



# 'Kill me or let me stay here'

**MAYFORD JIKOLO** (not his real name) was born in Cape Town, as was his father.

But he was sent to the Butterworth (now in the Transkei) for his high school education.

Apparently, it was this "sin" that cost him his right to live and work in Cape Town.

However he joined the ranks of the "illegals" — those who do not have proper documents (passes) and who are believed to number nearly half of the African population in the Western Cape — and managed to find work.

Accommodation was always a problem and last year he and his wife and three small children ended up squatting in the bush between Nyanga and Crossroads.

This was on July 16.

At dawn on August 19, police descended on the camp and carted more than 1 000 people off to Pollsmoor. From there they were sent to the Transkei in buses in terms of the Illegal Immigration Act which provides for deportation without legal defence.

Hundreds who had

escaped arrest sheltered at the Holy Cross Church in Nyanga. They were arrested there on August 26 and 349 illegals deported.

Mayford was among the first batch to be deported.

The deportees sheltered in church halls in Umtata.

The Transkei actively assisted those who wanted to return to Cape Town to do so. This was futile as roadblocks had been set up throughout the Southern and Eastern Cape. 2 523 people were intercepted at these roadblocks and sent back to the Transkei.

## Desperate

Mayford was desperate as he had been separated from his wife and three small children.

Eventually he managed to make his way back and arrived in Cape Town on October 8.

Immediately he started to search frantically for his wife and children.

He found his children with a cousin at Crossroads, but no sign of his wife. He checked the prisons, police, and even the morgue.

On November 10 he went to the Bantu Commissioner's office in Langa to ask for permission to stay in Cape Town and also a permit to seek work.

An official (whom he named) said that the only advice he could give him was to remain in the bush.

The next day the first of a series of police raids began and a number of squatters were arrested and deported.

On January 26 during one of the raids the police opened fire and Mayford was wounded in the shoulder. He was taken to hospital under police guard and

later charged with public violence and released on bail.

Early in March the squatters who had returned from the Transkei split in two groups — one deciding to move into St. George's Cathedral and go on a hunger strike while the other half decided to remain in the bush.

The split has its origins in the events of August last year when so many of them were deported.

Members of the existing bush committee at the time were not among those rounded up by the police as they remained behind.

In Umtata the deportees elected a new committee, most of whose members were among those who managed to return to Cape Town.

The bush people split into two groups around the two committees with two different strategies.

Both groups, however, are insisting they will die before they agree to go back to the Transkei.

As Mayford put his position: "They have already shot me once.

"Now they can either kill me or give me my right to stay and work in Cape Town."



# Squatters challenge system

THE action of the 54 squatters who fasted in St Georges Cathedral captured the attention of many. They represented the suffering and plight of thousands of other squatters.

Because there is no work or food in the rural areas, people are forced to seek work in the cities. The government makes lots of money from taxes it takes from the profits made by big businesses. To make big profits big businesses need lots of workers to work cheaply. So it follows that the government and the bosses need the people from the rural areas but they are required to work only. The government does not want to be responsible for them in any way.

Migrant workers are made use of as cheap labour. As migrant workers they have no rights. The workers fear being sent back to the poverty of the homelands if they show dissatisfaction and so the bosses are able to exploit as they please. Under the contract system the bosses do not have to provide any of the

usual fringe benefits like medical aid and sick pay. While they are in the cities the government refuses to cater for their basic human needs. Men have to leave their wives and families at home. No proper housing is provided.

The pass laws were introduced so that the government is able to control the amount of workers entering the urban areas. People from the homeland are only allowed to work in the cities. When their contracts end they must return. They are only allowed to work on a temporary basis and must renew the contract every year.

The reason why the Government is hostile towards the squatters is because they challenge the system.

They insist that they are not foreign workers. They say they are South African like all others born here and have a right to live and work here. They want this right legalised.

Big businesses and the government will not do this. They fear they will lose their grip. They fear that if the workers were allowed to stay in the cities permanently, they would organise themselves into trade unions. They would organise for something better than a starvation wage, something better than an insecure job that can last not longer than 12 months.

The 54 squatters demonstrate that social conditions are poor, wages are low, migrant workers are exploited and bosses are unfair but they rather remain here than face the hardships and starvation of the homelands.

# TRAIN FARES UP AS SERVICE WORSENS

FROM the beginning of this month people have to pay 15% more to travel to work by train — a journey that is becoming a daily hazard for thousands.

Trains have become so overcrowded and the service so bad that many people fear for their safety when travelling during peak hours.

During the morning and evening rush some commuters even sit on the carriage roofs if they cannot squeeze inside the doors.

Of those lucky enough to get in, some lie curled up in the luggage racks, stand in the toilets or straddle the

joints of the carriages to get a place.

People have to get in and out of windows because it is impossible to push to the doors through the crush. People have to keep the sliding doors forced open during the journey so that additional passengers can squeeze inside — leaving their arms and legs dangling outside. The chaos on trains has made it easier for thieves and thugs to operate, and many commuters have been robbed while travelling to and from work.

The situation has worsened in recent months, particularly on

the "Resettlement line" as hundreds of residents have moved into new suburbs along the route, particularly in Mitchells Plain, where Beacon Valley, Tafelsig and Eastridge were recently opened.

They also use the overcrowded trains — and no new service has been added.

As the service deteriorates, and more and more people use the trains, so the fares go up.

The increases are imposed by the Government that runs the South African Railways (unlike the bus service that is run by a private

company.)

People say the Government should make enough money available for the train service to keep the fares down because it is Government policy that forces people to live so far out of town and makes them dependent on public transport.

This increase comes shortly after the Railways ended the cheap "return ticket" system.

Now, if people want to travel to town and back, they have to buy two single tickets which costs almost twice as much as the old return tickets.

This affects people who travel to town or Mitchells Plain's "town centre" at irregular intervals to do shopping. They have to pay almost double for their transport.

Announcing the latest increases during the Railways budget in Parliament, the Minister of Transport, Mr Hendrik Schoeman, said transport services operated at a loss of R71,9-million.

In an interview he said that 80 percent of the losses on the Railways were suffered by the daily passenger services taking people to and from work. These

services were subsidised by R690-million a year, he said. A 15% increase was not a lot when compared to an average of 17,5% increase in wages and salaries.

However, community spokesmen have rejected the Minister's statement. They say if the Government insists on the Group Areas Act it must be prepared to pay enough money in subsidies to keep down train fares. They are also particularly annoyed that they have to pay increased fares when National servicemen have just been granted half-price fares on all first and second

class journeys by mainline trains.

"We cannot accept that we have to pay increased fares so that soldiers can travel half price," a person who travels to work by train every day, said.

People are also demanding an improved service — especially in the light of increased fares.

Mr Schoeman said that by the end of the year he hoped platforms would be extended so that trains could be increased from 11 to 13 carriages. The Railways also hoped to increase the service by an additional four trains at peak hours.