

# SONU ban cripples student development

By Warigia Macharia

Students of the University of Nairobi are pressing for a lift of the ban placed on Student Organisation of Nairobi University (SONU) by the Government in 1987. Student leaders who talked to *The Anvil* claimed that the University of Nairobi remained the only university in the country without an umbrella organisation. This had caused the students to continue living like animals in a zoo. "There is no order and no one to agitate for their needs," remarked a student leader popularly known as Karl Marx, of the banned organisation's Information, Publicity and Mobilisation wing.

"Students organisations give opportunity for students to develop their leadership capabilities. We have Julius ole Sunkuli, James Orengo and Willy Mutunga, who are now in positions of national leadership," expressed Oburu Moses another student leader. And the students are ambitious. They believe that if the students are mobilised as one, they will be able to bring old students together for the benefit of the university. "Fund-raising at the university is minimal as we do not have an alumni association. The union will be able to act as a contact point for the alumni. This is one of the factors that has helped other universities especially in the West be progressive," added Oburu.

The funds collected through the alumni efforts such as lobbying and walks, would help revive the run down facilities at the university and

help the needy students. Research at the university is severely affected by the lack of funds. SONU, if registered, hopes to revive it through the monies from the alumni.

The university has not yet committed itself to the registration of SONU. "When we went to Professor Gichaga, (the Vice-Chancellor of the University), he went back into history (by) reminding us of Buke," explained Oburu. Wafula Buke was SONU's chairman in 1987, and was reported to have struck rapport with Libyans so as to derail the government. He was sent to jail for five years.

Professor Gichaga told *The Anvil* that the official position remained that SONU had not been registered.

"It is for the students to decide on what to do. We will work with the organisations that they have," said Miss Emmy Sumbeiywo, the Dean of Students, in another interview with *The Anvil*. She added that they had been working with SONU before deregistration, and when registered, they would work together.

In their quest to have the union registered the students have decided to shun a confrontational approach. "It is in our constitution that we shall use non-violent means to address our plight," stressed Marx. And true to their words, they have conducted several peaceful meetings since November last year.

The students are hopeful that the University of Nairobi Governing Council will consider their request to register SONU by the end of February this year.