

Grassroots April 1985

Atlantis crippled by high prices, unemployment

A PLACE OF HARDSHIPS, SUFFERING

IN 1975, people from different towns, struggling to find good homes and jobs, began moving into Atlantis. The people were promised that work would be plentiful and that they would be given decent housing.

Rents would be low and there would be lots of facilities like parks, sportsfields and creches. There would be no need to go and work out of Atlantis.

The people dreamt of a better future for themselves and their families. But today, for the 50 000 people living in Atlantis, these dreams have turned into one big nightmare.

In just a few years, Atlantis has become a place where poverty, unemployment and high prices have virtually crippled the West Coast community.

Today men and women daily take to the streets of Atlantis to look for jobs. Many are forced to travel to Cape Town in search of

work. Mr Noel Williams of the Atlantis Residents Association said: "Every day you see new faces. Many of the other people have given up. They don't go out any more because there just is no work."

Daily people in Atlantis are losing their jobs. Since the beginning of this year, more than 1 200 people have lost their jobs. Some scratch in bins for food, while others sell bottles to get money for food.

Because things are so bad, many people have

fallen heavily in arrears with their rents. Some families owe the Divisional Council more than R2 000. This has led to many families being threatened with eviction.

It was only action by supporters of the Atlantis Residents Association in February which stopped more than 300 families being evicted.

So it seems that the suffering and hardship in Atlantis has no end. But the people are determined to overcome their problems. With the formation of the Atlantis Residents Association in February, the residents took the first step in the long and hard battle to build a better life for themselves and their children.

"All our money goes for rent. Water and electricity costs are very high. Food prices go up all the time. What must we eat? We can't eat anything any more. What can we do?"
John Mtini



Atlantis residents come together to discuss their problems

WE ARE SUFFERING HERE IN ATLANTIS



PETER NIJO (19): "Ek moet bottels verkoop om geld te kry vir brood. Ek is 'n bouwerker. Na Krismis het die baas gesê daar is nie meer werk nie. Ek soek nou lank werk. Daar is baie mense soos ek. Daar is net nie werk nie. As jy steel, is dit ook nie goed nie. Jy gaan tronk toe."



CHARLES NEELSE: Nie een van ons het gewa om hier te kom woon nie. Ek bly hier vir nege jaar. Die boere het ons belas met probleme. Ek kan nie meer snags slaap nie. As ons uitgesit word, waar gaan ons met ons kinders? Die tyd het aangebreek dat ons moet saamstaan. In die woorde van Nelson Mnadela, we must fight for our rights.

NOEL WILLIAMS: "Every day you see new people looking for work. Many others have given up. They don't go out any more because there just is no work."



Atlantis staan saam om probleme op te los

DIE mense van Atlantis is aan die beweeg. "Ons moet saamstaan", is die boodskap wat soos 'n veldbrand na alle dele van hierdie groot gemeenskap versprei.

Die inwoners se eerste stap was om die Atlantis Inwoners Vereniging op Februarie 25 te stig.

Meer as 450 mense het die vergadering in die Avondale Dorpsaal op daardie dag bygewoon. "Ons moet een woord praat en een pad stap," het 'n vrou gesê. Die mense het gepraat van hulle swaar-

kry in Atlantis. Hulle het gepraat oor die uitsettings, hoë huur, werkloosheid en stygende kos pryse.

Maar hulle het sterk gevoel dat iets gedoen moet word oor hierdie probleme. Dit baat nie om net te kla nie.

Die volgende dag het meet as 200 mense na die kantore van die Afdelingsraad gestap om stop te sit aan die beplande uitsetting van meer as 350 families.

Die amptenare van die Afdelingsraad het geskrik. Een van die amptenare het onmid-

delik 'n oproep gemaak om opdrag te gee dat geen uitsettings moet plaasvind nie. Dit was 'n groot oorwinning vir die mense van Atlantis en die nuwe Vereniging.

Maar die Atlantis Inwoners Vereniging het nie daar stilgesit nie. Hulle het besluit om ander probleme aan te pak. Hoë huur is 'n groot probleem in Atlantis. Die Inwoners Vereniging het besluit om daarteen te veg.

Deur die pogings van die Atlantis Inwoners Vereniging, is daar heel-

wat mense wêre se huur verminder was.

Die Inwoners Vereniging is nou besig om area komitees op die been te bring. Hulle voel dat die betrokkenheid van die mense baie belangrik is. Die Vereniging wil nie soos die bestuurskomitee werk nie, waarin die mense niks sê het nie, en wat vir hulle niks beteken nie.

Dit is net deur die samewerking en die eenheid van alle mense in Atlantis dat die slegte toestande kan verbeter.

DID YOU KNOW

- Since the beginning of 1985, about 1 200 people have lost their jobs in Atlantis.
- The arrears rentals for the period January 1 to March 31 1985 totals more than R300 000.
- That there are families in Atlantis who owe Divco more than R2 000 in rental arrears.
- That, about 350 Atlantis families are threatened with eviction.