



In the Welkom mineworkers play, Skop the team boss who rules his team with an iron fist is forced to seek the help of the personnel officer who drinks on the job and takes bribes. The play was performed by worker actors during NUM's Kinross commemorations in Welkom on October 1.

Mineworker play about a team boss and a sad young migrant

MINEWORKERS in Welkom are also actors. They have produced a popular play.

It is the story of a young man living in the rural areas. He tells his wife that he plans to go and work on the mines to earn money. She is very worried for him, but he leaves her and goes.

At the mine the young man meets Skop, the team boss. He is a short strong man with a big stomach, who rules his team with an iron fist.

The play also introduces the black personal mine officer on the mine who drinks and take bribes.

Bossy miner

There is also a white miner who is bossy and hard-faced. He speaks only to give orders.

He spends his time underground whistling, reading the newspaper and eating lunch

while the mineworkers dig out the gold.

Some of the workers reject Skop's iron rule. But he is in the middle between them and the demands of the white miner.

The white miner demands Skop do more blasting so as to increase production.

The white miner says his wife is complaining because he has not brought home a production bonus.

Blasting accident

It is easy for the white miner to tell others to do things, because he seldom goes to where the work and blasting is. Of course there is an accident.

The young man from the rural areas has his legs crushed by falling rock. When he goes home, his wife says he is no use because he can no longer earn money.

She leaves him. Angry and without hope, the young man commits suicide by sticking a

knife in his heart.

The play was performed at Welkom's Kinross Day commemoration. The audience of twelve hundred workers laughed and commented as they watched the truth of their lives, the suffering, the struggles and the victories.

Forming cultural groups

The Welkom play was produced and performed by workers for workers. The actors were playing characters they understood. For example, Skop was played by a team boss and the role of the injured young man was acted by a branch chairman who had been dismissed for supporting the June stayaway.

NUM members in some regions are coming together to form cultural groups. Forward, comrades, with building our workers culture.

Acting out the struggle

A NEW book called *Organise and Act* describes how workers in Natal began to make plays.

They organised themselves around making and performing plays because they realised united action does not just mean political struggle and the fight for union issues alone.

The creative side of people must be encouraged because "cultural work is important in broadening and deepening understanding of working class politics and principles".

The book looks at the plays, the worker actors and the problems and triumphs of the Natal workers theatre movement from 1983 to 1987.

As the book says: "There is a long history of working class struggle in South Africa. But it is only over the last few years that workers have organised to fight their oppression on the cultural front."

"In their poems and plays and songs they put forward their own views about how they see the world and how they would like to change it. They tell stories of their exploitation, they talk about their history of struggle against oppression and about their organisations and their leaders."

"They have begun to take culture out of the hands of the establishment and create new forms that are meaningful to the democratic forces that are working for change."

The first chapter describes the history of *The Dunlop Play*. This play served as an inspiration not only to the workers of Natal but elsewhere in South Africa.

Another chapter deals with culture under the State of Emergency. Against the backdrop of



Scene from 'The Long March'



war in the townships worker actors turned to producing educational plays telling of township conditions.

Writing about the success of *The Long March*, the story of the struggles of the Sarmcol workers, the author says: "There are no recipes for making plays. There are certain techniques and exercises - and those can be learnt. The skills of making scenes and acting comes with a lot of practise."

"Co-operation and collectivity were the key-words during the creative process of *The Long March*. Everyone had the right to contribute and everyone's opinion was valid."

The book says that there are differences between plays for mobilisation and plays for education. Plays for mobilisation mobilise support for the workers and their particular struggles.

Educational plays often tell of worker problems and lives. They show how migrant labour and capitalism exploit workers, and warn of some of the danger rural workers face when coming to the towns.

The book "ORGANISE AND ACT" is by Astrid von Kotze, and it is published by Culture and Working Life Publications, University of Natal. NUM cultural groups can get copies from our union head office.

A history of the beer brewing war

THE sale and drinking of alcohol has been used by the government to control the people.

The story of the history of alcohol in South Africa is told in a new book *Brewers, Barrels and Boycotts*.

The mine bosses wanted workers to drink at first. If workers spent their money on drink they would stay and work on the mines for a longer time. But then the bosses thought workers drank too much.

In 1897, the bosses asked the

government to ban liquor for Africans on the Witwatersrand.

In the 1920's and 30s many thousands of people came to live in the cities.

Many women made a living by brewing beer. The police made war on the women brewing beer - but the women had many tricks to hide their beer.

The book is written by Paul la Hawse of the Wits History Workshop, and is published by Raven Press.



Enter the NUM cartoon and drawing competition. 'The Miners' is a woodcut by a black Namibian artist

COMPETITION

NUM News is running a cartoon and picture competition for workers who draw in their spare time. The subject is "DAILY LIFE ON THE MINES".

There are two categories: cartoons and drawing. Prizes will be books and drawing materials. Send your entries before the end of January to NUM News, PO Box 2424, Johannesburg 2000. Names and full addresses must be written on the back of entries.