

STATEMENT OF THE UDF GENERAL SECRETARY
TO THE AGM OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN HEALTH
WORKERS CONGRESS HELD ON 1 JULY IN DURBAN.

On behalf of all those in the country striving towards the creation of a society free of injustice, ~~and~~ mental and physical suffering I greet this Conference of Democratic Health Workers. This conference comes at a moment in our history when the country is suffering the birthpangs of a new order. The ~~moment's~~ significance ^{is} enhanced by the fact that the process of breaking down the evil system of apartheid and building a new democratic order ~~is~~ taking place side by side.

Health Workers have a special contribution to make in this great struggle towards peace, democracy and justice.

You more than anybody else are sensitised to the unequal and unjust health system. You in your daily work are faced with the brutal wounds of apartheid - the fragmentation and lack of co-ordination of the health system, the insufficient funds allocated to black hospitals and clinics etc.

It is clear that what is needed is a fundamental transformation of the health system, one which is truly visionary and which takes into account the real nature of the South African society, one which takes into account the deep process of creating a new nation which our society is presently embroiled in.

The past few years have seen the ideological disintegration of the regime. The ruling ideology is rejected not only by the vast majority of the oppressed but also by an increasing number of professionals. — *black and white.*

Our struggle has also produced democratic organisations on all fronts including the health front. These organisations have developed a rich culture of democracy with themselves. Every attempt is being made to ensure that people are at the centre of decision making. The process of empowering ourselves has also been set in motion.

In my opinion this is precisely what the weekend conference is all about. We are searching for a health system that serves the people but also involves them.

On the health front we need to develop the theory and practice of a People's Health System.

If it is the persuasion of justice and democracy geared towards securing the physical, mental and social wellbeing of our people that moves thousands of our compatriots to commit the ultimate sacrifice, than does this not make our people in the civic, youth, women and trade unions allies of the health workers. *I suggest it does.*

Many of the issues which progressive organisations campaign around, are directly linked to work of the health workers, the struggle for decent housing, and the fight against poverty and unemployment are just some of the things which causes diseases like TB, diarrhoea, pneumonia etc.

All
Professional health workers need to search for people centred initiatives and become organically linked to them with the aim of enriching the process of developing a people's health system.

So let us squarely put our problem to the people and make it known to them that the present health system fails to address the root cause of the disease ie apartheid itself. Let us make it known to them health workers face an impossible task as long as apartheid remains intact.

Finally let us use this occasion to strengthen and nurture our resolve and courage. Let us with renewed vigour beckon the freedom that looms in the horizon. ~~and so~~

Let us ensure that this year, 1990 becomes truly the year of DEMOCRATIC People's Action For A SOUTH AFRICA.