is only hollowness in this description of the township.

To romanticise the history of the township and to project a couple of colour slides is disrespectful to the people of the township. What use these colour slides will have remains to be seen. What we need now is not feeble words about Alex: if people want to say anything about the township, they must do so seriously and responsibly. We have been deceived for too long and we are tired of petty poetry about this place. We are tired of people romanticising poverty.

M.M.

INKATHA

ISIVIKO SOMBHUSO

Chief Gatsha Buthelezi calls his movement *Inkatha* a liberation movement, a movement of "workers and peasants"; but is it really? The movement, revived in 1975, claims to have 750 000 paid-up members in rural and urban areas. While open to all Africans, in practice it remains tribally based: over 80% of its members (at a conservative estimate) are Zulus. Inkatha leadership is entrenched in the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly where the entire Cabinet is made up of senior Inkatha officials. Membership is organized in a hierarchical structure from branch level up to the Central Committee. Women and young people are organized into Brigades. Commenting on why women are organised separately, Dr Mdlalose, Minister of the Interior, said: "The Women's Brigade has certain specific activities of its own. When we say we want equality we don't for a moment think that a woman is identical to a man — there are certain things that in society are done mostly by women and we think that jolly good things are done by women. . ." Constitutionally the role of women is to "play an instructive role in the mobilisation of the womenfolk and upbringing of the children towards the objectives of the Movement". The Women's Brigades have sewing and cooking classes, cater for Inkatha training courses, grow vegetable gardens cooperatively and raise chickens and pigs. In other words, the separation of women into Brigades enables the movement to keep them in their traditional sex-roles.

Bantustan poison

An 'Inkatha syllabus', called 'Ubuntu Botho', has been introduced into KwaZulu schools to prepare KwaZulu school children for their role in the 'Liberation struggle' and to 'counter radicalism from the urban areas'. Time is set apart at

schools for Youth Brigade activities and the children are taught about the 'Movement'. Teachers are all sent Inkatha documents and are 'disciplined' if they refuse to follow the Inkatha syllabus. The syllabus has courses on 'Inkatha', 'History of Black Africa', 'African Culture', a modern lifestyles section, environmental studies, religious studies and practicals. In these courses, the children are taught about rural and urban life, economic development and the need for African business enterprise. They are also taught that Inkatha has filled the political vacuum left by the banning of the ANC and the PAC.

Inkatha has a 'self-help', 'self reliance' ideology. The Inkatha Development Office in Ulundi runs credit unions in the rural areas and bulk-buying schemes.

It plans to set up credit unions in the urban areas. Unlike stokvels, where members 'scoop the pool' once a month, Inkatha's credit unions are like banks, where members buy shares and borrow money when they need it.

Reformism

What does Inkatha mean by 'liberation'? In Buthelezi's words, 'for us what liberation is all about is the achievement of circumstances in which equality of opportunity and facilities will be there'.

He says that whenever a black man manages to establish a business, he strikes 'a blow for us in the liberation struggle'. In other words, while speaking of 'total change', Inkatha is simply arguing that blacks must be offered the full benefit



Recognition for service to the state?



"Get me Pretoria. . ."

of the free enterprise system. Inkatha advocates reform, not liberation: for liberation is not only the removal of racial discrimination, it also means removing exploitation of the working class by the capitalist class.

Inkatha fears an organised, politically aware working class. It wishes to use its working class membership for the achievement of reform within the existing capitalist system. Buthelezi said in a speech in Soweto that 'those who want to conscientise the people, increase their anger, are playing with fire'. He often refers to trade unionists as 'agitators'. Inkatha speaks of the need for 'responsible unions' concerned only with wages and workers to ensure harmony and a stable relationship between them. It says that the liberation struggle is not a class struggle but a racial struggle.

KwaZulu itself is a cheap labour sweatshop where workers are not protected even by South African labour legislation. KwaZulu's chief labour officer said in a speech to FOSATU: 'I wish to advise employers to train their workers on what to expect in an ideal trade union that will perfectly suit their requirements' (!). KwaZulu government employees are not allowed to join trade unions. A union, NISMANU, that attempted to unionise these workers was severely harassed by the KwaZulu government.

Twisting workers

An example of Inkatha intervening in the labour sphere was during a strike in Loskop, at a KwaZulu shoe company; the KwaZulu government sent Mr Khanyile, their labour officer, to 'mediate'. According to the union, the workers returned to work following 'the complete failure of the KwaZulu appointed Mr

Khanyile to mediate in the dispute. The bitter frustration and disappointment with Mr Khanyile reached a climax when it became known that Mr Khanyile had been to the factory secretly and had formed his own committee among the strike breakers'.

To make sure that workers will not lead the liberation struggle, Inkatha has a particular political strategy. It is opposed to what is called 'protest politics' and insists on 'indaba' — a strategy of negotiation. Buthelezi desires 'orderly' protest, coordinated and directed by Inkatha under his own petty bourgeois leadership.

His task in '76

During the 1976 Soweto revolt, Buthelezi called upon 'responsible' elements to protect township property from political militants. During the 1980 school boycotts in Kwa Mashu, Inkatha made the same calls as the South African state, calling on scholars to return to school and refrain from violent action.

The deception of Inkatha 'non-violence' became clear when Inkatha imps assaulted the scholars; eleven students were taken to Ulundi, given a lecture on Inkatha's role in the liberation struggle and interrogated in the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly. After this the students were detained, assaulted and their homes attacked. Oscar Dlhomo, top Inkatha official, said that Inkatha was 'not prepared to be led by children' and that 'we do not believe that children have the intellect to devise strategies, under which the Black man is to be liberated.

An army for Gatsha

Alarmed by the militancy of young people, Inkatha has set up a paramilitary Youth Camp near Ulundi. It trains young people for development projects in rural areas, but it seems likely that the trainees are also intended to serve a policing function to entrench Inkatha politically. This is in line with Buthelezi's statements during the school boycotts that 'it is time for Inkatha to establish training camps where branches and regiments are schooled in the development of anger in an orderly fashion . . . to be able to control riots . . . to conduct meetings in the middle of chaos which other people try to create'.

For all Inkatha's statements about being a movement of workers and peasants, it is a petty bourgeois movement in close alliance with big business. It is opposed to disinvestment, arguing that Blacks must rather 'infiltrate' the economy than 'boycott' it; by educating themselves, opening businesses, becoming foremen, and so on. Buthelezi initiated the Buthelezi Commission to promote 'stability and development' in KwaZulu and Natal. Capitalists were widely represented on the Commission while only one representative of the trade union movement was invited.

Buthelezi has often dismissed the old democratic demand for one-man-one-vote as unrealistic and speaks of accommodating 'white fears' and 'minority interests'. Inkatha's use of the ANC's songs, slogans and colours has for many years contributed to its popularity. However, in 1980, the ANC publicly denounced Buthelezi. This seemed to be because of Inkatha's repressive action in the 1980 school boycotts and its lack of support for the 'Free Mandela' campaign.

Interfering with the struggle

Having distanced itself from the people's struggles and the ANC, Inkatha has sought new friends — the PFP, business interests and reformist interests. It aims to achieve not liberation for the oppressed and exploited, but reform and stability within the existing capitalist relations, and can only compromise the liberation of the people of South Africa.



(Photo: DRUM)

ANALYSIS OF A POLITICAL SENTENCE

IT is necessary, as we know, to be critical towards the state; but perhaps even more necessary to be critical towards opposition groups. It is easy to see through the state's propaganda. Koomhof is called 'Piet Promises' precisely because he is **expected** to lie. But with people on the opposition side we are vulnerable, because we expect them to strive for clarity and truthfulness, yet they do not always do so. There are ambitious, ruthless demagogues within the opposition ranks as well as in the ruling pack. These are people who lack access to power now, but hope to get it under different circumstances in the future.

We must not ignore this problem by saying, ah well, it is a matter for the future. The future is being shaped right now, in the very struggles of those who oppose the state, in the political policies and behaviour of opposition groups. The future will inevitably be dominated by one or other tendency that is developing at this moment, within the ranks of suppressed organisations. Now therefore is the time for us to be observant, not when it is already too late, in the future.

The kind of political opportunism we must be on our guard against may be illustrated by reference to a speech made at the recent 'National Forum' conference held in Hammanskraal. I will quote a sentence from a speech made by a main speaker at this conference, Dr Nevil Alexander, and show in what ways it is false and misleading. This is intended as an illustration, merely. There are many policy statements, speeches and sentences that ought to be examined and analysed in this same manner. We need to cultivate vigilance, so that we are never half asleep when political leaders are persuading us of something or other.

Let's turn now to the sentence. Referring to the so-called 'whites', Dr Alexander said that they must be allowed to play some part in the struggle, and then he added, "... but the leadership of the struggle must remain with the black working class." It is that last phrase that I want to examine here.

committed to the ideal of liberation and who are prepared to make sacrifices.

"They must be allowed to play a part in the struggle, but the leadership of the struggle must remain with the black working class."

Another delegate, Mr Imran Moosa, defined blackness as a state of mind: a state of

What can Dr Alexander mean by saying that the leadership of the struggle must remain with the black working class? **Point number one**, we must be aware that the leadership of the struggle is not at present **with** the black working class, so the word 'remain' is inaccurate (not to say false). **Point number two**, leadership is itself actually a very difficult concept, and it is hard to imagine what can be meant by a 'class' exercising leadership. Leadership involves a relationship between a very limited number of men, even a single man on the one hand, and vast groups, masses, a class on the other. One cannot say that a 'mass' itself exercises leadership. Similarly one cannot say that a 'class' exercises leadership.



Dr Alexander

At present in South Africa, the class of capitalists is dominant, but it cannot be said that it exercises leadership. Leadership is exercised, **within** the capitalist class, by individuals, such as Oppenheimer and P.W. Botha, de Klerk, Buthelezi and others. There is an interplay between such leaders, and the class they belong to. Also there is a relation of domination, as for instance between the men I have mentioned, and others within

the same class, but who do not have the same objectives; such as Manie Mulder, members of the Afrikaans Weerstand Beweging etc.

When someone starts talking of the 'black working class' having 'leadership' in the struggle, we can be sure he is concealing something beneath that nonsense.

It might be argued that what Dr Alexander means is that leadership must be exercised by someone, or by some few, who belong to the working class. But this is not what he says: and even if this is what he actually means, there are still difficult problems with the statement. Is he himself (Dr Alexander, I mean) in a position of leadership? Undoubtedly. Is he a worker? Not at all: he is part of the petty bourgeoisie; he is what some unkindly call a 'floating intellectual'. Does that rule him out, as a leader? No. Can he be a leader of the working class? Yes. Why then does he not say so, since he himself must see it to be true. Why does he invent nonsense phrases like, 'Leadership of the struggle must remain with the black working class'?

Point number three, there is actually no such thing as the 'black working class'. The concept of class does not admit of adjectives such as 'black'. One also cannot speak of a 'female' working class, or of a 'juvenile' working class, although there are certainly female workers, juvenile workers and black workers, and although these are certainly treated differently from certain other categories of workers, and get lower wages, are the first to be retrenched etc. There are actually many more sub-groups within the working class; skilled and unskilled, migrant and urban, registered and unregistered, unionised and not-unionised. But the working class is **one** thing when we are speaking in class terms: it is the class whose interests are opposed to those of the capitalist class. But when we are speaking of individuals within that class, then we find very many different elements; blacks, women, juveniles, artisans, different grades of workers in different sectors such as commerce, industry, mining and farming, each with different kinds of skills in its workers, each with different relations with its workers.

We must therefore ask again, what can Dr Alexander mean when he refers to the 'black working class' as something that exercises leadership? He is not using a class analysis, because then he would have realised that he could not say 'black' in this context: but he uses the word 'class'. It is to confuse us? Was it a lazy slip of the tongue?

There are too many mistakes in the one short sentence, for them to be accidental. Moreover, the mistakes involve certain key terms that are rich in associations: 'leadership', 'working class' and 'black', are probably the key terms in political rhetoric today. It would seem, then,

that Dr Alexander has consciously used the terms to make himself acceptable to a certain group of people: and that he has constituted a formula that will guarantee his popularity.

However, the phrase is nonsensical. Each of the words involves a mistake. Does this not matter? It matters very much. To the extent that the sentence is nonsense, it hinders the struggle and does not advance it one little bit. To the extent that it is deliberate nonsense, it actually reinforces the bonds of the present system. At a time when maximum clarity is needed by the masses, for them to understand the forces by which they

are oppressed and controlled, and when the system itself does everything in its power to conceal the nature of social processes; at such a time for a person of the opposition to play the same game, is highly irresponsible, and shows a lack of respect for the very working class he pretends to support.

We must be alert. We must ask ourselves whether we want to be led by the nose, or whether we want to be able to find our own way. Leaders, speakers, will do one of two things: they will try to **clarify** things so that we understand, or they will try to **persuade**. Always reject persuasion; always accept clarification.

INDEPENDENT STUDIES

We say that it is necessary for people to study, if they wish to understand the social forces that shape their lives. Schools (especially under bantu education) do not help much, beyond teaching literacy and a few (often wrong) facts in History. People have to study privately, therefore, or in groups organised by themselves.

What facilities are there for this kind of study?

In Johannesburg, there is a very useful **Public Library**. This is open to anyone who wishes to read there, and there is a

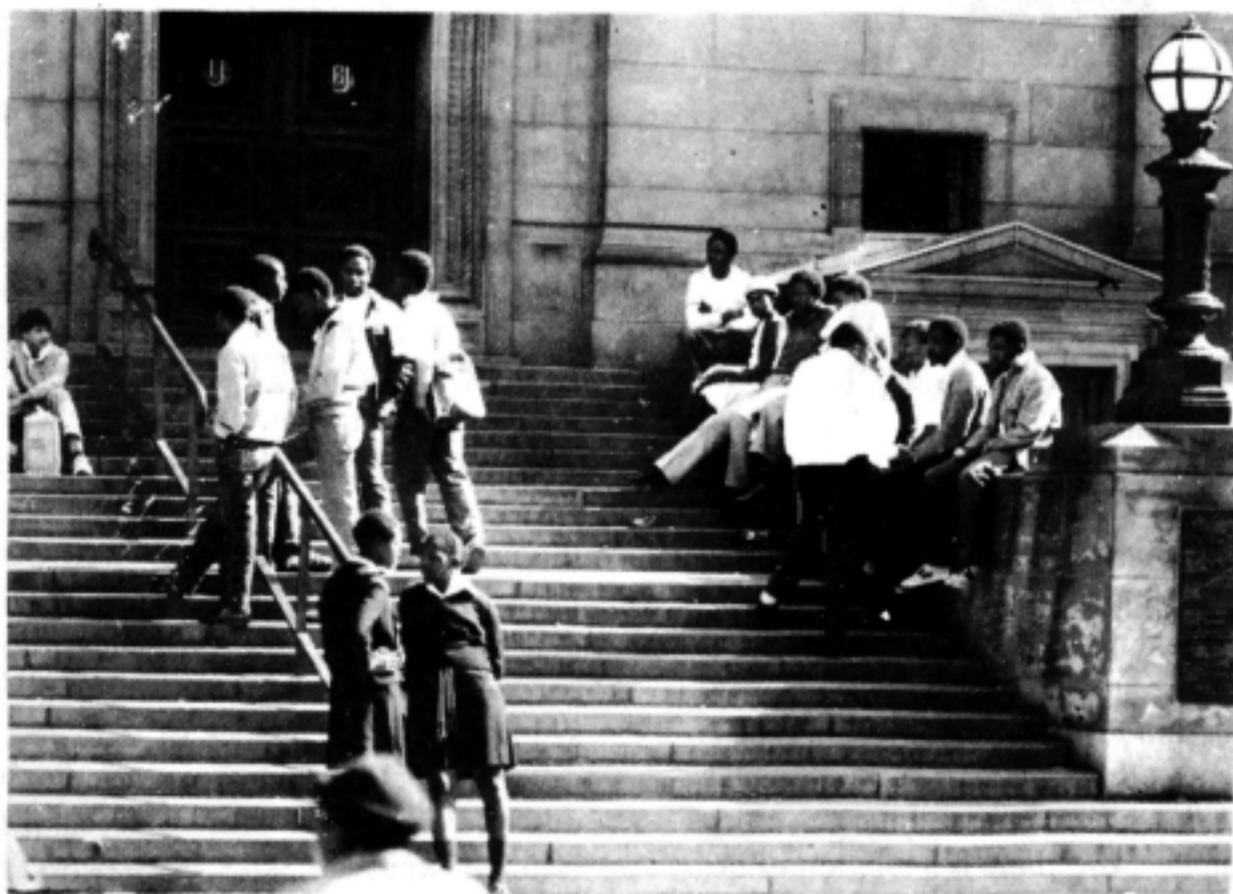
massive collection of books available. It is on President Street, between Simmonds and Sauer.

There are indexes of books, arranged alphabetically under name of author; alternatively grouped according to subject matter. If you don't know how to use the catalogue, ask one of the librarians to help you find any particular book. The books are kept in rooms below the library: you order the book you want at the front desk, write your seat number, and a librarian will fetch the book and bring it to you.

Another useful place is the library of the **South African Institute of Race Relations**. The address is: 68 De Korte Street, Braamfontein, not far from Wits University. There are books, and files of newspaper clippings. Here, too, you will get help from the librarians if you need it. This organisation also prepares a **Survey** every year, containing relevant information about racial matters in South Africa. A collection of these surveys will be found in their library.

Several very interesting publications are produced by groups of people in South Africa who are interested in social affairs. These can be bought, or consulted in a library. They are: **Work in Progress (WIP)**, whose offices are 40 Jorriksen Street, Braamfontein. **Africa Perspectives**, also in Braamfontein... Box 32287, Braamfontein 2017. **South African Labour Bulletin**, 4 Melle House, 31 Jorriksen Street, Braamfontein.

It is always useful to be able to buy and keep certain books. A very good bookshop is De Jongs, 4 Ameshoff Street, Braamfontein. But books are very expensive. One way to solve this problem, is for people to join together, as a reading group, and collect enough money to buy some books and also to photocopy articles or chapters from books, and circulate these among themselves. The editorial group of IZWI would be willing to help people start such a group; and we would also be able to advise on books and articles to read.



The Johannesburg public library

REPORT ON IZWI

IZWI LASE TOWNSHIP has existed for just over one year. With the present issue, number 6, we feel it is time to give a brief report, to say how things have been going for the paper, what set-backs we have had, what our policy is, and what we anticipate for the future.

Our distribution has increased from 1000 copies of each issue printed and sold, to 2 500. We sell the paper in the street, concentrating on the main passenger points for Alexandra residents, namely the township depots and the Noord Street terminus. Also we sell through a few bookshops, to subscribers, and by exchange arrangements with newspapers similar to ours.

We have received two sorts of response: some readers are excited by our paper and wish it to continue: others are distressed by it, and wish it to be crushed. There does not seem to be a middle-road response.

Of course we are pleased by the favourable response, but we don't intend to discuss it in detail here, as this would not achieve much. On the other hand, there are lessons to be learned from the other side, and we will go into some detail to define our critics position.

Izwi has been attacked from three directions: the state Publications Control Board, prominent members of the Alexandra Liaison Committee and irresponsible elements on the left. Let's take them in turn:

1. The first issue of Izwi was banned. This is a job done by the Publication Control Board, which is a mechanism for suppressing information or opinions that the state does not want people to know. It is a group

consisting of many arrogant people, all of them supposing that they have the right to decide what others may read, see, hear and enjoy. The number of publications, books, films, records and plays they ban is immense.

We were not surprised to be interfered with by this Board, but we were annoyed, and immediately took our case to appeal. We won this appeal, thus establishing that our publication was not undesirable. No further issues have been banned.

2. Like the Publications Control Board, the Alexandra Liaison Committee is part of the state apparatus, and it has the same intolerance of views and information that are critical of the state. After our second issue, we heard that Rev Buti was making appeals to people not to read Izwi.



"Our door is always open . . ."

In his rather stale biblical language he called us 'Jackals' and said that we were trying to separate the 'sheep' so that we might ourselves prey on them. (By sheep we understand he meant people.) Some months later he seemed to have a change of heart, and he told one of our reporters that we are 'right to be critical' and that we and the Liaison Committee should discuss things more often. But alas, the Shepherd later had another change of heart, and when our reporter next met him, the Reverend was unhelpful, discourteous and untruthful. At the same time, another prominent member of the Liaison Committee, Mr Magermann, treated the reporter with outright rudeness and aggression (see the letter below).

Quite clearly the Liaison Committee's claim to keep an 'open door' is just another figure of speech (together with 'jackal', 'sheep' etc) and is not to be relied on by anyone in the township. It is a fraud. They do not accept criticism, and they do not allow questions to be addressed to them. They are small tyrants, who would love to be big tyrants. We realise that they are in an uncomfortable position, pretending to lead the 'sheep' but at the same time representing the 'wolf' who is known to make many promises. Who would want to be in their shoes?

3. A third attack came from an unexpected direction — from the 'left' opposition itself. Admittedly our information here is limited, in that we received this attack from an anonymous critic. But the argument presented was coherent and clearly

intended to express a definite point of view. For these reasons we have taken it seriously, and propose to make some kind of response. In this criticism, we are accused of two faults: that we are 'workerist' in our policy; and that we 'divide the opposition'. We must examine these points in turn.

The term 'workerist' refers to the policy of restricting worker struggles to bread-and-butter issues of wages and working conditions. Now clearly, no one who has read Izwi carefully could possibly think that we are workerist. On the contrary, we have repeatedly emphasised that worker issues cannot be considered in isolation; that they must be linked with consumer issues, and community struggles. We are the **opposite** of 'workerist'. What can our critic mean, therefore? Or must we assume that he cannot read intelligently? We think it more likely that he is using the term 'workerist' to refer to a policy of regarding the interests of the working class as predominant in the struggle against un-democratic institutions and practices in South Africa. And if this is the case, we have to agree that we do in fact adopt that position. We adopt it, moreover, for good reasons and on conscious theoretical grounds. In many ways, in many articles, our analysis has been presented and is available for inspection, criticism, response. We do not at all feel that we can be unbalanced from this position simply because someone throws a word ('workerist') at us;

especially as the word has been badly chosen, and means something quite different from what our attacker intends.

As for the criticism that we are dividing the opposition, it is ridiculous. For one thing, the opposition is divided already. With or without the policy of Izwi, there are major divisions among groups who call themselves opposition, as has become quite visible in the past few weeks. But it is important to note here, that a major cause of division is precisely the repressive attitude some opposition groups show to one another. In place of thorough analysis and discussion, they seem to desire to shackle one another with ideological phrases, which does not help in the task of understanding, and ultimately gets in the way of organising also. It thus happens that after a time of peacefulness, everyone accepting the fashionable phrases for fear of being purged, suddenly there is a grand revolt, and new slogans are thought up with which to monopolise leadership of the opposition. It is a ridiculous, heart-breaking waste of time. There is real work to be done, and people who go in for slogans and phrases and false meanings and repression, get in the way of that work, and help the state in its task of control.

It is of vital necessity in South Africa that the masses should become critical, that their critique should be informed (educated) and that they should be drawn into the pro-

cess of discussion concerning the political circumstances of their lives.

Nobody should deny the opportunity of flexible discussion to the masses, or hold them to some doctrinaire position, which may or may not be understood. It is a form of autocracy, and does not open the way to the practice of democratic social functions.

The state spends vast resources of money and talent to conceal the mechanisms of repression. This act of concealment is repeated by opposition groups who hide the processes and functionings of the system under their own slogans. When the state wishes to silence its opposition, it says they are 'communist', and it does not try to clarify what 'communist' means, or why it is opposed to that thing. The word becomes meaningless. A vast area of important social arrangements present in the communist areas of the world, are thus suppressed, and the intellectual life of South Africans is impoverished. The same is true when people throw words like 'workerist' into circulation. Used as a term of abuse, without explanation or even understanding, it is an attempt to suppress thought, analysis and understanding.

To suppress is easy. It is not easy to contribute to understanding. The first, however, is a worthless and futile undertaking. The second undertaking is what true opposition must be concerned with in present circumstances in South Africa.

IZWI LASE TOWNSHIP is published by Ditshwantsho tsa Rona. It offers notes and views about events of today and of the past. Though mainly concerned with Alexandra, because that is the home location of Ditshwantsho, we hold that Alexandra is but a part of South Africa, and shares in the general struggle in this country. We reject the ghetto status of the township, and we reject strategies that attempt to divide it from other parts of the nation.

It is necessary to understand society in order to change it. We invite the public to participate in this paper, by carrying out research and by contributing discussion.

Letters, articles, comments and enquiries should be sent to our address:
PO Box 720, BERGVLEI, 2012.

THE POLITICS OF THEFT



Politics/Law

Theft is not usually considered a political matter. People associate politics with voting, making speeches and so on, while stealing is considered simply to be breaking the law.

What we should realise is that there is a definite connection between politics and the law. The law is made by men, and they make it in political situations. So while it is quite true that theft is a matter of breaking the law, yet we must still examine that very law, to see how it came into being, what its significance is and how it relates to politics. We also have to consider the question, if theft is breaking the law, why do people do it?

At its most popular level, stealing is a way of increasing income, where income is too low, sometimes too low even for ordinary survival. Some workers will only take a job if it enables them to steal: 'Daar's brood.' In that case the worker spends some of his time working for the boss, and some of it working for himself.

Firms respond to this by raising their prices. So, in a sense, the person who

steals is stealing from others like himself, who now have to pay higher prices for their goods.

Star 4.4.83 Shoplifting and employee swindle are costing each of the big retail chains R15 million or more each year, as the wave of corruption and dishonesty in business and among the general public continue to grow.'

'Mr Ackerman said the consumer was suffering badly from the impact on prices. ...'

Sunday times 12.6.83 Last year staff dishonesty cost local companies an estimated R600-million.

This is of course not the only form of theft. Examine these reports:

Star 17.5.83 Armed gangs on Reef look set to grab R1 million by July.

Star 31.1.83 Car thefts constitute a R200 million illegal industry. They are used in exchange for illegal diamonds, gun-running, robberies, house-breaking, drug-peddling, stock theft and acts of terrorism. (Zietsman)

Star 17.7.79 Petrol worth hundreds of thousands of Rands is being stolen in South Africa by syndicates, some of them operating road tankers, and siphoning fuel from bulk storage tanks.

Star 1.11.79 Farmers are losing nearly R7 million to stock rustlers every year.

Star 26.3.80 On a recent Saturday more than R8 000 was taken by gangs of muggers.

Daily Mail July 11 '83 Armed robbers have netted themselves a cool R1 million tax free in raids on banks, building societies and businesses on the Witwatersrand since the beginning of the year.

Clearly there is a lot of theft. More and more it is regarded as a fact of life, as if it were inevitable. But this is a rather terrible way to see social life - as if crime were a normal part of it. It is our intention in this article to dig quite deeply into the topic of theft, to try to understand its social roots, and try to find out its significance.

Theft/ownership

At first it seems easy to understand theft. It is taking something that does not belong to you. But if you think about it, there are some difficulties in this statement, mainly because of that word 'belong'. Clearly we cannot discuss theft without at the same time discussing **ownership**, and this is where the hard questions start. What gives rise to ownership? How do some people come to be owners, and other not? If we go back in time, we realise that ownership itself often started with theft. Who then is the owner, and who the thief?

To get this process clear in our heads, let's go over certain well known events in the history of South Africa. This is part of every school-child's history syllabus: its nothing new.

Dispossession of land

In 1657 Van Riebeeck took possession of 6000 acres of land in Table Bay, on behalf of the **Dutch East India Company**. What can this be called? There were already people in the region, grazing livestock over the very land these colonists now fenced and defended. Was it conquest, annexation settlement or theft?

The San and Khoikhoi people regarded the Dutch as taking something that did not belong to them and they challenged the settlers, by attacks, for more than 100 years – until, they were exterminated, or absorbed.

From these early times, the 'frontier' (that is the border between the white colonists, and the various black kingdoms of southern Africa) constantly moved, each time taking more land away from the San, Khoikhoi, Xosa, Zulu or Sotho.

In 1837 Voortrekker leaders Potgieter and Uys defeated the Ndebele, and considered that they now owned the regions that had been ruled by Mzilikazi (the central highveld of the Transvaal). Individual white farmers and companies began to survey the land (that is, mark boundaries and fix these farms under 'title deeds' in private possession).

In 1840 the boers defeated Dingane in the Blood River campaign and immediately began occupying (or should it be called stealing) the most fertile land in Natal.

Theft hidden by words

By 1913 most of the land in South Africa was owned by whites: and whether you call the process conquest, treaty, annexation or anything else, the effect was to put land into the possession of a certain group and to deny possession to another group who had previously occupied and used it. We can fairly say that the history of South Africa since the arrival of Van Riebeeck, has been the history of the expropriation of blacks from the land they used, and its occupation, control and use by the invaders.

During the greater part of the period we have been speaking about, that is up to 1880, land was the most important factor in production. For herders, land is necessary for grazing cattle and sheep, to create produce year after year: to the cultivator, fertile land is necessary for growing crops. This is why land was so important. Whoever controlled land, controlled the power to produce. The 'frontier' is nothing other than that line between groups in conflict over productive land and livestock.

Modern industry modern theft

After the development of mining and later of industry in South Africa, land became less important. Possession of wealth shifted to those in control of industry and mining. The major form of capitalist theft was no longer the theft of land, but the theft of minerals, of capital and of labour power. We will consider these later.

What I have been trying to convey is that the possession of land is a political matter, the result of force, of negotiation, of treaty, of contract, of the constitution and of voting. We ask, 'Who does the land belong to, and how did they get possession of it?' And if land is the key to production, the answer to our question also tells us how certain people manage to control wealth in their favour and at the expense of other people.

We may similarly ask, when considering later developments in mining, 'Who do underground minerals belong to?' There were battles over the control of those regions known to have mineral wealth – the diamond fields and later the gold fields. The Anglo-Boer war was fought to determine who would control the Witwatersrand, the richest buried treasure in the world.

The nature of boundaries and title-deeds is quite interesting. To the people who used the land before white settlers arrived, private ownership of land was unknown. Land seemed to them not a thing that could be 'owned', but simply something that could be used. It was used by members of the group; and if the tribe moved on to another place, they left land behind without feeling that they were losing something. The capitalist notion of possession (by title-deeds registered in law), is actually a means of preventing someone else from using something. Perhaps what is most important in the possession of something, is the ability to stop someone else from gaining from it by using it.

History of ownership

The other important thing to note is that ownership does not arise out of nowhere. It has a history – it started somewhere – and the way it started and the way it is maintained, are political matters. Ownership starts with conquest and continues through domination and control. Ownership is not natural – it is not a god-given right of some individuals. The act which gains property and the law which protects it, are both a product of organised human force.

In capitalism, the gap between owners and non-owners (rich and poor) is not caused by some people being stingy. This arrangement is actually necessary for the system to work. It is a system in which two things are necessary: there must be some people with enough wealth to set up factories, buy machinery and employ labour to run it; and then there must also be people who offer themselves as labourers, in return for a wage. How do these two conditions come about?

In the past, each and every person could provide for himself. As farmers, for instance, they had access to land where they lived and could grow crops or raise animals. It was only when this ability to subsist was denied people, that the conditions for factory production arose. When one group collected wealth, by taking it away from the other group, the very two conditions necessary for industrial production were created. Those who took wealth set up factories; those who now lost wealth (their land etc.) were forced to offer their labour.

Creating wage workers

This we get the necessary division of capitalist society into capitalists (those with wealth) and workers (with nothing but their labour power to sell in return for a wage). Of course, the creation of a large working class did not come about by itself. People do not leave their land, their implements and their livestock by choice. They were **forced** to give up their possessions; they were **driven** off the land; they were **made** to be dependant on wages offered at the factory and at the mine. The violent process of driving people off the land, is called 'expropriation'. It is a gigantic theft: and it is with this theft that capitalism begins.

Once the capitalist process has started, it continues on the basis of a different kind of theft. Firms continue making profits, because workers are paid less than the value they produce. The work they do each day brings high income to the boss, low income to themselves. They are paid for part of their production, but not for all of it. In other words, part of their labour is stolen by their employer.

Capitalism is based firstly on the original wealth that enables capitalists to set up factories, then on the continuous use of labour. Both involve theft.

Legal theft

These are not usually called theft, because the system is 'legal', and we tend to think of theft only in terms of law-breaking. Capitalists do not break any law when they set up a factory, or when they employ workers. Of course not. It is their law; they themselves make the law.

We have seen that capitalism is based on several kinds of theft:

1. expropriation (theft of productive wealth)
2. exploitation (theft of labour power)
3. competition (theft of markets)

We can then see that what is commonly called theft in our society, ie the 'illegal' variety, is actually a mirror image of capitalism, since there is theft of capital (productive wealth, to start a business); theft of consumer goods (to make up deficient wages) and 'white-collar' theft (theft by members of the capitalist class itself, a form of competition that is not legal).

Let's examine these divisions in more detail.

1. Many people, who do not wish to be exploited as labourers, try to get hold of enough capital to start some business of their own. Thus they might steal cars to be used in a taxi or transport business, or cameras to use in a photographic business, and so on. Since in capitalism you cannot accumulate money unless you have some in the first place, getting it is necessary — and often the way chosen is through theft.
2. We have explained that staff theft is most frequently a response to low wages. It is not just the fact of poverty that drives people to theft: we must also realise that people do not care about this — they do not feel bad about their 'dishonesty'; and this is because they recognise that they are actually being exploited. (See the article on the strike at Crown Gold)
3. Swindle and fraud are really interesting forms of robbery. The people who commit these are likely to be already members of the capitalist class, who are ambitious, and who are used to being ruthless in their behaviour. It stands to reason that people who are in the habit of extracting surpluses from workers, will not hesitate to break the rules of the (capitalist) game when it suits them. There is an amazing amount of this kind of theft.



One might say that capitalist society is rotten with it. It is done by manipulating figures, by outwitting computers, by forgery or confidence tricks. We must include in this category prominent political persons who take advantage of their position to get riches; newspaper executives who falsify

their circulation figures in order to defraud their customers; and many business tycoons who actually rob from ordinary people by manipulating accounts etc.

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY. —
The State Trust Board, created to get back and administer the funds misappropriated by the former Department of Information, has so far got back R10 672 896.

Social conflict

There is not only struggle between the classes in capitalism, but even among capitalists themselves. It is called **competition**, and many people think of this as a healthy sort of sport: but in actual fact, it is a ruthless 'kill or be killed' world where one producer attempts to outwit others, by fair means if possible, otherwise by foul. Producers and distributors alike endeavour to take markets and customers away from one another; so that, apart from their raids and thefts upon the consumer and the worker, they also prey on one another. The tendency in capitalism is for larger concerns to devour smaller ones, with an ever increasing concentration of power in the hands of a very few, enormously wealthy and powerful men, who then dictate terms to less wealthy ones.

It has been estimated that only five companies in South Africa control 74% of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange holdings (ie these five control that much of the wealth producing capacity in the country). These five are Anglo American, Barlow Rand, Liberty Holdings, S.A. Mutual, and Sanlam.

Theft is the shadow image of capitalism. It is illegal, but otherwise not very different from ordinary capitalist practices. Though it is punished, it does not vanish. On the contrary, it is growing more widespread with every day that passes.

This is not to say that it is only in capitalism that you will find theft. No. It is because both theft and capitalism have their roots in social conflict, that they are so linked together in this way.

The characteristic of both theft and capitalism is that they are ways people prey upon others. One is legal exploitation, the other is illegal robbery; in both the victims are not treated as fellow human beings but as useful sources of self enrichments. It is eat or be eaten.

Ukukhuthuza

During the 1940's and 50's there was widespread racketeering in Alexandra, by which is meant organised extortion or blackmail. It is taking advantage of people who are defenseless, to force money out of them by one means or another. It is interesting to look at the different forms, to see how similar they are in character, even though some are legal and others not.

Legal racketeering included the **bond** system and **rack-renting**. Remember that in the past land could be bought freehold in Alexandra; but, because there was a scarcity of such land available to Africans, plots were expensive and people usually had to get loans (bonds) to finance their purchase. These loans were advanced by money lenders (white mashonisa) charging a very high rate of interest.

Bo Mashonisa

'I know that many of the shareholders are in debt to European individuals and financial bodies . . . The rates of interest charged are very high, not to mention stiff raising fees and every other kind of charge which can be put onto the borrower. I could wish nothing more than to break this ring of European exploiters of the Alexandra Township standholders.' Chairman Alexandra Health Committee 10 June 1942.

What he is saying is that there is a kind of theft (though he doesn't call it that) being practiced in this business of lending money.

An effect of the high rate of interest on bonds was that landlords imposed high rents on their tenants to try to make enough to keep their bond payments up to date, for fear of losing their property and their previous payments as well.

' . . . housing the houseless poor is in fact a racket from which small (native) sharks draw small profits, and large (white) sharks draw large profits. V. Chairman A.H.C. November 1942.

This too is a form of theft, since tenants were hardly able to resist, given the desperate housing shortage. But rack-renting is entirely legal.

The gangs that came to prominence in A in those years, unlike the money-lenders and the rack-renters, were not protected by the law. They established themselves not under the laws protection, but quite simply by a force of their own. They broke the state's rules and established a rule of their own. They **colonised** Alexandra; they were Kings, as one gang actually called itself. Just as settlers broke into and overran South Africa, and just as later the Boers and Britons challenged each other for control of the wealth producing land, so various gangs sprang up, in Slagpaal, as Alexandra became known and fought for control. **Young Americans** and **Berlins** battled with the **Black Koreans**, each having a home base, but desiring to overrun the whole township. This goal eventually was achieved by the **Spoilers** and the subsequent **Msomis**, who, by 1957, were dominant.



Mothaka a akokotela . . . way back 1945

'Gangsters are running AT today; so much so that they have imposed their own levies on the residents. Businessmen pay a levy of £2 or even more per week or per month as the case may be. Bus drivers and Taxi-men £1 mid-week and £2 weekends.'

Of course the basis of authority and the ability to raise such a 'levy' was built on force. Anyone reluctant to observe the rules of the Msomis would be bashed up. It is the same principle as that used by the state!

Legal mafia

In 1958 an even more powerful gang took over in Alexandra, the **Peri-Urban Board**. It at once asked the police to remove competition (the Msomi gang), who were consequently rounded up without difficulty and put away.

The new reign of terror was different in certain details from the old. The 'special pass' Msomis issued to those who had paid their 'dues', was replaced by new official documents, the **residents permit** and **passes**. Almost at once expropriations began; that is, people were robbed of their accommodation and their freehold title. Families were split: that is, husbands wives and children were robbed of one another and of their common household life. These assaults were carried out by day, and legally. In these respects they differed from the assaults of the gangs.

Expropriation

The business of expropriation in Alex deserves close attention. From the time Peri-Urban took over in Alex, their policy was to reduce the population of the township, by influx control and by removals. By the end of 1960 about 25 000 people had been removed, to Tembisa, Meadowlands and Diepkloof; and 99 properties had been bought. One effect of this mass removal of people was to deprive landlords of their paying tenants, thus reducing their earnings. At the same time, agents of Peri-Urban were telling people that they would soon have no tenants at all, and that they had better sell their houses quick. The prices offered were low; but many standholders were really afraid, believing that they would soon not be able to meet their bond repayments, and would forfeit their property. Thus they sold to Peri-Urban, at ridiculous prices.

By 1967, Peri-Urban had bought 1,145 stands. Where some of these had stood, the hostels were built. In other cases the land was left bare. It was possible that Alex might be entirely demolished.

People who refused to sell their plots were threatened with expropriation. Houses that the state definitely needed to buy, were expropriated if the seller would not agree to an ordinary sale. Owners were deliberately given the impression that the amount paid for expropriation would be lower than that offered in the first place for sale. In this way many were induced to sell at low prices.

There was a public outcry over this during the years 1974 and 1975. Here are some cases reported in the press:

- Case 1 In September 1974 a businessman was asked to sell his house for R5 400. He refused, and after lengthy legal proceedings he was paid R15 992. (R.D.M. 19 Nov. '75)
- Case 2 Mrs J Modiba was given R8 000 for 2 properties, one with shops and houses. A valuator said the properties were worth R20 000. (Star May '75)
- Case 3 Mr B Sibeko was offered R5 400 for a property valued at R13 500. (Star May '75)
- Case 4 Another landlord was offered R6 070 for property valued at R16 000. (Star May '75)

None of this was actually illegal. WRAB and the Resettlement Board are both state agencies and had the legal right to expropriate, and therefore also a power to pressurise owners to sell. Special procedures were laid down by the Bantu Resettlement Act for expropriation of property such as those in Alex. Instead of ordinary market values being taken into account, the Board was entitled to offer the original purchase price plus 6% annual interest calculated from the date of purchase. Thus a property which cost R2 000 twenty years ago, could be expropriated for R4 400 today, whatever the real present market value might be.

In fact the property in this example might be worth many thousands more than the price paid over legally under the Act.

It is quite clear that however legal the expropriations and sales in Alexandra might have been, the reality of the situation was one of enforced deprivation — which is another way of saying 'theft'. A well known Provincial Councillor at the time put this view clearly saying that, "The activities of the Boards were tantamount to stealing the land, and that **extortion and not expropriation was taking place,**" (R.D.M. 9.7.75.)

EXTORTION / EXPROPRIATION

In January 1976 a report on 'The Alexandra Land Scandal' was compiled by a journalist on **Trust** magazine. The following details come from that article:

Mr J. Sibeko received a letter in September 1974 and was asked to sell his property for R5 400. He refused after an independent valuator said his property was worth R13 500.

A year after the first letter of expropriation Mr Sibeko succeeded in getting fair compensation for his property. Two arbitrators — one nominated by the Board and one by him — and a referee chosen by both, awarded him R15 992.



Mrs Susan Motsepe — expropriated

Mrs Susan Motsepe, 75, bought her property in 1926. She built a six-roomed house where she lives with all her children and grand-children. She also has two blocks of 10-rooms each which she rents out.

"Today, my property is worth R16 000 and my lawyers are negotiating for this

figure. The Board refuses to pay, and I have been ordered to hand over my title deeds.

"I refused to do so because I want to safeguard and guarantee the safety of my property. What followed was just sheer hell. I was summoned to appear in court where I was charged with failing to hand over my title deeds.

"My property has been turned into a mini-hostel. There are five contract labourers a room, and the yard is terribly congested, which has turned the sanitation into a health hazard. All I want is fair compensation for my property. We have been exploited so many times, we can't take it any more. If the Board wants my property, it must pay for it."

Mrs Pasha's case

A broken-hearted Mrs Ouma Pasha told TRUST: "I bought my property in 1949 for £3 000 and I have done a lot of improvements since. For example, there is full electricity in the main house, new sewerage, and I have built rooms for tenants.

"My property has now been expropriated. We are forced to pay rent to the Board, and the tenants were told not to pay rent to us anymore.

"My property is turned into a hostel now. The Board has brought in many single men who share most of the rooms and pay between R5 and R10 a room. Now all the money is going into the coffers of the Board. They are making tremendous profits as it is now.

Mrs Elizabeth Modipa said:

"I used to do the rounds as a washer-woman earning an average of 25 cents a time.

"I put this money together, and with the help of my late husband we managed to save enough to buy this property. When my husband died in 1956, I struggled to raise up the children.

"Under no circumstances can I accept their offers. I will fight them up to my last cent, if that's what they want."



Mrs Elizabeth Modipa — expropriated

(It may be noted) that the journalist who wrote this report with so much sympathy for the victims of expropriation and so much indignation against the state, Nunka Mkhalipe, now works for the Alexandra Liaison Committee — the body which took over and carried through the task of expropriation in Alexandra.)



Lords of Alex. The Msomi gang, replaced in 1958 by Peri Urban.

(Photo: DRUM)

No jobs, die ouens sal krevol

The 40's and 50's produced massive crime waves (the Msomis being part of this process) because of massive unemployment, especially in places like Alexandra. Such a crisis is again occurring today, with industries reorganising themselves, and dismissing workers ('retrenchment'). Unemployment is a function of the capitalist system, which originally expropriated people from their land, and now does not secure jobs for them all. It is hardly surprising, then, that active people will, if they cannot survive legally, try their luck in alternative ways, including theft.

Innocent wicked people

To bring our survey up to date, Izwi reporters spoke to some thieves in Alexandra, to find out how they themselves see things.

1. "I don't think I am a tsotsi: tsotsis are people who rob us of our backpay; for instance when I was fired the reason behind it was that I asked for backpay and I was told 'fired'. For clarification the whole thing started as follows: Our company (FTA) moved from Wynberg to Boksburg, and workers from Alex were promised a bus by the company. But after 2 days a bakkie with a canopy was sent to collect us. When it reached Boksburg workers refused to climb in, then management came and told us that we were fired, and those still interested in their jobs can come to be readmitted on Monday.
2. "Working in the factory is stupid; you work the whole day and produce something worthwhile, something which can bring the baas about R1 000 per day and out of that he gives you R10, and if you tried to quarrel you are fired. What puzzles in the factory is that you are always told that you are a hard worker; but as I've said, ask the increment and you are fired. The other thing that makes things worse is that when whites are employed temporarily they earn more than us, which means they get their pay from us. I am not saying this because I don't want to work. I did spend two months working . . . I decided to leave and actually started my business here at home where it is better than the R35 I used to get at the factory. Now that I am self employed I can buy everything I want, as long as gambling, hold-up and car stealing don't call police."
3. "I know people look at us a lazy group, but they ignore the fact that stealing itself needs energy. If one don't steal he will die. At factories there is no work, gates are written all over warning one not to enter since there are no jobs."
4. "Such people are stubborn and don't want to work. They want to control themselves, in that what they are doing is for themselves, they set time and everything. But the last step is prison."
5. "They are innocent wicked people in that their wickedness is caused by forces like for instance unemployment. Once a person gets involved in this kind of business he no longer senses like a human being, he becomes bloody."
6. "Prisons won't solve the problem because in most cases ex-prisoners get worse. When they return home they don't get employed and begin their 'duty' again."

To conclude

Theft is rooted in social conflict. The basis of our capitalist system is social conflict. While people are locked in war with one another, while there is oppression and exploitation of one class over the other, it is not likely that theft (the shadow of capitalism) will disappear. Only by changing from social conflict to social co-operation, will the energies of people be rightly directed.