



In solidarity with the Sarmcol Workers' Co-operative  
in dispute since May 1985 with giant UK company BTR

Theatre direct from Howick South Africa

# BAMBATHA'S CHILDREN

The Long March from the 1906 Poll Tax Rebellion ...



Wednesday 28th November  
7.30pm

Camden Centre, Bidborough Street, WC1

Tickets: £5.00 (waged), £3.00 (concessions)  
available on the door and from:

The Anti-Apartheid Movement (071) 387 7966

MSF (071) 267 4422 ext 325

Camden NALGO (071) 624 0963

Lambeth TURC

Tel: (071) 733 5670

Presented by SAWCO (Sarmcol Workers' Co-operative)  
in association with The National Union of  
Metal Workers of South Africa & TUC (UK)





# Bambatha's Children

## ... in Solidarity with the BTR Sarmcol Struggle



From the killing fields of Natal in South Africa comes a new play, *Bambatha's Children*. This is the third production of the SAWCO players following the highly successful UK tours of *The Long March* in 1987 and *The Sisters of the Long March* in 1988. Written and performed by black workers sacked by the British multinational BTR in the longest strike in South African history, *Bambatha's Children* will be touring Britain from October to December. It tells the story of three generations of struggle against colonialism and apartheid and sheds important light on the origins of the present violence.

### About the play

The desperate situation in Natal which is now spilling out all over South Africa underlines the vital anti-apartheid message of *Bambatha's Children*. The play begins in 1906 as the British colonial authorities in Natal impose a poll tax, to force black farmers to leave their land and seek wages working for white employers on farms and in mines. When Chief Bambatha leads a rebellion against the poll tax, the British and the white farmers slaughter thousands - trying to extinguish Zulu resistance. The story of *Bambatha's Children* is told using a mixture of mime, dance, satire and improvisation, reflecting the courage and optimism of a community which has never surrendered to the forces of apartheid.

The 'praise poet' of Bambatha mysteriously exists throughout the generations, always finding himself in the midst of people's resistance, and stating that his bones will not rest until the Zondi people, *Bambatha's Children*, are free.

The scenes tell the story up to 1985, and the point at which the *Long March* began, when BTR sacked workers at their Sarmcol plant for seeking recognition of their union, then called the Metal and Allied Workers Union. Since then, the strikers have suffered attacks by Inkatha vigilantes and a number, including one of the Sisters of the Long March, have been killed. The play, and their continuing resistance is a testimony to their courage and a reclaiming of their history.

### The Natal violence and BTR

If the strikers are *Bambatha's Children*, BTR has inherited the mantle of Cecil Rhodes and other pioneers of British intervention in South Africa. BTR's refusal to negotiate union recognition and its decision to sack all 970 black workers in May 1985 contributed directly to the initial outbreak of violence in the Pietermaritzburg area, which has escalated into a tragic civil war. The police have consistently sided with Inkatha, Chief Buthelezi's tribal organisation which provided the scab labour for the BTR factory.

The company has since continued its aggressive management policies by: recognising the Inkatha-backed union, UWUSA; ignoring pleas from the all-white Howick municipality to sit down with NUMSA to resolve the issue; refusing to meet even the minimum wage agreed by other South African tyre and rubber companies; and blocking the repeal of the notorious Labour Relations Act.

Apartheid may be on its last legs but the generations whose story is told in *Bambatha's Children* have fought and are still fighting against the inequalities of apartheid and the rampaging greed of the multinationals such as BTR.

*Bambatha's Children* deserve all the help we can give. If you would like to get involved with this campaign, please contact the address below.

Issued by: BTR Workers Support Network/SAWCO. UK address: P O Box 328, Cambridge CB1 2RQ