

# **LETTER TO THE EDITOR**

## **THOR CHEMICALS TRAGEDY**

Dear Sir,

Not long ago, I had the unhappy task of interviewing the mother of a worker employed by Thor Chemicals while her son was lying in hospital in a coma. I cannot adequately convey her anguish as she related the physical and mental change that she had seen in her son in the preceding months.

The agony of workers at Thor Chemicals as a result of mercury poisoning highlights the mercilessness of capitalism-imperialism when faced with a choice between the safety of people and the maximisation of profits.

Industries in South Africa have no concern for the effect of their toxic waste on people and the environment because alternative methods of disposal would decrease their profits. The practice has been that industries aim to maximise their profits with scant regard for people and the environment. Thor Chemicals is an example of this - a company that exposed its workers to amounts of mercury which threatened their lives and it is only when this danger was made public that the company closed down that part of the plant.

These same industries have the audacity to spend huge sums of money advertising the environment-friendly nature of their products and methods of production. It has become fashionable for all industries to advertise how they are contributing towards preserving the environment and the welfare of the people. Some companies, like SA Tioxide (a Company which had previously been notorious for its disregard of the environment), actually changed its logo to reflect this sudden "concern" for the environment. Other companies, e.g. AECI, fund nature reserves in order perpetuate this facade.

This attitude of imperialism is evident in other countries as well. The Third World countries especially have been victims of these profit-seekers. Resources of these countries have been exploited by imperialist powers with little regard for the welfare of the peoples of these countries.

The dangers highlighted above are inevitable under a capitalist-imperialist economic system. This disregard for the safety of workers in surrounding areas and for the environment in general, emphasises the aim of capitalism-

imperialism, i.e. to make the greatest profit possible. The welfare of people will always take second place to this.

Yours faithfully,

M.S.

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### **DID YOU KNOW ???**

1. Namibia has recently been begging for alms to the tune of R22 million for drought relief. At the same time the Namibian government took delivery of a luxurious R75 million presidential jet from France. (Daily News 27/8/92)

2. After talks with Nelson Mandela, the notorious collaborator A.Rajbansi described the ANC leader as someone "he could do business with". (Sunday Tribune Herald 30/08/92)

3. In an interview published in the Daily News (15/9/1992) Nelson Mandela says he "got frightened" about the state of the South African economy after he had received a briefing from Trevor Manuel, head of the ANC's Economic Department. And on what basis did the head of the ANC's Economic Department base his analysis that so "frightened" the ANC president? According to Mandela, Trevor Manuel had just been briefed by Derek Keys, the Nat Minister of Finance!

Makes you think, doesn't it !

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