

Cape Town Trade Union Library Opens

A new service for the trade union movement has started in Cape Town. It has been set up by a group of trade unions which have pooled their resources to provide a central reference service for themselves, and a reading room for all trade union members. Although the collection of books, pamphlets and journals is still small, the Cape Town Trade Union Library is now open for use on Saturdays between 10.00am and 2.00pm. The hours will be extended soon.

Because books (especially essential reference works) are so expensive; because workers live in overcrowded housing conditions which make reading very difficult; because many of the books that workers and trade unionists want to read are not readily available even when they are affordable; because there are hardly any public reading rooms: these are the reasons for the establishment of the Trade Union Library.

The trade unions who have started the Library wanted to overcome these problems because they believe that *workers' education* in the broadest sense is vital to the growth and development of the trade union movement. The Library will help the unions themselves to improve their collective bargaining; it will help shop stewards and union committees to learn more about trade unionism, its aims, roots, methods; and it will draw the ordinary union members more actively into the unions, and equip them with a sounder understanding of the workers' position in society.

The Library is not merely a collection of books. It will become an active resource centre and a spur to workers' education. Trade unionists who wish to join the Library will be asked to join the *Readers' Club* which will have its own committee. It is hoped that the Readers's Club will become an active body in its own right, participating in the affairs of the Library and organising programmes of its own.

The Library already has a good deal of material useful to trade union officials and shop stewards in particular. There is a complete, up-to-date set of all industrial council agreements and wage determinations current in the Western Cape; trade union directories; material on shop steward training; industrial health matters; labour history etc. Most of the material has been donated or obtained at reduced prices. The Library is under-financed.

The Cape Town Trade Union Library is a wholly trade union organisa-

tion, whose members are the Bakery Employees' Industrial Union, the Brewery Employees' Union, the Domestic Workers' Association, the Jewellers' and Goldsmiths' Union and the Liquor and Catering Trades Employees' Union. Membership of the Library is open to all trade unions which subscribe to the Library's aims and objects. Membership of the Readers' Club is open to *all* trade union members, even if the trade union concerned is not a member of the Library. Anyone who is not a trade union member may apply to join the Readers' Club as an associate member. Unemployed workers, pensioners, students, for example are welcome as associate members. A small membership fee is payable by members of the Readers' Club.

The library is situated at 108C Malta House, Malta Road, Salt River. It is only 5 minutes from Salt River station, which connects with every railway station in metropolitan Cape Town. The postal address is P.O. Box 376, Salt River, 7925. Anyone in other centres wishing to find out more about workers' libraries should write to the Secretary at that address.

All trade unionists in Cape Town will be welcome to visit the Library and to join the Readers' Club.

(Gordon Young, Cape Town, May 1983)