



One Union's Fight Against Apartheid

**The Story of the Free
Dave Kitson Campaign**

50p



Foreword

It is a measure of the cold and repressive nature of the Apartheid state that it can continue to hold a man in prison for 16 years out of a 20 year sentence without considering remission.

Dave Kitson has paid a heavy price for principles and ideals which he shared with many of his TASS contemporaries. I knew him well as an active member at a time when the union was establishing itself as a progressive and campaigning organisation. He played a full part in the industrial activity of the time and he was determined to secure the best possible conditions and opportunities for his fellow members. So it came as no surprise, when he carried on that struggle, albeit in an altogether more hostile environment, when he returned to South Africa.

Right from the beginning of his arrest and detention without trial, TASS (then DATA) rallied around Dave and his young family and started a campaign for his release. Sixteen years later the campaign, which is directed by the TASS Kitson Committee, goes on, and our resolve to free Dave and all political prisoners in South Africa remains undiminished.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ken Gill".

General Secretary

Dave Kitson and TASS

At the annual conference of the A.E.S.D. in 1955, the delegate from Lea Valley branch raised an awkward question about how holders of the Association's scholarship to Ruskin College were selected. He felt there should be more stress on service in the Labour movement and cited the example of an A.E.S.D. scholar who had gone from Ruskin to become Assistant to the Personnel Manager of the Daily Mirror. The delegate was Dave Kitson. No-one who heard him – not even Dave himself – guessed that he would prove his commitment to the movement by spending 20 years of his life imprisoned for his service to the working class of another country, South Africa.

Dave Kitson was born in South Africa in 1919. His mother was South African and his father was a Scot who grew up in London. Dave was a hard-working student and gained an engineering degree at Howard College, University of Natal.

At the age of 28, in October 1947, Dave came to England. He soon found a job

as an Aircraft Designer with the De Havilland Aircraft Company and joined the appropriate union, A.E.S.D.

He told the 1955 conference that he applied for the A.E.S.D.'s Ruskin Scholarship "because I wanted to become a greater menace afterwards than I was before". He won the Scholarship and found his two years (1952-54) at Ruskin useful, although he felt that the courses there were too much geared to the Oxford University syllabus and "the politics and economics put forward by the University of Oxford authorities were designed to give a mental attitude which was not really suitable for a member of the working class".

After Ruskin, Dave worked for the British Oxygen Company, where he was offered promotion on condition that he would give up being a Shop Steward. Dave refused. He was sacked, black-listed by other companies and in 1959, with his wife Norma, whom he had married three years earlier, returned to South Africa.



Arrest and Trial

Dave arrived back in South Africa at a turning point in the history of the South African liberation movement. In 1952 the African and Indian National Congresses had launched the Defiance Campaign, and thousands of volunteers went to gaol for breaking apartheid laws. In 1955 the Congress Alliance held a great "Congress of the People" at Kliptown, near Johannesburg, where delegates of all races proclaimed:

"We, the people of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to know that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of all the people".

But by the beginning of 1960 it was already clear that the policy of mass passive resistance had failed. Then on March 21 came the shootings at Sharpeville. The South African police opened fire on a crowd demonstrating against the Pass Laws outside a police station at Sharpeville in the southern Transvaal. They shot 69 people dead and wounded 188.

In the State of Emergency which followed thousands were detained and the African National Congress and the Pan-Africanist Congress were banned.

The leaders of the ANC decided that violence was inevitable. In his statement from the dock in April 1964, Nelson Mandela described how he and his colleagues felt that South Africa was drifting into an inter-racial civil war. To stop this, they decided that the ANC must change its policy of non-violence to the extent that it would no longer disapprove of "properly



Top right: Sharpeville, March 21 1961. Right: Delegates from all over South Africa came to the Congress of the People

controlled" violence. But the ANC itself was to remain a mass political organisation. Armed action would be carried out by a new organisation, Umkonto we Sizwe (Spear of the People).

Umkonto announced its existence in a Manifesto issued from underground on December 16 1961. It declared:

"The time comes in the life of any nation when there remain only two choices — submit or fight. That time has now come to South Africa. We shall not submit and we have no choice but to hit back by all means in our power in defence of our people, our future and our freedom".

Umkonto launched a campaign of sabotage of government buildings and key economic installations. If the sabotage campaign failed to bring the regime to its senses, the organisation decided to draw up plans for full-scale guerrilla war.

As one of the small number of white South Africans who had thrown in their lot with the liberation movement, Dave understood the decision to form Umkonto. In a letter to the union, he wrote:

"... I have always tried to hold dear those ideals to which I know TASS

Kitson questioned for 36 hours, wife claimed

SUNDAY TIMES REPORTER

TWO weeks before Mrs. Norma Kitson, of Johannesburg, was detained under the 90-day clause she approached the SUNDAY TIMES with the allegation that her husband, David, had been interrogated non-stop for 36 hours by the Security Branch and had collapsed twice.

She said she had been reliably informed that cold water was thrown on him to revive him and the interrogation continued. Mr. Kitson, an engineer, was detained under the 90-day law on June 23. A month later his wife also was arrested.

When I interviewed Mrs. Kitson she said she was "terrified" at the change in her husband since his arrest.

She had been allowed to see him twice and she described his condition as "white and shaken."

Mrs. Kitson, 30-year-old mother of two small children, said she had been told her husband had been seen to collapse twice during interrogation and was revived by having water thrown over him.

"When I saw my husband I asked him if he had fainted. He replied: 'I can't remember what happened. It was awful. It was terrible...'"



Mr. DAVID KITSON... his wife "terrified" at change in him since his arrest.



Mrs. NORMA KITSON... told to stop "this fuss".

in solitary confinement; who is not allowed to read or write—and who spends his days and nights since he was interrogated — he tells me—lying on the floor of his freezing cell with his blankets

released and had stood on the Johannesburg City Hall steps with her two small children in protest against his detention—she would not be allowed to see her husband again.



Norma Kitson, with Steven, 7, and one-year old Mandy, demonstrating on the steps of Johannesburg City Hall

aspires. This attitude has been buttressed by the day to day experiences I went through as an active member in England. It is just that in this country different procedures have to be applied to achieve the same ends ... ”.

Later, at his trial, he told how he joined Umkonto in 1962. He became a member of the Technical Committee and gave technical advice to Umkonto units. He also attended meetings of the Logistics Committee.

After Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki and other leaders of Umkonto were arrested at Rivonia in July 1963, Dave played an important part in trying to keep the organisation going. With three others, he formed an ad hoc group which aimed to continue some of Umkonto's activities until the liberation movement could assess the new situation.

By the end of 1963 Dave was expecting to be detained at any moment. For another six months he managed to evade arrest. On June 22 1964 he was detained under the '90-day law' which gave the police powers to hold 'suspects' incommunicado and in solitary confinement for 90 days. After three months of solitary, Dave was re-detained for a further 90 days.

With Steven, aged 7 and Mandy, who was only one and a half years old, Dave's wife Norma demonstrated on the steps of Johannesburg City Hall, calling on the authorities to charge or release her husband. Then she too was arrested and held for a month in solitary.

During his detention, police interrogators tortured Dave to try and make him give information about Umkonto's activities. In one non-stop 36-hour period of interrogation, he collapsed twice and was revived with buckets of cold water. He was forced to stand for long periods, day and night, without rest, subjected to foul language and finally left to sleep on a concrete floor wrapped in a blanket.

Finally, in November, he was brought to court, charged with sabotage, recruiting others for military training and receiving money to finance a campaign "for the repeal or modification" of the laws of South Africa. On trial with Dave were Wilton Mkwayi, a leader of the ANC, who was Number 1 accused, Laloo Chiba, John Matthews and S R Maharaj.

Altogether the five were charged with conspiring to commit 58 acts of sabotage, including blowing up pylons and railway lines and cutting telephone wires.

Dave was accused of serving on the Technical Committee of Umkonto's High Command from 1962 until May 1963, and afterwards on its Logistics Committee. He was alleged to have obtained parts for a radio transmitter and to have possessed a firearm which he handed over to Wilton Mkwayi. He was also said to have helped print and distribute a leaflet and to have disposed of a typewriter on which "subversive" documents had been typed.

For these "crimes" Wilton Mkwayi was sentenced to life imprisonment, Laloo Chiba to 18 years, John Matthews to 15 years and S R Maharaj to 12 years. Dave got 20 years.



Wilton Mkwayi



Laloo Chiba



Mac Maharaj

Pictures by International Defence and Aid Fund

“I could run, or stand. So I stood”

I am a white South African who was born in this country. I went to school with South Africans, to University with South Africans and fought in the war with South Africans. I feel an affinity with white South Africans.

As I grew up, however, and came to think for myself, it became difficult for me to reconcile the oppression of the non-Europeans here with the philosophical outlook of the Western civilisation we whites purport to defend. Clearly the situation was contrary to the Christian tradition in which I had been reared.

The only organisation I could find which stood for equality of opportunity, regardless of race, was the Communist Party. Later, I came to accept the Marxist standpoint that mankind can only achieve its complete liberation with the achievement of Communism.

Today communism is a swearword which is directed against a multitude of sins. Different people understand different things by “communism”. For my part, I saw communism as a movement against racial discrimination and oppression.

I found that when I got married, domesticity made bigger demands than devotion to ideals. I also found that I was still a South African at heart and wanted my children to be South Africans, so I came back to the land of my birth. I came back from England, where I had gone to further my career, with the clear intention of not taking part in any kind of political activity at all but of devoting myself to my

family. This attitude was buttressed by the fact that the Authorities knew about my past, for my passport was confiscated on my return. I lived this way for about a year.

Then, Sharpeville took place. The Active Citizen Force was mobilised. In the Emergency, hundreds of innocuous people were arbitrarily detained. In view of my past, I could easily have been one of them. The Government, supported by a majority of the whites, had turned a granite face to the Africans and their fellow-sufferers and had flouted the mainstream of development along which the world is going. This is still the case.

I could run, or stand. So I stood. It was natural, in view of my past, to find a home in the South African Communist Party. At least my participation would show that I stood alongside the Africans and their fellows. It showed the world that another white had chosen the side of humanity. In view of the Nationalist opposition to Communism, nothing could underline my detestation of apartheid more than being a Communist.

With the passage of time the inevitable reaction to the Government's stand took place. Poqo arose. There were spontaneous acts of appalling hate, such as the Paarl riots. I and my family could just as easily have been the victims of such violence as any other family. I felt that I should join at least in the attempt to direct opposition in a

Dave Kitson's statement in the Dock

Johannesburg Supreme Court, December 18th 1964

constructive and disciplined manner so as to try and avert danger to life or outbursts of racialistic terror.

I joined Umkonto for the same reasons that have been set forth at length by Nelson Mandela in another Court, namely that there were no lawful methods of effective opposition which remained open.

This is not the first time that political frustration has driven South Africans to break the law in order to achieve the ideals in which they believed. I would remind the Court that a few weeks ago the State President of the Republic of South Africa unveiled a plaque in a prison cell in which he had been kept for participating in armed rebellion in time of war.

These men, and many like them, were prepared to take the course they did, regardless of personal consequences, at times when the country was at war, for the sake of their ideals. Although their activities were against the law, their ideals were, and still are respected.

After all, our ideals of equal rights for everybody are equally noble. So far, however, the only response has been increased repression.

This does not mean that the grievances of the overwhelming masses of South Africa's blacks and whites alike have been met. It only means that my participation in voicing them has ended.

I do not see how I could have done otherwise.



Picture by International Defence and Aid Fund

The Kitson Committee

When the news of Dave's arrest came through, his colleagues in DATA moved into action.

On August 16 DATA members, led by the then General Secretary, George Doughty, held a demonstration in Hyde Park, followed by a march through the West End and a vigil and poster parade outside South Africa House in Trafalgar Square.

The Association's Executive Committee protested to the South African Government and the protest was supported by the International Federation of Commercial, Clerical and Technical Employees, representing four and a half million white-collar workers.

On August 17 the Executive Committee of the AEU wrote to the South African Ambassador asking that Dave and Norma Kitson be released or charged and when it received no reply, issued a statement saying that South Africa had 'degenerated into a country that is ruled by expediency rather than law'.

The Kitson Committee was formed in August, with representatives from the divisional councils of the Association in

the London area and with Des Starrs, Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, as Chairman.

The Committee urged DATA members to write or send telegrams to the South African Ambassador asking that the Kitsons be released or charged and to write to Dave and Norma themselves to let them know they had not been forgotten.

When Dave was charged, DATA's General Secretary, Archie McAlpine, immediately authorised the transfer of funds to cover his legal costs.

Then the Association launched a £3000 appeal for legal fees and to help Norma and the children. The response was magnificent, with branches all over the country holding collections and fund-raising events. Other unions joined in – among them the AEU, the Fire Brigades Union, the Scottish Commercial Motormen's Union, the Society of Technical Civil Servants, NATSOPA and the Scottish Mineworkers. Students at Ruskin College raised over £50 from a special dance.

At the Association's 1965 Annual Conference, TASS Journal Editor Jim

Mortimer was able to announce that over £3800 had been raised for the Fund.

TASS's fund-raising activities for Dave Kitson have continued to this day, with nearly £500 being raised at the 1980 Annual Conference for the Kitson Fund.

Thanks!

What has really made me grateful, and proud to be a member of DATA, is to read of the scale of your support for me. Even while in solitary confinement I had some inkling of it with a wonderful uplift for my morale, for although I was alone it made me realise that the world was with me. I have heard that letters came for me by the hundred although I did not receive any.

Thank you very much indeed.

Please thank for me the E.C., for its financial support to my family, and all those members of DATA who took up cudgels for me. I am most grateful to you all.

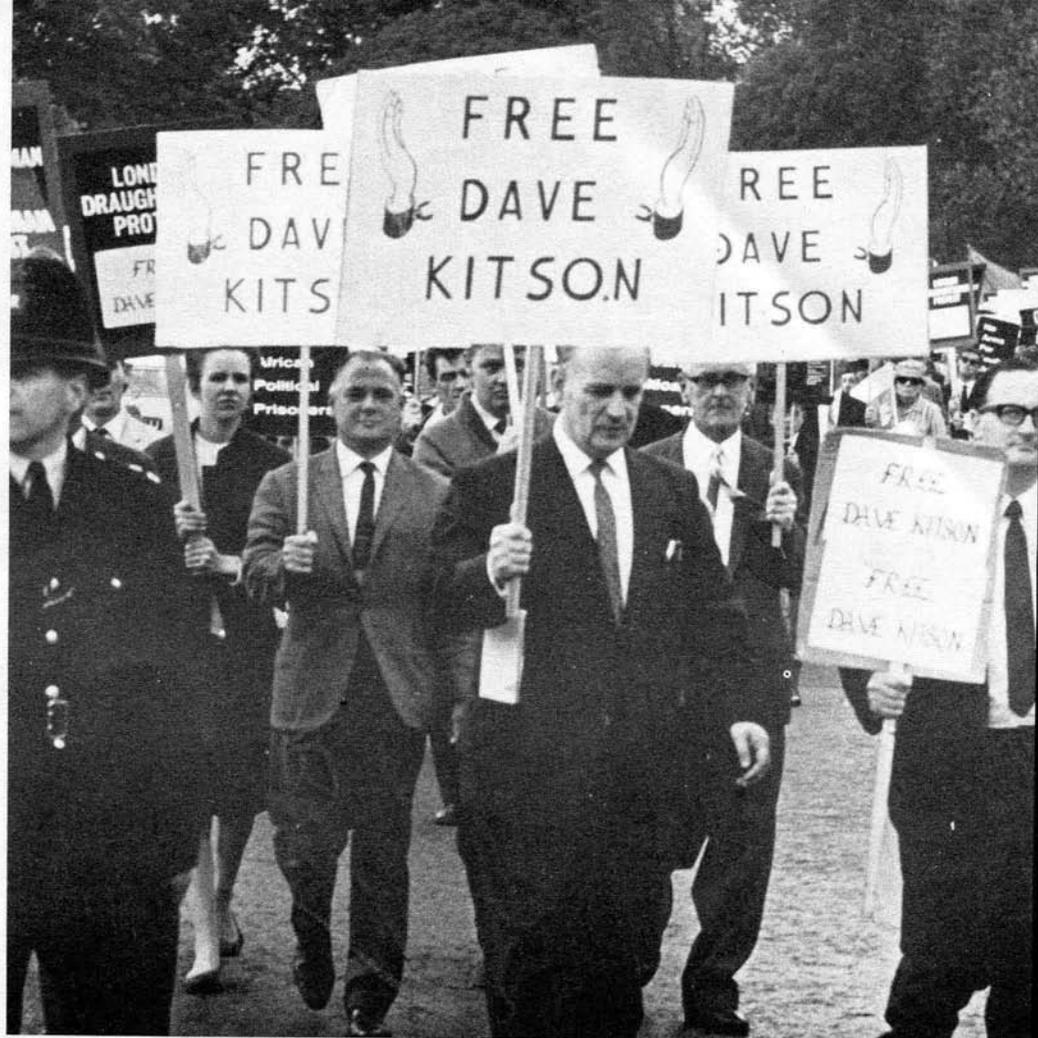
Ever since DATA was good enough to send me to Ruskin College I have felt a sense of responsibility to the Association, even during those times

DATA members march through London to demand Dave Kitson's release, after his detention in August 1964

when I appeared to have disappeared into limbo. I have always tried to hold dear those ideals to which I know DATA aspires. This attitude has been buttressed by the day to day experiences I went through as an active DATA member in England. It is just that in this country different procedures have to be applied to achieve the same ends. Whatever other condition my head may now be in, in consequence, one thing is certain – it is still unbowed. I thank you all most earnestly for helping to keep it that way.

Yours sincerely,
Dave Kitson

Letter from Dave Kitson to DATA, written during his trial and before he was sentenced to 20 years imprisonment.



Ruskin College march: Whitsun 1969

As well as TASS, Ruskin College also had a special connection with Dave. In 1968 the Ruskin Kitson Committee was formed, involving both staff and students at the College.

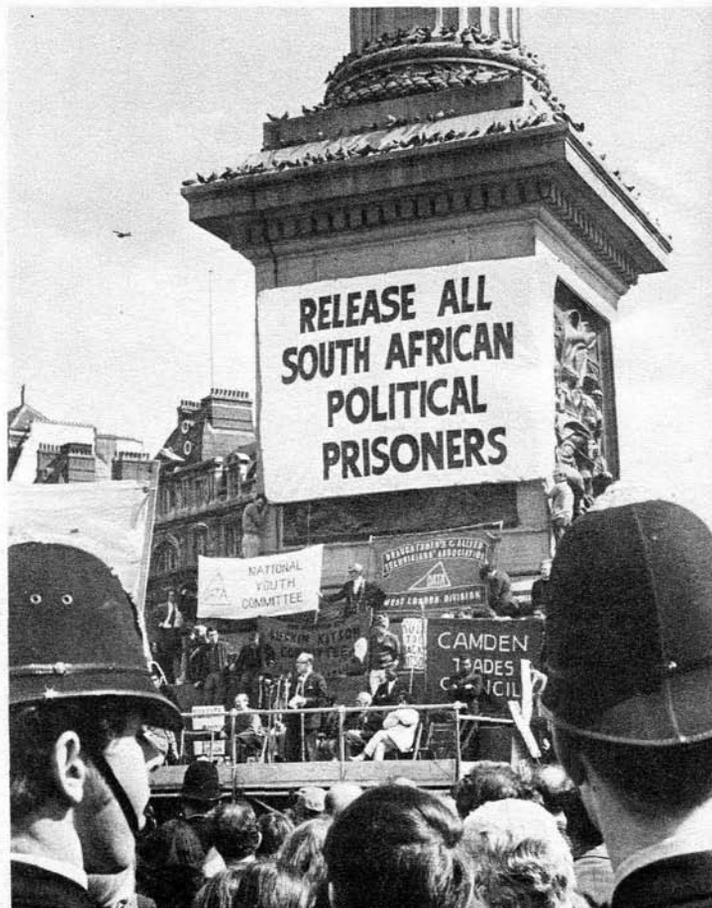
For two successive years, in 1969 and 1970, the Committee organised a four-day Whitsun march from Oxford to London, with meetings at High Wycombe, Uxbridge and Chiswick, along the route. On the 1969 march, walkers were harassed by the National Front, who drove past in cars shouting abuse. On Whit Monday, 1969, the march swelled to more than 2000 on the final leg to Trafalgar Square.

At a rally in the Square, around 5000 supporters listened to ANC leader Oliver Tambo, Ernie Roberts, Assistant General Secretary of the AEU, Bishop Trevor Huddleston, John Ennals of the Ruskin College Board of Governors and Robin Blackburn from the London School of Economics. The rally was chaired by DATA's General Secretary George Doughty.

In preparation for the 1969 march the Ruskin Committee had circulated every trades council and Constituency Labour Party in the country, with information about Dave Kitson and what he stood for. The march and rally were held again the following year.

The Ruskin Committee has involved each year's new intake of students in the campaign to free Dave and in anti-apartheid activities. Holders of the TASS Scholarship to Ruskin have played a special role in this, and the TASS award is now called the David Kitson Scholarship.

Right: Rally in Trafalgar Square organised by Ruskin Kitson Committee at Whitsun 1969. Far right: Dave's son Steven heads the march from Oxford to London





The Kitson Campaign

As Dave began his long term of imprisonment, the Kitson Committee faced the twin tasks of campaigning for his release and doing whatever it could to make his life inside more bearable. By locking away its opponents, the South African regime is trying to turn them into forgotten men and women. The Kitson Committee was determined that this would not happen to Dave.

From its early years the Committee asked supporters to "Send Dave a Card" at Christmas. Tens of thousands of cards have been sent over the years — the prison receives thousands every year. Although Dave himself is allowed to receive only 12 cards each Christmas, the prisoners know that sackloads of mail are arriving.

The Christmas Card campaign has been taken up by the Anti-Apartheid Movement and other organisations. They publish lists of the names and addresses of political prisoners' families in South Africa, Namibia and (until independence) Zimbabwe, each year, so that many other prisoners and their families now know that they have not been forgotten by the world outside.

Dave began his prison sentence in Pretoria Local Gaol, where conditions

were grim, but where the political prisoners were kept apart from the others and soon developed a group solidarity. An ex-prisoner has told how

CHRISTMAS CARD CAMPAIGN 1979

Arrested and sentenced to 20 years in gaol because he could not tolerate the repression and injustice that he saw all around him, TASS member, Dave Kitson, will spend his 16th Christmas in Pretoria Local Prison, South Africa.

**REMEMBER DAVE AT CHRISTMAS THIS YEAR AND
SEND A CARD TO:**

I D Kitson
Pretoria Local Jail
Pretoria
South Africa

at Christmas in 1965 they performed excerpts from *Murder in the Cathedral* — with props made of toilet-roll cartons, mailbag string and blankets, and put on a "concert" compered by Dave.

Later — after a spell at Pretoria Central — they were moved to Pretoria Local's "New Section". Physical conditions were better — with toilets and wash-basins in the cells — but psychologically Dave and the others suffered from the ban on news, restrictions on visitors and letters and above all the monotony of

spending long hours every day locked in their cells.

After the escape of three prisoners at the end of 1979, the "politicals" were moved to Pretoria Maximum Security Prison, where they were harassed by being constantly woken at night and put into cells which back onto the execution yard. Now they have been told that they will be moved back to the "Local" in April 1981.

At the beginning of Dave's sentence all political prisoners were kept in the bottom "D" Grade, so Dave could only receive one letter and have one visit every six months: now, as an "A" Grade prisoner he is allowed a letter and a visit every month. But the most important form of discrimination against political prisoners remains — they get no remission.

Some of the money collected by TASS has been used to buy "extras" for the prisoners — among them a film projector for special film shows.

In the last 16 years Dave has earned himself the title of "The World's Best Educated Prisoner". The prison authorities do not allow prisoners to take post-graduate courses. So Dave now has degrees in Economics and





Above: Mandy Kitson speaks to delegates at the TASS Kitson Committee's meeting at 1979 TASS conference.

Left: A TASS delegation presents Labour Foreign Secretary David Owen with the 1978 petition asking the British Government to call for Dave Kitson's release.

Political Science, in Applied Mathematics, a Diploma in Data-Metrics and a pass in a university course in Zulu, as well as his BSc in Mechanical Engineering. Altogether he has taken 53 courses in different subjects.

In 1978 the prison authorities banned study facilities for political prisoners. But after a campaign by the Prisoners Education Committee in South Africa and SATIS in Britain, these have been at least partially restored.

Since 1974 TASS has sent deputations to successive British Foreign Secretaries asking them to make representations to the South African Government for Dave's release.

The first meeting was with Jim Callaghan who said that the Government had no "locus standi" in the case because Dave was a South African citizen.

Two years later, in October a delegation led by Hugh Scanlon had a sympathetic hearing from Callaghan's successor Anthony Crosland. Crosland asked the union to raise Dave's case direct with the South African Ambassador in London. The union did so and was refused a meeting. Crosland followed this up with a personal approach to the South African Ambassador — but he died before any further reply was received.

The new Foreign Secretary David Owen

undertook to raise Dave's case with the South African authorities. At the same time the union agreed not to publicise its campaign so that diplomatic approaches could take place "without duress". It launched a petition calling on the British Government to "prevail upon the South African Government for the release of Dave Kitson".

In spite of being circulated only among members of TASS, students at Ruskin College and MPs, the petition gathered 18,500 signatures.

About the same time a letter signed by leading British trade unionists — among them many members of the TUC General Council — was sent to Prime Minister Botha urging that Dave should be released "on humanitarian grounds".

In 1980 TASS had another meeting with the Government — this time with the Conservative Under-Secretary responsible for South African affairs, Richard Luce. TASS's General Secretary Ken Gill once again asked the Government to raise the question of Dave's release with the South African ambassador, as well as to make a public statement in support of Dave and to press for the restoration of study rights for political prisoners.

As a result, TASS held its first-ever meeting with the South African Ambassador, Dawie de Villiers, on



September 23 1980. The Ambassador agreed to convey the union's concern about study rights for prisoners, lack of remission and the general physical conditions in which "politicals" are held, back to Pretoria. Subsequently, the union has been told that South Africa's Foreign Affairs Minister, R F Botha, has raised the issues with the Minister of Justice and that the Ambassador will keep TASS informed about his reply.

According to South African press reports, Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington did raise the cases of Dave Kitson and David Rabkin, and pressed the question of remission, when he met Prime Minister Botha last year.

TASS's campaign means that every member of the union knows about Dave Kitson and the part he has played in the anti-apartheid struggle. The campaign has ensured that Dave has become a symbol of opposition to apartheid in the wider labour movement. And because of Dave, TASS has made the fight against apartheid and the struggle for the international isolation of South Africa, one of its major concerns.

Left: Every year the TASS Kitson Committee organises a meeting and information stall at annual conference

How TASS fights apartheid

TASS took a practical stand against apartheid as early as 1958, when conference decided to sell the Association's holding in South African stock. The motion went on to ask the TUC to recommend to its affiliated bodies that they do likewise. Thirteen years later, in 1971, the TUC did so and in the following year Congress passed a motion proposed by TASS which committed the TUC itself to withdraw from companies with investments in South Africa.

TASS has always seen the campaign to free Dave Kitson as part of the wider struggle for the overthrow of apartheid. In particular it has campaigned for the economic, military and cultural isolation of South Africa, for support for the liberation movement and for solidarity action with SACTU and black South African trade unionists. The union has given strong support to the Anti-Apartheid Movement.

The year after Dave's sentence, in



Picture by Morning Star

A TUC delegation led by General Secretary Len Murray protests against the banning of South African trade unionists

1965, DATA conference urged the Labour Government to support UN economic sanctions against South Africa.

When a Tory Government was returned in 1970, one of its first acts was to announce that it would end the Labour embargo against arms sales to South Africa. The 1971 DATA conference declared that it was "completely opposed to the sale of arms to South Africa" and instructed DATA's Executive Committee to give full backing to any member who refused to work on a South African arms contract. DATA forwarded its motion to the June 1971 conference of the AUEW.

The Yeovil branch of the Association had already taken action by blacking work on seven Wasp helicopters which Westland Helicopters Ltd. had contracted to build for the South African Defence Force.

Next year the Association re-affirmed its support for members who blacked arms destined for South Africa and pledged "moral, political and medical support to liberation movements in Southern Africa and Rhodesia . . .".

In 1972 TASS decided to affiliate to the Anti-Apartheid Movement and to "actively support any action taken by the Movement, as approved by the

Executive Committee". Since then the union has been among the sponsors of all the major demonstrations and conferences initiated by the Movement – among them the national demonstration against arms sales to South Africa on March 23 1975, the rally in support of the liberation movements in Zimbabwe in November 1975, the demonstration calling for a South African arms embargo on March 6 1977, the rally to demand effective sanctions against the Smith regime on October 11 1978, the National Emergency conference which launched the UN International Year Against Apartheid in March 1978 and the Anti-Apartheid trade union conferences held in London and Scotland in June 1979.

Leading members of TASS have spoken at AAM public events, notably the late John Forrester, Deputy General Secretary, at a conference for trade unionists "Southern Africa and the British Labour Movement" in November 1976. The union also supported the trade union Weeks of Action against Apartheid called by the international trade union movement in 1977 and 1978.

When in 1973 the TUC decided to send a delegation to South Africa, TASS declared itself opposed to the visit. The TUC action was condemned by SACTU

Call to Action!

To all Trade Unionists. From the United Nations.

The General Assembly calls upon trade unions:

To organize rallies and information campaigns among the workers to make them fully aware of the problem of apartheid and to secure their collaboration in industrial action against South Africa.

To support internationally co-ordinated boycotts of South African goods.

To organise international trade-union action to ban handling of goods going to and from South Africa.

To investigate the operations of companies with subsidiaries inside South Africa.

To undertake, in the countries concerned, industrial action against transnational companies which refuse to recognize African trade unions in South Africa and fail to comply with internationally recognized labour standards.

To give moral and financial support to the African and non-racial trade unions in South Africa, including legal assistance to imprisoned and restricted trade unionists.

To intensify the campaigns against the emigration of workers to South Africa.

To request workers not to handle any arms orders to South Africa and to give full support to those workers who, on grounds of conscience, refuse to work on such orders.

From the United Nations General Assembly's Programme of Action Against Apartheid



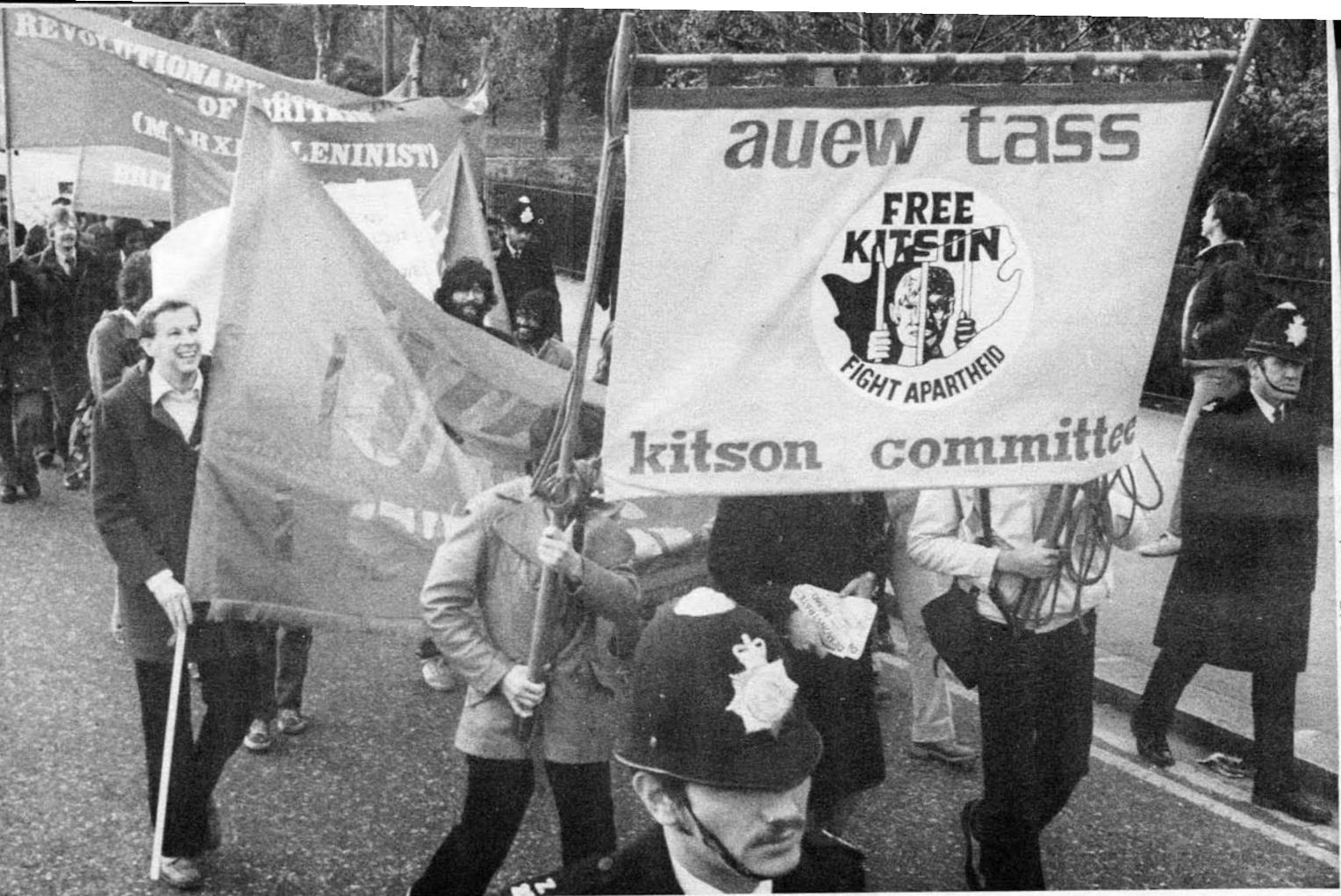
Information Dept., Anti-Apartheid Movement, 21 Charlotte Street, London W1P 9DQ, Telephone 01 000 011

which said that the delegation's visit would be stage-managed by the South African regime.

At the 1973 TUC, R. Henshaw, later Secretary of the TASS Kitson Committee, argued that the only result of the visit would be to give credibility to the apartheid regime: he said that the facts about apartheid were well known and "You do not have to go to South Africa to find out about them". The union's fears were justified when the



TASS members join a picket to demand the release of 71-year old South African trade unionist Oscar Mpetha in November 1980



Picture by Andrew Ward (Report)

Members of TASS Kitson Committee on the Anti-Apartheid Movement demonstration in support of the liberation movements in Zimbabwe in November 1979

delegation, on its return, proposed to overturn TUC policy by dropping opposition to British firms' investment in South Africa where those firms "encouraged black unions".

At a special conference held to discuss the report, in May 1974, TASS together with other unions, among them ASTMS, ACTT and the Weavers Union, argued strongly against it. (In the event, the Report was buried.)

The following year, when British Steel Corporation announced that it was to invest in a major new steel plant in South Africa, the union's General Secretary, Ken Gill, issued a statement deploring the decision and TASS-sponsored MPs were asked to press the Government to stop the investment.

In June 1976 South African police opened fire on demonstrating school students in Soweto. Protests spread all over South Africa and in the months that followed the police killed more than 800 unarmed demonstrators, many of them children.

The 1976 TUC saw a major advance in TUC policy on Southern Africa. A composite emergency motion proposed by the Tobacco Workers Union and seconded by TASS, called for an end to all new British investment in South Africa, a total arms embargo and for support for the South African

liberation movement.

Later in the year it became known that Marconi was planning to sell a troposcatter communications system to the South African Defence Force. To do this it needed a license from the Government. Standing firm on its own and TUC policy, TASS made representations to the Government against the deal on the grounds that the equipment was to be used in South Africa's war against SWAPO guerrillas in Namibia. In an act of betrayal by the Labour Government, Marconi got its license after it had removed a reference to Namibia from its license application.

In the same year TASS gave its support to the South African Metal and Allied Workers Union, when it was refused recognition by British Leyland's South African subsidiary. A document prepared by the Anti-Apartheid Movement "British Leyland and the Metal and Allied Workers Union: A Memorandum to the British Labour Movement" was widely circulated within the union.

The South African Government reacted to the endemic unrest which followed the 1976 Soweto uprisings by banning 18 black organisations in October 1977.

TASS immediately issued a statement

condemning the bannings and called on the British Government to impose an economic embargo against South Africa and to support sanctions at the UN.

TASS has a long record of support for SACTU, which was marked when Ken Gill became the first ever member of the TUC General Council to speak on a SACTU platform on behalf of the TUC, at a meeting held to celebrate SACTU's 25th anniversary on March 22 1980.

1980 saw the establishment of an independent democratic government in Zimbabwe, after a long and bitter armed struggle by the country's liberation movement. On several occasions TASS joined in protests against the Smith and Muzorewa regimes' illegal hangings of freedom fighters and their supporters and was a member of the Zimbabwe Emergency Campaign Committee.

Most recently, the 1979 conference of the union asked the Executive Committee to carry out a more vigorous campaign for the release of South African political prisoners, especially Dave Kitson, and for an end to investment in South Africa. In 1980 conference endorsed the Executive's activities in carrying forward the campaign for the release of political prisoners and sent greetings to the Prisoners Education Campaign Committee in South Africa.

Southern Africa — The Imprisoned Society

In 1980 there were nearly 500 black male political prisoners on Robben Island and seven white political prisoners in Pretoria Maximum Security Prison. There are an estimated 15 women political prisoners in South Africa.

Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Ahmed Kathrada and the other leaders of the ANC who were gaoled for life in the mid-1960s have been joined by hundreds who were sentenced for their part in the new upsurge of resistance which has been growing since the mid-1970s.

In Pretoria all the men who were sentenced with Dave in the 1960s have been released except for Denis Goldberg, who is serving life. Bram Fischer served his life sentence, dying tragically of cancer in 1975. But Dave and Denis have been joined by a new generation of militants — Ray Suttner, David Rabkin, Anthony Holliday, Jeremy Cronin and Renfrew Christie — convicted for their opposition to the regime.

In 1973 the TASS Kitson Committee took the initiative in calling a meeting to plan a new campaign for the release of all South African political prisoners. A

preparatory committee — made up of representatives of the TASS Kitson Committee, Ruskin Kitson Committee, the Anti-Apartheid Movement, Liberation, International Defence and Aid Fund, London Trades Council and the National Union of Students — was formed to organise a conference to launch the campaign. Later they were joined by the British Youth Council and the Roman Catholic organisation, Pax Christi.

The conference “South Africa — The Imprisoned Society” (SATIS) was held in London on December 8 1973.

As a first step, the conference launched a petition demanding the release of all political prisoners in South Africa and calling on the British Government “to exert every pressure on the South African Government to achieve this end”. It was also agreed that the campaign should extend to Namibian and Rhodesian political prisoners as well as South Africans. Thousands of signatures to the petition were collected and it was presented to the Chairman of the UN Committee against Apartheid at the AAM “Freedom Convention” held on June 29.

Later in the year SATIS supporters — among them former South African prisoners — held a 10-day 200-mile sponsored walk from London to Manchester to raise funds for the campaign.

The climax of SATIS’s first year was a four-day visit by ex-American political prisoner Angela Davis. On December 12 Angela spoke at a packed public meeting at Central Hall, Westminster, on a platform with the General Secretary of the Mineworkers Union, Lawrence Daly and Albert Dlomo who had been a prisoner on Robben Island.

On April 21 1975 the South African regime put 13 leaders of the South African Student Organisation (SASO) and the black consciousness movement on trial in Pretoria. They were charged under the Terrorism Act with fostering “feelings of racial hatred” and trying “to persuade blacks of the need for violent revolution”. SATIS supporters picketed South Africa House on the opening day of the trial. On the picket were former political prisoners who had walked from Brighton to London to raise funds for SATIS.



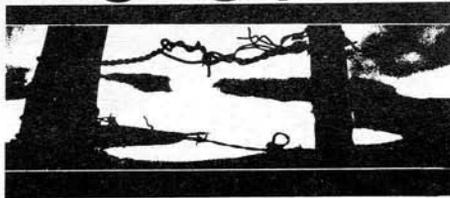
SATIS supporters carry pictures of South African political prisoners on a poster parade to demand the release of Nelson Mandela and all prisoners of apartheid in June 1980

In the first months of 1976 it became clear that the apartheid regime was launching a new wave of terror against its political opponents. First Joseph Mdluli, a veteran of ANC and SACTU, and then a young trade unionist Luke Mazwemba were murdered during interrogation by the South African Security Police.

From May 17 to June 26, South Africa Freedom Day. SATIS organised a daily picket of the South African Embassy in London in which political parties, trade unions, church and youth organisations were all invited to take part. At the same time it launched an Emergency Petition against South African police torture which was presented to Foreign Secretary James Callaghan on June 26.

In Namibia the freedom struggle led by SWAPO was gaining ground. In May 1976, in an attempt to break support for SWAPO, the Pretoria regime sentenced two leading members, Aaron Mushimba and Hendrik Shikongo to death on trumped up charges. SATIS immediately wrote to more than 50 organisations asking them to join an international campaign for their release. It distributed thousands of postcards demanding "Release Mushimba and Shikongo" addressed to Prime

Stop the execution of **SOLOMON MAHLANGU** sentenced to death for fighting apartheid



Minister Vorster, together with leaflets and posters setting out the facts of the case. The two men won leave to appeal against their conviction, and after they had spent months in the death cell, both sentence and verdict were set aside in March 1977.

In April 1977 SATIS called another conference "Repression in Southern Africa" to publicise the new wave of terror in Southern Africa and to widen support for the campaign.

The UN designated the year March 21 1978 – March 20 1979 "International Year against Apartheid". SATIS launched an International Petition to mark the Year calling for freedom for all South African political prisoners and especially for the Pretoria 12 – 11 men and one woman charged with belonging to Umkonto.

On March 2 a young ANC militant, Solomon Mahlangu, was sentenced to death for his part in a shoot out during which two white men were killed. The ANC appealed for an international campaign for his release. In the next year, SATIS helped to distribute thousands of postcards addressed to Prime Minister Vorster protesting against the sentence, as well as leaflets asking supporters to urge British Foreign Secretary David Owen to intervene. In defiance of appeals from the UN, Governments and people all over the world, the South African regime hanged Solomon Mahlangu in the early hours of April 6 1979.

In November the South African courts again imposed a political death sentence – on James Mange, a 24-year old ANC militant convicted of treason. Immediately an ANC Treason Trial Defence Committee was set up to try to save James Mange's life. SATIS helped to circulate a petition

urging Lord Carrington to intervene with the South African Government. It supported pickets outside the South African Embassy, asked for a meeting with Lord Carrington and wrote to all MPs who were known to oppose capital punishment. This time the campaign succeeded. Mange's sentence was commuted on appeal to 20 years imprisonment.

At the same time SATIS was taking up issues concerning the day-to-day life of convicted 'politicals'. In 1978 Denis Goldberg and the other political prisoners in Pretoria Local Prison appealed against a court ruling that they could not receive newspapers or any news of current events. SATIS publicised their case – but the prisoners lost their appeal.

The next move against the prisoners by the South African authorities was to announce that prisoners would no longer be allowed to enrol for "post matriculation studies". In September a Prisoners Education Campaign was launched in South Africa and taken up by SATIS in Britain. The campaign won a partial victory when in May 1980 the Minister of Prisons announced that study rights would be restored.

In the last two years there has been a nation-wide campaign in South Africa for the release of ANC leader Nelson

Picture by Morning Star



Bob Wright and Ken Gill meet Angela Davis on her visit to Britain to support the SATIS campaign for the release of Southern African political prisoners in December 1974

Mandela. This has been backed at the UN and by organisations throughout the world. In Britain the 16th anniversary of Mandela's imprisonment in June 1980 was marked by pickets and meetings and the presentation of a Declaration demanding his release. One of these events was a poster parade organised by SATIS.

From its beginnings in 1963 from an initiative taken by the Kitson Committee, SATIS now plays an important role in campaigning on behalf of political prisoners in Southern Africa. Its work will continue until all those political prisoners – in South Africa and Namibia – are released.

The Future

Unless he is granted remission, Dave Kitson will be released on December 17, 1984, having spent 20 years of his life in gaol.

Ruskin College, Oxford, has offered him a Fellowship – an offer which Dave's intellectual record makes him well-qualified to accept. If Dave wants to come to Britain, TASS is prepared to pay his fare and, with other organisations and friends, will help him to build a new life.

The final decision must be Dave's. If his past is anything to go by, his main concern will be to continue the struggle for a free South Africa.

TASS's fight against apartheid will not end with Dave's release. As this pamphlet goes to press, the UN General Assembly has once again called on the Security Council to impose mandatory sanctions against South Africa. The British Government has made it clear

that, with the other Western powers, it will veto sanctions in the Security Council.

TASS will continue to campaign for a total military and economic boycott of South Africa. We believe that this is the most effective way in which we can support the struggle for freedom in Southern Africa.

Our union supports also the struggle of black workers for trade union rights and the work of the non-racial trade union federation SACTU.

TASS is committed to campaign for the release of all Southern African political prisoners, and for them to be granted remission of their sentences and study and other rights, so long as they remain in gaol.

We are sure that the peoples of South Africa and Namibia will win their freedom. But we believe that the length of the struggle and the price

that they will pay in human suffering depends on the pressure that we put on the British and other Western Governments to end their support for the South African regime.

TASS says

**ISOLATE SOUTH AFRICA –
IMPOSE SANCTIONS NOW!**

**SUPPORT SACTU AND THE
STRUGGLE OF BLACK SOUTH
AFRICAN WORKERS!**

**FREE NELSON MANDELA AND
ALL SOUTH AFRICAN AND
NAMIBIAN POLITICAL
PRISONERS!**

Support the cause of African freedom!

JOIN THE ANTI-APARTHEID MOVEMENT!

The Anti-Apartheid Movement campaigns for freedom in South Africa and Namibia. It works in political parties, trade unions, religious groups, colleges and schools, and with the general public, for an end to all forms of collaboration with the apartheid regime.

The AAM's current campaigns are:

- **Isolate Apartheid South Africa: Sanctions Now!**
Impose UN mandatory economic sanctions against South Africa!
Stop oil supplies to South Africa!
Strengthen the UN arms embargo against the apartheid regime!
Boycott South African goods!
Stop emigration to South Africa!
- **Free Namibia!**
Stop British connivance in South Africa's illegal occupation!
Support SWAPO!
Cancel the Namibian uranium contract!
- **Release all Southern African political prisoners!**
- **Support the Front-Line States!**
Stop South African aggression against Angola and Mozambique!

JOIN NOW!

NAME

ADDRESS

TELEPHONE NO.

Minimum annual membership fees: Individuals: £7.50; students/apprentices, £5; school students/pensioners/claimants, £2; local organisations, £7.50; national organisations, £25

Affiliation rates for national trade unions are on a sliding scale, depending on the size of the union.

Subscriptions to AA NEWS only: UK/Europe £4.50; outside Europe, surface mail £4.50, airmail £6.50.

Membership fees and subscriptions can be paid directly into the AAM's Giro Account — No. 52 513 0004. They can also be paid by Banker's Order — forms available from the AAM Office.

Return to: Anti-Apartheid Movement, 89 Charlotte Street, London WP 2DQ. Tel. 580 5311

The AAM has special material for trade unionists. For further information contact: Chris Child, AAM Trade Union Officer.

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for British engineering

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TASS benefits

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- Free convalescent homes with travelling expenses paid for members and immediate family.
- Lump sum grants.
- Dispute benefit.
- Technical publications.
- Advice on Equal Pay, Discrimination, Employment Protection, Occupational Health and other new legislation.
- The *TASS News and Journal*.
- Careers guidance.

These are in TASS

Secretaries, clerks, typists and all clerical and administrative staff.

Finance and production control staff.

Sales, purchasing and service personnel.

Systems analysts and other computer staff.

Scientists, technologists and technicians.

Engineers and draughtsmen.

Foremen and chargehands.

Testers and inspectors.

Managers and other senior staff.

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