

Having cleared most of the black freehold areas in northern Natal, the state has now turned its attention to the 100 000 people living in black freehold areas in the Ladysmith district. There are 92 000 people living at Matiwane's Kop, Lusitania, Mbulwane and the Driefontein Complex (Hansard question 698, 16th March 1983). 1063 people will be moved from Jonono's Kop and the people from Ndonoyane and Steincoalspruit bring the total figure close to 100 000.

In September 1982 Koornhof promised at a public meeting in Ladysmith that the black freehold areas around Ladysmith would be cleared within the next four years. We now see the beginnings of the state's grand plan to move these 100 000 people into an area of thornveld which was bought up from white farmers in the late 1960's and which stretches from Ezakheni eastwards along the road to Helpmekaar.

The signs that this process has begun are:

- 1: On the 20th May this year, Mr Stander, the Ladysmith Commissioner, called a meeting at Matiwane's Kop, a freehold area of more than 12 000 people, about 23 km from Ladysmith. He notified the meeting that money has been allocated in the 1983/4 budget for the removal of Matiwane's Kop. R2,5 m has been allocated for this purpose. A spokesman for the community at Matiwane's Kop responded to this information by saying that they were pleased to hear that money had been allocated to Matiwane's Kop but they wanted this money to be spent at Matiwane's Kop, as they had no intention of moving.
- 2: In 1978 the tenants at Steincoalspruit were moved to Ekuvukeni which lies about 50 km from Ladysmith. Only landowners now remain on this black freehold area under which it seems likely that there are valuable coal deposits. Now 65 new residential sites are being laid out past Ekuvukeni. These sites are intended for the landowners at Steincoalspruit and the compensatory land which is to be given to them, in exchange for their good land at Steincoalspruit, is an area of thornveld stretching from these new residential sites towards Limehill.
- 3: A small dam is being built on the farm Olifantskop. It seems unlikely that this water can be gravitated to Ekuvukeni. The water is probably intended for new settlements close by. Crude sites have been cleared on the road to the Olifantskop dam and this is probably the site intended for the Matiwane's Kop people.
- 4: The Minister of Co-operation and Development revealed in parliament (Hansard 29th March 1983) that the people from Jonono's Kop will be settled on the farm Roodedraai, a farm adjoining Ekuvukeni, a closer settlement of 20 000 people.
- 5: In June, Mr Volker, MP for the Ladysmith area, revealed that talks had been held with KwaZulu representatives to link black spot removals to industrial development in the Tugela Basin (Daily News 21/6/83) and went on to say that Ladysmith was only 10km away from Ezakheni which meant that blacks and whites would be close to work. In fact Ezakheni is 20 km away. What is more misleading however is that Mr Volker is implying that all the people from black freehold areas will be settled close to Ezakheni. In fact the SADT farms earmarked for the removal of these people surround Ekuvukeni, 50 km away from Ladysmith.
- 6: A storage depot of fletcraft parts (tin huts provided for people who are moved) and government trucks and buses lies between Ezakheni and Ekuvukeni. A large number of Co-operation and Development workers from the Transvaal live closeby.

#### What will conditions be like at the new places ?

One way of gauging this is to look at the conditions at Ekuvukeni, a closer settlement which lies in the centre of the area marked for the removal of these 100 000 people. The majority of the people at Ekuvukeni were moved from Steincoalspruit in 1978.

- 1: Water. In spite of protestations by Koornhof that adequate provisions are made for people before moving and General Circular no 2 of 1982 which states that "It is necessary

to ensure that sufficient drinking water is available for settled families. The water must be fit for human consumption in accordance with minimum requirements of the health authority concerned," water at Ekuvukeni ran out five months ago and water is being trucked in from the Vergelegen Dam. People are compelled to stand in queues, and if the household is unable to provide an individual for that purpose, they have no water that day. 7 trucks are currently being used at a cost to the taxpayer of R770 a day.

2: Employment. Because Matiwane's Kop and Driefontein lie relatively close to Ladysmith, a large number of the working population, while supplementing their incomes with agriculture, commute through to Ladysmith. The Surplus Peoples Project has found that in Matiwane's Kop 16% of the total working population (15-64 years) and 23% of the male working population were commuters. Relocation to 50km from Ladysmith would make it likely that these people would lose their jobs.

It is alleged that the Ladysmith labour bureau gives preference to workseekers from Steadville, the township in Ladysmith, then Ezakheni and finally the settlements of Ekuvukeni, Limehill, Vaalkop and Uitval, in order of distance from Ladysmith. As there are 9000 people in Steadville and 50 000 in Ezakheni, the chances of the workseekers from the 87 000 people (probably a great underestimation) living in Ekuvukeni and the rest of the Nambiti district around Ekuvukeni, finding work as commuters and travelling 100 km a day, is extremely slim. The consequence is that the people from this area generally live off pension money and migrant earnings.

Now the state wants to move another 100 000 people into the area.

3: Transport. In the unlikely event that the people that are moved were able to retain their jobs, commuting would mean travelling 100 km to work and back each day. About 60km is on dirt road. If all these employees living in black freehold areas retained their jobs, as the bus company operating on this route is subsidised to 60% of its running costs, large amounts of money would be paid by the taxpayer to transport these people to work and back every day, from their new places which surround Ekuvukeni.

4: Loss of agricultural land and cattle. Although the people of the freehold areas around Ladysmith are not totally supported by agriculture or animal husbandry, these two activities make a considerable difference to their standard of living. As only those landowners with more than 17 ha of land get 'land for land' compensation, removal means the forced selling of their cattle and no longer having access to agricultural land. Removal thus means further impoverishment.

Mr Kinghorn, chairman of a local farmers' association, in discussing the removal of freehold areas around Ladysmith stated, (Ladysmith Gazette 1 July 1983) "Would it not be a better proposition, particularly for the squatters on these farms to support and accept the available offer by the government to resettle them in a place where the standards of living would be raised to the same level as their counterparts living in well organised townships?"

And on the 6th June this year in Parliament, Mr Volker, MP for Ladysmith, described the conditions of the black freehold areas in the following terms, "They are paying rent to a few individuals. There are no decent roads, health services, water supply or electricity, to say nothing of telephones. There is no sewerage system or garbage removal service. All these deficiencies in the black spots of necessity lead to the inhabitants not considering their residence there to be permanent."

However the people of the black freehold areas around Ladysmith are well aware that they are much better off than the people of Ekuvukeni and this is one of the reasons why they are refusing to move.

As a representative of one of the threatened communities has said, "We are determined to die in the place of our ancestors."