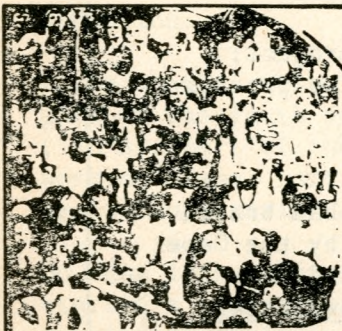
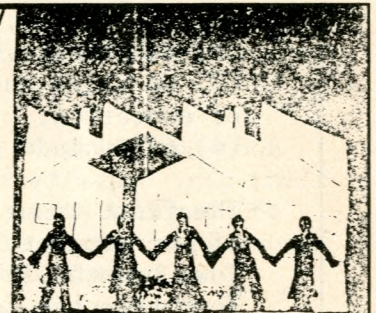


# LACOM NEWS

THE LABOUR AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES PROJECT (LACOM) IS A PROJECT OF THE SACHED TRUST

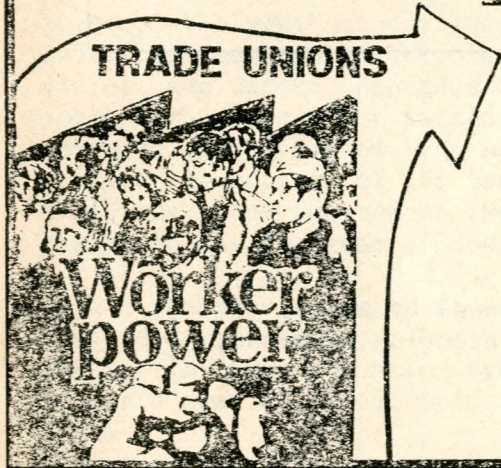


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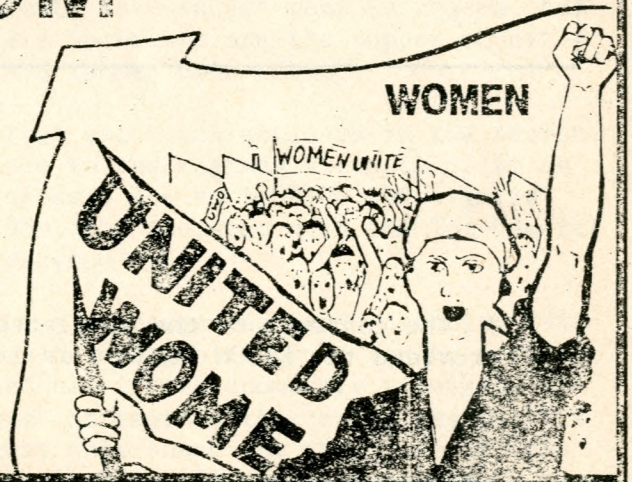


CIVICS

LACOM



TRADE UNIONS



WOMEN

NUMBER 2

NOVEMBER 1986



# FORWARD

At the national meeting of LACOM held in East London in May, a decision was taken that LACOM should produce its own newsletter. The newsletter would be produced four times a year. The different branches would take responsibility for putting together each edition of the newsletter. All branches would be responsible for submitting material for each edition.

The aim of the newsletter was said to be:

- (1) to provide a forum for open debate and of self-criticism and evaluation;
- (2) to discuss some of the concrete problems facing the project;
- (3) to raise more general and topical issues related to the practice of education;
- (4) to include general information and news.

The first issue of the newsletter was produced by the Durban branch of the project. This, the second issue, was put together by the Cape Town branch. The Durban, Pietermaritzburg, Eastern Cape and Cape Town branches submitted material for this issue, LACOM Newsletter Number Two.

The ideas expressed in the newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of either the SACHED Trust, nor all members of the LACOM Project.

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Cape Town

## **JUNE 16 AND THE WORKING CLASS**

June 16 1976

### **INTRODUCTION**

On June 16th 1976 the youth of Soweto once again opened the struggle against Bantu Education.

It is now 10 years later and COSATU has united the workers movement more than ever before. Workers must now become active in the struggle against Bantu Education.

As we show in this booklet the struggles of the youth against Bantu Education are part of the struggle of the working class, part of the struggle against oppression and exploitation.

On June 16th 1976, 20 000 students started a peaceful march through Soweto to protest against Afrikaans being used as the medium of instruction in schools. The police opened fire and.....were shot and.....killed.

1976 was the year in which the bitter anger of the youth of our land spilt over. The reaction of the state was violent and direct. Hundreds of our youth were murdered or maimed, others tortured and tried and many more had to flee the borders of the land to avoid the cruel sjambok of the police state. It was the year of SOWETO.

It was the year in which students once again saw the need to protest against the rot in their education system. It was a year of blood, fire and bullets.

Ten long years of determined struggle have followed since then and there has been no peace. Hundreds - even thousands - of our youth have died in ongoing State violence in our country.

The working class has been drawn directly into this bitter struggle. It has suffered the loss of its sons and daughters. It has mourned their deaths. Together with the students, thousands of workers have been brutalized and attacked by the State and its collabor-

ators. Sadly, these events have often left some workers confused, powerless and even divided.

As workers we must clearly understand what June 16th means for the working class in this sick and violent society.

### **THE STRUGGLE AGAINST BANTU EDUCATION**

In 1954 the ANC led people in a campaign against Bantu Education.....

In 1959 they fought the segregation of the Universities.....

In 1976 the youth of this land took this struggle over education into their hands. In doing so they widened the liberation struggle to the very roots of oppression and exploitation.

In these 10 years we have seen struggle and organisation develop in many areas. The youth in the schools and townships; workers in the factories have built their organisations. People in the community have fought rent increases, bus fare increases and the puppet councillors forced upon them.

Great unity was achieved in the resistance to the regimes attempts at false reforms. The anti-SAICC campaign in 1980, the resistance to the Tri-Cameral system.

These campaigns and the worsening crisis have begun to bring youth, workers and all in the community together. We must strengthen this unity and workers must understand why they have to take the lead in all these struggles.

Neither the bosses nor the government can solve the crisis in our land. They have shown this by their actions over the last 10 years. Millions of workers are unemployed. In some cases they have not even the basic needs required to stay alive and are slowly dying. Workers have only a tiny share in the vast wealth they create. They have no share at all in the political decisions which are made by the ruling classes. They have no say in matters concerning the



education of their children, their housing, their transport and even the burying of their comrades.

Workers must now fully enter the struggle symbolised by June 16th. They must join with their children to take it direction and take it further.

#### WHAT ARE THE STUDENTS' DEMANDS

- (a) a free and equal education
- (b) the right to form democratic SRC's
- (c) an alternative education
- (d) an Education Charter
- (e) a 'Peoples Education'
- (f) a complete revision of the syllabus and the removal of racist and sexist forms of education
- (g) a proper system of teaching methods and the way it effects the relationship between teachers and students
- (h) the end to corporal punishment.

COSATU has stated its support for these demands. Now is the time to discuss them fully. We must talk with the youth who first called for those demands, we must work out in more detail what they mean and what strategies are needed to achieve them.

#### EDUCATION: WHY IT IS PART OF THE WORKERS STRUGGLE

Why should workers involve themselves in these students demands? This is a question often asked and because people have not been clear on it there has been the great danger of confusion and division.

On May 1 1986, the united action of workers supported by the youth and many others made May Day a public holiday. May Day is the day where workers remember their struggle and dedicate themselves to continue it.

On June 16th 1986, we should also ensure that this day will become a day of commemoration and dedication for the South African people.

The last ten years have also seen the massive (and sometimes needless) loss of blood. We in the working class must recognize the sacrifices of our children and we must advance the claims they have made for a proper system of education. Just our responsibility as parents means that we cannot stand back. The students themselves have cal-

led for our support and assistance as parents and as workers.

The youth and students have on many occasions offered and given their support to workers struggles - Sarmcol, Simba-Quix, Wilson Rowntree and many others.

There have been many problems and sometimes conflict. This weakens us all. Now we have to build unity.

For this unity to be firm and lasting we must understand the real link between workers and education.

We must see how important the education struggle is for workers, and for the liberation of the working class and all in society.

Education is important because of the skills it gives people and because of the ideas that people learn. These ideas will shape the way in which people do things and understand things. But it is for these reasons that education is a real problem in South Africa.

Until now the content of education has put forward only the ideas of capitalist educators and of racism. Education talks only for individuals and how they can improve themselves. Collective organisation is seen as an evil. Race and tribe are used to explain peoples actions. The unity of the oppressed and of the working class is denied. Very little is said of the broad struggles of the workers of South Africa against the system of capitalism and the racism which is its hallmark. But even less is said about the great and all important contribution of the working class to the creation of this country's wealth and power. Very little is known about its organisation, its forms and its leadership. In addition there is almost no mention of the hardships of the women, the unemployed and the rural people of our land.

Our youth do not learn the history of the liberation movement, of the ANC, SACTU and all those who have fought for a free South Africa.

For the workers organisation this is a real problem. It means that education about the workers struggle starts only when people join our trade unions. It means that capitalists and others can confuse and divide workers because they



are unclear. The present education system does not build our movement but tries its best to weaken it by attacking collective action and organisation and glorifying the benefits of profit, money and the gain of the individual no matter how much others are suffering.

The problem goes even deeper. At present the education system destroys ideas of democracy rather than building them. The schools encourage small dictatorships where inspectors, headmasters, teachers and prefects rule. Corporal punishment is allowed and parents are only consulted for their money. The system denies participation. That is why we must support SRC's as a step to democracy. But we must go further - teachers, parents and students must all participate because all are part of education.

Education must stop hiding the truth about our history. Education must be democratic and not authoritarian. These are steps to Peoples Education.

What is most important for us as workers is that Peoples Education involves the working class. Why is this?

Firstly, to provide education we have to use our social wealth and it is the working class that produces that wealth. If workers produce that wealth then they should also be involved in how that wealth is distributed between different users in our society.

Should the resources we have be spent on certain elite schools as they now do in Natal. This will produce a few skilled people who will show how successful Black advancement is. But it will deny decent education to the majority.

Should we build more universities or more technical colleges, or more high schools or more primary schools or more creches and family care centres. These questions must not be left to educational experts. Workers both as parents and producers must be fully involved in taking these decisions.

Secondly, what kind of education must be given? Must it create a class of highly paid "educated people" such as lawyers, doctors, professionals, managers, bankers, businessmen and techni-

cians? Must it create an "educated" class of people who then do the job of controlling and managing the interests of capitalism? What control over these "educated" people do workers have?

As workers we are told that our work is manual work and we do not deserve to be paid as much as mental workers. This is as if we do not have to think while daily risking our lives in producing the wealth of this country. No! The only answer is for us to break down the divisions between mental and manual labour. It is a division which is such a powerful weapon to keep workers powerless.

We dare not leave this struggle to so called "educationists" or "experts". Education is always presented to workers as a matter which is too difficult for them and which they must leave to experts. But in fact there is no reason why workers cannot play an important part in the planning of education in society and in controlling that education.

Knowledge must liberate us, it must allow us to develop as human beings. Knowledge must not be used to oppress workers. It is not only in history and politics that this is true. Science and technology are used to oppress workers. Workers get little training in these so that they have to depend on experts and skilled people. Workers appear powerless and without knowledge.

For workers, science must be able to explain things not hide them in mystery. It must explain how machinery and technology work and how they can help us rather than control our lives. It must help workers to control their lives so that they can have the power to change their lives.

There is one other very important point that workers must see. That is that education does not stop at schools. Education continues for adults both now and in the future. At present we have an urgent task to educate adults so as to correct the great damage of Bantu Education and Christian National Education.

COSATU saw this and passed the following resolution at its Congress.

## COSATU EDUCATION RESOLUTION

This resolution is important because it is talking about workers education controlled by workers. It is not the training and education that capitalists want to give workers.

The resolution is really talking about alternate education. The building of alternate education is a very important area where workers and youth can unite.

Some very important changes have taken place in the education struggle. New organisational structures are being built. We can link with these structures.

Very important meetings were held in Johannesburg in December 1985 and in Durban in April 1986. These meetings brought together students, teachers and parents from all over South Africa. Out of these meetings the National Education Crisis Committee was built. Now organisation is being built. Alternate education is starting. This is deepening and strengthening the liberation struggle. Workers must be part of this because the working class will have to be the builders of the alternate education system. It is the working class who will benefit most from alternate education.

It was stated in the Keynote Address at the NECC meeting in April 1986:

"What do we mean when we say we want peoples education. We are agreed that we don't want Bantu Education but we must be clear about what we want in its place. We must also be clear as to how we are going to achieve this.

We are no longer demanding the same education as whites, since this is education for domination. People's education means education at the service of the people as a whole, education that liberates, education that puts people in command of their lives."

NECC Keynote Speech, April 1986

What we have tried to make clear in this booklet is that workers and the youth have common interests in the struggle over education. We have seen that many changes have to be made. If we make these changes then we will build Peoples Education for all in our society and we will be truly liberating ourselves from oppression and exploitation.

Surely this is the direction in which workers must go.

However, many people tell us that this thing of the schools is just agitators using the children. They tell us that our children need education and that they should not boycott schools. They are prepared to use sjamboks to whip the children back into school.

Where are these people taking us? Are they not forcing our children to accept Bantu Education, to accept an education that hides oppression and exploitation and produces only labour for a greedy capitalist system?

We as workers must see that our children in their struggle against Bantu Education have opened our eyes. Let us go forward and not backwards.





# War against Ignorance

The fact that millions of people, in this era of high technology and scientific advancement, still cannot read or write is one manifestation of the way in which masses of working people throughout the world are exploited and oppressed by capitalism and Imperialism.

It is no accident that illiteracy is most prevalent among the most destitute of the population or that it is linked with those who are denied basic necessities like food, health, housing & employment.

The unequal way in which class society allocates resources has resulted in the majority of people being denied access to education in this way (thus) keeping them backward and ignorant. In the underdeveloped ex-colonial countries, this suits monopoly capital, for they are able to draw from a cheap, unskilled labour force.

The super exploitation and oppression of the poor peasants and workers is made easier while widespread illiteracy and ignorance exists.

Using other factors such as an inadequate education system, few schools and extreme poverty have further contributed to the ignorance that prevents people from understanding the society in which they live. People are conditioned to accept their poverty and hardships as natural.

In the struggle for fundamental change the teaching of literacy to adults has become an important aspect and is closely linked to the battle against oppression and exploitation. All revolutions have as part of their reconstruction, a literacy campaign.

This article attempts to show briefly how literacy has been used to wage war against the monopoly of knowledge and skills.

## Russia

An initial concept emerged in the wake of the Russian Revolution of October 1917 and was to have world-wide repercussions. The struggle against illite-

racy became an integral part of the revolution at every level: political, social, economic and cultural. To bring literacy to the masses was to awaken their political consciousness and mobilise them in defence of the new regime.

Adult literacy was seen to be even more important than the education of children, for adults were at once citizens, soldiers, producers and parents. As early as December 1919 the B P introduced a decree making it a duty for everyone between the ages of eight to fifty to learn to read and write, either in their native tongue or in Russian, depending on the choice of the individual.

In 1923 a voluntary organisation known as "Down with Illiteracy" was created. The country was transformed into a gigantic school.





In 1919 the bolshevik party initiated a decree making it a duty for everyone between the ages of 8 and 50 to learn to read and write.

Illiteracy dropped dramatically from 75% in 1917 to 43% in 1923 and to 11% in 1939.

All subsequent revolutions have drawn inspiration from this feat.

## Nicaragua

The first major act of reconstruction of the Sandinista government was to mount a nation-wide literacy campaign. Access to education was systemically denied to most Nicaraguans by Somoza as a form of political control. Now it is seen as crucial that political liberation should be accompanied by liberation from illiteracy, so that ordinary Nicaraguans can be equipped to participate in shaping their own futures.

The national literacy crusade which began only eight months after the overthrow of Somoza, was an attempt to restore the people's right to the basic skills of reading and writing which the Somoza regime denied them. Equally important, the most marginal sector of the population was integrated in the process of radical transformation. The central function of the crusade was the conscientisation of the workers and peasants.

## CHINA

In 1949 80% of the country's population was illiterate. The past 32 years have seen the transition to literacy of 128 million people.

Today 90% of the country's workers and miners have attained an educational level to those who have completed their higher primary education.

## Viet Nam

In Vietnam, immediately after the revolution of August 1945, Ho Chi Minh called on the population to perform three basic tasks:

- a) to conquer famine
- b) fight foreign aggression, and
- c) battle against ignorance.

The three were interdependent : as long as a nation is underdeveloped and uneducated it is at the mercy of imperialism.

Like their Russian comrades the Vietnamese revolutionaries saw the necessity of conscientising the masses through teaching them to read and write. When threatened by US aggression, the work that had been done among the masses paid dividends as the people rallied to the defence of the revolution. The victory over illiteracy was crucial for the successful implementation of development strategies for the transition to socialism.

By 1958 virtually the entire population between the ages of 12 and 50 was literate- a remarkable feat for a country at war with the US.

## Angola

These letters written to literacy instructors in Angola illustrate the importance of teaching literacy in order to overcome the legacy of colonial exploitation and oppression.

Comrade Literacy Instructors,  
YOU KNOW HOW TO READ AND WRITE.

But in our country, however, 99 people out of 100 do not know how to read or write.

This is one of the terrible consequences of the situation created by colonialism and imperialism in Angola. The Portuguese colonialists never cared to give a minimum education to the Angolan people, and they even prevented them from teaching themselves. Due to economic difficulties, the lack of schools and racial segregation, the sons of our country have not been able to read and write.

For a people which does not know how to read or write it is more difficult to understand the causes of their own poverty and to organise, because it is more difficult to communicate. It is for this reason that illiteracy suited the colonialists, and all sorts of exploiters, so well.

We are leading a Popular Revolution



against colonialism and the structures of exploitation which it imposed on our country. We should thus remove all the evils engendered by foreign domination; and one of these evils is ILLITERACY. To fight it for us revolutionaries, is one of the most important obligations.

In helping other comrades to read and write, you are engaging in an act of patriotism and revolutionary spirit. To communicate with others what you have been able to learn under different conditions, constitutes an important contribution to the National Revolution, for the Angolan People.

You will certainly encounter great difficulties. But you can surmount these difficulties with your militant will and the illiterate comrades' desire to learn.

During the time you will be teaching, you will see that you will be learning many things from the illiterate comrades.

Reading this "Guide" will permit you to resolve the greater part of your

difficulties. Other difficulties will arise for which there is no solution in the Guide; in this case you should note them down and transmit them to the person responsible in the MPLA. If, during your practical activity, you resolve these difficulties, you should explain how you have done so, so that your experience can aid other comrade literacy instructors.

This Guide is a first attempt to establish a simple and efficient method of literacy instruction adapted to Angolan problems. In contributing to it with your criticisms and suggestions, this manual will be improved and enriched.

Comrade Literacy Instructors. Thanks to your efforts and dedication, many Angolans will learn to read and write. Thanks to your efforts and dedication, our Popular Revolution will continue to advance.

With courage and perseverance we will also win this battle.

THE ANGOLAN PEOPLE WILL CONQUER ILLITERACY !

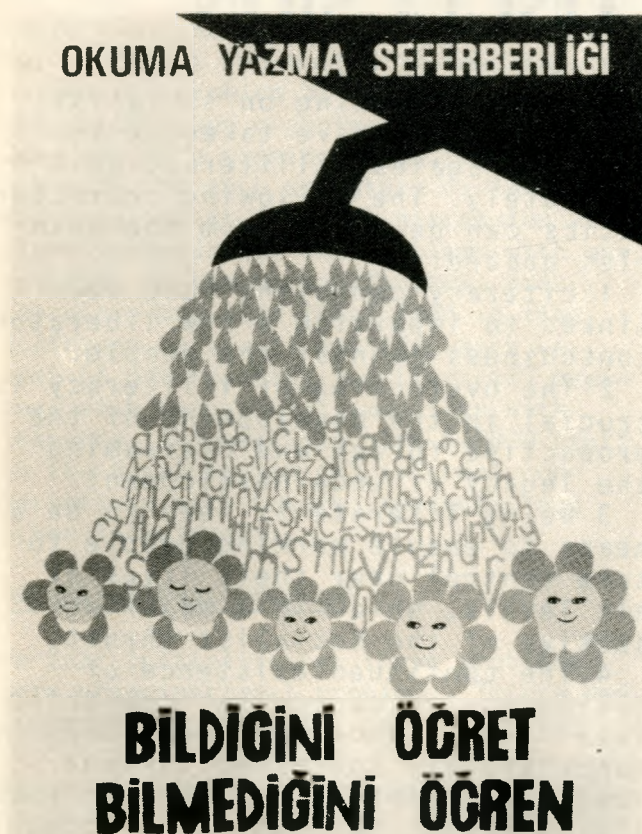
VICTORY IS CERTAIN !

#### GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Comrade Literacy Instructors.

You should always take the following general recommendations into account;

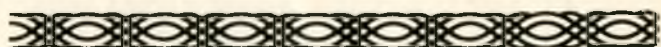
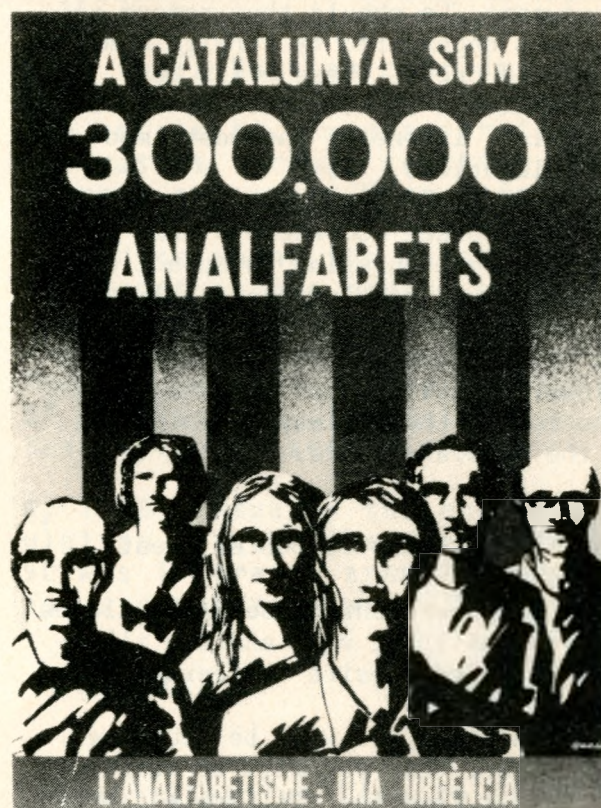
1. You are not a teacher and your comrades are not students. You are only one of those who, for specific reasons, have had the possibility to learn something your comrades have not had the opportunity to learn. Now you are fulfilling your revolutionary duty by communicating this knowledge to others. Together, your illiterate comrades and yourself form a group in the service of the revolution.
2. Concerning you illiterate comrades, you should maintain relations of friendship, equality and mutual respect. You should not think that you are rendering a personal service, but that together, you each are fulfilling your obligations; that of teaching and learning.



Poster from Turkey



3. You should be constantly interested in their problems, their work and their life.
4. You should always be ready to pay attention to their difficulties and preoccupations.
5. Remember that certain illiterate comrades may have trouble seeing or hearing; help them more than the others.
6. During the course, never give orders and do not lose your patience.
7. Do not forget that the work is collective.
8. Change the lesson when you see that the comrades are tired of it.
9. Do not forget that you learn as much from the comrades as they learn from you.
10. Absolutely avoid any action with a comrade which could humiliate or hurt another, less gifted comrade. This is the only way to obtain a comradely spirit within the group.
11. In the group, especially during the first lessons, try to quietly introduce a way of behaviour in which each person can freely express his opinion.
12. Before each lesson, study it attentively with the aid of the explanations contained in this Guide.
13. Never begin a lesson without having studied the **POLITICAL THEMES** found at the end of this guide.
14. Each instructor should work with a group of no more than twelve comrades.
15. Be sure that the comrades take care of their manual; read them the instructions on the cover.



## CONCLUSION

Countries embarking on socialist transformation have taken up the struggle against illiteracy most resolutely. The following characteristics can be drawn from the examples quoted:

1 Literacy campaigns have been linked to imparting a new liberatory consciousness amongst the people.

2 The overcoming of illiteracy is crucial in the development of the productive forces and overcoming the legacy of underdevelopment.

3 Being literate is seen to be a means to enable working people to take control over their lives at all levels, which is a major objective of the socialist thrust.

4 The continued existence of illiteracy in capitalist countries (even the advanced ones) can only be fundamentally addressed through social transformation, which has as its objective the ending of economic exploitation and class inequality.



# literacy teaching for workers

This article will look at some of the problems which have arisen from our work in literacy in the Durban/Pinetown areas. It will also give an overview of some of the alternatives which others involved in worker education have offered. It will look at the usefulness of these suggestions in the light of the problems which have been identified, and on the basis of this understanding attempt to offer an analysis of the literacy teaching practise for organised workers in Durban. Finally, it will make some recommmendations.

## PROBLEMS

The teaching of literacy in the Durban/Pinetown area has a very short history. In August of 1985 the SACHED Trust in Durban was approached by one of the unions in the area to start teaching workers from one of its factories in that area. This teaching was extended in 1986 on the request of other workers from other unions to include workers from 69 factories in these areas involving an initial number of 441 workers. As our first report to the unions indicated there was a sharp drop in attendance after the first two months of teaching. We raised the problem by reporting on it in the workers own organisational structures. We also examined this problem in other forums such as tutor, or learner meetings and in informal discussion with other individuals. The problems with our teaching in the Durban/Pinetown area therefore have been identified in five different ways: (i) records which we keep of our teaching practise (ii) meetings with tutors (iii) meetings with learners (iv) meetings with SACHED staff in the Natal region (v) informal conversations with tutors, learners, and other individuals.

## ORGANISATIONAL PROBLEMS

We felt initially that these problems were organisational problems. Tutors and workers have indicated to us that our teaching which combine workers from different factories and different shifts create the following problems: (i) changing groups: tutors do not always see the same group of learners when they teach. Workers who work a two or three shift

only attend every other week or every three weeks; (ii) difficulty to contact workers who have problems: co-ordinators have found it difficult to reach such learners after they have stopped coming. Related to this problem of different shift times is the problem of overtime. Workers have identified overtime as a real constraint on their ability to: (i) attend lessons held at a fixed time, and (ii) maintain the motivation to continue coming to lessons over an extended period of time.



## DENOCRACY

Another aspect of our education which we have not been able to address satisfactorily, is that of democracy. We attempted to resolve this issue through reporting at the level of the shop steward councils in the locals where we teach and through our reports to the Regional Congress. We found that it has been difficult for these structures to address in these forums, the problems we have raised. Other attempts to democratise our teaching, for example meetings of learners and tutors to discuss problems have not concretised in any organisational form which will allow workers and their organisations any real control over the teaching/learning process. We are very aware that we might be creating structures which will be in conflict with those of workers. In addition we think that it is an important part of the learning



process to involve tutors and learners on a systematic basis in the planning of lesson outlines. This too will require some form of democratisation.

### METHODOLOGY

Another problem encountered from the outset was the problem of different levels of English language competence. Initially this appeared to be an organisational problem: how can we organise our classes to accommodate different language levels as well as different levels of literacy? Some workers may not be able to read or write with ease in English but have developed a high level of spoken ability. Tutors have, for this reason, felt that they have to divide themselves into being many different teachers at the same time to help everyone. Workers have pointed out that this is not so much an issue of organisation as one of method. They suggest that in their experience translation may help to solve at least part of this problem. This is not to say that there is no relationship between organisational forms and an appropriate methodology. An issue which relates to method and organisation was raised by some of the tutors. They felt that learners needed to take more responsibility for their learning and that they still saw tutors as too similar to teachers in the formal school situation.



### CONTENT

Another problem which has been identified, relates more to the content of our teaching, i.e., the topics or themes that have been a vehicle for our lang-

uage teaching. The focus in our teaching in Durban and Pinetown has been on issues which are factory based or derive from other everyday experiences which workers may have. Here workers have felt, especially those at a more advanced level that although they want to learn English and have an interest in factory based issues, they also want to learn something else, for example history. Learning English is not the main focus of their need to learn. Rather they need to sharpen their English to become a better tool for exploring other knowledge. Also issues which may be viewed as more in the realm of the union's educational responsibility have been raised by workers in the course of lessons. The problem here is whether we can define specifically the content that we would be allowed to teach in terms of our mandate.

From this brief discussion of our work in literacy in the Durban area, it seems that there are four main areas of concern:

- (i) the issue of organisational form of classes and
- (ii) more importantly, the question of the forms of democracy in organisational structures;
- (iii) the issue of an appropriate methodology taking into account the different levels of education in the same group, and
- (iv) the issue of content.

### OTHER ALTERNATIVES

It is in this framework that I would like to discuss two views of education for workers: a paper by Karl von Holdt, "Literacy and Liberation: towards a workers school", delivered in April this year at the National Literacy Conference in Cape Town; and emerging ideas about worker education based on discussion with Gareth Coleman. Both these views look at literacy education for workers and can help us to understand some of the problems we have encountered in this area.

Von Holdt's paper is concerned with the relationship between literacy and liberation. He analyses this relationship from three different but related perspectives: the content of literacy education; the method of such education; and its organisational form. He says a literacy organisation has to help liberate adults



from ignorance. This means that it has to help adults develop their knowledge and understanding of not only, the mechanical process of reading and writing, but also of history and society, an understanding of own experience, knowledge and ideas and also scientific knowledge. This means that a literacy organisation really becomes an Adult Education organisation.

Von Holdt says that there are two important theories of knowledge that have influenced directly or indirectly the literacy practice of organisations. Paulo Freire whose ideas about literacy briefly says that people's daily experience must be the content of literacy teaching and that teaching must happen in such a way that it allows dialogue between the learner and the teacher/co-ordinator. This active participation in the teaching must lead to an understanding of the reasons why an illiterate is illiterate, of their oppression and of their ability to change that reality. Another view of education is that of Lenin who believed that party officials had a real knowledge and understanding of the world and that they had to pass this on to the mass of the people to raise their understanding of the world. This implies a one way method: from the intellectual to the working people.

Von Holdt says that neither of these two views is really satisfactory. "For Freire the masses know everything and for Lenin the masses know very little." He then explains that the situation is far more complex. The intellectual or teacher holds the power in that he/she selects information that form part of the teaching and which is determined by a particular view of the world. The method of teaching where learners have the room to put their own views, to discuss and criticise, keeps the intellectual from becoming a dictator or someone to be seen as the only holder of true knowledge. The learner should come to understand that neither the teacher nor the learner is the bearer of unquestionable knowledge.

As he continues to explain, a learners' committee (i.e., the organisational structure of the programme) extends and ensures learners' control over their own education. He emphasises that this is a struggle for democracy - to shift power from those who hold intellectual power. He also makes the very important point

that such education must confront the question of political power and that political power can only come from the power of mass organisations taking mass actions. For this reason education such as this must be situated in the context of democratic people's organisations and their struggles for liberation. For this reason the ALP in Cape Town initially worked with the trade union structure. However due to organisational problems they now see themselves not as organisationally linked but rather linked through their political practise.

Gareth in discussion has taken up this point of organisational links but has extended it. His discussion largely dealt with problems of worker education and tried to examine problems that specific organisational forms seemed to have. The view that worker education such as in a literacy programme by a service organisation, must be closely tied to the decision making structures of worker organisations and that as such it would ensure democratic control over that education, appears to be flawed. The main problem is that this form of organisation does not allow democratic control over the educational process by workers as a class. This is so for the following reasons:

- (a) structures that are consulted were established out of the need for workers to collectively challenge the power of the bosses and the government. The internal mechanisms of these structures have developed outside of direct educational issues. (This is not to say that these structures cannot be democratically changed from below);
- (b) a leadership elected on the basis of shopfloor issues might make educational choices for the rank and file membership. Sometimes this is the case with an outside organisation - individuals who are not involved in this programme might make such choices for the membership;
- (c) educational programmes fizzle out and are not regenerative.

This type of education potentially reinforces learning as an individualised process. Education proceeds from point A to point B. Individuals can for example proceed along a path to "literate success". Such preconceived ideas limit the choices available and takes, more importantly, learners outside of their conditions of struggle. The learners' aim is predetermined by the way in which the classes are organised. For Gareth the



question is: How can educational practise be linked to the socialisation of knowledge?

He suggests that the answer lies in the organisational form such education takes. Because of the form in which production is organised, workers in the factory have the greatest consciousness of themselves as a class with similar interests. Here education can be built into workers everyday lives as far as the content is concerned and a methodology developed that allows debate and discussion of issues in a collective way. For example, factories could nominate and elect rank and file workers to attend classes. The focus would help to develop worker tutors who in turn would be responsible to develop educational organisation in the factory. The content of such education would be determined by the factory group. The problem still remains, though: What should the link with the union/federation be? Gareth pointed out that there is the possibility of conflicting interests if such education is organised by a group from outside the trade union movement. Questions of how such conflict could be avoided or resolved still need to be explored.

#### ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In my analysis I would like to deal with

the problems of organisation and democracy. It seems to me that the problems of content and a suitable methodology are related to and dependant on the organisational form such education takes. I think that the earlier discussion has shown that there are two aspects to the problem of the organisational form of an education programme offered to the membership of an existing organisation:

- (i) How do we organise for levels of democracy internal to the programme?
- (ii) How do we organise for levels of democracy that would link the programme to that of a wider based organisation?

Van Holdt answers the first question by suggesting that the problem can be solved by a controlling committee that would deal with problems related to the teaching and learning process. He also makes the important point that such democracy should be supported, in fact demands, a teaching method that allows learners to question the knowledge that the teacher/co-ordinator brings to the lesson. In fact, this process is part of what is being learnt. He attempts to answer the second question by suggesting that the programme should be situated in the broad democratic movement. Placing the programme within the appropriate ideological framework does however not mean that the problem of democracy has





been solved. Democracy is a practice and this suggests that there must be clear organisational structures within which one can operate. Gareth's suggestion of factory based programmes also answers the first question. Democratically elected representatives from the shopfloor would participate in the education. The direction of the programme would be controlled by those workers on the floor who elected them in the first place. This widens the base of democracy from that of a group of learners who are workers to that of a working class. It is precisely this fact, that the base of democracy has been widened that also empowers such an organisation with the ability to act. This is where the potential for conflict with the workers' organisations lies for a service organisation. A clear answer of what the nature of this relationship should be can obviously not be formulated by an outside organisation. However, there are some issues which can be raised for consideration:

(i) it is important to democratise the teaching/learning process; in fact this is an important part of the learning process itself. Mechanical knowledge of reading and writing will not shift the power of knowledge from those who hold it at present;

(ii) if the object is for workers' organisations to take control over the teaching/learning process themselves, then structures must be created that would allow a real democracy to operate. Workers must have a forum within the service organisation (i.e., the teaching place) where they can raise their problems, but they also need to have a forum within the structure of the union/federation where their problems with the teaching practise can be raised effectively;

(iii) it must be recognised that an initial mandate for a specific kind of education and the scope of that mandate will continuously have to be renegotiated. This requires a continuous commitment from the body that gave the initial mandate;

(iv) because of the danger of conflicting interests between the service organisation and the union/federation the basis of the working relationship needs to be formalised. There is need for control by the worker organisation.

What have workers themselves shown us about organising their education? Wor-

kers who attended initial classes always arrived in small groups from the same factory. These groups tended to be workers from the same shift and often from the same department. Almost always one or two of these workers had organised the other workers to attend classes with them. When such "leaders" stopped coming, this often meant that other workers also stopped coming. After the programme had started new learners almost always approached us in factory groups for lessons. Also workers who came together in a group often insisted on staying in that same group despite the fact that they had differing levels of English competence and learning might have been "easier" for them at another level. Sometimes workers with a better knowledge of English would take over teaching functions and translate words/concepts to others who had problems following in English. There would then also be discussion about the exact meaning of the word in English. So workers see the tutor not as the only source of knowledge, but rather as someone who has a certain kind of knowledge. Tutors and learners (both groups are members of existing workers' organisations) are insisting on wider levels of democracy. They express the need to be involved in the selection of information to be taught and in the design of such information into a lesson. These observations suggest that Gareth's concept of factory based education is not just an "idea". However this type of education would require real levels of commitment from workers' organisations. The question remains as to how to integrate such a programme with the existing one. Some workers who are saying that they would like "something more" are saying that literacy education must be more than just teaching a language or how to read and write. It must become adult education. Von Holdt explains very well why a literacy organisation must become an adult education organisation.

The question of the content of such a programme needs to be examined. Clearly there must be an input from workers and tutors as well as from the staff of the service organisation. The problem of possible authoritarian practice by those who at the outset of such a programme have the power of intellectual knowledge, can only be countered by a democratically constituted programme, which allows for real control over the programme by the learners and worker



tutors as well as their organisations. It is not sufficient to say that such a course will only deal with issues raised by the labour movement. The manner in which such issues are dealt with can still be undemocratic. It may well be a one way process from intellectuals to workers. The tension in such a programme between those who know and those who are learning can only be solved by real democratic practise. Specific concrete problems which relate to the functioning of the programme such as problems with shifts would be more easily dealt with if the programme was based on democratically elected factory groups with real representation in the structures of the workers' organisation.

It appears to me that the problem of conflicting structures between that of an education programme organised by an outside organisation and a workers organisation could partly be solved by

ensuring that :

- (i) the workers who attend the programme are democratically elected by the union in the factory;
- (ii) that tutors' from the workers organisation; for example a body such as the regional education structure of the union in the area where the work is being undertaken;
- (iii) that worker learners and worker tutors in the programme elect from their ranks a committee which would represent their ideas and problems to the service organisation;
- (iv) and that from such a body representation to the union/federation's education structure would be elected. In this manner the possibility of interference in the union/federation's own programme would be more controlled. More needs to be written about the educational functioning and functions of a workers' committee that would decide and evaluate the content and methodology of an educational programme.







# SACHED EDUCATION WORKSHOP IN PINETOWN

Comrade Thami Mohlomi's (Natal Regional Secretary of COSATU) speech at the

SACHED Education Workshop held at Pinetown on the 31 August 1986

Comrades

We are gathered here today to discuss one of the most important matters in this country which is education. The issue of education together with all the matters related to apartheid has led this country into the crisis in which it is today. So it is easy for us to be clear about what education is really all about so that we can come with solutions to this problem and work out a programme that will directly deal and overcome the problems facing us in this present apartheid education.

To be really clear about the role of education and its contribution to society we need to look at it historically. Since civilization an advent of class divided society education, like everything, fell into the hands of the ruling class, i.e., the slave masters. During slavery education was the privilege of the slave masters and their children. Only those slaves who were co-opted into the ruling class had that chance to get educated.

Education during this time served to justify the slave system and make it acceptable to the slaves. Under the feudal system the same thing happened. Education fell into the control of the church which was one institution that was a great feudal lord, owning close to a third of European land. The church also used education to justify and defend the feudal system. People were taught that the order of things existing on earth was preordained by God. The class structure of the world is the same as that in heaven where we have God at the top, the arch-angels, the angels and people. On earth we had the king, the feudal lords, the bishops down to the peasants and serfs. People were taught the order of things and no one could

change it. Even during this system education was a privilege of the few from the ruling class and those individuals who decided to join the church from the oppressed classes. The advent of capitalism brought a lot of invention which assisted in producing books and a lot of materials needed to advance education.

This assisted a lot in democratising education and making it accessible to many people. However because of class division even under the capitalist system capitalism could not really allow education to be equal in the sense.

Today we find that there are differences between the kind of education offered to the African children is even of a lower standard than that offered to the children of the white working class. It is in fact not even a second but a third grade education which only enables us to objects of exploitation.

The capitalist class also realised that education is a very powerful weapon in the hands of a ruling class and the capitalist are actually using education to reinforce their ideas of individualism and justifying the capitalist system. How often do we hear our teachers saying: "You must learn so that you don't become a street sweeper in future." This gives an idea to children that street sweepers are lowly people for whom one has to have no regard and the important people are doctors and lawyers etc. This is the kind of



education that the children of 1976 challenged and were prepared to lay down their lives to see the destruction of. It was not of course the first time that this kind of education was challenged. From its inception the progressive organisations such as the ANC challenged Bantu education. With the banning of these organisations there was a lull to the resistance against Bantu education until 1976.

Since 1976 there have been a lot of developments in the education front. For the first time this year we saw the government agreeing to offer free education to the African children in the form of free books, etc. This is a major victory for the people and it is up to us the workers to see how do we advance this struggle.

Today there are organisations such as the NECC which has its structures all over the country on a regional and a local level. It is upon us to see how do we link up with these structures so as to strengthen them and advance their cause and at the same time strengthen our organisation. COSATU attended the 2nd Consultative Conference of the NECC and was party to the resolution taken at that conference. Now it is our duty to put those resolutions into practice and to decide how to do that. Organisations such as SACHED are doing a very good job by offering to workers alter-

native education to Bantu education. This is why COSATU encourages its members to attend education classes organised by SACHED because it helps to advance the level of education and of understanding among workers.

However, such organisations are short term measures and the ultimate solution to this problem is for the working class to assume power and to put itself in a position of the ruling class. Because as we have seen through the development of society it is only when one has put one in a position of a ruling class that one can decide what kind of education should be in operation.

Therefore we can see comrades what a heavy task lies ahead of us if we want to really solve one aspect of our lives which is education. We have to do away with the whole socio-economic and political system that exists and establish a new one where the workers will be the ruling class.

This is not an easy task comrades and it will need a lot of sacrifice and dedication on our part. However, this does not mean that we should not involve ourselves in the ongoing struggle to improve education in this country and to start short term measures to offer better education to our children and ourselves.

AMANDLA!!

FORWARD WITH THE PEOPLE'S EDUCATIONS!!

## WORKERS EDUCATION DAY





# JOHANNESBURG NEWS

As a result of a feasibility study conducted by LACOM (Johannesburg) in late 1985, with Trade Union, we embarked on a series of courses which deal with improving writing skills of workers.

Amongst these, are a course on report writing and note-taking, a general writing skills course, and a NEWSPAPER and NEWSLETTER writing course.

The NEWSPAPER and NEWSLETTER course is a relatively new course for LACOM. It was developed in consultation with trade unions. Recently, we ran the course for shop-stewards from Mawu (local) and PWAU (BEC members). The course was very successful. Dirk Hartford, COSATU News Editor, introduced the workshop. He spoke about the need for a worker's newspaper. He said: "In COSATU, we are trying to build strong worker participation in the paper." He encouraged workers to write their own stories which can then be published in their newspapers and newsletters. Here are some of the stories which were written by the workers who attended the workshop.

## MONDI WAGE NEGOTIATIONS

by Ray Mossie (PWAU)

I would like to tell you about a dispute we had with management. The dispute started over wage negotiations.

We (PWAU), were demanding an increase of 40c per hour. Management refused, claiming that 40c was too much. They told us that they only had 18c to offer on top of what we were already earning. We tried to indicate that their offer was too little. It did not cover the rising cost of inflation.

Management then drew graphs and lots of figures that we did not understand. "You see this! You see that! The Company is running at a loss. A further increase would plunge the business down the drain." These were management's remarks.

We then compromised by going down by 5c in our demand, which was still rejected. PWAU then declared a dispute. Without consulting the workers or the shop-stewards, management enforced a 3c increase, with the balance, pending the workers decision on the company's offer. Workers then undertook a ballot and the

decision was to go on strike. An emergency meeting was called. In the interim, workers were singing and shouting: "Amandla! Amandla! "

Management then hastened to agree to the demands of the workers. The workers had won their struggle - the original demand was met. All this happened at the Mondi Paper Mill in Springs.

## WOMENS' OPPRESSION

by Vusi Mbatha (PWAU)

Black women are the most oppressed human beings. They are oppressed as women, workers and as Black people.

Black women are regarded as inferior to men. In some situations they don't have a say in community affairs, home affairs and union affairs. Their opinion on any issue will not be regarded as valid. They work double shifts - at work and at home.

Women also have less choice of jobs, as a result they suffer sexual harrasment from their bosses at work. They are subjected to low wages irrespective whether they do equal jobs as men. Domestic workers suffer the most oppression. They work long hours including weekends and public holidays. There is no law to protect the personal humiliation they get from the "madame".

In addition to the exploitation suffered by all workers generally, women have their own added burdens. As child bearers they are discriminated against. For instance, when they are pregnant, they are shifted from the front to the back of shops, or somewhere else where they will not be seen by the customers.

The overall aim of LACOM's programme in Johannesburg is to build and spread skills within the independent labour movement. Through courses like the NEWSPAPER and NEWSLETTER writing course, we hope that both officials and workers, will use their skills to build their own education programmes.



## QUOTE FROM COSATU NEWS

Quote from Editorial Comment of COSATU NEWS Number 2, 1986.

„Now in COSATU, and in many other local organisations of workers and youth, we can see that the capitalist system has nothing to offer us except more poverty and exploitation, more police repression and racist oppression. So many workers and youth are saying that the only alternative to this system is a socialist system - a society controlled by workers and organised to meet all the needs of the workers.

If the masses of workers and youth are demanding a socialist solution to the crisis, then it is COSATU's task to take the lead in discussing with all organisations:

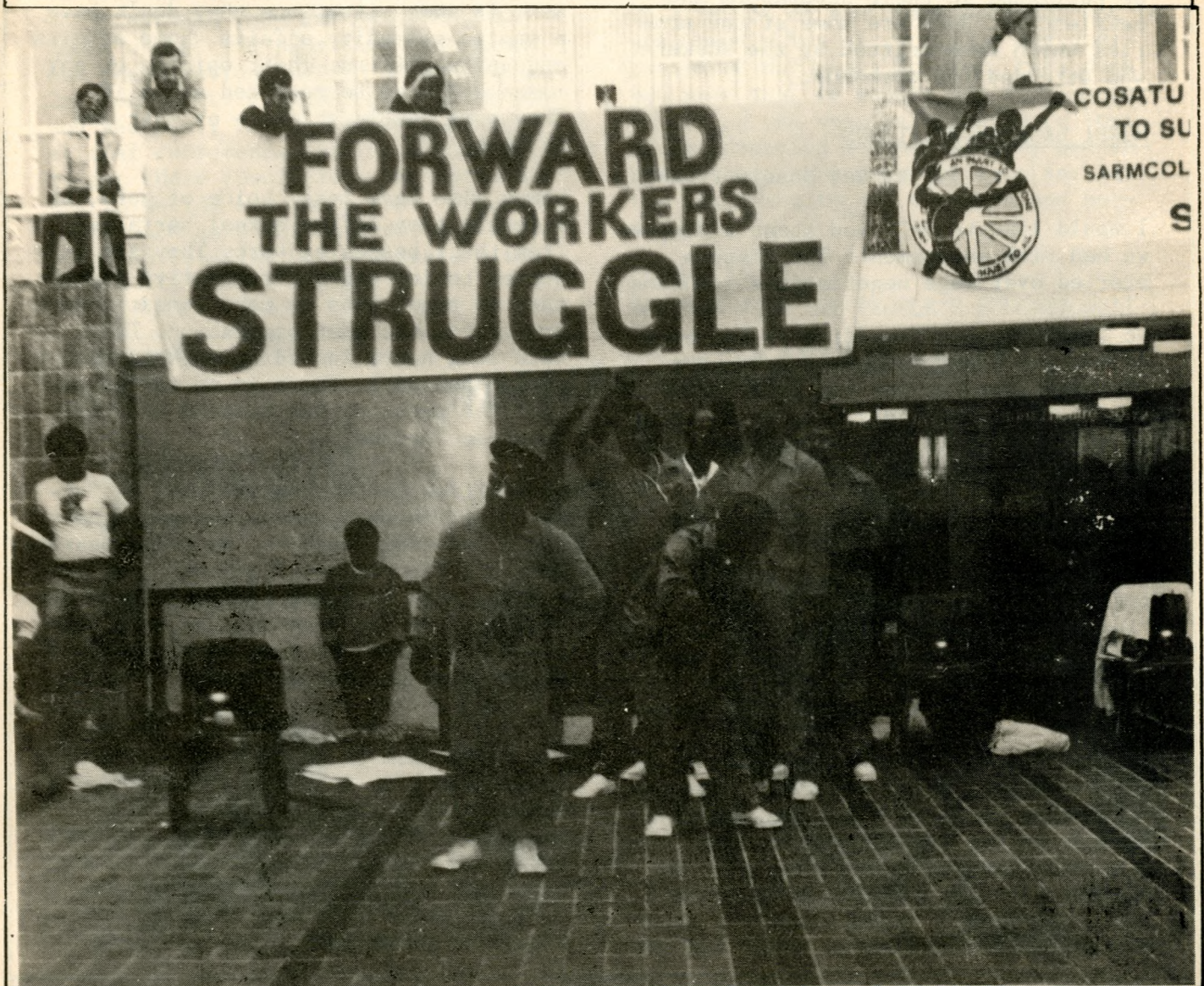
\* the principles and policies of workers democracy and control;

\* the socialist solutions we need, and how to achieve them."

The struggle against ignorance and illiteracy is very much part of the struggle for socialism.

A literacy programme, as shown by the experience of other struggles, is very much part and parcel of that programme to build a socialist future where the workers shall govern.

And if LACOM, as a service organisation for unions and community organisations, really wishes to be of service to these organisations and their members, it will have to be familiar and sympathetic with the socialist solutions they are striving to find for their problems.





# WESTERN CAPE

## DOMESTIC WORKERS LAUNCH NATIONAL TRADE UNION

Domestic Workers organisations from all over South Africa will come together on Saturday and Sunday 29 and 30 November to launch the South African Domestic Workers Union, SADWU.

After nearly two years of talks the following five unions have decided to form one domestic workers union:

1. South African Domestic Workers Association, Johannesburg.
2. The East London Domestic Workers Union.
3. The Port Elizabeth Domestic Workers Union.
4. Domestic Workers Association, Cape Town.
5. The National Domestic Workers Union, Durban.

The domestic workers and farm workers are the only two sectors of the labour force not yet enjoying any form of protection under the law.

One of the main tasks of the new union will be to fight for some form of legal status for domestic workers.

The launching of one, united national union for domestic workers sets the stage for a major campaign to get recognition for one of the most exploited sections of the work force in this country.

Another major task would be to mobilise the many domestic workers still outside the union.

There are about 1 million domestic workers in South Africa at present. Of these only about 60 000 are unionised. The majority of the domestic workers are therefore still to be organised.

The launching of SADWU is to be welcomed and it is hoped that it will only be a question of time before it too will join the ranks of COSATU.

VIVA SADWU!



## STOP PRESS

Cape Town:

The launching of the Domestic South African Domestic Workers Union (SADWU) in Cape on Saturday and Sunday, 29 and 30 November went off very well.

Over 600 delegates and observers from different parts of the country and representing over 50 000 domestic workers clapped their hands and danced when the SADWU constitution was finally adopted.

The new union has set itself the task of mobilising as many of the 1 million domestic workers working in South Africa as possible and fighting for a better deal for one of the most exploited sectors of the work force.

From the response of the delegates and observers, it would appear that the first executive of the new union has much popular support.

VIVA SADWU VIVA



## Domestic Workers Writes:

# History of the struggle of the Domestic Workers in the Western Cape

The thought of organising Domestic Workers and forming a union had been in the minds of people during the 50s and 60s, but because of the way in which domestic workers live, alone in the backyards of the rich it was very difficult to organise them. Workers are trapped in the backyard and isolated from the rest of the oppressed community. There is an estimated 350000 domestic workers in the Western Cape alone.

During 1969 domestic workers came together to discuss their problems. Meetings were held in Salt River and in Maitland. At that time some-one working for Young Christian Workers ran programmes for workers in various areas.

In 1976 we started organising domestic workers on a full-time basis.

During this period there was no office, no money, or paid organisers. This prevented the core group from getting the union off the ground. In 1977 new attempts were made by Maggie Oewies and Florrie De Villiers, and they started organising on a full-time basis. A year later a constitution was drawn up and an office was found. They were assisted by a group of concerned people, a lawyer, trade unionist and others. At that time the office was established and a general meeting was held. On 23rd July 1978 the following members were elected as office-bearers: Maggie Oewies (Chairperson); Florrie De Villiers (V. Chairperson and Treasurer; Eunice Mankay (Secretary).

Since then more and more women got involved in organising domestic workers. People worked hard, they went from area to area, many workers joined as a result of this. Many challenges lay ahead, so great were these challenges that at times one found oneself in the most difficult of

situations. Madams calling the police, dogs were set loose on organisers, workers themselves resisting the union, no money and no transport. One of the biggest disadvantages facing the organisers was the fact that domestic workers are not protected by any labour laws. Also for every one worker there is one boss. This means each worker's case has to be dealt with separately. Organising woman workers is difficult. But organising domestic workers is even more difficult. They often have to baby-sit till late. Many work from Sunday to Sunday. One does not have access to the workers at the place of work.

All these difficulties and obstacles did not stop us.

We in the Western Cape were not the only ones trying to organise domestic workers. Throughout the country domestic workers were being organised. All these groupings were involved in similar struggles. At the beginning of 1982 SADWA, DWA, ELDWU, NDWU and PEDWU got off the ground. Contact and liaison between the groups was made. This carried on for 3 years but because of regional differences and problems, communication broke down.

In 1985 the attempt at uniting all domestic workers was taken up again by DWA. The first Unity Talks were held in Cape Town in June 1985. Since then many meetings, discussions and fights happened between the five groups. But much progress was made.

The aim to build one national union, SADWU, will be realised on 29-30 Nov - 86.

VIVA! THE WORKERS' STRUGGLE.



## Extracts and quotes:

For the Sandinistas it (literacy) was an urgent political priority.... Roberto Saenz, one of the crusade's planners and currently Vice Minister of Adult Education, had had four years of experience teaching literacy in semiclandestinity. "It is a political project with pedagogical implications", he explained, "not a pedagogical project with political implications. There are no neutral projects, not in Nicaragua, not in the United States, not anywhere. Every social project carries with it an ideology - in order to maintain the system, to reproduce the system, or to sustain a process of profound change."

Literacy is fundamental to achieving progress and it is essential to the building of a democratic society where people can participate consciously and critically in national decision-making. You learn to read and write so you can identify the reality in which you live, so that you can become a protagonist of history rather than a spectator.

FATHER FERDINANDO CARDINAL, SJ,  
FEBRUARY 1980 NICARAGUA.

## POETRY

### TO THE STUDENTS OF THE WORKERS AND PEASANTS FACULTY

So there you sit. And how much blood was shed  
That you might sit there. Do such stories bore you?  
Well, don't forget that others sat before you  
Who later sat on people. Keep your head!

Your science will be valueless, you'll find  
And learning will be sterile, if inviting  
Unless you pledge our intellect to fighting  
Against all enemies of all mankind.

Never forget that men like you got hurt  
That you might sit here, not the other lot.  
And now don't shut your eyes, and don't desert  
But learn to learn, and try to learn for what.

BERTOLT BRECHT 1953 - 1956