

For Music Action – Call the “K Team”

They came, they saw and they sang. You may not have heard of them but they are the latest music sensation in the labour movement – the Kelloggs Choir – known affectionately as the “K Team”. Originally formed in early 1983 by Agrippa Xaba and his 3 brothers, the group declined, but was recently revived in January this year. All the 11 members hail from rural Natal near the village of Kwaceza and have developed the distinctive traditional music style of “Scathamiya” and includes a repertoire of song and dance. All the items are composed and choreographed by Agrippa. The majority of the members are former Kelloggs employees but are now unemployed. All reside in a Kwa Thema hostel in Springs and regularly get together to compose songs and rehearse.

Songs which have been very popular deal with Chris Dlamini's detention, the SASOL dismissals, the death of Andries Raditsela and the importance of a trade union. Their first smash hit was a praise song to FOSATU. The chorus line goes:

FOSATU is a federation which represents the people.

FOSATU is an organisation the workers must belong to.

David Mashele, manager of the K Team, in an exclusive interview, explained that they only sang in Zulu mainly because of the origins of the group:

Our songs are basically of struggle, or as we call it “Soyibanda Insimbi Ishisu” which means we will go on even if it is tough. We'll grasp the iron even if it is hot.

Although the choir desires self sufficiency it is extremely difficult because 8 of them are unemployed. Mashele says there is a danger that they would disband because of financial pressures and because workers need jobs. The K Team received a R900 travel sponsorship from Kelloggs management and have sung at such big worker occasions as the SASOL May Day meeting and the Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union's annual general meeting.

Workers' choirs have added vitality and cultural impetus to the workers' movements. Don't miss the K Team. They will be performing live, together with other choirs and cultural groups at the FOSATU education workshop.