

# AN INDEPTH LOOK INTO WHAT MAKES

## SELFLESS COMMUNITY SUPPORT SHOWS UNITY

THE WESTERN Province General Workers Union believes that the hardline attitude of the bosses during the meat strike helped unite the workers and the community.

A statement by the Union to GRASS-ROOTS says:

You will have learnt of the decision of the meat workers to call off the 12 week long strike. Although the workers have been forced to retreat for now, they have given a very clear message to the bosses.

The meat workers — like the rest of the op-

pressed community of South Africa — have, by their courage and determination shown the bosses that they are no longer willing to accept the old system and that they are willing to fight for their basic rights.

The workers have

been forced to retreat temporarily. Many mistakes were made and many lessons will be learnt. But, most important, the people of Cape Town have shown the bosses and the state that the workers struggle and the struggle of all the oppressed people

are one and that henceforth they will fight together shoulder to shoulder. The bosses may have forced the workers to retreat now, but their 'victory' will be at great loss to themselves and the state because by their actions they have helped unite

the workers and the community. You, the people of Cape Town have shown the unity by the selfless support that you have given to the meat workers. On the basis of this unity the struggle will continue and go forward.



BEFORE discussing the meat boycott we should look at the different sorts of boycotts. People can use a boycott to protest against something which they can't change directly. This is a symbolic boycott. Or people can use a boycott to influence a situation directly and win certain demands. This is a pressure boycott.

There are two kinds of pressure boycott. In a direct boycott, like the bus boycott, people are boycotting for something which affects them directly — the lowering of bus fares. In a support boycott, like the meat boycott, people are boycotting to support the demands of one section of the community. In this case the community is showing its solidarity with the striking meat workers.

The meat boycott is a pressure boycott, not a symbolic boycott. It is meant to force the meat bosses to meet the strikers' demands, by stopping them from selling their red meat.

This was because the butchers had seemed to be taking the lead in the boycott. The community went on trying to keep the boycott going, but at this stage they couldn't persuade all the butchers to stop selling red meat. This made it very difficult for the butchers who supported the boycott to carry on without losing all their business.

### DIFFICULT

It seems that if the community had been leading the boycott right from the start, they could have made it very difficult for any of the butchers to start selling red meat before the end of the boycott.

It was also a hard struggle for the community to keep up the meat boycott. There was a ban on meetings soon after the boycott started. This made it more difficult to spread awareness of the meat strike in the community and to keep people informed about the effects of the boycott.

Also, unlike the successful

boycott last year of Fattis and Monis products, this time people were being asked to boycott not only one brand, but all brands of red meat. And red meat is a very important staple food for people who cannot afford many other sorts of protein.

### SACRIFICE

So this boycott needed a big sacrifice and commitment from the community.

An important part of any boycott is to make sure that individuals do not spoil things by not pulling their weight with the rest of the boycotters. The best way to do this is to keep people informed all the time and to make them understand why it is important to keep on with the boycott. In this case it seems to have been hard for the community and the strikers to watch very closely over individual consumers and butchers who did not stick to the boycott.

When the meat boycott was suspended in the middle of July,

## State helps bosses to crush strike

there was a lot of confusion in the community about what was happening in the meat strike and the boycott. Especially since by this time all butchers had gone back to selling red meat. Also, some people were asking why they should make such big sacrifices when they could not see any results and when they could see no chance of the meat bosses giving in to the pressure in the future.

### SUSPENDED

So it was not realistic to call for the boycott to be suspended instead of going on with it or stopping it completely, because it is hard to start the boycott again properly.

Also, for the first time since the beginning of the meat strike, the way the boycott was going seemed to be out of step with the way the strike was going. The community was being asked to suspend the boycott for two weeks to give the meat bosses a chance to negotiate, at a time when the bosses showed no sign

of being prepared to negotiate. At this stage it was clear that the bosses were taking their orders from the State, and ignoring the strikers and the community.

### OBSTACLE

The main obstacle to the success of the boycott was not in the community. In spite of all the problems, community support has been very strong, especially in the first months of the strike.

If the strike had been a conflict just between workers and their bosses with the community behind the workers, the boycott would certainly have had an important effect. But the State was also involved. The State stopped the bosses from giving in to the pressure caused directly by the strike (the loss of production) or to the pressure caused by the boycott (the loss of money from selling red meat). This meant that the force which the strikers and the community supporting them had to face was much stronger than usual in a strike.

# SPORT PART OF EDUCATION STRUGGLE

THE schools' boycott in Cape Town and in other parts of the country have had some interesting side-effects.

In Cape Town schools' sport has come to a standstill.

Gone were the days when high schools like Trafalgar, Harold Cressy, Belgravia, Bellville South and all the other Cape schools

clashed on the sportsfields. They forgot about their rivalry on the sportsfields as they declared their solidarity and joined the boycott.

Certain teachers also forgot about their duties as referees and they formed the Teachers' Action Committee.

But former students still remembered with fondness their midweek games, soccer,

rugby, netball, etc. against other schools.

Even the gulls at Turfhall Park missed the enthusiastic students, who in the past had left some food behind for them to eat. They now had the freedom of the park, but less food.

Grassroots spoke to some scholars to discover their opinion about the importance of sport in their

struggle.

Most of them endorsed the principle that you can't play normal sport in abnormal society.

They also felt that their struggle for better educational facilities was also a struggle for better sporting facilities. This meant the improvement of existing facilities . . . and that future schools should have

equal sporting facilities.

These young people, who seem to have matured overnight, justifiably pointed out that white schools, with their better educational and sporting facilities, were well-equipped to produce better educated matriculants and sportsmen.

So the boycott also had to pave the way for sports-

men to become the equals of their white counterparts.

They, therefore, felt that the temporary disappearance of schools' sport should also be seen as part of their struggle for equal education.

People who thought that school sport would be resumed, now that the Committee of 81 has called off the boycott, will have to wait until next year to see the scholars on the sports fields again, because it would be impossible to play all the various winter sport matches before the end of the year.

One should also realise that SACOS president Hassan Howa was right when he said "The teachers have a lot of leeway to make up, therefore, it is understandable that we will have no schools' sport this year."

So we will have to wait until next summer before we can see places like Athlone Stadium filled with excited students, who will be urging their athletes on.

## Spring follow-up to awareness programme

A SPRING SCHOOL similar to the successful Winter School held during the June school holidays is being planned in Mitchell's Plain for September.

The Winter School was held in the local Anglican Church Hall in Mitchell's Plain. It was initiated by Inter-Youth, an association of various youth clubs in the area

It was felt that the awareness programmes held at schools had heightened the socio-political interest of some students and had introduced others to unfamiliar concepts and ideologies which could only be dealt with in a very superficial manner due to the conditions existing at schools.

The time was ripe for

a more in-depth study of the economic and political dynamics of South Africa.

### PLANNING

A great deal of planning went into the preparation of the talks relating to the topics, specifically bearing in mind:

- The knowledge of the participants — i.e.

what they knew.

- Their understanding and perception of words, concepts.
- Their mental skills and academic abilities.
- Their expectations.

The purpose of the Winter School was to:

- Be informative.
- Provide opportunities for discussion.
- Allow delegates to re-

reflect on past events in our history.

- Lay the groundwork and provide the basic skills required for constructive participation in various areas of involvement such as schools and civic associations.

A talk on GRASS-ROOTS featured in the programme.