

# editorial

This issue of Critical Health is different to our usual publication.

It is dedicated to Neil Aggett:

- \* as a doctor and trade unionist,
- \* as a tribute to the ideals he worked and died for
- \* and in support of his understanding of health and society.

In this edition we are also making a statement of support for progressive change in South Africa.

Critical Health and the editorial collective join all those who have expressed abhorance at the death of Neil Aggett and the security laws which make detention possible.

While these laws still exist we support the Detainees' Parents Support Committee's call for improved medical care of detainees. We also align ourselves with those who call for the unconditional release of all political detainees.

Neil saw illness as a manifestation of people's living and working conditions. He realised that to treat them effectively he had to change those conditions. The best way for him to play a part in achieving this change was to work as a trade unionist.

His ideals and understanding of the broader issues in South Africa and the price he was prepared to pay for them raises questions about our role as health workers in South Africa.

Neil chose to put his effort into trade unionism rather than working solely in the health sphere as a vehicle for change. This is not a path open to all of us. It takes a particular type of person to be a trade unionist. There are other ways to contribute towards meaningful change in South Africa.

Progressive work is needed in every sphere. In the health sphere there are some obvious needs. There is a need for all health workers to understand and research the links between health and society and to clearly illustrate the root causes of illness.

We need to translate that understanding into working for change in the health sector specifically and society in general.

We need to establish the basis for the democratic organization of all health workers. We must also demand major changes in our own working conditions and break down the divisions between all health workers.

We must involve ourselves in demanding conditions which will allow people to lead a more healthy life. We must work together to guarantee the right to proper housing and sanitation, improved working conditions and access to adequate health services.

Through these activities we hope to contribute towards the struggle for a democratic South Africa. Above all we need to be critical of our work at all stages.

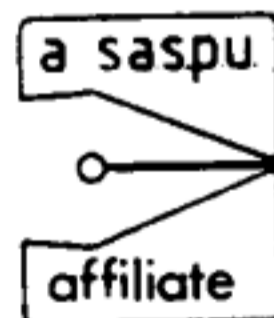
The precise direction of change needed in the health sector is not clearly defined. Many health workers have ideas about what change is needed and how best to go about that change. Critical Health hopes to play some part in facilitating debate on these issues.

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This special edition was put together by friends and colleagues of Neil in conjunction with the editorial collective of Critical Health.

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