

A new era for our film media

MANY of us don't know that that dormant giant — the University of Nairobi — is beginning to take its leadership role in our society seriously. And blazing the trail in this new direction is the Department of Chemistry which hopes in a couple of years to have replaced foreign science films over the Voice of Kenya with local, relevant ones — if the TV station is willing to try them, that is.

Dr. Raphael Munavu, a lecturer in organic chemistry told me that the department has initiated programmes to make the ordinary Kenyan aware of its functions and help our local industries to use local resources.

As part of this, the department publishes a magazine, *The Chemistry Magazine*, which comes out twice a year and is sold at 7/50 per copy to the public. But perhaps the most interesting idea the department has initiated is that of making local science films that could replace those notorious German Transtel, American, and British science programmes which some people have been arguing are too technical to be made in Kenya.

At present, the department's Nairobi University Chemical Club whose members are students and whose patron is Prof. Shem Wandiga, has produced on film which is currently being shown to students in secondary schools free of charge.

And Raphael told me that the film, which is in colour and on 8mm, was made at the amazingly low cost of 2,000/-. (You may want to compare that with VoK's costing of a similar length documentary on 16mm which I'm told is close to 200,000/-.)

The film shows the evolution of soap-making technology starting with when we in Kenya used tree leaves and sisal — anything with foam, to use Raphael's description — and ending with the modern way of making the lather-producing stuff.



RAPHAEL MUNAVU

"Every place we have shown it, the film has generated tremendous enthusiasm," says the lecturer. "In fact students have been pushing for it to be shown on the VoK. I'm sure it's of good quality."

To be fair to the VoK, the university has not yet approached them about their films. But Raphael said they would soon talk over with the broadcasting station about the possibility of using their films.

"If the VoK agrees, we're thinking of buying more professional equipment. We could also arrange for the VoK to provide the equipment and professional photographers so that all that the students would do is the interpretation," says Raphael.