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WORKS COMMITTEE
INFORMATION BULLETIN
NUMBER 28
OCTOBER 1983

K A R I B U N I !!!

The SOMAFCO teaching and support staff have taken the plunge -- they have decided to formally join hands with other workers in Mazimbu. The SCHOOL STAFF PRODUCTION UNIT was born in October. United we stand, to build the kind of work force and community our organisation wants. This decision on the part of the school staff can only be a strengthening factor, both to them and to the Works Committee. UNITY IN ACTION!!

(More about our newest production unit later in this issue. -- Editor)

REPORTS RECEIVED

Due to some unforeseen problems, the Information Bulletin Committee was not able to get copies of all the production unit Minutes for October. Therefore, the reports below are only a partial reflection of meetings held.

AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT

Here is another article from the Agriculture Department, and this time our main topic is the goat section. But first information about other sections:

Animal Production

Piggery: As you all noticed, we slaughtered on the weekend of 22 October: 6 pigs with a total of 304 kg. The slaughtering will take place every fortnight in the future.

In the beginning of next year, we can already use the new piggery (now being built at Mazimbu) for the farrowing sows.

Poultry: Since the last article, the egg production has increased every week; it is now about 1900 eggs per week. Especially the young ones are doing their very

best. However, we want to recommend seriously that one should not eat raw eggs. (WHY NOT?? -- Editor)

Cattle: An extension of the kraal has been built. The kraal was not very big and when the goats joined this section suddenly, this decision of extending was immediately taken. The kraal is now twice its previous size.

Crop Production

Field: The harvest has been done. Next month, we will have this section as the main topic, about all the products and their figures.

ADVERTISEMENT: PEOPLE WHO LIKE TO BAKE OR COOK WITH UNGROUND SORGHUM CAN GET THIS AT THE FARM. Bring your tin and we supply 5 kg.

Horticulture: Notice that also

in this section we start being self-sufficient. The fertilizer we use is the manure from our own piggery.

Manpower

At the moment there are dynamic developments in this field. Some time ago it was decided that the agriculture department should be separated from the rest of the project (on paper) to see how much we gain by producing our own food. Therefore, we have Miriam and Gea who are doing the administration and the bookkeeping. At the same time Miriam will learn secretarial work.

The crop store got a milling plant, which will be installed this coming month by a Danish instructor, Bjarne Beck, Karim, just back from a scholarship on mechanical engineering, and Seleman Vaziri, a Tanzanian with practical experience.

In November Calist Kakaba will join us in the cattle section. He did a course on general agriculture.

General

Our department sends a watertank to Unit 2 every day after working hours to help solve the water problem.

October 25 was the big day. Then we got the generator, which means electricity. We thank the comrades from the Electrical Department very much.

The Goat Old Times Ahead

As you know from the last article, the goats have been removed to the cattle kraal, except for the six milking goats.

Lately all the private goats have been nationalised as well. This means no more problems and

no more sensation from that side, but more people satisfied and happy!!!

It means no more interfering in lessons by goats who want to enter the classroom.

It means no more decorating by goats who walk over the floor of cement which is still drying.

It means that pawpaw trees and banana trees and all the other plants can grow and the people themselves can decide when to shorten them.

It means also that gardens will be very nice in future with flowers and other plants.

The last sensational news for this month is that the number of goats increased in one year from 180 till nearly 300 and the section is still increasing!

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CARPENTRY UNIT

Although the shortage of wood glue is by no means over, a small quantity has been received, and this means that production is on again.

The production unit meeting stressed that comrades should be more disciplined in their attitudes towards work. For example, they should always report to the foreman if they must leave the factory. This has not been happening, and comrades were cautioned to improve their behaviour.

Comrade Patrick Dube has been found drunk during working hours and was called before the production unit to account for his behaviour. A punishment was decided on by the production unit, but Patrick's attendance has been very poor since that time.

Carpentry (continued)

Production for the month included 33 door frames, 28 window frames, 5 cupboard frames, 5 cupboards, and 10 lattices.

DRIVERS UNIT

A new schedule of assignments to vehicles has been drawn up, in an effort to provide better service and ensure improved maintenance of vehicles. Drivers are expected to give regular reports on their vehicles.

GARMENT FACTORY

The Fighting Fund continues to grow. (Our readers will remember that the members of this production unit resolved to contribute 10/- each per fortnight to this fund. -- Editor)

The question of progress was discussed. The teaching of techniques is going slowly because of the irregular attendance of many of the comrades.

(See elsewhere in this issue for MORE on the Garment Factory. -- Editor)

SCHOOL STAFF UNIT

(This is the very first report from our newest production unit! Karibu!! -- Editor)

The School Staff has now formed a production unit. The production unit comprises the school administration, the teaching staff, the school office staff, the boarding staff, the library staff, the resource centre staff. The chairperson of the production unit is Pearl Serote and the secretary is Nonjabulo Zwane. The unit has not yet decided on a

representative to the Works Committee.

Before the formation of the unit, there were differing ideas about the constitution of the unit. Some comrades felt that the teaching staff should form one production unit and the support staff another; others felt that there could be one unit. It was decided that for the time being, the whole staff should form one unit and this can be reviewed with time.

The School Staff Production Unit has held its first meeting at which they discussed the areas they hoped to cover.

SITE

Dormitory Units: Renovation of Unit 1 continues, with work on the first block nearly completed and work on the second one already started. (This work may seem to be going slowly, but readers should please realise that for the Site it is extra work that is being fit in here and there in our regular building programme -- which is very full -- wherever there is time; we are doing our best.) In Unit 3, work on the dining hall is almost finished; the main work left now is electrical, particularly the hooking up of the new transformer. Basic building work continues in Units 4 and 5.

School Complex: The Teachers' Block is just about ready for plastering, and this will begin soon. The laboratories are seeing real progress now: all the plasterwork is finished and by the time this Bulletin is in your hands the screeding (floor finish) will be done as well; by about the middle of November the verandas will be cast; installations of the gas and water pipes are well under way. Work on Blocks 7 and 8 (newest classrooms) has started again, with

Site (continued)

the last pieces of slab being cast and the rest of the columns as well. In the Library, the basement section walls and staircase are completed, and preparations are being made for ceiling work; in the rest of the building, foundation work continues.

Children's Centre: Finishing work continues here and there, mostly to replace items that have been stolen. The thatching of the shade hut in the Nursery Section continues (under the able direction of Bra Joe Kabetso) and construction of the one in the Creche Section has begun. The walkovers are being cast.

Other: Work continues on the duplexes in Tabora and placing of frames will begin soon in the community hall. The footings of the new Primary School have been cast and foundation work will now continue. In the hospital, tiling work is fast progressing and the verandas are being cast; we hear that three containers of building material for the hospital are in Dar es Salaam harbour, and we look forward to receiving them in Mazimbu.

THANKS!!! The Somafco students helped offload 2 lots of cement from the Soviet Union -- a total of 1360 bags -- in October. Their quick response and their high spirits are much appreciated by the Site. We know that we can continue to count on their help in the future.

TECHNICAL DEPARTMENT

Comrade Killian Masipa has joined the production unit. Karibu.

Drawings completed: transformer substation at the farm; shelter for goats and cattle at the kraal;

furniture drawings for the Children's Centre; road access; schedule for standard trusses; library slab reinforcement.

Work in progress: permanent piggery; Kurasini contracts; Central Stores Complex; Dakawa; temporary community centre.

The production unit has agreed to make a contribution to the Fighting Fund.

TREASURY UNIT

Additional staff is still required in this Department.

The unit has recommended to the Works Committee that children whose parents are not working for medical reasons should still be allowed to attend the Day Care Centre and Nursery School.

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HISTORY DEPARTMENT

Our regular monthly feature continues, this time with....

REVOLUTIONARY RUSSIA

In the first 20 years of this century, the former Russian Empire experienced three major revolutionary upheavals: in 1905-7, in February 1917 and October 1917. The first of these (1905-7) was an attempt by the workers and peasants (supported half-heartedly by the bourgeoisie) to overthrow the Tsarist regime. Although this attempt was unsuccessful, the people's forces gained important revolutionary experience. The Bolshevik Party in particular made a deep analysis of the 1905-7 revolution and learned many important lessons from it.

(continued on Page 11)

WORKS COMMITTEE REPORT

Comrades, on behalf of the entire working force here at Mazimbu, the Works Committee congratulates the R.P.C. for forming its Coordinating Pool. As it was explained to us, this Pool is to ensure that our Political Programmes do not clash. We also appeal to the other structures not to take short cuts but to cooperate with the Coordinating Pool.

An Appeal: For the last few months the Works Committee has been observing a lot of loitering and movement of people around the Logistics Store during working hours. Although some do go there for genuine reasons, many are just hanging around. We appeal to the comrades that the Stores should not become a Breads Corner.

The Works Committee thanks all the Production Units which went to contribute at Dakawa with the digging of the trench. To those who did not contribute, we believe that next time they will see the importance of these political programmes. More of the same will be coming.

Fighting Fund: As some production units have started to contribute to the Fighting Fund, the Works Committee conveys its message of courage to them and also asks the other units to join the chorus. We shall have also moved a step ahead in response to Comrade T.G.'s request. Let us all say: Forward, YES! Backward, NO!

New Year's Eve Party: Comrades, the Works Committee reminds all production units and Bulletin Readers that we are approaching 1984, the Year of the Women as declared by the ANC. Therefore, our efforts should be doubled this time. As is our tradition, a committee has been formed to work out details and means for the success of our New Year's Eve Social Political Gathering.

Lunch: Here we inform all the Production Units that the idea of going back to a lunch hour was approved in principle by the Directorate. However, certain details still have to be worked out before the matter is finalised; the Treasury is working on this. Comrades should be well aware that we will still be expected to work an eight-hour day -- the introduction of lunch will mean that we continue until 4:30 each afternoon instead of knocking off at 3:30. There will be more information on this issue in the near future.

Rest: It has been said several times that those who do contribute should have a rest from time to time. Finally it was approved that they should have two weeks rest in each year with full incentive -- IF they have an 80% attendance during the year. This follows one of the recommendation of the Seminar. The rest period shall be monitored by the Production Units and the Works Committee. The Works Committee shall submit the details of the matter to the production units through the representatives.

New Production Units: The Works Committee congratulates the School Staff and the Welding Shop for forming production units. The permanent representative of Welding is Cde Zoni. The School Staff is still going to choose their rep to the Works Committee.

Comrades, the Committee takes this opportunity to inform the readers, Units and the community at large of the following: New permanent representatives to the Works Committee: From Treasury is Comrade Maduna; Welding is Comrade Zoni and Garment Factory is Comrade Emily.

In the last Bulletin we said Cobblery was to be incorporated with the Treasury Unit. This was reviewed and it was felt that Cobblery should form its own unit. Once more the Works Committee is asking groups of people who are engaged in production of any kind to form production units, e.g. the Day Care Centre. The Community can only be informed of progress and problems you are facing if you have a production unit. This will smoothen the communication line of the Mazimbu community and will stop malicious propaganda and distortions.

Technical Drawing Classes: The Works Committee sat down for days and hours to make a suitable programme with Comrade Barbel, who is in charge of these classes. These lessons do not need a high academic background. The programme is as follows: Thursdays 1630 to 1830 (in weeks when there are no political unit meetings); Fridays 1630 to 1830; Saturdays 1000 to 1200. Please attend these classes for your own benefit. For further information, see Comrade Barbel or your representative to the Works Committee.

Comrades, the Committee informs all Bulletin readers that the Works Committee is now represented on the Directorate by its Chairperson, Comrade Sonny. This is according to the resolution adopted by the Seminar.

Works Committee Meeting Hours: After having gone through the difficulties of meeting hours the Committee finally agreed that it shall only meet Saturdays immediately after work. We ask the production units to have their meetings on the week that the Works Committee is meeting to analyse the reports, so that reports can be looked into when they are still fresh.

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SEMINAR SEMINAR SEMINAR SEMINAR SEMINAR SEMINAR SEMINAR SEMINAR

In this issue we reprint the next in the series of papers presented to the Works Committee Seminar, held in August:

THE POLITICAL ROLE OF THE WORKS COMMITTEE AND PRODUCTION UNITS
IN THE PRESENT PHASE OF THE STRUGGLE

Dear Comrade Leaders, Dear Comrades,

Today we are witnessing the development of a new kind of construction with the development of this project. As it develops the organisation acquires more

experience and gradually perceives the requirements of this historic mission. The comrades who are participating in the construction of SOMAFECO are an embryo of the detachment of workers, who in the future of South Africa will take part in transforming that abortive

system.

Together with the workers at home they form a component part of the revolutionary process for National Liberation. As workers in the revolution we produce for the development of our struggle, we are jealously safeguarding the rear which should be kept strong as to be in a position of supplying the front with the necessary equipment. This detachment is in its infancy and will develop immensely as the complex is taking its proper shape.

In order to ensure the realisation of the factors stated above, the production units should be organised on a proper basis.

The Role of the Production Units

The Production Units should have a Head of department and an active core which will assist him or her in tackling some of the vital issues. It would be composed of the Head of department, Chairman, Secretary, representative to the Works Committee, if necessary the work coordinator. The duty of the core should be planning work in a particular Unit and where possible form teams according to the abilities of the workers. The production Units help the workers to plan their work and productivity. The meetings which are held by these units help to ensure maximum effort and to implement the directives passed by the management. The Anarcho-syndicalists said that workers should not engage in politics and that they could get along very well with only Trade Unions.

This is proved wrong because you cannot have an organised work force which lacks political consciousness. For prosecuting this task successfully the active cell must know its members. The head and his or her immediate assistants ought to organise get-togethers and study trips. In these kind of trips comrades come to know each

other's behaviour outside the working area. With this information the work coordinator and the head of the department will be able to distribute work without facing grave problems.

It is also the task of the core to develop the consciousness of the workers. In order to achieve good results in production, workers should be trained politically and practically. The historical background of SOMAFECO should be related and comrades must be told that failing to accomplish this monument will be giving the enemy a chance of spreading his malicious propaganda against us.

The head ought to educate his or her members so that they can distinguish between what is primary and secondary; to be specific -- the interest of the collective from personal interest. Therefore it means that the core should be exemplary.

Comrades, here in Mazimbu we are the owners of the means of production and this means we should not work slowly and reluctantly as if we are at home, where the boss will force a worker to do his or her job. At home the worker has to sell his labour power in order to survive; in our situation the output is meant for the development of our revolution.

For the Production Unit to reach such heights they must understand their role and the importance of the work they are performing. This can be attained by explaining the question of resources and how the donors are organising these materials. These objectives can be achieved through proper planning and working out work norms, which will facilitate the Unit with a comprehensive data, indicating deliberations of various members of the Unit.

In this manner the Production

Units would be in a position of judging and developing the comrades who are lagging behind in their work. This calls for the improvement and clear understanding of production relations which will enable us to function properly. It is a known fact that some Production Units tend to neglect the importance of criticising the fellow workers including other departments.

A clear understanding of this factor will lay the basis for building new work discipline in Mazimbu.

Building New Work Discipline

Comrades, while making efforts to set up structures which will facilitate the smooth running of work in our areas of work, we are encountering problems of misusing the property of our movement. Comrades mishandle items donated to us by the peace-loving people in the Western world and our friends in the socialist countries. In order to overcome these shortcomings in our planning we should have methods which will be useful in the distribution of goods. This includes some of the components which should be received as part of our Emulation programme.

Incentive

While engaged in productive work the movement realised the need of giving the working force incentives as a means of stimulating them. At the same time this question should be dealt with thoroughly for it tends to mould the people's attitudes and create property instincts which could present problems as our Complex shapes up.

It also leads to a stage where comrades consider the question of money as primary and the movement work as secondary. In order to combat the tendency of individual gain the workers should work con-

sciously with the aim of improving the conditions of the community. For us to build the spirit, moral incentives should be introduced.

Comrades, moral incentives involve the enrollment of a hard-working and exemplary comrade in a course. His or her qualifications will be up-graded and in this manner will contribute effectively in the productive work around this Complex or in other centres of our movement. The other means could be emulations.

Emulations

Let us view the present situation in South Africa where our people are suffering under the yoke of Apartheid. Perpetuating this ill system which leaves our people homeless, exposed to various diseases and unemployment like in all capitalist countries. The 'haves' in South Africa have created conditions and introduced laws. These laws leave our people with no choice but to sell their labour power in order to obtain the means of subsistence.

In the different industries our people are working under difficult conditions and receiving meagre salaries which are far less than what a worker has produced. This process exposes the nature of capitalism and how parasitic is the whole structure. We are building up a new work discipline with the sole aim of eradicating the hangovers of that ill society of exploitation of man by man. Also with the aim of creating a new kind of a worker who will be capable of participating in the present phase of our struggle and in future South Africa.

Criticism and Self-criticism

The Works Committee and the Production Units as Politico-Administrative bodies help to protect the workers from abuse. The Pro-

duction Units do not replace any of the base structures of our movement like the RPC and the Youth. These organs are expected to help in our main task, the main task of course being the production. In realising all these tasks politics should play the major role.

Adult education is also important in improving our production. All workers need to be educated in order to understand the importance of self-reliance. As workers we should be exemplary and should see to it that our activities are directed to the development of the Complex. One other thing a worker should make a point of is that his or her shortcomings do not influence the community.

The Bulletin as a Agitator

The Bulletin should help to facilitate communication between the workers. It should reflect political aspects and other events. In this manner the Bulletin won't be concentrating on disseminating ideas but would assist in conscientising the workers. The Bulletin should report on the progress made by Production Units and the performance of students at school, for example at the end of the year.

Women in Production

Back in South Africa women are generally accepted as good as domestic servants. In our case their contribution in all the Production Units is viewed as equally important as that of their male comrades. Women have proved to be capable in all the different work categories.

The Role of the Representatives

The work of the Chairman, Secretary and the representative in the Works Committee should be well coordinated. They should explain the role played by the Works Committee in their respective Production Units. They should prepare

papers for discussion and they should guide in all the meetings. Their work is very important and this calls for us to elect potential leaders as Chairs and Secretaries. The articles appearing in the Bulletin can be discussed in the Production Units and ideas can be exchanged for the benefit of all the workers in different Production Units.

Role of the Works Committee

Before talking of the cadres of a given structure, we should consider the structure itself. Without looking at the structure we shall be doing injustice to the objects of the organisation. The same applies to the Works Committee as the Politico-Administrative organisation. The Works Committee should guide, assist and support the Production Units in their role to mobilise and plan their production.

Leading cadres in the organisation like the Works Committee should not be competent only; but they should also accept advice and have the ability to listen to those who are in the lower structures. The Works Committee should be very constructive in attending to the problems of workers. This will help to keep the principles of our movement. It should also show or educate the cadres in the Production Units on the way to improve their production and the style of work. Again the Works Committee should plan ways of involving the students in production.

The reports from the Production Units should be studied and analysed by the Works Committee in order to suggest ways of improving their style of work. The Works Committee as a link between the workers and the management should encourage new initiatives and come out with constructive plans for our workforce.

PRODUCTION FOR VICTORY!
WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE!

From the Electrical Department

NEW SUBSTATIONS IN MAZIMBU

Mazimbu will get two new electrical substations one of these weeks. To help you understand what this means, I will first explain what a substation actually is.

Electrical energy is transported from one place to another (e.g. Kidatu power station to Mazimbu) on power lines. The voltage in these lines is very high -- 33,000 volts! This high level of voltage is necessary because of a scientific fact: The amount of power that is transmitted through a line is fixed by the product of voltage and current. Or we could say:

$$\text{Power} = \text{Voltage} \times \text{Current}$$

Current causes heat. If current is a big part of the power going through a line, the line becomes hot, so to prevent damage you would have to have a very thick wire. This is not economical, and besides, such thick wires would be very inconvenient to work with. But if we lower the current, we can keep the power at a steady level by increasing the voltage. So, what goes through the high tension lines is a very high voltage and a low current -- but it adds up to the right amount of power.

Now, these 33,000 volts can't be fed into Mazimbu just like that -- imagine what would happen to our radios and stoves and fridges (and maybe us too) if that many volts were sizzling in!!! We have to lower the voltage -- to transform it to a level we can use.

That is what a substation does. A substation is a transformer plus some other equipment, which lowers the voltage from 33,000 to 240 volts. It is this lower voltage that we put on the lines and send into Mazimbu. That's a nice comfortable amount, and just what our radios and other electrical equipment like.

At the moment we only have two transformers, both at temporary places: One is behind Unit 1 and the other is in Kliptown. There will be a third one in front of the School, to feed the school buildings and Unit 3. This one is permanent and will enable us to use the Unit 3 kitchen and dining hall. So it is an important event in the building of Somafco. Another permanent one is coming in at the same time at the Farm. This will enable that department to store and process everything they harvest. I expect light at the farm within some weeks.

It is nice that we can show you such an obvious event because most of our work is more or less backstage. Hopefully many comrades will take notice of this and realise that we can be proud of our electrical workers.

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From the Garment Production Unit

THE MAZIMBU GARMENT FACTORY

Most people in Mazimbu don't know very much about the Garment Factory. We work behind closed doors, and generally we discourage a lot of visitors. This is to prevent the comrades at work from being distrubed unless absolutely necessary.

The Garment Factory began in January 1983 with Uncle George Ponnen as head and a staff of seven people. It was initially planned to cater for the ANC membership and also to generate funds for the movement by the sale of the surplus production. At the same time it could teach our people skills in sewing and factory management.

This of course is a long process and cannot be achieved overnight, especially by people who have no basic knowledge about sewing or office work. As time went on more people joined the factory and others left for various reasons, mainly through ill health.

Presently there are fourteen people working in the factory, including Uncle George who is having medical treatment in Canada.

The factory is fully equipped with semi-industrial and industrial machines. We urgently require a staff of fourty people, both male and female, to work on the machines, to do cutting, designing and pettern-making, and to work in the office and storeroom. The factory also requires a mechanic to service the machines.

In the process of teaching and learning we have produced skirts and tops, children's dresses and panties, shirts, pants, overalls for the Catering staff, curtains and other small items. The factory is designed to produce only in bulk.

The Garment Factory has rules and regulations like any other establishment. These are explained to every new member who joins the unit. There are specific times for starting and finishing work and a code of conduct during working hours. There is a morning and midday break for refreshments. These rules have to be strictly adhered to for the smooth running of the factory, as Discipline is the Mother of Victory.

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(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4)

Revolutionary Russia

The revolution of February 1917 resulted in the overthrow of the Tsar and the establishment of a bourgeois democratic government. Many important rights were won by the working people: the right to form trade unions and to strike, the right to belong to political parties of their choice, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, etc. However, political power was in the hands of the bourgeois "Provisional Government" which refused to redistribute the land of the large feudal landowners to the peasants, refused to withdraw Russia from the First World War, and was unable to improve the people's living standards.

(concluded on Page 16).

From the Housing Committee

HOUSING IN MAZIMBU

With the struggle escalating at home and aggression by South Africa being unleashed on the Front-line States, more and more people are coming to Mazimbu. Added to this are qualified students returning to work in our Complex here.

The accommodation problem is, therefore, more serious than ever before. Lack of cement and the building materials further bedevils us and the rate of construction has as a result considerably slowed down.

We appeal to all comrades, including our expatriate friends, to appreciate our difficulties and to assist us in trying to solve the present housing crisis. We have to share and live together in the houses that are available to us. We cannot afford to be exclusive.

The African National Congress is a liberation movement. We are not in our country and are therefore dependent on friendly governments, organisations, solidarity groups and supporters for everything we have and we try to the best of our ability to give everyone an equal share whether it be accommodation, food, clothing, or anything else.

We also appeal to the comrades who are leaving the Complex on short courses or for treatment to please leave their keys with the Housing Officer, so that their rooms can be utilised by visitors during their absence.

Comrade Enos presently has a waiting list of 27, awaiting individual rooms. It is very difficult when he needs to place comrades to find that departed occupants have given over their rooms without the knowledge or permission of the Housing Committee. This is very unfair and places him in a difficult and often embarrassing situation.

In some cases, comrades who have in this way been offered temporary accommodation by their friends refuse to vacate to permanent places assigned to them.

Comrades, without your cooperation, chaos and anarchy will result and this is not in keeping with the aims of our Movement or the terms of the Freedom Charter. Structures are there to be observed and Unity in Action is our slogan.

"Unofficial marriages" is another aspect of life which the ANC is not prepared to tolerate and adds to the housing headaches. Many comrades have left their assigned rooms to live with a partner, very often in someone else's home, causing inconvenience and distress to the occupants.

Please comrades, don't harrass the Housing Officer. His task is difficult enough. Newly arrived comrades will simply have to wait their turn. Remember that others have been waiting much longer than you.

This is a joint problem for all of us to try to solve together. Please help and cooperate. AMANDLA!

SKETCH OF A SOUTH AFRICAN PATRIOT

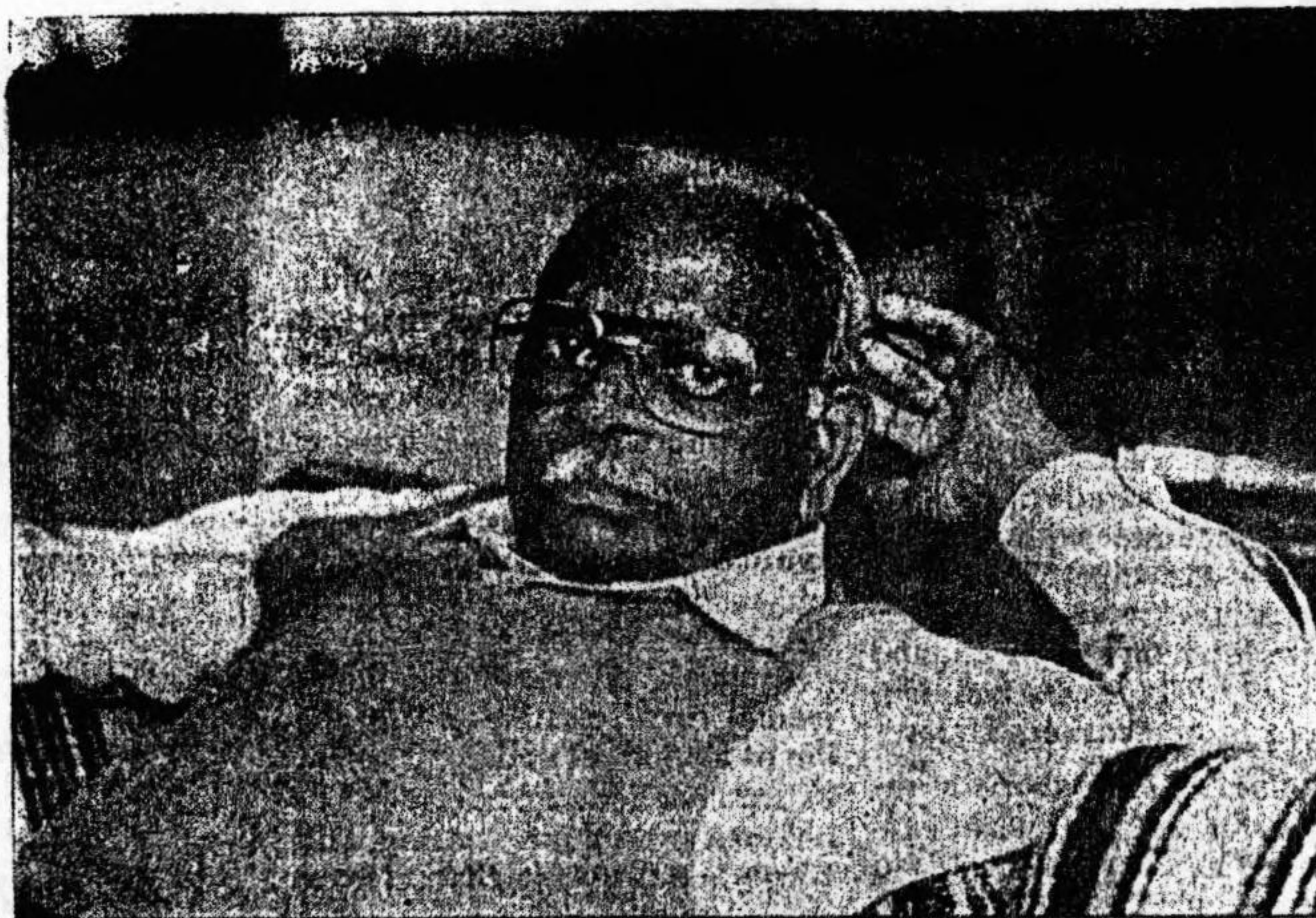
The following article appeared in a Canadian newspaper, and we reprint it here in tribute to our stalwart comrade, George Ponnen, who will soon be returning from medical treatment abroad to resume his duties in Mazimbu.

A LIFE DEDICATED TO LIBERATION

Hardly a Canadian is unaware of the tremendous struggle under way today in South Africa as the people rise up in their millions to smash the hated apartheid regime. Daily reports emerge of battles on all sides -- armed actions, strikes, student protests, church, women's and countless other organisations mobilising for freedom.

What some may not realise is the long, difficult and valiant road the movement for liberation has travelled in South Africa to reach today's high level. This road represents the efforts and sacrifice of thousands of patriots. Many today are dead, many are in exile and in prisons and many are still working for the cause to which they dedicated their lives decades ago.

George Ponnen is one such fighter. Marking his 70th birthday this June, George Ponnen's life is a chronicle of the political life of the South African people. On a visit to Canada, he was interviewed:



GEORGE PONNEN: 'I'm still fighting at 70'.

Interview with Uncle George Ponnen
(Continued)

"My father came from India to South Africa as an indentured labourer in 1867 to work in the sugarcane fields," Ponnen began. "He died in 1921 leaving my mother with seven children."

George's childhood included a struggle to achieve an education, interrupted three or four times as he was forced to find work to add to the family's meagre income. He worked in a cigar factory, a tin and a tea factory. In 1927 he "completed" his education and was hired in a clothing factory, a trade which stayed with him throughout his life.

"My first insight into unionism came when the offices of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union, which was next door, were raided by police and white thugs. I watched them throw typewriters from the third floor onto the street."

George, along with others, began organising the Natal Garment Workers Union in 1928. "It was the first time I came into contact with the colour question because the white union secretary wanted only whites on the executive." The fight was won, the executive was "Mixed".

In 1933 Hitler came to power in Germany and South African "Grey Shirts" paraded with swastikas. "We formed the Anti-Fascist League and organised counter-demonstrations.

"At one of our meetings I was handed some pamphlets and papers. I was very interested in what they said and discovered they were materials of the Communist Party of South Africa. I joined the CPSA the following year."

George's party and union work merged. He helped form Communist Party trade union committees and participated in the 1935 strike at the Durban Factory where for the first time in South African history Black, Asian and white workers -- men and women -- came out 100% united. And they won.

"This strike was an eye-opener. Workers in other plants began organising. In 1936 a great strike of ironworkers took place which fought the combined forces of the employers, police and national administration.

"Then the sugarworkers were organised. This was a difficult task because we couldn't set foot on the great estates. We held meetings at the seashore and on river banks, but we succeeded. For the first time wages, working conditions, housing, education for the workers and their families were regulated because of their union."

The union movement spread across South Africa into all areas. It was a period of the organisation of Black workers. "The Communist Party played a role in this process," Ponnen emphasised. "And the regime fought back with a series of repressive laws."

The people responded, campaigns developed. Young people took leadership in the Natal Indian Congress and unity policies emerged and forces united against white minority rule.

Interview with Uncle George Ponnen
(Continued)

George Ponnen became a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of South Africa in 1938 and was also chairman of the Durban District committee. His activities both in the party and the trade unions led to his being banned by the apartheid regime in 1950. For five years, under the Suppression of Communism Act, George was banished to a rural district, forbidden from trade union activity and forbidden from speaking to another banned person.

By then George was married with a family. "I met my wife Vera who came from London in 1938. She was a member of the Young Communist League in Britain. We worked together in South Africa and married in 1942."

Vera and George had two children who both now live in Canada. "I want to say how proud I am that they are so close to our movement and playing their role," he said. Vera died in 1979 in Edmonton.

Following the lifting of the ban in 1955 George served for many years on the Trades and Labour Council and worked for the full rights of African workers in the trade union movement. In 1954 the TLC sided with the bosses and decided to keep Black unions out of the TLC.

"This led to the formation of the South African Congress of Trade Unions in 1955. Our policy declared it is not only a matter of organising workers for economic demands, but to carry on a political struggle for the liberation of Black workers," he stressed. "Economic improvement without freedom is meaningless."

In 1964 during the country-wide round-up George was arrested. "I was held for 90 days in solitary confinement. Upon release I was immediately re-arrested for another 40 days. When I refused to give evidence in court (each refusal bringing a 12 month prison term) my comrades advised me the regime had enough to send me to Robben Island. I escaped South Africa in 1965."

George's travels took him to Botswana for a year, followed by 10 years in Zambia. In 1975 he came to Canada. Five years later, on request from the African National Congress, George once again returned to Africa -- this time to Tanzania -- to continue his life's work.

Today he runs a clothing factory at the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College where South African exiles train. "We have a primary school, a vocational training farm and other projects. We also teach young people the history of our people's struggle. My job is to teach the history of the South African labour movement."

"What do you tell the young people you teach?", I asked.

"I describe our movement's history; why it started, the turns it has taken and why it continues today," he replied.

"I tell them we are fighting for our birthright and to be free citizens in our own land. I tell them we are fighting for fundamental

Interview with Uncle George Ponnen
(Continued)

human rights -- to vote, to govern, to breathe fresh and free air without fear.

"You must make up your mind now, I say to them. You must learn to hate poverty, starvation, tyranny, racism and fascism.

"And you must learn HOW TO FIGHT for freedom.

"You must learn internationalism because the world and working people are a oneness. You must learn to discover the root causes of the rottenness in South Africa created by capitalist greed for profit.

"These are the issues before you. Make up your mind now."

George Ponnen smiled and added: "That's what I did many years ago. And I'm still fighting at 70."

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(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11)
Revolutionary Russia

The Russian masses became dissatisfied with the Provisional Government and began to throw their support behind Lenin's Bolshevik Party which was calling for the overthrow of bourgeois rule and the establishment of a state ruled by the working class in alliance with the peasantry. On October 25 (according to the old Russian calendar, but November 7 according to the modern calendar) the workers rose up, led by the Bolsheviks, and overthrew the Provisional Government. They established a new workers' and peasants' government based on the Soviets (Councils) of Workers, Peasants and Soldiers Deputies. At the head of the new government they elected Vladimir Illich Lenin -- perhaps the greatest revolutionary leader of all times.

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