

SASPU 

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OPENING THE DOORS OF LEARNING



Students struggle for democratic control

THE STAYAWAY

THE EDUCATION crisis that has gripped South Africa since the beginning of the year has sparked the most successful worker stayaway in years.

Every major industrial centre in the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging (PWV) complex ground to a halt as hundreds of thousands of workers responded to a call by 36 progressive organisations in the Transvaal for a two-day stay-at-home in solidarity with boycotting students and in support of their own demands.

Nearly a million school students have boycotted schools this year, demanding radical improvements in the education system. The government has ignored these demands.

The two-day work stoppage was an historic event. For the first time, it brought together the Federation of South African Trade Unions (Fosatu), the United Democratic Front, the Congress of South African Students (Cosas) and other organisations in common mass action.

The stayaway was called in support of certain demands:

- the democratic demands of the students must be met;
- the army and the police must be withdrawn from the townships;
- all rent increases must be scrapped;
- all community councillors must resign;
- all detainees and political prisoners must be released;
- all dismissed workers including the Simba workers must be reinstated;
- all bus fare increases must be halted;
- unfair general sales tax and other taxation must be withdrawn.

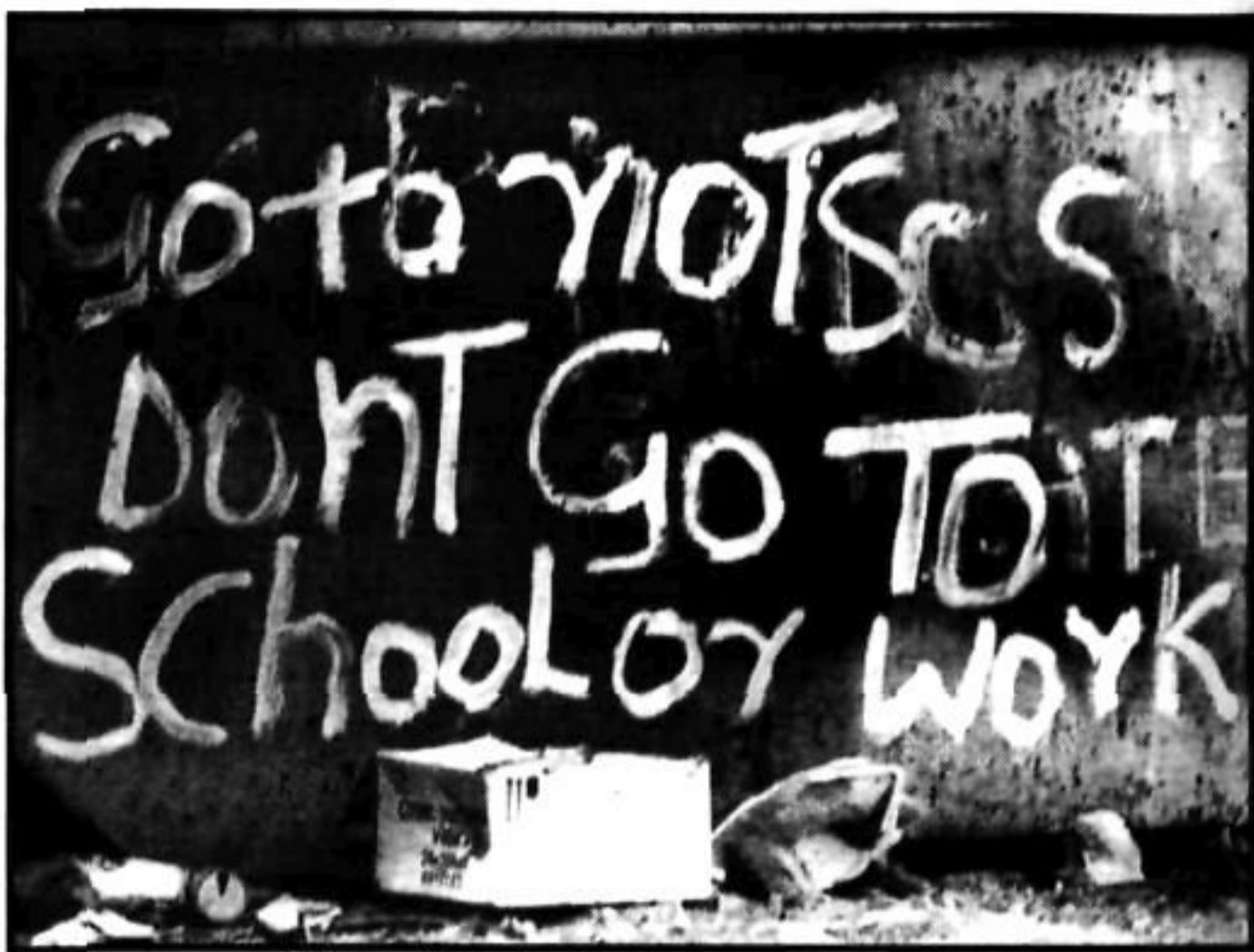
Explaining the stayaway call, a Transvaal Regional Stayaway Committee (TRSC) spokesperson said workers faced retrenchments, repression and low wages. Township residents faced increased rents, electricity charges and transport costs, and severe police and army repression.

Student demands for Student Representative Councils, better textbooks and qualified teachers, an end to sexual harassment and the scrapping of the age limit law had met with harsh police interference and government silence. The stayaway aimed to force out some answers.

The call for a stayaway took root when Cosas met representatives of progressive organisations in the Transvaal to discuss the education crisis and to look at how different sectors of the community could support each others struggles.

On October 17, 36 organisations representing the major part of the progressive movement in the Transvaal agreed to organise a stayaway in solidarity with students and their struggle, and in support of the demands of community organisations and unions.

Organisations held meetings to work out their demands. Students spoke to their



Writing on the wall as hundreds of thousands stay away

A 48 HOUR

Workers, students and residents brought South Africa's industrial heartland to a halt for two days. It inspired progressives, and gave bosses and government lots to think about

parents, urging them to stay at home. Over 400 000 pamphlets were distributed by Cosas, unions, youth groups, civics, womens and other organisations throughout the Transvaal.

The townships were also littered with hundreds of thousands of police pamphlets. Thousands were dropped into Soweto and Eldorado Park from helicopters. In Witbank police were handing them out at roadblocks.

Organisations set about getting in touch with hostel dwellers.

Some migrants were union members. But in some areas migrants were not unionised, and so youth and civic organisations went to the hostels to gather support. Backed up by pamphlets and daily discussions on the trains and buses, the unions, civics and youth groups succeeded in winning overwhelming migrant support for the stayaway.

The Federated Chamber of Industries reported poor attendance at work in most areas. The stayaway had 100 percent sup-



Many stayed away, but police went to work

port in Kempton Park factories, 90 percent in Springs, 90 percent in Wadeville, 60 percent in Industria, 98 percent in Boksburg, 75 percent in Benoni and 100 percent in Secunda.

In Katanda nearly everyone stayed at home. So did 90 percent of Vaal residents, 80 percent of East Rand people and 65 percent of Soweto residents. Putco said that on the second day buses from KwaThema only had 100 passengers. Normally they carry 35 000!

The DET said 300 000 schoolchildren in



6 500 workers at Sasol meet to hear their fate. Minutes later they were all fired, harsh punishment for backing students and fellow workers

STANDSTILL



Empty streets and barricades

the PWV area stayed out on the first day. 300 schools remained closed, and the call spread. About 6 000 students from 6 schools in Landverwacht, Standerton, joined the stayaway.

The success of the stayaway was clouded by death, detention and repression. Clashes with police claimed 23 lives. Violence was worst in Tembisa, where at least seven people died.

In Ratanda, the dead included a ten month-old baby. In Duduza a policeman was attacked and killed. In Pretoria 17 people including a three-year old child were treated for bullet wounds after clashes with police. Two Atteridgeville students, aged 13 and 16 were shot in the neck and died in hospital.

Hundreds of police in army vehicles moved into Tembisa. Even so, bottle stores and beerhalls were attacked. The homes of two councillors and some shops were set alight. Railway police were forced to guard trains entering the

township after one suburban train was set alight.

Police and army roadblocks were set up in and around all Vaal townships. In Tsakane, SADF units moved in with police to guard the clinic, post office and shops after two beerhalls were burnt down. In Katlehong, two youths were shot dead after an attack on a community councillors home.

Immediately after the stayaway, the security police went to work. People were picked up at their homes and taken away. Among those detained were: Thami Mali, TRSC chair; TRSC members Moses Mayekiso of the Metal and Allied Workers Union and Themba Nontlantane of the Municipal and General Workers' Union of SA (Mgwusa); Peter Makgopa, Victor Kgobe and Tshiki Mashimbye, all Cosas Transvaal Regional Executive members; Obed Bapela and Guy Berger, workers at Media and Resource Services (Mars); Chris Dlamini, Fosatu and SFAWU president; Bangaliswe Solo of the National Union of Textile Workers; and Oupa Monareng, TRSC member and president of Soyco; Jethro Dlalisa of the Transport and General Workers Union; John Campbell from the Silkscreen Training Project (STP), Kate Philip, Nusas president, and Piroshaw Camay, secretary general of the Council of Unions of South Africa.

Police also raided the offices of UDF, Fosatu, STP and MARS. They carried warrants saying they were investigating 'terrorism and subversion' in terms of the

Internal Security Act.

6 500 Sasol workers who supported the stayaway were fired after they refused a return-to-work ultimatum from management.

Police allegedly raided a shop stewards' meeting, and detained worker leaders. Management then fired the rest of the workforce.

Fosatu lashed Sasol for the dismissals: 'If this mass dismissal has been carried out on the instructions of the government, it is just this kind of senseless and insensitive provocation that gave rise to the stayaway.'

Sasol claimed production was not badly affected and a new workforce would be recruited immediately. But other estimates are that the stayaway cost Sasol R12 million.

What did the government and business have to say? Minister of Home Affairs and National Education, FW de Klerk, said: 'South Africa cannot afford to allow its labour and economic spheres to become a political battlefield'. Minister of Law and Order, Louis Le Grange, said the 1984 unrest was worse than in 1976 because 'more adults' were involved. Minister of Manpower, Pietie du Plessis said workers should unite 'to sweep away these troublemakers'.

The chief executive of a large East Rand transport company said the loss of two days production was equal to ten percent of one month's output. Bank economist Louis Goldenhuys said damage to the confidence of overseas and local investors caused by a massive stayaway was even more serious than loss of production.

But progressive organisations stood confidently behind their decision to back the stayaway.

THE YEAR OF THE BOYCOTT



YEAR OF STRUGGLE, TIME OF LEARNING

The rumblings of student anger were heard from the first days of school this year. The government ignored the warnings, sparking a bloody and bitter struggle for control of the schools.

The students, on boycott, have learnt many lessons . . .

STUDENT anger which began rumbling last year started again from the first days of this year's school term.

There were scattered protests and boycotts in 1983. Conditions in the schools were bad and getting worse. The school year ended and the students' demands were still met with stony silence from the education authorities. Exam results brought another shock.

More than half of all matric students failed, and the pass rate in other classes was very low. That was bad enough. But then hundreds of students trying to gain readmission to school were refused. They were told they were 'too old' or that classrooms were overcrowded. Some were just victimised.

Many students believed they had been failed unfairly. In Atteridgeville students found 19 unmarked exam scripts just lying in a desk, which confirmed their suspicions.

Complaints from students and demands to open the schools to all fell on deaf ears.

The Department of Education and Training (DET) was setting the scene for a year of conflict. Their blind eye on grievances and deaf ear on demands forced a mood of militancy on students. And they began gearing up to back their calls with further action.

Students demands were clear from the start:

- recognition of democratically elected Students' Representative Councils
 - scrapping of the prefect system and the age-limit laws
 - an end to excessive corporal punishment
 - an end to sexual harassment
- In 1983, Atteridgeville students boycot-

ted classes demanding recognition of SRC's they had already elected. From the first day of 1984 this campaign continued.

In Cradock, protests broke out when popular school teacher and head of the Cradock Residents Association, Matthew Goniwe was transferred out of the area by the DET. Students and residents joined to call for his reinstatement. The DET repeatedly refused to give in and so a boycott of classes began.

Classrooms in Port Elizabeth and Bloemfontein stood empty as students stood by those who had been refused readmission. With the support of parents and progressive organisations they won their demands and the students were readmitted.

Some short term victories were won, but in most areas students met with stubborn refusals. Educationalists warned that 1984 would turn into another 1976 if authorities didn't start listening.

Clear demands, deaf ears, big sticks

By March, students had had enough. They said the DET couldn't just remain silent on grievances and demands they had been putting forward for so many months.

Schools boycotts shook Atteridgeville, Cradock, Tembisa and Alexandra and from there spread like wild fire. Thousands of students were involved.

Students at universities, training colleges and technikons also downed pens to give muscle to their own demands.

Students tried again and again to state their case to principals and the DET. Every delegation, petition, request and demand met with arrogant refusal or indifference.

Weeks before the Vaal uprisings students had told their principals they wanted democratic SRC's, an end to prefects and corporal punishment, and the scrapping of the age-limit laws.

At one school the principal refused to even look at the demands.

SRC's were not for students, he said. At another, the principal kept students waiting for weeks before meeting them. Then he told them he would never give in to their demands.

At most schools the student voice was simply ignored. Did the government and the DET think students and their demands would just disappear?

Of course they did not disappear. Students were forced to conclude that demanding changes was getting them nowhere.

Students began a campaign to force the authorities to listen to them. They boycotted classes to show they were united and serious about their demands.

At first, entire schools stayed out for limited periods before going back to classes. Students came to the school grounds but left their books at home. They didn't need them because they were not planning to enter classes. Instead they met in the grounds, to discuss strategies and elect representatives who would take their demands to principals.

Even this show of strength had little effect on the education authorities. Some principals claimed they had no power to give students what they wanted. It is up to the DET, they said.

The government was not in a mood for listening. It was only interested in stopping the boycotts. Facing determined students with firm demands, the DET chose to bring in the police.

They poured into the townships in hippo's and landrovers. Peaceful student meetings in school grounds and marches were violently broken up as police invaded, baton charging students, and firing teargas, buck shot and bullets.

Hundreds of students were injured, arrested, detained, charged, and jailed. Some were killed.

The first victim was 15 year old Emma Sathekge, a student from DH Peta High School in Atteridgeville, who was killed when she was run over by a police landrover.

As police action increased, the confrontation escalated. From places like Atteridgeville and Cradock clashes between students and police spread across South Africa as students nationwide joined the boycotts.

Fierce police action was meant to crush the boycotts. But it made students even more militant and increased their determination.

More than 15 000 mourners at Emma Sathekge's funeral heard a Cosas leader say, 'despite assassination, divisions, harassment, detention and death in detention we will prove in action that Bantu Education is evil. We will revolt against it until it has been utterly scrapped, dumped on the junkheap of history and buried once and for all.'

'Agitators!' cries DET, but students back Cosas

Adding insult to injury, DET officials and the government stubbornly maintained the boycotts were caused by 'instigators'.

Cosas was singled out for special attack. This angered students as they saw themselves as part of Cosas and identified



Wattville turns tragedy into a statement of strength

with its aims.

Cosas represented and united students in different areas and gave national character and strength to their demands. How could it be blamed for the DET's refusal to grant SRC's, and its failure to listen to their grievances?

The DET wanted people to believe students' demands were not genuine but the creation of 'agitators', that students were not capable of taking the decision to boycott.

In fact demands and decisions on boycott action in different schools were drawn up democratically. Entire student bodies decided on demands and actions, and the almost total boycott was a clear indication of their unity and solidarity.

As one Cosas leader put it: 'The conditions we are forced to study under in our schools is the agitator. And the government and the DET's refusal to listen to our demands while

sending in police is the instigator.'

By the end of April the list of places affected by student struggles was getting very long.

On top of boycotts in Atteridgeville, Cradock, Graaf Reinet, Paarl, Bloemfontein and Alexandra came protests at the universities - Ngoye, Turfloop, Medunsa, Western Cape, Cape Town and Venda, and at colleges in Pietermaritzburg, Fort Beaufort and Soweto.

School students said again and again they would not return to classes until their demands were met. The government continued to use force, with heavy clashes breaking out between police and students.

Now students added another demand - release all detained students.

Meanwhile classes at Atteridgeville schools were suspended and students locked

out. At the beginning of May the DET threatened to close all boycotting schools indefinitely.

Puppet councils - 'we won't be fooled'

A few days before the threatened closure of schools, the then Minister of Education and Training, Barend du Plessis announced in parliament that Pupil's Representative Councils (PRC's) would be allowed in the schools.

'Pupil representatives' together with principals, teachers, and members of school committees, would form a Liason Committee. These structures, du Plessis claimed, would ensure 'improved communication' between students and the Minister.

Students were suspicious and said the DET was trying to undermine the demand for SRC's.

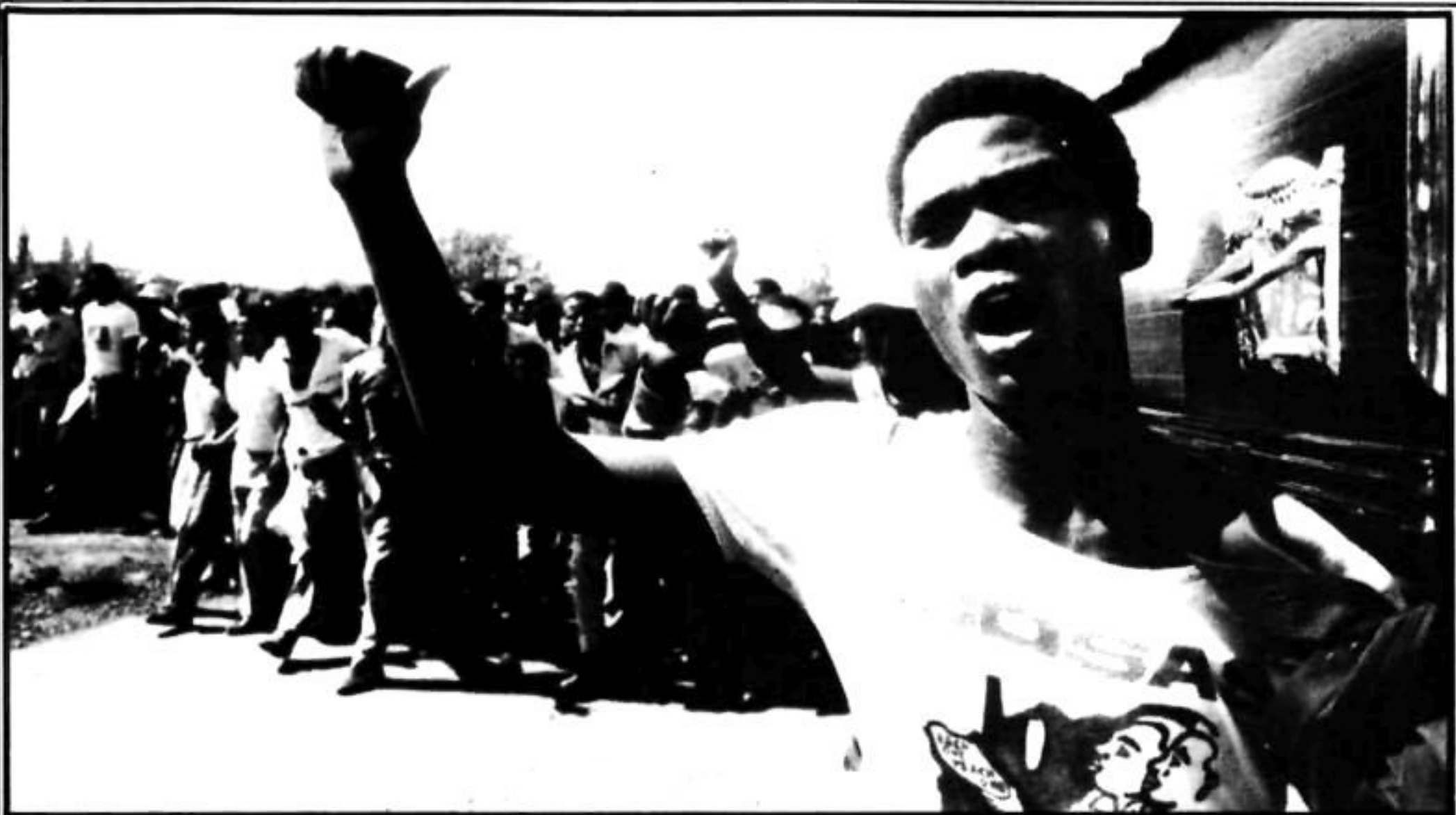
Why was the DET suddenly interested in 'improved communication' they asked. They had been 'communicating' their demands and boycotting classes for nearly four months. Atteridgeville students had elected their SRC's, but the DET had not only refused them recognition, but had sent in the police and threatened to close their schools. They rejected the PRC's as puppet bodies.

Students said they would not be fooled. Let the boycotts continue! Their demand was still recognition of their own democratically elected SRC's. These were the structures which would represent their interests best.

The DET's proposals for PRC's fell far short. But the government had been forced to recognise that the prefect system was unacceptable and the demand for SRC's enjoyed overwhelming support.

After offering this carrot the government's big stick was, as usual, not far away.

On May 15, after weeks of



Salute to Bongani Khumalo, Cosas' Soweto branch secretary who was chased and shot dead by police

intense clashes between police and students, all six Atteridgeville schools were closed. 6000 students joined another 5000 in Cradock who had suffered the same fate.

Solidarity nationwide

At the end of May Cosas and Azaso called a National Day of Protest and Solidarity with all schools, colleges and universities that were closed or on boycott.

It was a massive show of non-racial solidarity and unity. Students stayed away from lectures for the day, held mass meetings and demonstrations and pledged support and solidarity with fellow students and their demands.

Leaders from Azaso, Cosas and the National Union of South African Students (Nusas) staged a placard demonstration outside the DET offices in Pretoria. Placards said: 'DET stop detaining, shooting and killing our fellow students'; 'SRC's are our democratic right'; 'Free and equal democratic education now'; and 'No to age-limit laws, corporal punishment,



Mourners pay last respects to Hendrick who was shot in the head by Pretoria police

sexual harassment and corrupt teachers'.

As schools, universities and technicons closed for the mid-year break, thousands gathered at rallies all over the country to commemorate the June, 1976 uprisings and rededicate themselves to the struggle for non-racial democratic education.

Into the townships

In most schools the poor quality of teaching and the lack of textbooks appropriate to cer-

tain subjects were high on the list of grievances. In Queenstown and Welkom students had been without science teachers for months. Many teachers had little or no training while others were racist and insulting. Students nationally called for qualified teachers and a free supply of textbooks.

But students grievances didn't end at the school gates. They joined forces with other residents fed up and angry with township conditions.

In Tumahole near Parys, about 12 000 students and residents staged a peaceful march against increased General Sales Tax and rent, and against

community councillors.

Police armed with sjamboks and teargas moved in and sparked off violent clashes between residents and police.

Bonakele Ngalo was found dead in a police cell less than 24 hours after police took him and 50 others into custody.

The Tumahole protests were just the beginning. Township after township erupted in protest in the months that followed.

'More and more students are seeing their problems in the schools as part and parcel of problems resulting from the entire undemocratic system', said one student leader.

'When we leave school every day the problems continue. The trains and buses home are always late and overcrowded or the fares have gone up again.

'When we get home we are hungry. But there is no food because there are no jobs or wages are too low and GST and rents have gone up. Police are teargassing and attacking us at school and hunting people for passes outside school.

'At the same time the DET and the government, and the community councillors are acting against the people and

using the police to crush the demands of students and residents'.

As the boycotts spread throughout the Transvaal, the Eastern Cape and parts of the Orange Free State, the police grew more ruthless and the number of victims began to climb.

In Welkom 18 year old Papiki Loape was shot dead during student protests in support of their demands for SRC's, an end to excessive corporal punishment, qualified teachers and improved facilities.

At the Mabopane East Technikon in Soshanguve, near Pretoria, Hendrik Nkuna was shot dead when police invaded the campus.

In virtually every boycott the story was the same - boycotting students inside and outside school grounds were met by police firing teargas, buckshot and rubber bullets.

By July, at least 23 schools in Tembisa, Cradock, Daveyton, Alexandra and Atteridgeville had been closed or suspended, with more than 30 000 students on boycott.

Classrooms empty as constitution falls flat

As the campaign against the new constitution elections was reaching its high point Cosas and Azaso called for a fortnight of protest against the apartheid constitution.

Nearly one million students

from South Africa's schools, universities, technikons and training colleges went on boycott and joined the nationwide protest against apartheid elections.

Boycotts up to this point had involved mainly students from the African areas. Now students from coloured, Indian and white areas joined in the protests.

Some students boycotted on the voting days. Others stayed out for two weeks around the election period.

Students stood together with others in demonstrations at polling booths and were among the hundreds injured and arrested when police baton charged and fired rubber bullets and teargas.

By August 22, coloured education officials confirmed that 624 000 students were on boycott - about 80 per cent of all students at schools under its control. Indian education officials admitted that most students at Indian schools boycotted classes on voting day.

With world attention on South Africa and Botha's promises of reform, the government lashed out at anti-election and student activity.

Boycotts and clashes with police continued in Welkom and Tumahole.

On the East Rand boycotts spread from Tembisa to high schools in Katlehong, Daveyton, Thokoza, Wattville, Vosloorus, Duduza and later to KwaThema near Springs. At least four students were killed as police were sent in to crush the protest.

As battles moved out of the school grounds and onto the streets, parents began to rally to the support of students and their demands. Parents support for students had been quiet. But as the conflict intensified, parents and workers began to side actively with their children.

They too were under pressure. Township conditions grew more unbearable by the day and people's ability to survive was under attack. Prices of food, transport, clothing and other items went up and up. GST was a crippling 10 per cent, wages were low, and every day more breadwinners were losing their jobs.



From Cape Town to Mankweng, students have boycotted schools. Nearly a million students have come out this year.



Mourners at the funeral of Johannes Ngalo, a Parys resident who died in police custody

On top of this, community councils rejected by residents months before pushed up rents and service charges.

In the Vaal Triangle students joined thousands of residents in a stay-away in protest against rent increases. In the pattern of the school boycotts, peaceful protests met with force. The events which followed sent shock waves across the country and into the international community.

Simmering anger exploded and running battles between police and councillors on the one hand and residents erupted throughout the Vaal townships.

Defenceless residents were pitched against hippo's and police armed with guns, firing teargas, rubber bullets and live ammunition. The number of people killed was estimated at more than 100, the injured, detained and missing were too many to determine accurately.

It soon became clear that the conflict had developed into a civil war.

All students in the Vaal - 93000 of them - boycotted classes and threw their weight behind the protests.

Towards the end of September Port Elizabeth students joined rent protests and renewed class boycotts.

The people fight back

As police attacks intensified so did the counter attacks. Police vans, councillors houses and shops, schools were stoned and petrol bombed. Barricades were set up to stop police entering the townships.

In the East Rand townships of Daveyton, Katlehong, Thokoza, Tembisa, Vosloorus, Wattville, Kwathema, in Tumahole and Mamelodi, and a number of Eastern Cape towns, violent confrontations between police and students increased as more students joined the boycotts bringing the total to more than 200 000.

At Fort Hare, Turfloop and Transkei universities the situation was similar. As students put forward their demands, the authorities screamed for the police.

In Soweto, where there had been sporadic boycotts and running battles between police and students. Bongani Kumalo, secretary of Cosas' Soweto branch was allegedly repeatedly shot, hounded down and killed by police.

Mass funerals for victims took

place almost every weekend. Police intervened here too. On the East Rand residents defied a restriction placed on the funeral of six students killed during the boycotts.

Unarmed people clashed directly with heavily armed police. Students marched to police stations demanding the release of fellow students.

In every area students demanded the withdrawal of police and soldiers from the townships and the release of detained students.

Students and parents unite

Students and parents held meetings in some of the boycotting areas. A new and stronger unity was growing. Committees were set up in many areas including Port Elizabeth, Katlehong, Daveyton, Kwathema, Soweto and in support of boycotting students at Mabopane Technikon, Ngoye and Transkei universities.

Soon parents began to consolidate their support into

action. In October successful worker stayaways were staged in Katlehong and KwaThema, forerunners of the massive Transvaal stayaway in November.

Students and parents stood together not only in support of students demands for democratic education but also in their call for the resignation of community councillors and the dropping of rent increases.

At meetings in Wattville and Daveyton students resolved to bar councillors from attending victims' funerals, saying 'they are collaborators in the system that killed our fellow students'.

Councillors in the East Rand pleaded for help from government ministers to help. In Soweto and the Vaal they joined Cabinet Ministers le Grange and Viljoen in blaming 'instigators' and 'agitators' for the boycotts.

Meetings had been banned in Cradock for many months. In September the government slapped a blanket ban on meetings in most parts of the Transvaal, and in some areas in the Eastern Cape and Natal. A weekend ban was placed on meetings in Queenstown where students were boycotting classes.

And in a further attempt to

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undermine the growing support for students demands, all boycotting schools in the Vaal, East Rand, Soweto, Mamelodi and Soshanguve were closed down a week before the scheduled school holidays.

When schools reopened again the boycotts continued.

Soldiers in as DET tries to divide and confuse

Soweto schools came to a standstill as thousands of students flocked to Bongani Kumalo's funeral. A heavy police and SADF presence continued throughout the next week. They patrolled the streets in hippo's, fighting battles with youths.

In the Eastern Cape where boycotts were spreading and growing in strength, violent clashes escalated. SADF troops were stationed in Port Elizabeth and Grahamstown. Students at more than 50 schools in Port Elizabeth, Uitenhage, Grahamstown, Queenstown, Fort Beaufort, Graaf Reinet, Somerset East, Cradock, Oudtshoorn, Port Alfred and King Williamstown stayed out.

By early October student militancy showed no signs of subsiding.

The government stepped up its mixture of repression and reform in an attempt to defuse the situation.

Minister of Law and Order le Grange, speaking at the Nationalist Party Transvaal Congress, launched a fresh and widely publicised attack on the United Democratic Front

(UDF) and some of its affiliates including Cosas, saying they had 'revolutionary aims' and were responsible for 'unrest in black townships'.

Forty policemen had been injured, he said and police had already killed 65 people, wounded or injured 126 and arrested 793. And the SADF in the townships? They would play a greater role in supporting the police, he said.

Four days later Minister of Education and Training, Gerit Viljoen called a press conference to announce the new name 'communication structures' promised since the PRC idea was rejected in May.

He said DET had a constitution for SRC's in schools and announced that six Atteridgeville schools closed since May would be re-opened.

Matric students could write exams in November or in May/June 1985 and other students could write exams in January next year, he said.

Newspaper reporters hailed the move as the DET giving in to students demands, but school students and parents were unconvinced.

At meetings in the different boycotting areas the DET's constitution was rejected because it had been drawn up without consulting students.

The six Atteridgeville schools remain empty and were joined by primary schools in the township.

Viljoen went back to the 'agitator' theme: 'hostile organisations and individuals are doing their utmost to spoil the positive effects of the new communications structures', he complained.

But nearly a quarter of a million students, continued their boycott. Their demands had not been met.



Students protest during Emma Sathekge's funeral



Young students salute their assassinated leader, Bongani Khumalo. Minutes later, there were pitched battles between students and police hippos

STUDENTS DEMAND

THE DEMANDS BEHIND THE BOYCOTTS



Students say they had cause to boycott. They have inferior education, no SRC's, are victims of sexual harassment and an age limit law.

STUDENTS ARE more determined than ever before to win their fight for democratically-elected Student Representative Councils (SRC's).

Since 1976 this has been the single most popular demand among students. This year again they have left their classrooms in thousands to force the government to recognise their right to democratic SRC's.

Students want SRC's because they refuse to put up with the hated prefect system. Students want structures which will represent them and give them power in the schools.

But just like in 1976, the government has responded by trying to silence student protest with force. Classes have been suspended, schools shut down

The SRC battle of wills hots up

**THE STUDENTS DEMAND:
Democratically elected Students
Representative Councils**

and police and SADF troops called in. Thousands of students have been beaten up, teargassed, sjambokked, arrested, detained and even killed.

In the face of this onslaught students have stood firm. The call for SRC's has remained loud and clear. And so the gov-

ernment has brought in another weapon to try and break the students down.

It had to admit that students would never accept the prefect system. But if they were not going to give in to the students demands, they would have to offer something in their place. What the government has tried

to do is offer students 'concessions' which look like they are meeting student demands but which really do very little to upset the balance of power in the schools

That was the job minister of Education and Training Gerrit Viljoen had to do when he called a press conference to announce that the government had decided to offer students SRC's. He came prepared with a ready-made constitution which would be introduced in all schools.

Leaders of the Congress of South African Students (Cosas) immediately rejected Viljoen's proposals. 'Students were not consulted', said a Cosas statement. 'Students were not party to this decision. Viljoen's constitution is not



SRC's not PRC's; SRC's formed and elected by students, not the DET - the students' demand is countrywide

representative and does not even begin to meet the democratic demands of students.'

'In addition, there is something wrong when this offer is made while Cosas leaders and students are in detention,' said the statement.

Cosas' response showed clearly that their long standing demand has been that students must be allowed to elect democratic SRC's, and must decide on how they should function, and what they should do.

Cosas' Eastern Cape Region condemned the DET's SRC scheme as 'an already made framework designed to be imposed upon students who were not party to that decision. It will not solve our problems.'

Viljoen should have looked carefully at the records of the man who had the job before him. Former Education Minister Barend Du Plessis tried to persuade students to accept Pupils Representative Councils. He announced his plan in parliament and backed by radio, TV and newspapers he tried to sell it as the answer to everybody's problems.

His offer was rejected immediately. The reasons given were the same: students cannot simply be handed down PRC's; they must be consulted; nothing short of student-run and controlled SRC's with full powers would be accepted.

The proposed PRC's were described as 'puppet bodies'.

Viljoen's SRC's are being called the same thing. Apart from the fact that they were drawn up without consultation, Cosas has also rejected them because they fall far short of students demands.

Cosas outlined these demands in a proposed draft constitution, which it drew up following discussions with students across the country.

It proposes the following aims for SRC's:

- to assist the staff to instill responsibility and dignity in the students;
- to make students active in all matters affecting them;
- to represent the student body wherever necessary;
- to promote students' development from a grassroots level.

Cosas' draft SRC constitution, unlike the DET's, emphasises the importance of a representative body which will concern itself with all students' grievances. Viljoen's SRC's which are supposed to come into being next January will be 'strictly educational bodies'. They would not be allowed to affiliate to organisations concerned with student problems (like Cosas), and would not be able to take up student grievances.

Cosas says the government SRC constitution puts strong emphasis on discipline, loyalty, respect, punctuality, morality and academic thoroughness, rather than looking deeper into students' problems.

Cosas says there is little difference between the present prefect system which students are protesting against and the new SRC structures proposed by the DET.

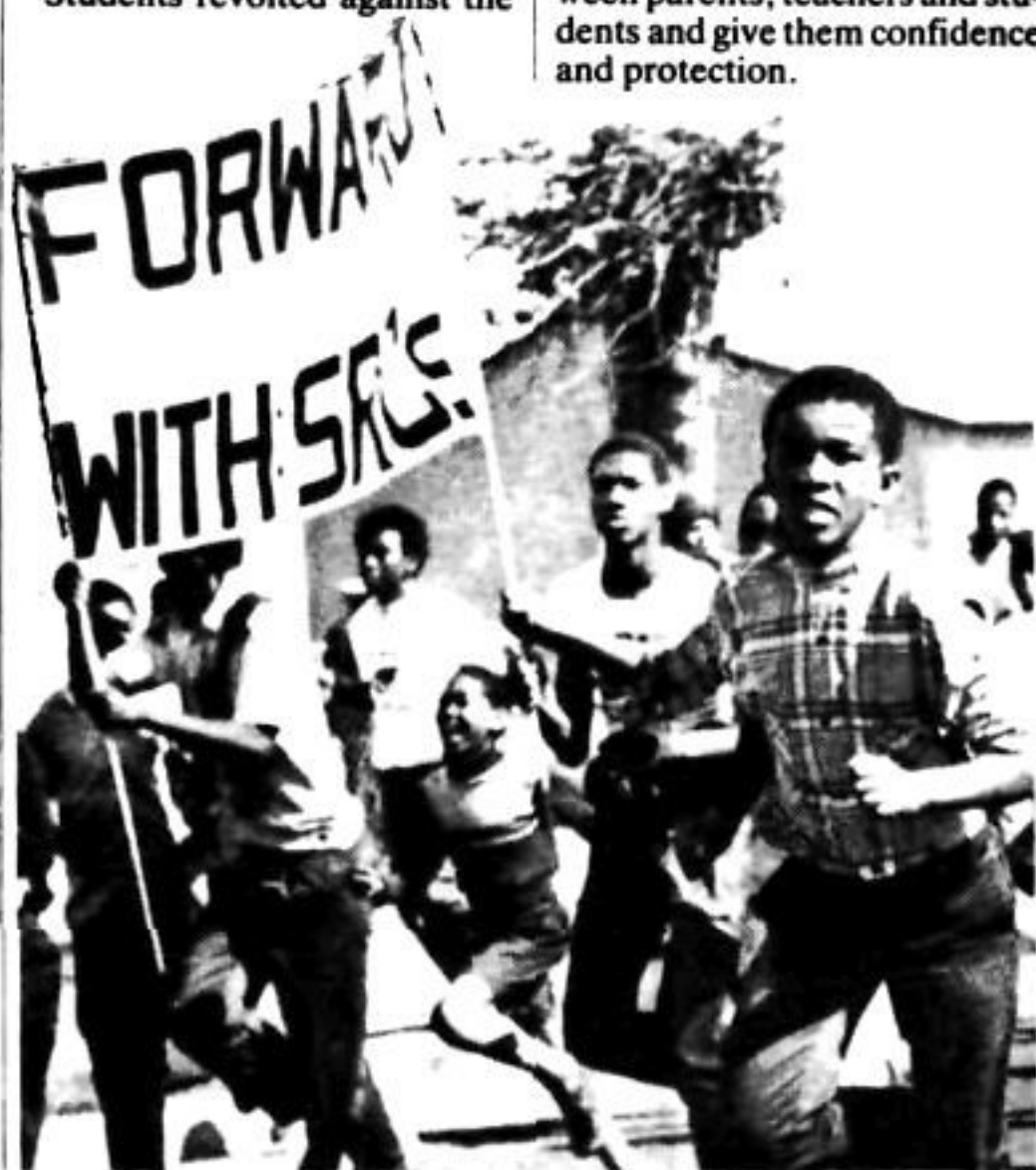
'Prefects are the eyes and ears of the staffroom,' students complain. 'And the new SRC's will be the same.' In fact the DET SRC constitution says that SRC members would have to assist in maintaining 'order and discipline' in the classrooms.

Students revolted against the

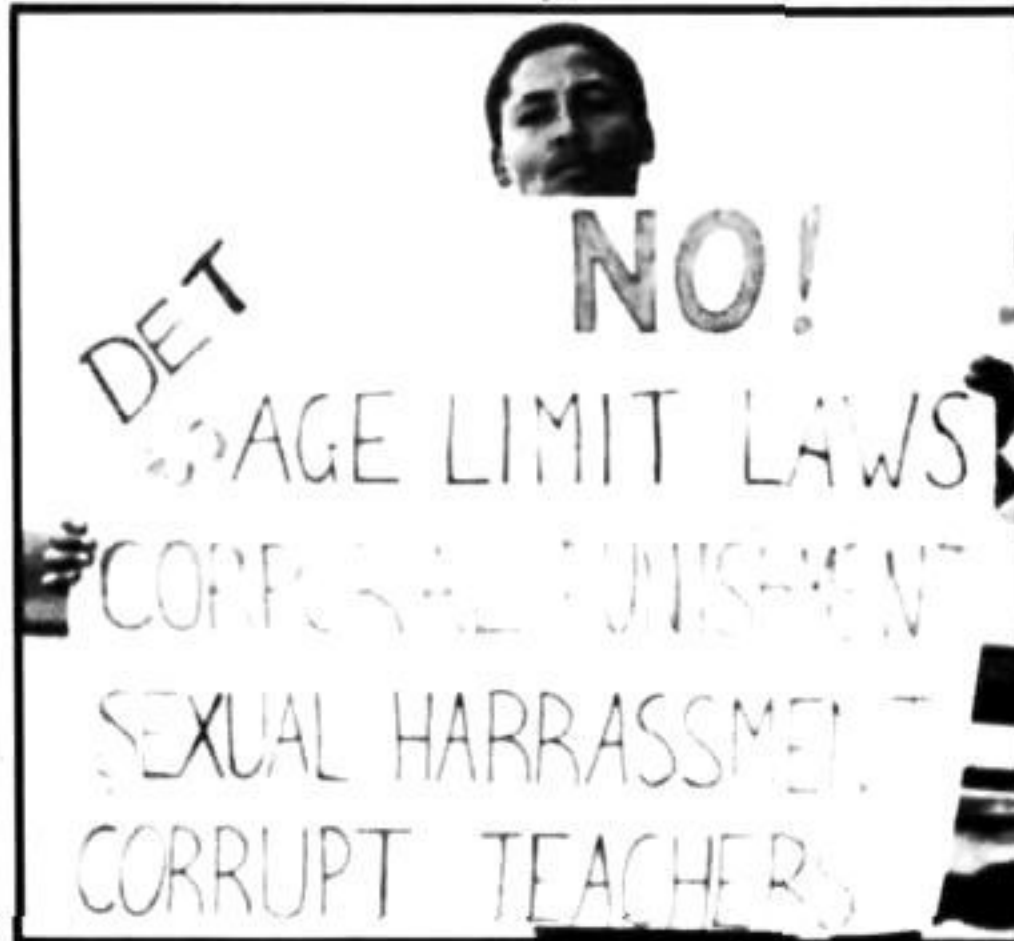
prefect system for just this reason. 'Youth are taught to instruct, command and be strict under the prefect system. There is no room for explanations, questions or criticisms. The new SRC won't change this,' said a student.

In contrast, the democratic SRC envisaged by Cosas would enable every student to 'participate fully in decision-making.'

Democratic SRC's would also aim to improve relations between parents, teachers and students and give them confidence and protection.



Never too old to learn, DET



When the DET ignored them, student leaders took their demands to DET offices

THE STUDENTS DEMAND: Scrap the age-limit laws

ranks with the unemployed. The effects on students have been quite terrible.

The age-limit law has hampered student activists from organising in schools for equal, compulsory education and better conditions because the authorities can now use another weapon to kick stu-

dents out of schools.

Students have been prevented from finding semi-skilled or skilled jobs in the labour force, and forced to accept unskilled work with very low pay - if they can find any work at all.

When students are kicked out of school in the bantustans, they are forced to migrate to

the urban areas to look for work. Since they do not have Section 10 rights, they are almost always arrested, and sent to work on prison farms.

The DET has helped to make it impossible for older students to attend school, since their applications to return to school are sent in January, and they only receive replies in September of that year. This means that an entire year is wasted, and students are forced to look for alternatives.

The age-limit is being applied in an increasingly devious way. Instead of refusing to admit student activists, which would spark off resistance by students, such activists are detained for six months at a time. When they are released, the principal refuses to re-admit them.

Many students are forced to break their studies to earn money for school fees and to support their families. Several years later they want to return to school.

They are turned away. Very few students are in a position to study at private educational institutions, and so the possibility of them completing their studies amounts to nothing.

If students get sick and are unable to write exams, they are refused readmission to school.

High failure rates and high unemployment may lead to many students being recruited into the ranks of the SADF, if they are refused an education and see no other options.

Cosas has called for the age limit regulations to be scrapped entirely. They say age should not be a criterion for education.

STUDENTS never accepted it when the DET said some students were too old to continue with their studies and would not be readmitted to school. Ever since the age limit laws were introduced in 1981 students have called for their abolition.

But in spite of this thousands of students have been forced out of schools, into the factories or onto the streets, just because the DET said they were too old for school.

The DET said it introduced the age limit to put pupils of the same age in the same class and to bring the DET in line with other education departments. Textbooks, syllabus and teaching methods were designed for specific age groups and large age differences in the same class retarded 'normal development of pupils' and could create 'serious disciplinary problems', said the DET.

At the beginning of 1983, the DET sent a directive to schools stating that pupils who were 21 years or older and had failed matric, and Junior Certificate pupils who were 18 years and older, would not be allowed back to school. These students should register at adult education centres.

Students over 20 were not allowed into standards 9 or 10, those over 18 were excluded from standards 6, 7 and 8, and those over 16 could not go to any primary school without the permission of the director.

These regulations prevented thousands of students from going back to school. They were meant to reduce numbers in the schools and to drive students into the streets to join

THE DEMAND to end corporal punishment has been echoed by students across South Africa and is a serious grievance in every school receiving apartheid education.

Students say they are no longer prepared to accept this physical violence against themselves at school. They say punishment should be aimed at correction not assault, and that democratic SRC's would help build and maintain discipline.

Even the Department of Education and Training (DET) has acknowledged that there is excessive use of corporal punishment in schools.

What do the DET regulations say?

● Students can be given corporal punishment in cases of 'grave neglect of work, lying, bullying, indecency, gross insubor-

'We will not be beaten!'

THE STUDENTS DEMAND: An end to excessive corporal punishment

dination, truancy or any other grave breach of discipline' but only after the principal has done a full investigation.

● Corporal punishment can only be given by the principal, or by a teacher in the principal's presence.

● Only boys may be hit, and only on the buttocks.

● Students may not be punished in front of their fellows.

● Not more than four lashes may be given to a student in one day.

● All punishment must be recorded in a special book

In spite of these regulations, students are being brutally punished for minor offences, often for things they cannot control: arriving late for school, not having school uniforms, failing to do homework, giving wrong answers in class and failing to

● To page 14

Stop sexual harassment and halt abuses of power



The fight is on to stop the sexual harassment of female students in the schools. 'Treat female students as human beings, not sex objects,' says Cosas

SEXUAL HARASSMENT has been high on the list of students' grievances.

It's related to power structures in the schools, say students. Teachers decide who gets punished, who will pass and who will fail, and this gives them power over students which they often abuse.

Male teachers use these positions of power and authority in the schools to coerce female students into having sex with them.

And the problem is not confined to the classrooms. The present society tends to regard women as sex objects. Because of this, women also face these problems at home and at work.

Students are demanding an end to sexual harassment and say that female students should be treated as human beings, not as sex objects.

Some teachers try to seduce female students by inviting them to their homes saying they will help them with their school work.

One student said she went to a teacher's house for extra lessons. Once she was there he tried to force her to cook and clean his house and to have sex with him.

Some teachers call female students to their offices and then feel their bodies. This happened to one student who said she felt humiliated and angry but powerless to do anything. Who could she complain to? It was her word against his. And she feared trouble if she did complain.

Sometimes harassment is quite obvious. In Bloemfontein, Form I students saw a teacher

taking a female student to the administration block. When they investigated, they found him trying to rape her.

Some teachers have been charged, convicted and sentenced for raping students. This happened to one teacher in Pafogang. But many cases never get as far as the courts.

Students who refuse to give in to the pressure are often victimized. They receive heavy punishments for no reason, and some are even failed or have to leave school because teachers make life unbearable for them.

Other students have had to leave school after teachers, some of whom were married, made them pregnant. These students say they seldom get help or financial support from their former teachers once they have given birth.

Male students are also affected by the sexual harassment of female students. One student complained that he was victimized by a teacher who was interested in his girlfriend. Another student, from Rathanda High School, reported that a teacher stopped coming to class altogether after a confrontation with a female student. As a result the entire class suffered.

The DET admits sexual harassment exists in the schools but claims that controlling the situation is beyond its power.

Students are expressing their solidarity with victims of sexual harassment and calling for the authorities to act and put an end to such abuses of power.

**THE STUDENTS DEMAND:
An end to sexual harassment**

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pay school fees. And, say students, they are seldom given a chance to defend themselves.

Most students who 'break' rules like these do so because of the appalling social conditions under which they live. Students can't afford school uniforms or school fees because their parents face low wages and unemployment. Poor housing conditions and lack of electricity are often the reasons why students cannot do their homework or keep up to date with their schoolwork.

The Health Workers' Association has reported many cases of students coming to clinics with bruised hands, thighs, legs and buttocks, and even head injuries.

DET regulations have been blatantly ignored. In most black schools girls are beaten and students are almost always caned in the classroom in front of other pupils.

Parents are reluctant to take action because they fear their children will be victimised. 'Teachers threaten to beat the living daylights out of our children and fail them if they dare to tell their parents of their punishment', said one parent.

Parents have called for the suspension of those teachers who bully defenceless children and are threatening legal action if nothing is done.

Cosas members have reported many examples of corporal punishment in their schools:

● In Bloemfontein, two girls were punished for sneezing in class. They were hit all over their bodies. The teacher said he hit them because he was furious.

● In the same school, a teacher beat students very badly when they refused to wash his car during school hours. When he discovered that the students had reported the incident to the principal, they were beaten again.

● Generally, boys get about 20 lashes on the buttocks, and girls about 12 or more.

SRC's at schools have done much to expose this violence against students, and are organising for the abolition of all corporal punishment. They do not believe discipline can be guaranteed by violence.

THE STUDENTS DEMAND: The withdrawal of police and SADF from schools and townships



On the run. Students have faced the might of the police in their struggle to win their demands



Hippo's and machine guns - a common sight in the townships



In Soweto, a riot policeman fires teargas into a crowd

No surrender as police let loose

CLOSE ON one million students boycotted classes this year demanding far-reaching changes in the education system.

After coming up against a wall of stony silence from the government and the education authorities, they went on boycott.

The government reacted in a way that everyone has come to expect but still finds shocking when it happens - widespread, thorough and sometimes brutal repression.

Violent confrontations, shootings, baton charges, tear-gassing, hippos in townships, detentions, whippings, rubber bullets, birdshot, harassment, and death have become almost daily features as the police and the South African Defence Force invade townships across the country to stop the student protests.

At least 30 students have lost their lives in clashes with police since the beginning of the year. Add in those killed in the recent Vaal uprising, and the total of student deaths soars to over 50.

Hundreds of students have been detained in police swoops.

Those killed include Thabo Sibeko (6), a Sub A pupil, allegedly shot by police in Wattville.

Patrick Phala, a Daveyton scholar, died after a confrontation between police and pupils. The police allegedly said Phala had hit his head on a brick during a baton charge. But doctors said there was a bullet in the back of his head.

A student at the Mabopane Technikon died after allegedly being chased, beaten and shot by police. An eyewitness claimed she saw police shoot the student Hendrik Nkuna in the head, and then tell him: 'Stay there and die'.

Police have invaded university campuses and schools. At Saulsville High School 36 students were injured, 20 seriously, when they jumped off a second floor balcony to escape police baton-charging inside their classrooms. Students alleged police attacked them in their second floor classes, trapping them. Their only escape, they claimed, was to jump.

In Daveyton, students were meeting in a school yard when police surrounded the



Overcrowded classrooms, no textbooks, under-trained teachers . . . the problems every African student faces

Lesson one: 'Organise, or fail'

The demand for free textbooks which are suitable for students needs and for qualified teachers goes back many years. During the 1976 Soweto uprisings and the 1980 schools boycotts these demands were high on the list of students' grievances.

But in 1984, students are still battling with the same problem. Textbooks are still expensive and unsuitable. Teachers are still unqualified.

The Department of Education and Training (DET) claims they are correcting the situation. They say they are providing free textbooks and upgrading teachers. The reality of the school situation, how-

THE STUDENTS DEMAND: Free textbooks and qualified teachers

ever, shows this is not the case.

The Minister of Education and Training, Gerrit Viljoen, estimated that during 1982/83 his department spent R8 714 000 supplying free stationery, textbooks and prescribed books to African pupils in primary and secondary schools.

This money may seem a lot but none of it was spent on supplying prescribed books, and

stationery was only given to primary school pupils who are subject to compulsory education.

Students say the DET does not supply enough textbooks. There are students who never receive books, while others are supplied with books only in the second or third term.

In 1978 the DET claimed that African pupils in Standards 8, 9

and 10 had all received the textbooks they required. But, in 1984, pupils still complain that between 50 and 100 students have to share a single textbook.

Students are not simply demanding free textbooks for everyone. They are also demanding that these books be appropriate. Students at schools in KwaThema, near Springs, discovered when they came to write their exams that the questions were not based on any of the books they had been supplied with.

Inappropriate textbooks are an important factor causing the high failure rate. Last year more than half of all the Afri-

● From Page 15

school. Ignoring a request by the principal to leave, the police attacked. They invaded the school, firing buckshot and beating students with sjamboks. Some students were chased into the Housecraft Centre into which five teargas cannisters were fired. Some students passed out. Others escaped from the school grounds, but were chased through the streets.

At the University of Western Cape, riot police chased stu-

dents through the campus, and trapped them in their dormitories. One student was allegedly shot in the testicles with a rubber bullet at point blank range.

In Atteridgeville, a few days before the DET closed six schools, police baton-charged and teargassed students in the school yard. When parents rushed to another Atteridgeville school after getting reports that their children were being beaten up by police, they too were baton-charged. When teachers tried

to intervene police allegedly turned upon them.

In nearby Mabopane, students were chased through the streets and yards by police. Police allegedly then searched houses and dragged students out and beat them.

Cosas leaders have come under heavy fire from police. Scores of Cosas leaders have been detained, and most of the Soweto branch executive is in detention.

The Administrative Secretary of Cosas, Bloemfontein student White Mohape, is suing

the Minister of Police for assault, kidnapping and attempted murder.

He alleges he was kidnapped by Security Policemen, beaten up, and shot at on the outskirts of Bloemfontein.

Peaceful marches have constantly been broken up by police. In Grahamstown, students marching from Nyaluza High School were attacked by police who used sjamboks, rubber bullets and landrovers to disperse them. A number of students were admitted to hospital in a critical condition after

STUDENTS DEMAND

can matriculants who wrote end-of-year exams failed. As one student put it, 'DET is gambling with our future'.

'How can you read a book which does not have sufficient information in it, and be expected to pass?' he asked.

EVERYONE knows there is a teaching crisis in South Africa's black schools. More than anyone else the students who suffer under this system know it.

But few can offer comprehensive solutions.

The Department of Education and Training (DET), the government department responsible for teachers, can't even offer partial answers. With all its educational experience, it has never been able to fill African schools with teachers skilled and qualified enough to do the job.

Educationalists say this crisis is caused by the low salaries paid to teachers and by the mass walkout of teachers after the 1976 student uprisings in protest against Bantu Education.

The salaries of African teachers are terribly low, despite an increase of 12 per cent in January this year. The gap between white and African teachers' pay remains huge. Which is why many potential African teachers prefer to take industrial jobs where they will earn higher salaries.

The situation has become so bad now that, even if very attractive salaries were offered, it would still be impossible to find enough black teachers, never mind well-qualified ones.

Dr Hartshorne, an ex-planner for the Department of Bantu Education and member of the



Sixty-nine out of every one hundred black teachers have not passed matric.

de Lange Commission of Enquiry into Education, admitted in September that 78 out of every 100 black teachers were not qualified to teach. Of these, 69 had not even passed matric.

The DET is aware of the situation, says their Liaison officer. The department has 'a

number of programmes' to upgrade teachers' qualifications, he says.

Why then at the beginning of 1982, did the DET start phasing out all post-Standard 8 and two-year teacher courses in colleges under its control?

What makes the situation

worse is the high teacher-pupil ratio. Last year there were 42,7 pupils per teacher. That is bad enough, but then many teachers work on a double-system (teaching two standards per day). And many schools have the 'platoon' system (two teachers instructing two classes in the same room at the same time).

In 1982 there were 1 375 African schools teaching Sub A and Sub B in double sessions, and 22 093 Sub A to Standard 8 pupils being taught by 509 teachers in the 'platoon' system.

In the same year a little-noticed scandal showed clearly how serious the shortage of qualified teachers was. White matric pupils were marking the exam scripts of black matric pupils.

It is not as if investigators have to dig very far for the truth. A student from a Rathanda school near Heidelberg told SASPU FOCUS: 'We found a matriculated student from that very school teaching students the next year.'

Another student said: 'We don't get decent textbooks, buildings and facilities. Next we find that even our teachers can't teach. What can we do? It is not surprising that we have such a high drop-out rate.'

The DET has now been promising for years to correct the 'teacher problem'. It has not advanced a step.

As a student said: 'It is not a 'teacher' problem. It is the DET and the government's problem. It is a problem with the education they are giving us, and their stubborn refusal to change the education system.'

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allegedly being knocked down by landrovers.

A Pretoria inquest court found that Emma Sathekge had been killed at her school gates after being knocked down by a police vehicle. The magistrate said the driver of the police car was 'negligent'.

Students have also faced the wrath of the courts. Many have been charged with 'public violence' following clashes with police. Others have been charged with 'intimidation'. A

14 year old Cosas member recently appeared in a Cradock court charged with public violence.

The bantustan governments have played their part in attacking student organisations. The Transkei government recently banned Cosas and Azaso, and detained a Cosas official. Four Cosas members were charged earlier this year under the Ciskei National Security Act. Organisers are constantly harassed in Bophutatswana, say Cosas officials.

When Bongani Kumalo, Soweto Branch Secretary allegedly killed by police, was buried, Cosas appealed to police not to interfere. Their request was not surprising. At nearly every funeral of students killed in clashes with police, there was a large police presence, and very often interference.

Police did not interfere with Kumalo's funeral, but placed heavy restrictions on it. It was not allowed to take place on the weekend when it was scheduled. Despite this, thousands attended.

Police presence at funerals, police action in schools, streets and homes, presented a danger and a challenge to the schools boycott.

The students' response? A fresh and unanimous demand from all students boycotting in protest against today's education system - all detained must be released unconditionally, all charges against students must be dropped, and the police and SADF must be withdrawn from the townships to stop the bloodbath continuing.



Azaso members at the launch of the Education Charter Campaign which will involve progressive organisations countrywide

Student charter will strengthen, unite and guide

The Education Charter will be the guiding beacon for creating a non-racial, democratic education system, say student leaders

authorities.

But students in the schools and universities are not just taking up immediate issues. They have also begun the long, painstaking task of putting together an education blueprint which would not only deal with immediate issues but would also put long-term demands on the agenda.

Azaso president Simphiwe Mgoduso explains: 'Maybe after five or ten years the short-term demand for SRC's will not be an issue, but the long-term demand for

community involvement in the running of education as part of the demand for a free and non-racial South Africa will remain.'

Students demands should prepare them for a free society 'where education would be used not for a status symbol, but to impart skills, knowledge and technique for the sole purpose of improving the lot of mankind, where intellectual life would be one with manual activity.' So says Border UDF president, Steve Tshwete.

In 1982, Azaso and Cosas

decided to spearhead a campaign which would collect together the education demands of all South Africa's people. This document would be called the Education Charter.

Now the Education Charter Campaign (ECC) is starting to pick up speed. What does the ECC hope to achieve? 'The Education Charter must steer the campaigns and struggles that lie ahead and be the guiding document in all our struggles around education issues,' says Mgoduso.

'Let's take SRC's which students have been demanding for years. The government is feeling the pinch because there is widespread support for this. That's why the DET is coming up with a so-called SRC constitution, using sophisticated rhetoric, trying to cool the situation down.'

'But this constitution drawn up by Pretoria is not based on the will of the people. With the Education Charter we will be able to measure every initiative from the state or other quarters against our demands.'

The Education Charter

In the schools and universities, where apartheid education is meant to teach black South Africans to accept the system and their place in keeping it going, hundreds of thousands of students have refused to fit in. From the beginning of 1984 to the present moment student protest has boiled up and down but never stopped.

From these and earlier struggles, demands which would bring about greater democracy in education have been shaped and popularised. In the schools students are calling for the scrapping of age-limit laws, an end to corporal punishment and sexual harassment, adequate textbooks and teachers, and above all allowing students to form the Students' Representative Councils (SRC's) they have been demanding for years on end.

Democratic student representation is a central demand on the university campuses, too. Students have also taken a united stand on unfair timetables, victimisation of students and repression by university and government

would also reflect the gains made by the student movement in the past. 'It will enshrine all the demands our brothers and sisters have died for,' says Mzukise Meyane, Cosas organiser for the Eastern Cape.

The campaign aims to bring together the educational demands of all South Africans and not just of students. 'Our parents finance our education directly. As members of the community and as oppressed and exploited people working in the factories, they have an interest in our education' says an Azaso spokesperson.

But the community would not just be interested in education as parents. Worker, youth and womens organisations would have different demands for education which would relate to their own experience.

'For example workers might demand free, compulsory education for their children, because most working class parents today have to pay for their children's education. Or youth organisations might demand that the army withdraws from interfering in schools by taking the youth on camps and outings.'

And so, hundreds of organisations are being asked to take part in the ECC and to add in their demands. 'The Education Charter must be a document which reflects the true feelings and demands of our people,' say the organisers.

The campaign places great importance on the way in which the demands are collected: 'The Education Charter must involve as many people as possible if it is to have any meaning. Any document drawn up by a handful of intellectuals cannot possibly be of value. It will not raise our people's consciousness and build their different organisations which is what the ECC sets out to do.'

The Education Charter should also grow out of the struggles being fought at the present time, in the schools, townships and factories, and should reflect them. 'People don't just sit and close their eyes for a few minutes and think what should they write down. Their demands are produced in the arena of what they are fighting for.'

The ECC has made a strong



Student leaders at ECC launch, representing Cosas, Nusas and Azaso. Kate Phillip, blacked out, is in detention

We, the peace-loving people of South Africa..

NOTING:

● ***that the separate and inferior system of education for the majority of the people of South Africa entrenches inferior and undemocratic ideas***

● ***that the unequal education which students continue to reject further deepens the present crisis***

● ***that the so-called reforms including the de Lange proposals and the White Paper are measures to ensure the continued survival of Apartheid education***

● ***that under this New Constitution Apartheid education will still be felt in our classrooms and the cultural life of our people will still be harmed***

BELIEVING:

● ***that education must be based on the needs and serve the interests of the people***

● ***that education should be accessible to all regardless of colour, creed, sex or age***

● ***that reforms will not bring about a lasting solution to our problems in education***

● ***that our students struggles arise out of real grievances***

● ***that education is not an issue affecting students alone but all sectors of our society***

● ***that there can never be meaningful change in education until there is meaningful change in society***

THEREFORE PLEDGE:

● ***to unite as workers, women, youth, students, professionals, sportspeople, and others and fight side by side***

● ***to interlink the struggles in education with the broader struggle for a united, free, democratic and non-racial South Africa***

● ***to engage ourselves actively in a campaign for an Education Charter that will embody the short-term, medium-term and long-term demands for a non-racial, free and compulsory education for all in a united and democratic South Africa based on the will of the people.***

Declaration of the Education Charter Campaign

start. Over 1 500 people converged on Grahamstown for the Eastern Cape launch of the campaign, travelling in buses, cars, vans and even hitch-hiking. The campaign has also been launched in the Transvaal and Natal at high-spirited rallies.

Education Charter committees have been set up on campuses and in schools.

There is still a long road ahead. The next step is to set up Regional Education Charter committees, consisting of representatives from a wide range of organisations. These committees will set out to bring in demands from every corner, from students, parents, teachers, worker, community and youth organisations.

Regional committees will then meet to put all the demands together in a document, which will then be put to the people of South Africa for final approval. Finally, a national conference will be held, sometime in 1985, where the Education Charter will be adopted.

On the relationship between the Education Charter and the Freedom Charter, organisers say: 'The ECC is trying to explore the educational demands set out in the Freedom Charter and to give them greater content. The doors of learning and culture shall be open to all that is still our demand. Now the question we must ask is what specific demands in the long and short term will help us to force those doors open.'

And they say the long-term demands of the Education Charter will not be met if those of the Freedom Charter are not. 'The present racist regime can never come to terms with democratic demands because the type of education structure is devised to buttress economic, political, cultural and social domination,' says Tshwete.

Struggles around education are seen as closely bound up with broader struggles. 'We can't have a free education system in an oppressive South Africa. The struggle around education is linked to the demand for a government based on popular will.'

THE SCHOOLS OF WAR



Students in the schools are fighting an undeclared war with the police and the government. The result - bitter lessons learnt on the power of strength.

SOCIETIES ARE about power - who has it and what they do to keep it.

Power is controversial. There's a contest between those who have it and exercise it, and those who don't have it and want it. Those who have it and use it to their advantage want to keep it. Those who don't have power have to fight to get it.

This contest over power plays itself out wherever people come into contact with each other. At school, at work, or at home, people relate not as equals, but as unequals - as people who have different amounts of power.

Some have economic power to wield; others enjoy a political advantage. Power may go hand in hand with class, age, gender, race or religion. But it's got nothing to do with justice or fairness.

Power goes to those strong enough to get it - and keep it. It is a harsh reality of our world that those that have it often don't deserve it. On the contrary, they misuse it.

Our own country bears this out. Political and economic power is held by a ruling class that used military might, laws and the ideology of racial superiority to establish its domination.

They seized the land and took possession of the natural resources, denied

Students are demanding changes in education.

Getting them has proved a costly task demanding sacrifice and organisation.

Workers, women, the youth and residents have their own demands. Winning them is difficult, but not impossible. It means the structures of power and control must be challenged and replaced

the indigenous people a say in government and subjected them to harsh political measures. All these controls restricted where people could live and work, and what they could do and say.

Dispossessed and subjugated, the people were forced into lives of wage-slavery, bound to employers whose dedication to profit drove them to extract the maximum amount of work for the minimum amount of cash.

The social and political power of the present ruling group came only after long and bitter struggle. To achieve it some of them organised themselves into secret societies like the Broederbond.

The Ossewa Brandwag

served as the military wing of the Afrikaner Nationalist movement and embarked on sabotage campaigns in order to destabilise and weaken the system. Their leaders plotted the take over of the education system, the church, the bureaucracy and the media.

At the same time, the ruling class has formed itself into huge international corporations and federations of employers. Just look at the large mining houses whose investments stretch through every sector of economic activity, here and overseas. Look at the Chamber of Mines which handles the recruitment of labour, conditions of employment, industrial relations and, if necessary, negotiations with workers.

Having established themselves the ruling class now have the problem of holding on to the power they have acquired through coercion, rather than through agreement. With such shaky foundations, their power is a high-risk investment that cannot last forever.

Teachers and pupils, employers and workers, men and women are all engaged in a constant battle over the frontiers of control. Some battles are minor skirmishes, others are major assaults. Each one nevertheless has some effect on ruling class domination, making it more or less effective.

Our ability to push back these frontiers of control and alter the balance of power is ultimately a question of organisational strength and strategy, of doing the right thing at the right time.

As students, workers or residents we face opponents who are far stronger than we are.

Control

Although we have the advantages of time, numbers and justice, the ruling classes have organised and equipped themselves to keep control. Their machinery is too powerful for us to challenge it as individuals. Only as a united group of students, workers and residents can we hope to be effective in opposition.

And only with organisation can we turn our numbers into a viable opposition - one which participates and acts. The trade unions have shown that without solid structures in the factory, (their unit of organisation), they would have no bargaining power in dealing with the bosses.

In recent years independent unions have been able to force employers to accept the right of workers to organise. More and more employers are agreeing to negotiate with the democratically elected representatives of the workers. They have signed agreements laying down procedures for handling grievances and they recognise that issues like wages and dismissals have to be negotiated.

Democratic structures through which workers can mandate their representatives, and to which those representatives are accountable, are essential if the factories are to

be the building blocks from which the union is built. They make it possible for members to take part in decision making and give them valuable experience in organisation and administration. Without these structures the workers would not be able to marshal themselves and organise strategically.

By organising, mobilising and politicising their constituency, students and workers contest and obstruct the exercise of power by the ruling class and its allies. The very existence of democratic organisation among students and workers means that the ruling class can no longer rule unopposed.

As opposition develops and deepens it has far-reaching effects on a wider range of power relations. At times it wins back areas of social life and brings them under peoples' control. A good example of this is the situation of dual power that exists in some of the schools.

Students have made it impossible for the teachers to teach Bantu education. They have forced them to teach in a way

that educates rather than indoctrinates, or they have taken over the courses themselves.

Where workers have been able to organise effectively in the factories they have ended the unilateral control of the bosses and forced them to negotiate wages and working conditions. Collective bargaining is a test of strength between the union and management, and so unions have developed a range of tactics designed to gain the maximum benefits for their members.

Work-to-rule

They use go-slows, work-to-rule, lightning strikes (where they lay down tools for a couple of hours but don't leave the factory), selective strikes in different parts of the plant, the full-scale withdrawal of labour, solidarity strikes and so on.

If no agreement is possible they may decide to apply for a Conciliation Board, and if that fails to resolve the conflict they may opt for mediation or arbitration. All of these tactics are designed to increase the bargaining power of the union in

negotiations.

Not every tactic is successful. Some strikes leave the union weaker than before. Factory structures may disintegrate as workers leave the factory and are dispersed all over the community.

Some of the members may get jobs elsewhere in factories that are not yet organised. Key union militants may find themselves blacklisted and unable to find jobs again. The strike may also stretch the union's limited resources to breaking point and disrupt the ongoing work of the organisation.

The union may also not be in a strong enough position to win all of its demands, and may have to accept a partial victory or a compromise. Politics is the art of the possible, and each dispute is part of the process of establishing democratic participation in production. The success or failure of any action is not measured in terms of who won or lost but in terms of one's strength and preparedness for the battles that lie ahead.

The same can be said for boycott as a tactic in the



schools and universities. Students are organised in the classroom, and as soon as they stay away they face the problem that their basic structures disintegrate. University groups lucky enough to have offices on campus may find themselves locked out and with nowhere to meet, no base from which to organise and coordinate action. Those at schools with no offices find it difficult to hold their supporters together once they are spread across the township.

Counter strategy

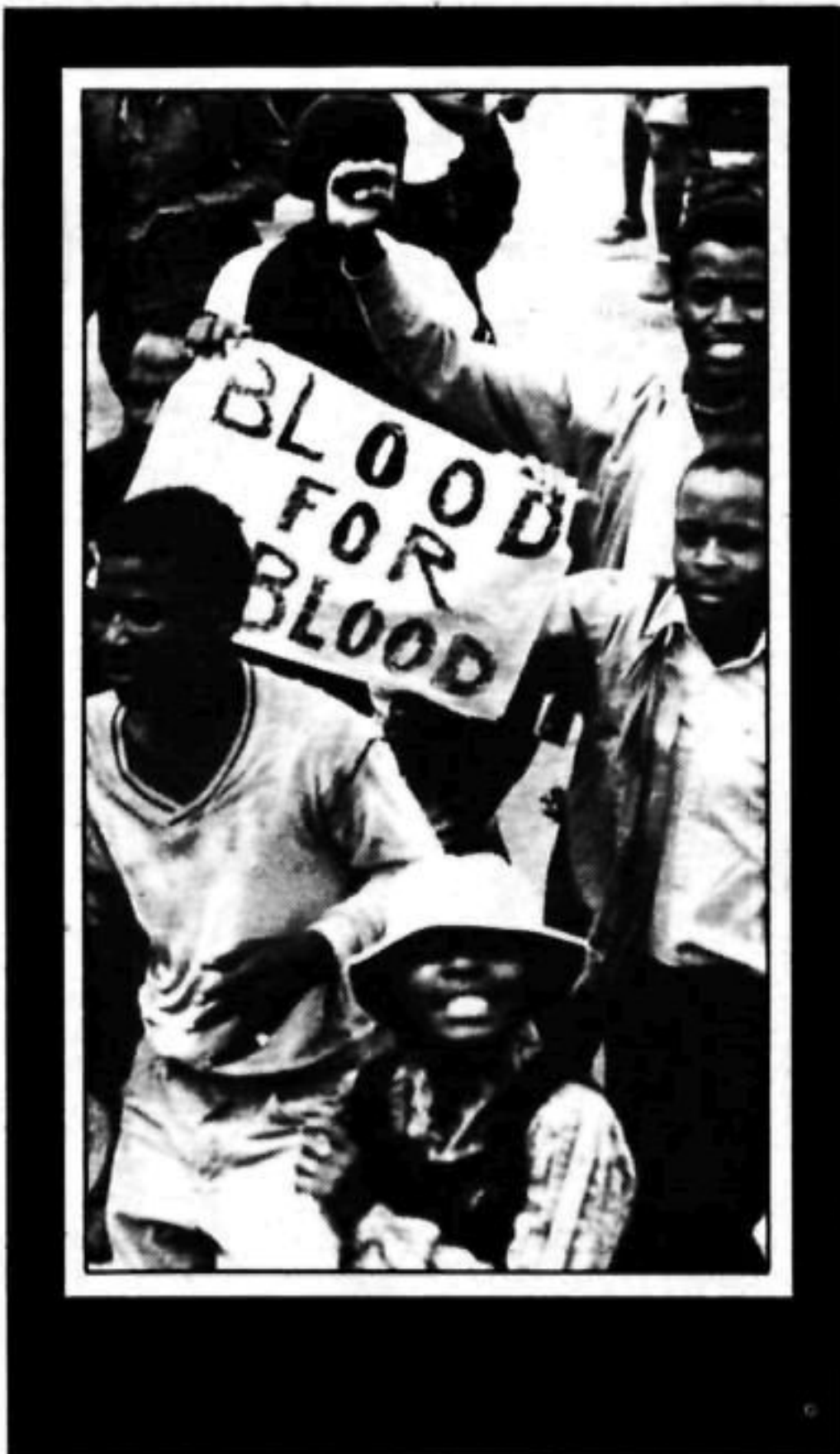
The lack of regular contact and tight structures makes it difficult to decide on strategy and to maintain clear direction. As the days turn into weeks, confusion may set in. The authorities use the press, radio and TV to good advantage, making counter offers designed to divide students and undermine unity. These problems of contact and coordination are likely to be made worse by detentions and harassment of key organisers.

Just as the unions sometimes find themselves unable to cope with the number of strikes, student organisers may find the boycotts spreading further and faster than their organisation. It is interesting to note that the German metal workers union, IG Metal, the largest trade union in the world with 2,6 million members used a system of selective strikes to support their demand for a 35 hour week.

By striking in the companies that manufactured components for the automobile manufacturers they were able to cut off the supplies of components and so shut down the car manufacturers themselves without having to call out the workers in those car companies.

This meant that a minimum number of workers were actually out on strike, and drastically cut down the risks faced by their membership. What's more, the union knew that they would never succeed in reducing the working week from 40 to 35 hours in one shot, and eventually compromised on 38,5 hours.

Holding organisation together during a stay away or strike is only half the problem. The other half involves coming



out of it intact and strengthened, ready for the future. Given that gains and losses are seldom decisive or irreversible, the next round is often more important. What you do next is what will determine whether you can consolidate and protect your advances.

That's why students during the 1980 schools boycotts distinguished between their short and long-term demands. They knew that the boycott was a limited tactic which they could only keep up for a certain length of time. So they set themselves goals they felt they could achieve in that space of time, after which they would go back to school and regroup.

To strengthen their position boycotting students in the Western Cape formed Parent-Student support committees.

This ensured the support of the parents and adults in the community, and provided a more authoritative structure through which they could put forward their demands. These structures not only managed to break the deadlock between the authorities and the students, but they also led to the formation of civics in many communities.

A formal link to other organisations can be crucial to the success of a tactic like boycott or stay-away. Because conditions vary from constituency to constituency, and from area to area, the tactic will vary in its success. The right tactic for the students may be the wrong one for the unions, and what suits the schools in Atteridgeville may be very different in the Soweto situation.

Tactics have to be adapted to

local conditions, and have to be flexible enough to meet changing conditions as the struggle progresses.

This problem of the right tactic for a particular situation is even greater when action is taken nationally. The organisation not only has to take many different situations into account as it plans its programme. It also has to constantly monitor the progress of the action in different areas to decide when shifts in tactics are necessary.

Once again this degree of contact and coordination places extreme loads on scarce resources, and repressive countermeasures add to the difficulties.

Having learnt these lessons in the past students have now taken to consulting with trade unions, civics, youth and womens groups to ensure that their strategies compliment and reinforce each other. Each constituency has come to realise that it cannot transform power relations in its own sphere, without a corresponding process of transformation in other spheres of society.

Exploiters

It would be impossible to win democracy in the schools while the factories and offices that the education system feeds remain under the control of a small but powerful class of exploiters.

Similarly the struggle of the workers in the factories will be undermined if the ruling class can maintain its grip on the schools. After all, the students of today are the workers of tomorrow. And the fight for democratic control in the schools and factories will not be over until all power relations in society have been transformed.

Experience has shown that transformation is a long and difficult process rather than a single series of victorious events. A process that involves much more than the defeat of the bosses or the government and their allies. All over the world, we see societies where the dominated classes have managed to radically alter the balance of power, only to find not much has really changed and they remain trapped in the previous relations of power

and domination.

The victory of ZANU in the Zimbabwean elections has not changed the fact that workers have no control over the ownership and management of factories, that peasants are landless, and that schooling still takes place according to curricula drawn up by the old Smith regime. A lot has changed but very little has been transformed.

This is the overwhelming challenge facing democrats in South Africa today. At the same time as students make demands about their right to be represented by democratically elected and viable SRC's and an end to corporal punishment, they have to be thinking about the long term transformation

Power

The immediate demands for better education will all result in superficial and cosmetic changes if they do not form the basis of a challenge to the relations of power which regulate our society.

That is why students have distinguished between their short and long-term goals. Their daily problems in the schools have to be taken up. Concessions and changes have to be fought for. But those problems will remain for as long as education for domination is necessary. Hence Cosas demands an end to the sexual harassment of female students in Atteridgeville schools at the same time as it participates in the UDF's campaigns against the new constitution.

Students are aware that their problems are not just the result of poor administration or a shortage of resources, and that they go a lot deeper than the racial prejudices of the nationalists who designed and run the system of Bantu education. They know that education is one of the key institutions through which the ruling class ensures its rule by training some people to play the roles of bosses and supervisors while leaving the rest to be bossed and supervised.

In some areas boycotting students are able to meet during the day and run their own education programmes. In so doing they are not only attacking the structure of the educa-



tion system, but its content as well. This alternative programme means that they are not simply rejecting the present system but trying to develop a new one. Even though their control over their own education may be short lived, these students will have laid some of the foundations of a democratic system of education for a future South Africa.

Protests

The current school boycotts are exceptional for many reasons. They have been raging for almost a year since Atteridgeville students began their protests last November, and have involved areas where student organisation had not previously taken root. The demands have been clear and specific, and relate directly to the day to day experience of students.

At the same time students have played a vital role in broader community protests against the community councils, high rents and rising transport costs. They have faced vicious repression from the government and bantustan police, and have had to deal with sophisticated attempts to confuse the issues by the DET, the media and competing student groups.

Despite these difficulties, Cosas has managed to expand its organisation, reaching out to schools which had previously been unorganised or disorganised. It has recruited members and started new branches, run training courses, produced pamphlets and newsletters, held regional and national council meetings and generally held its organisation together.

Bearing in mind that Cosas'

officials and members are all scholars, that it has no head office or regional offices, no proper administrative setup, no transport with which to cover the vast distances between branches, and that many of its key activists have been arrested or forced into hiding, its achievements so far will doubtless make inspiring history.

Right now Cosas is busy broadening the base of its action by allying with other organisations to protest against the government's handling of the education crisis in particular and its brutal response to popular demands in general. In so doing the students hope to build unity and solidarity between different progressive organisations, and to move their own struggle beyond the stalemate it has currently reached.

Democratic SRC's

It is unlikely that the DET or the government will agree to the student's demands, reasonable as they are. But it is vital that Cosas continue to push for democratic and independent SRC's, free text books, properly qualified teachers, and the abolition of corporal punishment and the age limits. Not just because their members feel strongly about these issues, but because they raise fundamental questions about the function of education and about the type of society it serves.

Gutter education and poverty tell us a lot about who wins and who loses in our society, and it is only by challenging the machinery through which class power is exercised that that power can be checked and neutralised.

The challenge to ruling class power is a challenge to us all to build democracy. The struggle for democratic education is about the same issues as the struggle for workers' rights and the struggle for democracy in the townships. And, all these struggles are essential parts of the struggle for a democratic government in South Africa.

The people shall govern, not only in parliament, but also directly in the schools, factories and communities. Nothing less than power to the people!

Changing only to maintain apartheid

When the going gets rough, apartheid education is forced to change . . . but not really

SOUTH AFRICAN society is filled with examples of fabulous wealth alongside appalling poverty. Together with this economic inequality goes inequality in political power which is both a result of economic dominance and a means by which this dominance is maintained.

To get away with such selfish and anti-social behaviour the dominant group must either force or persuade the dominated to accept this unequal division of power and wealth. In many countries the ruling class uses heavy-handed repression to intimidate the powerless into accepting their position at the bottom of the social ladder.

The problem with this is that the dominated don't accept their deprived position as if life is meant to be like that and nothing can be changed. They soon unite to demand a share of the wealth.

If those in power can't convince people that the factories, mines, farms, shops and offices, the government, police, prisons, and military, the church, mass media, the education system and even entertainment should be controlled and owned by the few, they have a huge problem on their hands. And that means problems for everyone as the ruling class turns to force to get things done their way.

Trying to persuade people that their poverty and powerlessness is natural is a full-time job for the ruling class. And so they have built up a network of organisations and institutions to protect and maintain the system as it is. And what better place to start than teaching the children of today to be the workers of tomorrow.

The idea is to get them when

they're young and easy to persuade and more likely to accept the things teachers tell them. Some are taught to be bosses and supervisors, others are prepared for lives as labourers, machine operators and artisans.

The first group go all the way through school and on to a university or technikon. The second are lucky to make it past the first few years. After all, the only thing that labourers need to understand are instructions and commands.

In South Africa today only 17% of Africans of school-going age ever get to school, and only half of them make it beyond standard three. One

percent of those that start school make it to matric and last year half of those failed.

The rulers of South Africa have found it necessary to deny black people political rights and to impose controls over every aspect of their lives — land ownership and occupation, housing, movement, employment, recreation, health and welfare, and even citizenship.

The education system is a vital part of these controls. Politically it tries to control thought and produce people with the correct attitudes. Economically it tries to manufacture a

variety of workers to fill the different positions in the labour process. And because the political and economic situation is constantly changing, the education system also needs to adapt.

That's easier said than done. Human beings think and feel and can't simply be moved around like railcars in a shunting yard. Verwoerd had designed a system of Bantu Education for hewers of wood and drawers of water in the 1950's.

But by the mid-seventies economics and politics in South Africa had changed. Large monopoly firms using high technology equipment had put their stamp on the South African economy.

The ruling Nationalist Party had consolidated its grip on the government and was shifting its support-base from the lower levels of the bureaucracy to the higher levels of industry and commerce.

Internal political opposition had revived after the crackdowns of the 1960's. The massive waves of strikes in 1973 and 1974, and the nationwide uprisings in 1976 and 1977 signalled clearly that things would have to change, and quickly.

There was a sudden flurry of commissions which collected evidence on problems in labour relations, bantustan consolidation, education, security legis-



Harry Oppenheimer with Gatsha Buthelezi at the opening of an Anglo-sponsored technikon in Kwazulu

lation, influx control, housing and the mass media.

Recommendations flowed thick and fast recognise trade unions, allow people to own their houses and lease their land for 99 years, restructure the schools to provide for greater specialisation and more specific training for industry and commerce, tighten up influx control and speed up resettlement.

Business was especially anxious for the government to take steps to ensure the long-term stability of industry. Together they began drawing up plans which would:

- defuse black student radicalism;
- use education to overcome the twin problems of a shortage of skilled labour and 'ill-discipline' in the ranks of the labour force, and
- promote the belief, both internally and to South Africa's 'friends' in the West, that the government had mended its educational ways since the slaughter of 1976.

By 1980 however, the face of Bantu Education was as ugly as ever and students staged national boycotts in protest. Government and big business made a lot of noise about the need to improve and restructure the education system. Companies kept patting themselves on the back for supporting black education and proudly showed off their handful of black management recruits.

The government set up a massive investigation into education which culminated with the *De Lange report*. The report came out in 1981 and recommended:

- that one ministry of education be set up in order to promote what would clearly be just an illusion of 'integration';
- that a small and select group of black students be allowed to enter private, non-racial schools;
- a greater emphasis on 'streaming' pupils into different vocational channels through specialised tests, entrance exams and so on. 'Investment in education can only show dividends if it can guarantee the manpower potential of a country is applied productively in its development' said the report;
- increased technical training was a crucial priority, to fulfil



June '76... or October '84. Bantu education has not changed. Nor has the high cost of opposing it

the new needs of capital;

- that the government and business should share responsibility for so-called 'non-formal' education including training at factories and even capital-sponsored literacy programmes.

But, the government dragged its feet in implementing de Lange's proposals and clearly distanced itself from some key recommendations, particularly the call for one education system. The government managed to postpone dealing with the report and making new laws until the end of 1983.

Then it released a White paper on education which rejected the single ministry of education idea a fundamental symbol of 'liberalisation' in

reformist eyes and favoured retaining racially separate administrations as well as separate schools Apartheid's well-worn lie of 'separate but equal' would remain unchanged.

As expected the White paper is closely linked to the new constitution. White, coloured and Indian legislatures will each be responsible for separate school systems as their 'own affair'.

At the same time, the independent powers of the separate chambers will be strictly limited. In education, distribution of finances and the question of educational standards, falls under 'general affairs' which is controlled by the white-dominated institutions of government. And even in

'own affairs' President PW Botha can still use his veto to block decisions.

South Africa will now pay for 15 ministries of education! These include four provincial departments, ten ministers in the bantustans, three ministers for 'own affairs', and a white minister for Africans living in 'white' South Africa.

The government has also accepted the need for greater social differentiation in education and accepted De Lange's proposals of expanding technical courses, abolishing 'free' education and raising school levies. The government has allowed what the Conservative Party calls 'creeping integration' to continue in private schools and has also encouraged private sector sponsored facilities like Pace college in Soweto.

But on the whole these restructuring efforts have fallen dismally short of the kind of response necessary if those in power are to overcome the crisis in education. This fact is clearly recognised by large-scale capital and reformist educational circles which are despairingly critical of the government's weak will particularly its refusal to bring in a single ministry of education.

The massive boycotts currently taking place are once again saying to the government 'nothing has changed'. The government still spends twelve times more on each white student and refuses to meet demands for democratically elected SRC's, and an end to corporal punishment and sexual harassment.

Recent brutal suppression of student protest has shown that the government is unable to restore its authority without using force. And now it seems that even if the government created a reformed educational system, young blacks would still refuse to be bought off.

Education has increasingly been linked to broader issues in our society by the students themselves. It is clear that little reforms like the undemocratic SRCs, recently proposed by the Minister of Education, will do nothing to alleviate the current crisis in education.

Restructuring has failed because it only sought to tamper with the system while keeping all the basic tenets of apartheid, 1984-style, intact.



Lulu Johnson, Cosas president

**Nusas president
Kate Phillip
is presently
being held in
detention under
Section 29 of
the Internal
Security Act.**

**Her picture
may not
be published**

Kate Phillip, Nusas president



Simphiwe Mgoduso, Azaso president

Student leaders speak

Q ■ Why do you think there has been such a high degree of student mobilisation and militancy this year?

Lulu: Conditions under which people are living have worsened considerably, and they are no longer prepared to tolerate them. All basic essentials cost much more - staple food costs have risen and rent hikes make it worse. But wages remain the same and many workers are being retrenched.

There is also increasing repression in the schools. The question of representation has been important in the students' response to the conditions they face.

Students have realised the need for democratic representation in schools. They want a say in all matters affecting them. They want their voices to be heard, and they want to be recognised. They are tired of being regarded as children expected to just obey the authorities.

Q: What are the students' main demands?

Lulu: Our main demands are for democratically elected Student Representative Councils, an end to corporal punishment, scrapping of the age limits, an end to sexual harassment, and free textbooks and qualified teachers. But there are many other demands.

**Leaders of the
one million
students who
struck against
apartheid edu-
cation speak to
Saspu Focus on
the road ahead**

Q: Could you compare students' demands now to those in 1976 and 1980?

Lulu: In 1976 students were rejecting Afrikaans and eventually the entire system of Bantu Education, seeing the alternative as being white education. By 1980 the goal was free, equal and compulsory education.

Drawing from past lessons, students realise that for education to be changed, the system of rule in our country must change. Alongside this awareness, students see the need to categorise their demands into short, medium and long term demands.

In the present boycotts, students have come up with short term demands around representation, corporal punishment and so on which can be met within the present system.

Through these demands we are laying the basis for the long-term demands. The demand for democratic SRC's is part of the process of preparing ourselves and building a future South Africa where representation will be genuine and democratic.

Whatever forms of representation Viljoen (Minister of Education) and du Plessis before him have tried to impose on our schools, students know that Viljoen's aim is to further the system of white domination and to try and stop the growing consciousness among students.

Q: Do you think acceptance of a short term demand by the government represents an advance towards the long-term goals?

Lulu: It does. Autonomy of SRC's, which is the most pressing demand, says: 'We want to rule ourselves, we want to have a say in how our education is conducted.' With such a demand, it becomes clear that we are preparing for a future South Africa where people shall have control over structures which work in their interests.

Q: To what extent has the boycott been used as a weapon rather than a principle?

INTERVIEWS

Lulu: A boycott is a strategy. If the DET or the government refuses to listen to students' demands, we have to use other ways to get them to respond.

We cannot just demand that the education system be abolished and replaced with a people's education, and then go on boycott until it is. We have to single out demands which can be met within a short space of time - that is basically why we are organising around issues of corporal punishment, the age limit laws - they can be abolished.

When a boycott is no longer effective, the strategy must be reconsidered. A boycott itself

cannot go on for as long as the education system is undemocratic and unequal. It must be used effectively and then be called off at the appropriate time, to be used at another time.

Q: The government first refused anything except prefects. Then they offered Pupils' Representative Councils. Now they have drawn up an SRC constitution. But they still refuse to allow students to draw up their own constitution. Why is this?

Lulu: The government is panicking. It is scared of the students who have quickly become conscious of the issues and their role. It has sent in

soldiers to suppress conscious action. But unarmed students are still prepared to fight for genuine democratic representation.

Students realise that, at all costs, democracy must be practiced - in the drawing up of their own SRC constitution, and in the running of their SRC. These principles of democracy which have also been in practice in student action are entirely in opposition to the government's definitions of democracy.

Because the present government is anti-democracy, any form of democratic representation presents a threat to the government - that's why they resort to repressive action and are not prepared to recognise a democratic SRC.

Q: By putting forward the DET SRC constitution the government seems to be recognising that the prefect system and even the PRC's won't work. Do you see this as a concession?

Lulu: One might say yes, that due to the pressure from the students, with our parents supporting the struggle of their children, the government had no alternative but to concede in some way to students' demands:

They were trying to fool people into believing that this was what they had been struggling for. Of course, it wasn't - the government would have an upper hand in controlling the SRC's and it would mean the same prefect system or PRC's in another form. Students and parents have seen through the government's move, and have rejected the DET's SRC constitution.

Q: The government blames the boycotts on 'agitators' and has launched vicious attacks against Cosas. Could you respond to this?

Lulu: I think that the limited representation in our schools, the excessive corporal punishment, broken windows etc. - are the issues which brought students out of classes demanding a free flow of textbooks, genuine representation and so on. These are the agitators in our education system. When the government accuses Cosas of agitating, they are in a sense admitting defeat - they can't solve the crisis in the education system they created.

Q: Many students have been mobilised through the boycotts. How can this mobilisation be channeled into ongoing organisation?

Lulu: Students realise - although not yet with full understanding - that Cosas is an organisation they can fit into. And in Cosas there are structures - branch structures, and in some areas sub-structures out of the executive committees. More than that, it will become clear to those who have been actively involved during the boycotts that they have the task of strengthening organisation within our school premises. Because that is where our base must be consolidated.

Q: What gains has Cosas made this year?

Lulu: Presently around Transvaal there are about 25 branches, compared to 17 at the beginning of the year.

'Students are tired of being regarded as children expected to just obey the authorities'
- Lulu Johnson,
Cosas president



'They'd prefer to close than to listen to us'

Simphiwe Mgoduso, Azaso president, slams government

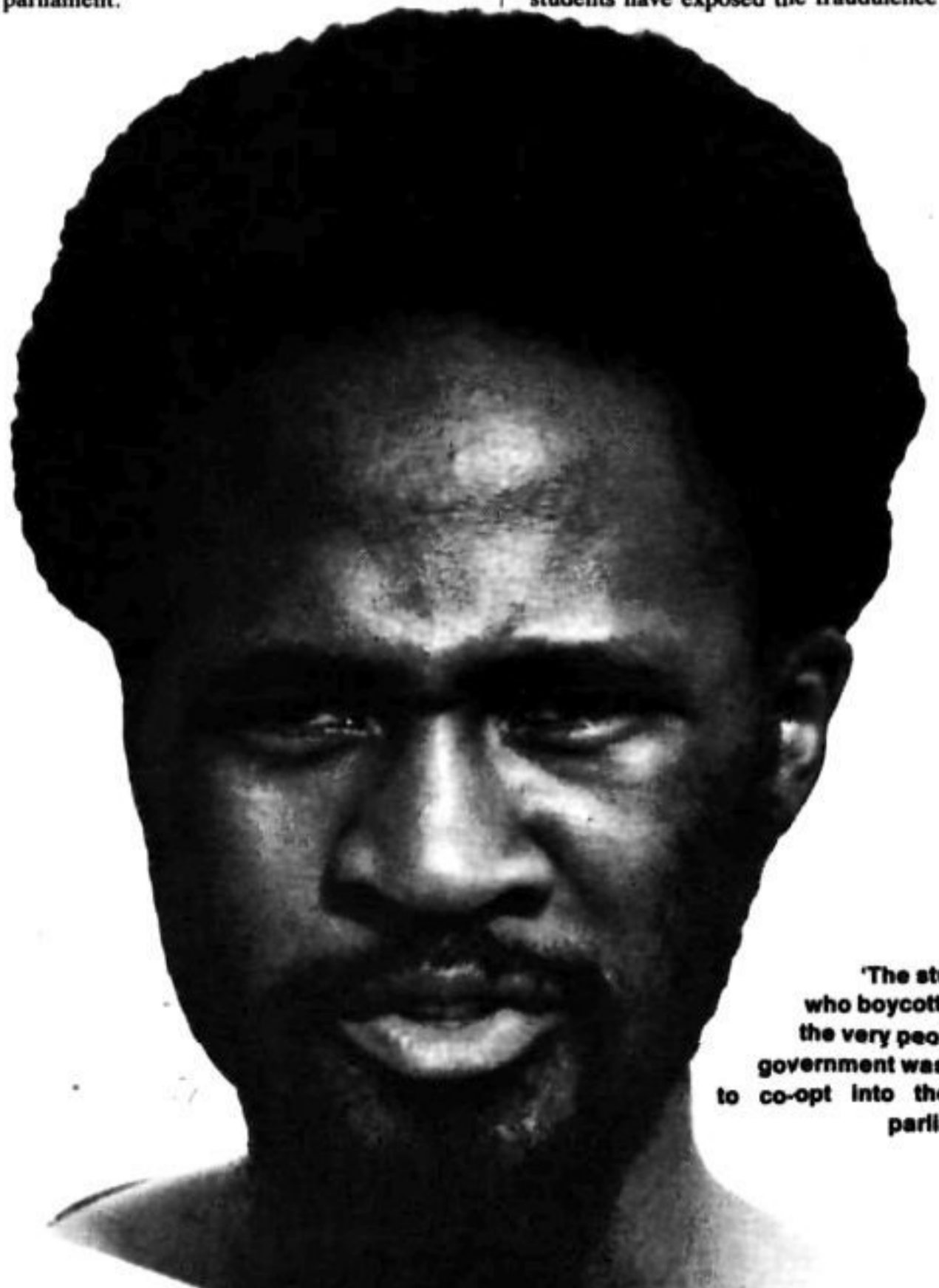
Q ■ Attempts to co-opt black students into supporting the new constitution and the bantustan bureaucracies have failed. This year has seen intensive struggles and boycott action on most of the Azaso campuses. Could you comment on this?

Simphiwe: Students took to the streets opposing the new constitution, and most of our campuses were out on boycott for two weeks - campuses including the Western Cape and Durban-Westville, where the students are the very people the government was trying to co-opt into the tri-cameral parliament.

The government's failure here has a lot to do with the extensive work of Azaso organizers. We have been able to raise the level of political consciousness and make students realize that the Apartheid programme offers no solution at all.

Then there are the attempts to co-opt African students into the fold through the various bantustan structures. The bantustan system relies on the black middle class and without their active support and participation it would fall to the ground.

We have seen Fort Hare students refuse to allow the university to be used to train Ciskei police, public prosecutors and other civil servants. At Turfloop, students stood up against bantustan leaders using the campus. At Unitra, students have exposed the fraudulence of the



'The students who boycotted are the very people the government was trying to co-opt into the new parliament'

In the Eastern Cape there were 8 branches, but now there are 15. And in the OFS there are about 9 branches. It proves, in no uncertain terms, that Cosas has gained a lot of support. For example, the South Cape area recently called on Cosas people to address their meetings and form Cosas structures.

So, Cosas has grown from being groups of students in different areas, to being a mass-based national students' organisation. In areas like the South Cape, the Eastern Transvaal and Northern Transvaal, Cosas is in demand from students who want to know about it and be educated by it.

In some unorganised areas where students didn't have much contact or understanding as to where they could fit into the organisation, Cosas people went there, established contact and helped set up branches. Recently one branch was established like this in Vosloorus in the Transvaal.

Q: Do you think the increased support from parents will give the students' demands more weight?

Lulu: Yes it does. For example, in the 1980-82 crisis our parents intervened. The DET was saying it didn't understand our problems and demands. But when our parents went to them, the DET suddenly realised its attempts to confuse our parents had failed.

Our parents, as the workers, are putting on the pressure. They have rallied behind us and this has meant that the authorities have no choice but to consider our demands.

With worker stay-aways and the bargaining power of the workers, bosses may put pressure on the Minister of Education and Training. They may tell him: 'Let those students have what they want because our workers are out and with no production we have no profits and therefore no taxes for you.'

Q: How will the Education Charter Campaign relate to present demands of students?

Lulu: Cosas and Azaso do not see the campaign as being for students alone. The demands from other groups must be included. Activists from all areas will be involved in the campaign and it is their responsibility to go around and talk to people in farm areas, factories, schools, churches, etc. We want to get as many people as possible involved in discussing the education system and forwarding their demands.

Q: How do you see the school situation developing next year?

Lulu: Immediately after every crisis situation - after clashes between police and students - students return to classes and there is a lot of tension. Police will still be on watch in areas where there have been boycotts.

Whatever crisis situation prevails, the government's way of dealing with it is violence - guns, rubber bullets, teargas. They may do what they did in Sebokeng - raid every house and force all people of schoolgoing age to go school, even if they are working. This is how the government will try and control the situation.

Matanzima regime, in Natal we have seen medical students at Howard College reject the KwaZulu government, and at Ngoye, students strongly objected to one of the university's departments being used as a propaganda department for Inkatha.

Q: What issues has Azaso organized around this year?

Simpfiwe: There have been several issues such as bad food, academic harassment and so on.

A major issue has been democratic representation. Students are still fighting for this because the administrations are only interested in their own dummy bodies.

Academic harassment is a continual problem. At Turfloop, for example, some lecturers deliberately fail certain students.

And then there are the lecturers who owe their primary allegiance to the army and police force. At both Unitra and Ngoye, lecturers have been exposed as working for the security police and being responsible for the detention of students.

Q: What advances have been made in the struggle for democratic students representation?

Simpfiwe: In tertiary institutions, as in the schools, democratic SRCs are still not allowed on many campuses - Durban-Westville and Transkei university are typical examples. At many colleges and technikons students are also forming democratic SRC's but the administrations are doing their best to frustrate these developments. And they are even prepared to close down the campuses rather than listen to students demands.

But we are succeeding here and there. Fort Hare students have fought for an SRC since 1982, and now they have an interim committee which is recognized by the university administration.

Q: To what extent have parents been organized in support of students on the campuses?

Simpfiwe: Parents have responded to the

expulsions and suspensions of students and the closing of campuses by forming parents' structures like ad-hoc parents' committees and crisis committees in support of students at Transkei, Ngoye, Mabopane and so on.

Parents are working hand in hand with students to work out a solution to the crisis. And Azaso and Cosas have started a campaign to set up permanent parent structures. This will enable parents to take up our issues in an organized fashion - and not just in response to an issue or a crisis as it arises. This hasn't really happened since the campaign against Bantu Education in the fifties.

These structures form an important part of the Education Charter Campaign.

Q: What is the significance of the Education Charter Campaign (ECC) for Azaso?

Simpfiwe: For Azaso, the ECC gives direction - where we are moving to, what our short term and longer term demands are. It will also allow us to assess what gains have been made as we go along. All this is very important for student organization to run properly, especially given that our constituency is a transient one where the student body changes from year to year.

Q: How do you see the relationship between the Education Charter and the Freedom Charter?

Simpfiwe: The Freedom Charter is a popular document incorporating all the demands of the whole nation. The Education Charter is intended to be an amplification of the education clause in the Freedom Charter - that the doors of learning and culture shall be opened to all.

The question the Education Charter will be answering is how the doors shall be opened - on a short, medium and long term basis.

Q: How will the Education Charter be drawn up?

Simpfiwe: The process will vary from area to area depending on conditions there. In some

areas like the Ciskei it is impossible to have meetings even if there is no ban. So seminars, workshops, house to house visits etc. will be used to discuss the campaign and collect demands.

We have already been training our activists for more than a year in preparation for the campaign. But the process doesn't develop in a linear fashion, so while we are training our activists we are collecting demands, against the background of the present crisis situation in our country.

The demand for SRCs, for example, has been stated clearly in the schools and universities and it is already part of the Education Charter Campaign. The same applies to the demands put forward in student/parent meetings all over the country.

All these demands are produced in the arena of the battlefield in education. Struggles around education, and the demands that emerge in these struggles, become the demands of the Education Charter.

We intend the campaign to last for 12 to 18 months from the time of the launches in September and then to have a big congress where the Education Charter will be adopted.

Q: Would you comment on the government and bantustan attacks against Azaso and Cosas?

Simpfiwe: Azaso and Cosas represent the interests of the students and that is why we are growing, not only in numbers, but in our theoretical and organizational understanding. Our programmes are diametrically opposed to the regime's, and that is why they are trying to crush us.

But it is impossible for them to uproot us, because Cosas is the students in the schools, and Azaso is the students on the campuses. And whether they ban us or not, these students will still organize around their demands.

The banning of Cosas and Azaso in the Transkei is meaningless - the students there still face a corrupt administration, excessive corporal punishment, and they will continue to fight against these, regardless.

They are still part of the South African student movement, and their demands are the same as those of students all over the country.

Q: How do you see the link between the short-term demands, for example, for SRCs, and the long-term demands for a non-racial and democratic education in a free South Africa?

Simpfiwe: The demand for a people's government, for a non-racial and democratic South Africa is naturally linked to the demand for democratic SRCs.

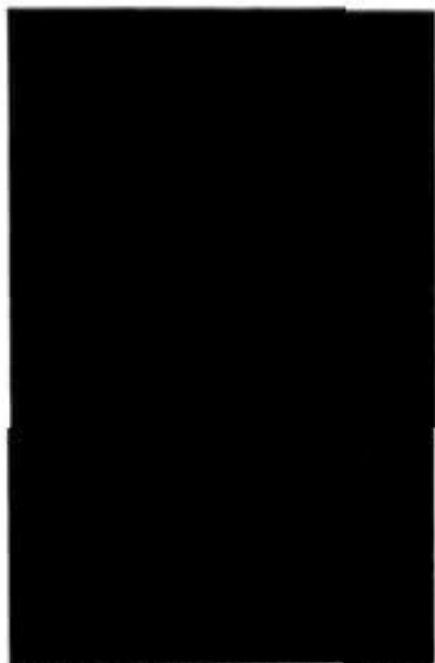
Building true democracy starts at a school, factory and community level. It is here that people collectively realize the need for democratic representation at every level, and experience and understand the need for running their own lives. And in this process people also realize the need for a people's government.

So students demand democratic SRCs, workers demand democratic trade unions, and residents demand representative civic bodies.

This is a process starting from below, from the people, and moving upwards.



Johnson: searched for by the security police, his Port Elizabeth home fire-bombed



Philip: detained by the security police under Section 29 in the anti-stayaway swoop



Mgoduso: his organisation is banned from organising in the Transkei bantustan

Turning tools of apartheid into forces for change

White students are schooled for comfortable jobs in the upper levels of the apartheid system. Drawing them into the movement for progressive change is no easy task. Nusas is fighting . . . and winning.

As a result, our approach has been to take campaigns to the schools through pamphlets, rather than attempting to organise pupils in an ongoing way at this stage. Most recently, we pamphleteered white schools in relation to the Transvaal stayaway explaining black student grievances.

Q: Nusas, Cosas and Azaso have formed the student wing of the UDF over the past year. On what basis is this alliance built?

Kate: The alliance has been built through a common commitment to the Freedom Charter. The alliance is also based on a recognition that Cosas and Azaso are the leading organisations in the student movement, representing as they do a mass base of oppressed students. Students in Nusas are not oppressed, but a sector of white students can be mobilised in support of democratic demands.

The alliance further reflects the recognition that the education struggle must be waged on all fronts — not only gutter education must be opposed, but christian national education and the privileged elite nature of white education as well. The formation of UDF has helped to structure and develop this alliance.

Q: Does the Education Charter Campaign represent an advance in this alliance and what is its significance for Nusas?

Kate: The Education Charter Campaign should forge an even stronger and more cohesive student alliance. This is the non-racial student movement's first common, long-term campaign and as such, a milestone in student movement history. Nusas has pledged its full support and participation in the campaign and will make it a major priority in 1985. We are working with Cosas and Azaso at a planning and co-ordination level in the major centres.

Q: Students on the Nusas campuses are being prepared for positions of power and control over South Africa's majority. How does Nusas challenge this?

Q: What has Nusas' response been to the present schools boycotts and student demands, and how have students on the Nusas campuses supported these demands?

Kate: The overall response has been complete support and identification with student demands in the schools. These have been widely popularised on our campuses.

We began with the first schools boycotts in Atteridgeville and Cradock and held a joint Nusas-Azaso day of solidarity at Wits. Nusas students demonstrated with placards in the rush hour traffic and representatives from Cosas, Nusas and Azaso picketed the DET offices in Pretoria.

Q: How do you see the relationship between struggles in the schools and struggles in the universities?

Kate: Struggles in the schools and universities have challenged and undermined apartheid education's aim which is to produce an unpoliticised and compliant workforce in the schools, and a co-opted managerial and professional sector in the universities.

As Cosas has stressed, the pupils of today are the workers of tomorrow. Struggles in the schools make students politically conscious of how the education system equips them to become cheap, exploitable labour. They see how their powerlessness against excessive discipline and poor conditions mirrors the vulnerable position of workers in the factories.

They learn through struggle that unity is the key to strength, they start to build a commitment to democratic principles and non-racialism. And when the army and police are used against fellow students and their parents, and Cosas leadership is detained and silenced, the mass of pupils realise that their problems can only be solved when they have won political rights. So, instead of an unpoliticised compliant workforce the schools are actually providing militant politicised workers.

Students at university are not the workers of the future, but the professionals, administrators and bantustan bureaucrats — the middle class, who right now are prime targets for co-option as part of P.W.'s reform strategies.

So it is all the more urgent to win the political allegiance of students to the cause of change, not co-option; to get students to see ourselves not as individual success stories, but having a responsibility to serve the community and use our education for change.

Winning the political allegiance of students is also crucial for the future, when advanced technical and professional skills will be needed to build a democratic society, at a point where many who have those skills may well withdraw them to sabotage the economy of a democratic South Africa.

Q: The white schools have long been strongholds of apartheid ideology. Have any attempts been made to challenge this?

Kate: This is a difficult task facing Nusas. White school education is very conservative and access to schools very difficult. Also, our personpower and resources are often stretched, and we are often confined to maintaining our position on the campuses in the face of concerted right wing opposition.

Kate: Attempts to challenge the role of our education have to take place in a framework of political opposition and education on the campuses.

It is now accepted on all the campuses that the SRC's are crucial in countering the reactionary ideas and misinformation characteristic of CNE and SATV. Through mass meetings, pamphlets, the student press, and through solidarity action we bring the real news to students, challenge them to take a stand, and act on that.

Faculty councils are also a key area through which the role of our education has been challenged and alternatives sought. Faculty councils have campaigned for courses such as community health, labour law, industrial sociology, and African literature.

In the past, Nusas students have been criticised for not remaining committed when they leave campus. Often avenues for ongoing involvement have not been clear. But over the past few years the emergence of progressive professional associations like Democratic Lawyers Associations, NEUSA, Health Workers Association, Technology Advice Group and others have provided such avenues. The emergence of groups such as Jodac, and the UDF area committees in white areas have also allowed students leaving Nusas to maintain their involvement and commitment.

Q: Police and SADF soldiers have been sent into schools and townships in an attempt to crush protests. What effect has this had on the End Conscription campaign on the Nusas campuses?

Kate: The End Conscription Campaign is the culmination of several years of opposition to the role of the SADF and militarisation. The compulsory conscription to the SADF of all white males has made this an issue of immediate concern to white students.

The recent invasion of the Vaal by the SADF and police units has definitely boosted this long-term campaign. The possibility of students being forced to aim rifles at fellow South Africans voicing legitimate demands in the townships, combined with the illegal occupation of Namibia, has had a major effect on white students attitude to conscription.

Q: What are the difficulties in organising white students and what are the major issues Nusas has organised around this year?

Kate: Nusas organises in a very difficult constituency. White students have a very real material interest in the maintenance of apartheid, because it guarantees their privilege.

White students have also been through twelve years of CNE, many nights of SATV news and, for many, two years in the SADF as well. Many are caught up in a framework of 'total strategy' and racism.

Finally the complete separation of white students' experience from the oppression and exploitation of the majority means that the political issues and crises at hand don't hold the same urgency or anger as they do for black students.

Despite these problems, Nusas has mobilised large sectors of the white student population around education unrest, rent protests in the Transvaal, the End Conscription Campaign, the anti-election campaign, and in support of democratic demands.

EASTER MONDAY 1944 was a decisive moment in the history of South Africa. It was the day a group of young men got together at the Bantu Men's Social Club in downtown Johannesburg to launch a new and vigorous organization - the African National Congress Youth League.

It was with the Youth League that the organisation of young people as a specific grouping in the struggle really began. Their first battle was against the lack of action by the leadership of South Africa's oldest political organization, the ANC.

Their later battles were against those in their own ranks who could not accept that a solution to South Africa's

problems was non-racial, and not simply replacing a white government with a black one. All these battles were vital in shaping the struggle for democracy in the country.

As early as 1920, militant acts took place in African educational institutions with certain organisations developing around this militancy..



THE MOVEMENT

But these groups, like the National Union of African Youth formed in 1939 and the Social Students Society at Fort Hare, had limited membership and goals.

The first systematic attempt to organise the country's youth came however from within the African National Congress.

The 1943 ANC annual congress in Kimberley was the

immediate stimulus for the Youth League. Anton Lembede became the first Youth League president in 1944. The first manifesto and three-year programme had simple but important goals:

●To co-ordinate the activities of South Africa's youth in order to secure national unity.

●To fight moral disintegration.

●To give Africans the self-confidence to become a national political force.

The Youth League quickly became a popular and effective force. Within a few years it grew beyond the Transvaal, with branches formed in Natal, the Eastern Cape and at Fort Hare University.

Although unity was always a



IN PROGRESS



1950's . . . morning assembly at a Fordsburg school. Many were later active in the democratic movement

priority, ideological differences soon emerged in the League. Lembede and his successor to the presidency in 1947, Ashby Mda, developed a narrow view of African nationalism that hinged around the psychological liberation of South African blacks by appealing to their 'race consciousness'.

Others in the League, particularly the Transvaal grouping of Mandela, Tambo and Sisulu, came to reject this position more and more. With their main focus being on the need for action, they called for a nationalism that organised and united all democratic groups against both racial discrimination and economic exploitation.

ANC changes

The victory of the National Party in the 1948 general election provoked many changes to the structure and programme of the ANC as a whole. The Youth League executive - Mandela, Sisulu, Tambo, Mda, James Njongwe and David Bopape - drew up a new programme that was adopted by the Transvaal Regional Congress.

The 1949 ANC annual congress was what the young militants had been waiting for: a new and more progressive leadership emerged and the Youth League's 'Programme of Action' was adopted as the programme of the ANC. The programme clearly reflected the assertiveness of the Youth League. It called for boycotts, strikes, civil disobedience and non co-operation to achieve an end to all segregated political institutions.

Although the Youth League was now at one with the ANC leadership, it was still an important pressure group during the decade of widespread resistance that followed.

The Congress of the People at Kliptown in 1955 linked democratic principles with the militancy of the early Youth League.

Both the Freedom Charter which was drawn up and the newly-formed National Consultative Committee - consisting of the ANC, SAIC, South African Congress of Trade Unions, South African Coloured People's Congress and the Congress of Democrats - showed clearly that 'Africanism' had failed.

The Youth League kept up its action in the mass campaigns of 1956-1960, adding a great deal of organisational energy to them.

The passing of the Extension of the Universities Education Act in 1957 caught the League at a relatively weak period, however. The massive Treason Trial of Congress leaders in 1956, which involved as many as 18 Youth League members from the Transvaal alone, severely drained its resources. It was therefore a mainly white student organisation the National Union of South African Students (Nusas) that ended up fighting the Nationalist government's attack on academic freedom.

Oldest group

Nusas is the oldest and most established student group in South Africa. It was founded in 1924 on the model of the National Union of Students (NUS) in Britain. At first it committed itself to the apolitical goals of international co-operation with student leaders in other countries.

Initially all English and Afrikaans campuses belonged to Nusas. But this ended early in the organisation's history. In 1933 when English students simply wished to debate the admission of Fort Hare - the first black campus - to Nusas, Afrikaans students used this as a pretext to leave.

Nusas now began to work with black students and in 1945 Fort Hare and Hewett Training College became the first black affiliates.

But Nusas after the war was not political. The leadership believed students should be involved in political activity, but only outside of Nusas.

As a result black students left the organisation in the early 1950's.

The mass militancy of the 1950's had a strong effect on Nusas. New leaders saw the need to actively engage in politics. Linking themselves closely to the South African Liberal Party, they set about the difficult task of increasing political activity at the same time as maintaining the support of white students. Two principles they adopted - the 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights' and the concept of a 'Democratic Education in a Democratic Society' - greatly helped in this.

By the time of the Extension of Universities Education Bill, Fort Hare had reaffiliated to Nusas. In response to the Nationalist moves to legalise and entrench the racial discrimination at universities, Nusas started an exceptionally vigorous and energetic campaign. From 1957 right through to 1959 its members organised protests, petitions, marches and calls for international solidarity against the Bill.

The Nusas Campaign did not stop the Bill becoming law. In 1959 the government simply railroaded it through parliament.

The campaign did, however, show that Nusas could mobilise students on a large scale in opposition to apartheid. This was clearly acknowledged by the Youth League which saluted the students and academics opposing the Bill. On the basis

of the campaign, the Youth League began consultations for a non-racial national student conference.

But such a conference was never to get off the ground.

In 1960 the Fort Hare SRC was ordered by the University authorities to leave Nusas. When the students refused to do so, the SRC on the only black campus at the time was dissolved.

1960 saw the end of the era of legal, mass-based opposition to apartheid that had been heralded by the Programme of Action in 1949. The State of Emergency declared in the wake of the Anti-Pass Campaign and Sharpeville shootings of March 1960 was followed by the banning of both the ANC and the newly-formed Pan African Congress.

But times had changed and new strategies and tactics were to be developed. On December 16 1961, from then on known as 'Heroes Day', two dramatic announcements were made.

One pamphlet announced the formation of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the military wing of the ANC, while another announced the formation of the African Students' Association (ASA) as the student wing.

Police pressure

The ASA aimed to organise black students in high schools and more importantly in the newly established 'tribal colleges, such as the University of the North in Pietersburg and the University of Zululand at Ngoye. Although it soon secured a support base at the University of Fort Hare - an old ANC Youth League stronghold - its growth was short lived. Within the first months of its formation, it closed down under police pressure.

Although Nusas had been largely out of step with the Congress Movement, it did not escape the authorities' attention. The detention of Nusas leaders, alongside those from the ANC, Sactu and the Congress of Democrats, radicalised the organisation.

In 1961 it appointed ANC president, Chief Albert Luthuli, as Nusas Honorary President and developed lines of communication with the ASA.

Two events allowed Nusas to rally support on the white campuses. In 1965 Nusas invited Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy to do national speaking tours of the campuses. The state refused King a visa to enter South Africa and at the same time banned the Nusas president.

The banning evoked massive public outcry and, in many senses, turned the tide of public opinion in favour of Nusas. Up to 10 000 people attended Kennedy's addresses.

Nusas continued to enjoy large-scale support as it launched a series of massive protest campaigns on the English-speaking campuses.

Justice minister John Vorster claimed Nusas was a 'cancer in the life of South

The collage features several newspaper clippings and photographs. At the top right, a headline reads "The Story of ALEXANDRA CENTRAL" with a sub-headline "THROUGH sheer determination...". Below this is a large, bold headline: "Why do Schools Riot?". To the left of this headline, there are smaller snippets of text: "ney Oliver Tambo, Secretary. Congratulations for this significant idea of illiteracy!" and "a council also teach banned through games, c". Below the "Why do Schools Riot?" headline is a photograph of a large crowd of students holding protest signs. Some of the visible signs include "DOWN WITH APARTHEID", "STOP BANNING STUDENTS", and "LIVE-TIME". Below the photograph is another headline: "STAY-AT-HOME WEAPON". To the left of this headline is a small photograph of a person. Below the "STAY-AT-HOME WEAPON" headline is another headline: "THE DEATH OF A SCHOOL". To the right of this headline is a photograph of a school building. At the bottom of the collage are several portraits of individuals, including one of Oliver Tambo and another of Father Trevor C.R. with the text "Father Trevor C.R. says: 'plan foretelling promising'".

Africa that must be cut out'.

With the ASA essentially smashed, black students now turned to Nusas. In 1968, Fort Hare students boycotted lectures in support of Nusas, leading to violent clashes with the police.

Black students were fighting to affiliate to Nusas as part of their general struggle to determine their own future path. But Nusas itself could not live up to these expectations. A real divergence existed in the fact that white students were campaigning against the erosion of democratic rights, while their black colleagues were fighting to secure the most basic of those rights. At the same time the task of politicising white students differed considerably from that of channelling the opposition and anger of black students.

Black organisation

When the Minister of Bantu Education issued a decree forcing black students to eat and sleep separately from their white counterparts, various black student leaders began to raise the need for an all-black student organisation.

At the 1969 Nusas Congress, black students led by Abraham Tiro, Steve Biko and Barney Pitso, walked out of the organisation to form the South African Students Organisation (Saso).

From this point on, both black and white students would have to define roles in the organisation appropriate to their own conditions and communities. Only once this was achieved could they consider defining their relationship to one another.

It was a full decade before either group really began to meet this challenge.

At the time of its formation, Saso had within it many different ideologies, and aimed itself at the broader goals of uniting black students and at the general political development of the black people. In 1970,



1972... Student protester arrested on the steps of St George's Cathedral



1972... A teargas cannister is thrown back at the police

however, it began to take a more definite direction, writing black consciousness into the constitution.

By 1972 black consciousness had expanded to the point where its supporters felt the need to establish a national political organisation. The Black People's Convention (BPC) was formed by Saso

and three religious groupings and was presented to black people as an alternative to working within the apartheid system.

However, while Saso and BPC became active at a public level and in the media, little went into concrete organisation at the grassroots. They did not have a clear programme of action and became preoccupied with fostering pride and self-dependence, rather than political power.

Their failure to define a relationship to the long-established resistance organisations meant that they soon came to be seen as a 'third force' - an alternative to both the ANC and the PAC. Early in the history of Saso and BPC, elements within them began to explore new ideas and attempt to direct them in a more progressive direction.

In 1973 and 1974 over 100 000 black workers downed tools in the huge strike wave which swept the country. It showed up deficiencies in Saso and BPC as well as in Nusas.

Saso and BPC found themselves with few links and little stated interest in the plight of the black worker. Saso was severely constrained, too, by state action against it. Its entire executive was banned in 1973 and 12 leaders were put on trial the following year.

Re-assessment

Though Nusas proved to be quicker to respond to the rise in worker militancy, it was not without its problems.

The re-assessment in Nusas after the black student breakaway brought new ideas. Protest activity was simply not enough - it had to be accompanied by social action.

On a public level, Nusas was getting a lot of attention. Its 'Free Education' campaign in 1972 saw clashes with the authorities and unrest on all the cam-



1975... Pro-Frelimo students celebrate the victory of the armed struggle in Mozambique. Moments later police broke up the gathering

pus.

The state used the opportunity to launch an all-out attack on Nusas. Following the Schlebush Commission of Inquiry into Nusas and the Christian Institute in 1973, Nusas was barred from receiving overseas funding and eight of its leaders were banned.

In 1975 four leaders and one academic were charged for furthering the aims of communism but were acquitted after a year on trial.

The ferment of ideas generated by the formation of Saso soon spread to black students and youth in general. A host of youth clubs, discussion groups and cultural organisations sprung up to accommodate this response.

Military force

The National Youth Organisation (Nayo) was one of the two national structures to emerge.

Nayo never developed into a truly national organisation. Rather, it remained a loose federation of regional youth structures, the strongest being in the Transvaal.

Its significance lay more in the ideas that developed within it. Military force and the potential of the black labour force to cripple the economy featured on the agenda of political discussion.

The militancy and vigour of the organisation attracted considerable state attention and in 1974 and 1975 dozens of Nayo leaders spent lengthy spells in detention.

But it was the South African Student Movement (Sasm), formed during this period, which had a major impact on the South African opposition movement.

In 1971, youth clubs from Diepkloof, Orlando and Orlando West and schools in Soweto formed the African Student Movement attracting Natal and Eastern Cape schools as well.

The national structure which was set up included a national executive, regional executive and local school branches.

From 1973 onwards, Sasm became the focus of state attention in the form of detention and close surveillance. As a result, the organisation began to operate on two different levels.

Firstly, it operated on a public level, where discussion groups and educational programmes were run openly in the schools, and secondly, on an underground level, where a cell structure was developed with links to the ANC.

In 1976 the Minister of Bantu Education announced changes in the regulations dealing with language instruction in African schools.

Half the subjects would be taught in English, and the other half in Afrikaans (including Arithmetic and Maths). The move provoked an immediate outcry amongst school students, who began to look for ways of opposing it.



1977 ... Soweto students demonstrate outside the Urban Bantu Council

On June 13, 1976 Sasm called a planning meeting in Soweto to discuss the Afrikaans issue. Close on 400 student representatives arrived and agreed to set up an action committee, consisting of Sasm's Regional Committee and two representatives from every school in Soweto. The Action Committee gave itself three days to mobilise the students of Soweto.

June 16, 1976 was chosen as the day to stage a peaceful demonstration to express their opposition to the Minister's plan and the Bantu Education system in general.

The Sasm plan was a straightforward one. Students would meet at 12 different assembly points in Soweto and march at ten minute intervals to the Orlando Stadium. There, student leaders would address them in a mass demonstration.

The students never reached the stadium. On route they were confronted by heavily

armed policemen who fired teargas in an attempt to disperse them. The students stood firm, and police opened fire, hitting at least four students with their first rounds.

Almost immediately students picked up whatever they could lay their hands on - sticks, rocks and bottles - and began throwing them at the police. Within minutes, a peaceful demonstration had turned into a riot.

The militance of Soweto students on June 16 far exceeded the original plans of Sasm leadership. But the extent of the anger came as no real surprise. From the beginning of 1976 students had launched a series of boycotts of lectures and eventually exams, in protest against the use of Afrikaans. It was the shootings of that first day, however, that turned this anger into a mood of outright confrontation.

In June and July, demonstrations and violence spread throughout the Transvaal, to the Orange Free State and Natal. Student demands shifted from the scrapping of the Afrikaans ruling to the withdrawal of police from the townships, and the release of the hundreds of detainees who had now been arrested. Schools became a focus of attention and were burned by students in many townships, as the initial protest began to assume the nature of a national student and youth uprising.

Political stage

Two groups now emerged to occupy the political stage. The Sasm Action Committee, drew on two representatives from each Soweto school. Pamphlets encouraging unity amongst students and workers, and commemorating Freedom Day on June 26, were widely circulated amongst demonstrating students. Secondly, the Black Parents' Association was formed. Led by respected figures in the black community, it emerged as the voice of Soweto parents.

By the end of July it was clear to student leaders in Soweto that if they were to maintain the tempo of activity, they needed a far tighter leadership group that could lead, rather than simply co-ordinate. Not only had the police begun to detain the Sasm leaders, but the staggered reopening of Soweto schools was clearly planned to prevent a united student response.

On August 1, Tsietsi Mashinini announced the formation of the Soweto Students Representative Council (SSRC) and called for two representatives from each Soweto school to attend a meeting the following day. Mashinini emerged as the first president of the SSRC, the body which was to provide leadership to Soweto students, and at times the community as a whole, for the following 14 months.

August 4 was set as the date for the SSRC's first offensive. Six weeks of activ-

ity had taught the student leaders that if they were to have a real impact, students could not continue their struggle alone. So they planned to coincide a massive student march from Soweto to the centre of Johannesburg, demanding the release of detainees, with a call for a worker stay-away on that day.

The first of the three worker stay-aways of the period was largely successful. But the students' attempts to march to Johannesburg ended in bloodshed.

Towards the end of August, SSRC and ANC pamphlets began circulating in Soweto calling for a second worker stay-away. The pamphlets, which called on parents and workers to show solidarity with the youth, were initially met with a favourable response.

In the midst of this stay-away SSRC president, Tsietsi Mashinini fled to Botswana. The speed at which he had emerged as both a Soweto legend and an international figure resulted in intense political harassment and a major manhunt for him.

Within a day of his leaving the country, the SSRC announced that Sydney Khotso Seatholo would replace him. Although unknown and far less charismatic than Mashinini, Seatholo spent a great deal of energy systematically touring and speaking at Soweto's schools.

September saw the peak of the national uprising with the third worker stay-away on the 13th being the most successful, with nationwide demonstrations.

As the end of 1976 approached, students were forced to explore new tactics and methods to maintain the momentum they had achieved. The SSRC called for a period of mourning for those who had died during the uprising, planned to last until the end of the year.

Stay-away

The sensitivity of the SSRC's position in the community was best illustrated by the call for a five day stay-away in October. While the previous stay-aways had been successful, this over-ambitious call was almost totally ignored by working people. Students had begun to recognize the power that workers can wield, but had not yet appreciated the extent to which workers are primarily concerned with securing their own survival, and will not automatically throw their actual weight behind political campaigns.

The beginning of 1977 was not an easy time for the SSRC. The exams that students had boycotted the previous year had been deferred to February and a major debate broke out as to whether students should return to school and write them or

not. In mid-January Khotso Seatholo was shot by police in a car chase and slipped across the border into exile. The SSRC immediately elected Daniel Sechaba Montsitsi as its new president.

In April the West Rand Administration Board (WRAB) announced steep rent increases for Soweto - in some places as much as 80 percent. The SSRC grabbed the opportunity to take up an issue that affected the community at large, rather than the students alone. A massive march produced results: WRAB suspended the rent increases. This raised the SSRC's image and support to an all time high in the eyes of the community.

The credibility and support of Soweto's student leaders was something the South African state would not tolerate. On June 10, 21 people were arrested, including Montsitsi. Once again, the SSRC did not delay in appointing one of the two remaining executive members, Trotoma Somo, as its new leader.

On October 19 1977, the state finally clamped down on the organisations that had dominated politics during the 1970's and banned the SSRC, Saso and SASM.

With the bannings, students had to carefully assess the strengths and weaknesses of student organisation and prepare the way for the road ahead.

Two vital lessons emerged from this assessment period that stretched well into 1978. The first was that the key to the success of the struggle for true liberation in South Africa was the organisation and leadership of the largest sector of society - the African working class. Secondly, organisations that existed primarily in the media and on public platforms, however popular, were of limited value.

Foundations

What was needed was mass-based organisations that provided the opportunity for people in different sectors of society to actively participate in changing the conditions under which they lived and worked, and in so doing, challenge the very foundations of apartheid.

Of the student groupings that had existed during the 1970's it was only Nusas that survived the clampdown of October 1977.

Yet the contributions of those who have been involved in the organisations were central to the new thinking of the period. Whether it was from the jail cells of Modderbee or Robben Island, the tenuous security of the neighbouring states or life on-the-run in the townships, experiences were assessed and the foundations for the progressive student movement laid.

The Congress of South African Students (Cosas) was the first new student organisation to emerge from within this assessment. Formed in mid-1979 it immediately set about the task of drawing together black school students.

The emergence of the Azanian Students' Organisation (Azaso) as the progressive



1977... Students organised under the Soweto Students Representative Council march against the Urban Bantu Council's rent increase. The whole UBC was forced to resign



1980... and University of Cape Town students take to the streets demonstrating solidarity with boycotting school pupils

organisation of black university and technical college students was less directed than that of Cosas. Originally formed as the student wing of the newly-formed Black Consciousness Organisation, Azapo, late in 1979, much of the first year was spent debating the narrow philosophy that Azapo had adopted. It was only at the July 1981 Congress, held at Wilgerspruit outside Johannesburg, that a clear direction emerged which rejected Black Consciousness and committed Azaso to the broad democratic struggle, lead by the working class.

Out of step

The events of 1976 and 1977 also had a profound impact on Nusas. The extent to which Nusas had been out of step with the militancy of black school and university students had been clearly brought home by the theme that had been chosen for 1976 - 'A Year for Peace'.

It was therefore from one of the weakest periods in its entire history that Nusas emerged with a new and dynamic direction. The 1977 and 1978 themes of 'Africanization' and 'Education for an African Future' drastically altered the emphasis of Nusas, moving it away from the protest politics that had dominated activity in the 1960's and 1970's, to the democratic organization of students on campus.

1980 stands out as another milestone in the history of student struggle in South Africa.

Again student anger reached a level where there was no alternative to militant action. In April, coloured school students in the Western Cape began boycotting classes in protest against their poor educa-

tional facilities.

The Western Cape students were soon joined by school and university students throughout the country. The boycott spread as students shifted their attention beyond the immediate issues and mobilized around the broader demand for a truly 'democratic education' as part of a truly democratic South Africa.

When they decided to end the boycott, students had come to realize that it was not the boycott itself that was the essential component of their struggle. It was rather the organisation that it generated. In order to effectively contest apartheid education, students would need organisation at every level, from each specific school through to a structure for national co-ordination and leadership.

The significance of the two new student organisations, Cosas and Azaso, was therefore increasingly appreciated.

Broader struggle

These organisations together with Nusas stressed the need for student struggle to be properly integrated into the broader struggle for democracy in South Africa

Azaso, Cosas and Nusas all joined the campaigns of this period including the Free Mandela Campaign, Red Meat boycott, Wilson-Rowntree boycott, Anti-Republic Day activities, and boycott of the elections for the 'dummy' South African Indian Council, which all addressed themselves to different aspects of the overall struggle. The 1981 Republic Day activities, with the slogan 'Forward to a People's Republic' saw the three student organisations coming together publicly for the first time in a 'democratic student alliance'

Yet, even at this high point of militancy, it was the organisation that was occurring in the schools and on the campuses themselves that was to provide the greatest pointer to the way forward. When a range of prominent student leaders were detained for lengthy periods, and some subsequently served with five-year banning orders, the student movement was not in fact demobilized. Whilst the presence of the leaders was missed, Cosas, Azaso and Nusas all continued to grow and develop.

Non-racialism

At the 1983 Azaso Congress, held in Cape Town, an event occurred that marked the extent to which non-racialism has been established as a principle of the progressive student movement. As the highlight of the Congress, and what the Azaso newsletter called 'the most historic moment in the development of the student movement', a range of the most prominent student leaders of the past decade shared a platform in discussing the different aspects of their common history. Diliza Mji, Saso president in 1976 until his arrest and banning; 'Terror' Lekhota, permanent organiser of Saso until his imprisonment on Robben Island, Dan Sechaba Montsitsi and 'Prof' Morobe, president and vice-president of the SSRC until their imprisonment on Robben Island and Auret van Heerden, Nusas president in the crucial years of 1978 and 1979, captivated the packed hall with their views on how the past informed the present.

'Organise, Mobilise, Educate' - this was the common call of the speakers, and one which pointed the road ahead for the democratic student movement

