

HEALTH WORKER VICTIMISED

Mr Pravin Gordhan a qualified pharmacist, working at King Edward VIII Hospital in Durban, was detained on November 27 1981

Mr Gordhan, who is also an executive member of the Natal Indian Congress, was kept in solitary confinement until his release on May 7 this year. On his release he was served with a two year banning order and house arrest.

While in detention Mr Gordhan lost his job as a pharmacist, but was told that in all likelihood he would get his job back upon his release. He therefore applied to resume his position on the hospital staff on his release.

On July 7 1982, Mr Gordhan received a letter from the Natal Provincial Administration (NPA) saying there was no suitable post at the hospital to which he could be appointed. The Director of Hospital Services was quoted in the Daily News as saying Mr Gordhan was not considered a sufficiently "productive unit". The Chief Pharmacist at the hospital had alleged that a considerable amount of Mr Gordhan's time at work had been spent on "political activity". The provincial authorities have denied that Mr Gordhan's firing has had anything to do with his recent detention, and claim that the decision was taken on purely professional grounds.

Mr Gordhan, in his eight years at King Edward Hospital, had never been criticised for the way in which he had done his work. The hospital Superintendant, however, has said that the hospital was not obliged to employ people if it did not think them suitable.

The provincial authorities have also claimed that there "is no suitable post" to which he can be appointed despite the fact that a number of posts for pharmacists at Durban's provincial hospitals have recently been advertised.

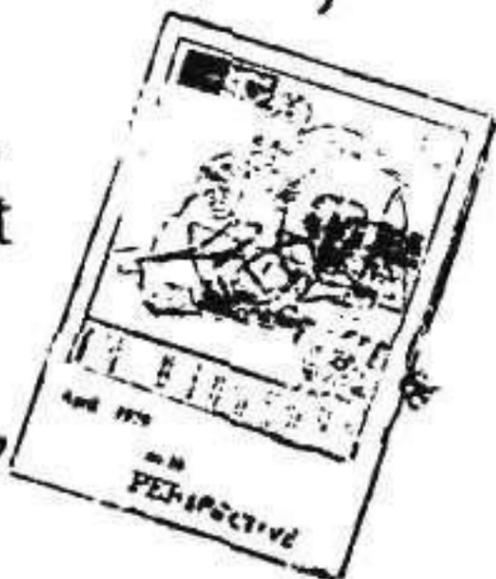
Mr Gordhan has been offered jobs at private pharmacies outside the Durban magisterial district. He has made applications to the authorities for a modification of his banning order to be made to enable him to take up employment. This too has been refused.

Mr Gordhan has been detained, kept in solitary confinement for over five months, banned, house-arrested and now also denied the right to earn a living. Critical Health condemns this act, as well as all other acts of the authorities, against those progressives struggling for a democratic South Africa.

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WOMEN AND HEALTH

The next issue of Critical Health will focus on "Women and Health". The issue will contain articles on women as health workers, women as consumers of health care, women workers and health, and the particular problems of South African women.

We would welcome any suggestions as to what should be included in the issue, and would value any articles or letters submitted for publication.

Write to Critical Health, POBox 2313, Johannesburg, 2000.