



## Tennyson Makiwane on the New Dance Rhythm

## 'KWELA, MZALA!'



Right in the swing of it.

## UP MY ALLEY

IF the so-called "Patriots" think that I'm going to kick up a hullabaloo about them in this column, they're mistaken.

I have only the heartiest contempt for whoever they may be.

★

CAPE Town Whites made a rush to get their identity cards and it seems that apart from criticisms of their looks in the photographs everything was hunky-dory with them.

Carrying a pass doesn't appear to worry them much, because I guess they don't expect a cop to come up and say "Waar's jou pas?"

● But you can bet there are a lot of Africans wishing those Whites had a black skin for a day . . . the day they forget to take their passes out with them . . . just so that they know what it's like.

★

THE public have got so used to the Russians sending sputniks way up yonder nowadays that asking anybody to comment is like pointing at any star up there and asking him what he thinks of it.

● The best I could get out of a fellow-passenger on the train home was: "Oh, it's just another one of those things."

★

BUT nobody gets used to these Immorality Act cases. Especially when some high shot "stoops low." The latest stooping session in Krugersdorp brought an M.P. to the defence of the stooper.

## DEATHS

ALLY: New Age regrets to announce the death of the father of Rahima and Fatima, two well-known members of the Congress movement. Mr. Ally supported them in their activities and always had a ready welcome for all his members and friends of the family.

"He's an example to his fellow men," said the M.P.

● That sounds like incitement to contravene the Act, to me.

★

WHAT is this I see?

After rubbing my eyes I'm convinced that what I'm reading is the real McCoy. South Africa is sending a shooting team to compete in the world small-bore championships in MOSCOW in August.

● I wonder where they got their passports from.

★

BAAS Strijdom made utterances the other day to the effect that his republic would be a democratic one . . . "I don't think



By ALEX  
LA GUMA

★

either the English-speaking people or the Afrikaans-speaking would tolerate anything else."

● I might be wrong, but I believe that there are some millions of other people in S.A. who wouldn't tolerate anything else.

★

AND further Herr Strijdom says he has information from the "Bantu in their own reserves" (apart from the "Communists and the Leftists") that the policy of the Government was such as to encourage voluntary allegiance to the state.

● Another Strijdom special hand-out.

★

THE Congresses say they're prepared to sit down and talk to anybody and tell them where they stand. But the Unity boys don't believe in conferences, summit or otherwise.

● They can't reach that high.

THEY say our South African "kwela" music is becoming a hit overseas. One of the largest dance organisations in Britain has taken up this South African dance "The Kwela."

Record companies are pressing kwela records as fast as they can go, and disc jockeys are pushing the music over the radio and television. Even more noteworthy, British author Wolf Mankowitz has used a kwela record "Tom Hark" as a theme tune for his play "The Killing Stones."

Of course what is good enough for Britain is always good for us here and lo! our commercial radio is now playing kwela music for all of us to hear. In the past this music was restricted to the Bantu programmes of the S.A.B.C. and was the private property of township social life.

## ITS MEANING

What is "kwela"? I suppose like its other jazz counter-parts 'Jive,' 'Bebop' and 'Rock 'n Roll' it has no real meaning. A few years ago the African bands introduced this new type of music. And at those hot 'non-stop' dance sessions the fans would at intervals form a ring round the ace couple, clapping hands to the rhythm and yelling "kwela mzala!" (ride on, Cousin—"cousin" being used in the same way as "hep cat.") The screaming crowd would then turn to the band, urging it on with "Tshisa!" (Make it burn.)

The music itself, as I have pointed out before, is simply the adaption of African traditional music to the jazz tempo—with a bit of improvisation. The appeal of the music to township Africans was terrific. You did not have to buy a music album before you sang the songs—you knew them.

The entry of the recording companies into the lucrative trade of selling African jazz (kwela) records helped the music to achieve a great deal of refinement. It is cool music. Unlike rock 'n roll the kwela isn't a series of physical jerks. It is much smoother.

## PENNY WHISTLE

The introduction of the penny whistle into the music gave it its mass form. Its exponents needed no longer to be the professional band members who alone were able to buy and play expensive instruments. Anybody or any group could gather together a penny whistle band, with only guitar accompaniment, and play.

But of course the musicians, like the children who were told that the 'shining stone' they were playing with was really a diamond, never really knew that they had scored a big scoop.

Many who preferred to play the American "modern jazz" were pushed by hunger to play the kwela and make a few pounds from recording.

On the other hand the recording companies have all along seen the new music as a gold mine. They employ several talent scouts to go around getting both amateur and professional groups to make records. Scores of records are placed on the market—you hear them morning and afternoon blaring from the record shops.

Now a big break through has been made with the opening up of the overseas market.

## FAME AND FORTUNE

If the same pattern which raised Elvis Presley, Tommy Steele and others from nonentities to neo-millionaires when rock 'n roll topped the hit parade were

repeated, the road to fame and fortune would lie ahead for the top men of the kwela hit.

But the snag is that many of the leading African musicians are tied to recording companies by contracts which pay the musicians only a flat rate for each recording made and which leave royalties and copyright with the recording companies.

As for the composers of the songs, often nobody ever knows them, let alone greets them with the fame they deserve. Though I notice that some talent scouts have stuck their names to compositions they no more composed than you or I. The percentage payment due to the composer then goes into the pirate's pocket.

It is time that a body like the Union of Southern African Artists stepped in to protect the interests of our musicians and to compel the recording companies to offer better contracts.

This was one of the aims of the Union when it was founded. What about a progress report from the Union?



## SPINNING DISCS

YOU want to have the kwela right there at home? Well, here are some of the latest releases.

Claude Williamson, the American pianist who recently came out here with the Bud Shank Quintet, plays with Spokes Mashiane, South Africa's penny whistle and kwela king, on TJ 222.

Maybe you'd like to have some of the discs now being released in Britain. They are recorded here on "Bantu" records as well.

"Jika Spokes" TJ 132 by Spokes Mashiane and "Cool Mood" NV 3058 by Peter Makana.

If you buy the new long-playing penny whistle discs featuring Spokes Mashiane, Ben Nkosi and Peter Makana you will have just about all the penny whistle music you want.

Trutone TLP 1047. Other new African jazz releases worth having are played by Zacks Nkosi's Orchestra.

BMSC JP 2091 and Section "Z" JP 2090.

Watch this column and I'll be around with more kwela hits.

T.M.

## ZEERUST ARSON CASE

## 9 Sent to Prison

JOHANNESBURG

Nine men from Braklaagte, near Zeerust, were found guilty on arson charges in the Rustenburg Circuit Court last week, and sentenced to 18 months hard labour, without the option of a fine.

Among the nine is an old man of about 68 years of age. They had all spent five months in jail awaiting trial.



Spokes Mashiane, King of the Kwela.

## SACTU Protest To I.L.O.

JOHANNESBURG.

The S.A. Congress of Trade Unions has lodged a protest to the International Labour Office in Geneva and to the Secretary of Labour on the exclusion of SACTU from the selection of a workers' delegation to the 44th session of the I.L.O.

Representing 46,000 workers, SACTU is the only non-colour-bar trade union co-ordinating body in South Africa, yet it has again been cold-shouldered by the Government in the choice of workers' spokesmen.

Not only that, but this year the Trade Union Congress has also been left out, and is thinking of sending its own man as an observer. Candidate in mind is Mr. L. C. Scheepers, of the Leather Workers' Union, whom the TUC is also sending to the Commonwealth Trade Union Conference in June.

## INDIANS ORGANISE

(Continued from page 1)

on the advice of the Natal Indian Organisation, a well-attended mass meeting, which included prominent Indian and African residents of the area, unanimously rejected this standpoint.

Under the chairmanship of Mr. I. C. Meer, ex-Treason Trialist and banned Vice-President of the Natal Indian Congress, the meeting heard Mr. Alan Paton and Mr. John Didecott, of the Liberal Party, and Mr. J. N. Singh and Mr. H. E. Mall, Vice-President of the Natal Indian Congress, condemn the Group Areas Act and the suggestion to work the Act by submitting plans for race zoning.

At the end of the meeting, Dr. M. V. Gumede, a local Medical practitioner, and Mr. Simon Davids, the principal of the Verulam Indian High School, stated that the people of Verulam were grateful to the speakers for having "cleared the air" and for putting forward a clear-cut policy in regard to the Group Areas Act.

## OBJECTIONS

Within a week of this meeting, hundreds of individual objections to the proposals before the Board "expressing total opposition to the removal of any person of any race from his home or place of business," have been submitted by an Action Committee which was formed as a result of the meeting.

This Committee is preparing a comprehensive memorandum on the implications of the Group Areas Act which will be submitted to the Group Areas Board when it meets to consider the proposals now before it.

**Collection Number: AG2887**

**Collection Name: Publications, New Age, 1954-1962**

***PUBLISHER:***

*Publisher:* Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand

*Location:* Johannesburg

©2016

***LEGAL NOTICES:***

**Copyright Notice:** All materials on the Historical Papers website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

**Disclaimer and Terms of Use:** Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

People using these records relating to the archives of Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, are reminded that such records sometimes contain material which is uncorroborated, inaccurate, distorted or untrue. While these digital records are true facsimiles of paper documents and the information contained herein is obtained from sources believed to be accurate and reliable, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand has not independently verified their content. Consequently, the University is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the website or any related information on third party websites accessible from this website.

This document is held at the Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.