

Urban Foundation: Diffusing Frustrations

Following the article on the Urban Foundation in the last edition of GRASSROOTS, we take a look at how the Foundation tries to ease the frustrations of the people by providing services which is the duty of the local authorities to provide.

The Urban Foundation is an organisation formed by businessmen after the uprisings of 1976. They put money into a fund to be used for projects in communities.

These men say that they came together to help improve conditions

in communities.

But to know whether this is true, we must look at what it does in our communities. We must also ask how these men get the money they give to Urban Foundation.

People all over the country live in poor conditions. These same

people work for the men who belong to Urban Foundation. Their bosses pay them low wages which makes it impossible for them to improve their living conditions.

Once our people have paid their rent and bought food, they have no money left for other

essentials.

Also, local authorities such as the Bantu administration, the divisional council and city council do not put aside enough money to improve the townships where our people live.

The businessmen become richer and richer because they pay the people who work for them low wages. They then put the money that they save on wages into the Urban Foundation. This money in fact belongs to the people.

PROJECTS

But the Urban Foundation gives this money to projects in communities which the government should see to.

Let us look at Robin Hood creche in Elsie's River. This creche is one of the most beautiful creches ever built in any of our areas. It has been

built from Urban Foundation money.

But the people are grateful because they think they are 'lucky' to have such a creche. They do not understand that it is their right to have such a creche.

They do not understand that such a creche should be built by the government because the government collects taxes which are supposed to be used for the people's needs.

In Facticeon the people rejected a plan by Shawco to use an Urban Foundation loan of R40 000 to develop a sportsground in 14th avenue. Kenfacts, the area's newsletter, exposed the plan and explained that the loan had to be repaid at 10 per cent interest. This would have meant that each club would have to

pay R100 a year to repay the loan.

"Why should the Urban Foundation give money for a sportsfield which the council should see to?" asked the residents.

"We must ask the council to provide facilities," they said.

If the men who donate to the Urban Foundation paid people higher wages then the people will be able to live better and not suffer so much.

Instead of helping communities, the Urban Foundation is helping the government. It is giving communities what the government should be giving them - houses, creches and community centres.

In the next issue of Grassroots, we will look at what the Urban Foundation has done in Crossroads.

SALT RIVER ON THE MOVE

DURING the recent unrest in Cape Town, it became clear that Salt River needed a community organisation.

The existing ratepayers association failed to call any public meetings or to take up issues affecting the community.

There was no way to judge Salt River's reaction to the school, bus and meat boycotts.

Attempts were made to form a parent-student committee - these were unsuccessful.

A few individuals

from the community then met and convened a mass-meeting for the residents of Salt River.

The purpose was to rally support for the meat and bus boycotts, to assess the school boycott, and to attempt to form an effective community organisation.

About 1 500 people attended the meeting at the Salt River Institute on Sunday, May 18. Many had to return home because the hall was overcrowded.

The community str-

ongly supported the boycotts, called for equal education for all, and condemned arbitrary detentions.

A unanimous decision was taken to convene another meeting. At this meeting a community organisation, the Salt River Civic Association, was formed. An executive committee was elected by the 300 people present.

Although the policy has not been ratified by the general body of members, its aim, said

executive committee members, is to equal citizenship and democratic rights for all South Africans.

Development of the organisation was curtailed by a ban on public meetings.

The community is trying to keep the organisation alive by arranging free films, and social gatherings where people can get to know one another and civic matters can be discussed informally.

A newsletter is being drawn up.

BBSK on rights

(From page 9)

paid for repairs Council has not even done."

The BBSK Action Committee feels that all residents have a right to better living conditions and improved facilities. The committee asks: "Are we going to allow Council to do with us what they like?"

"We must form an association so that we can organise ourselves and fight issues together.

According to the committee, the aims of the residents association should be:

- to build unity by breaking

down the barriers which separate us as fellow workers;

- to stand together on all issues affecting us not only in the places where we live, but also in the places where we work.
- to ensure greater security and protection for the interests of all residents.
- to strive for better living conditions, increased facilities and the development of the area in the interests of all residents.
- to work towards greater control by the residents

over the running of the area.

- to work in co-operation with other bodies with similar aims.

Members of the committee have split into groups and are working in each of the four areas. They visit people at their homes and discuss with them the problems of the areas. Their main task is to find out how many people are keen to assist them in the launching of the RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION.

The action committee feels that much more can be achieved if the parents of the area PARTICIPATE IN THE FORMATION OF THE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION.

The residents association will fight to improve housing, educational and sporting facilities in the area and strive to fulfil all the aims set out.

The Action Committee meets once a week to hear report-backs from the four groups. When a certain group has problems the other members of the group either advise and/or offers assistance.

Decisions concerning the whole area are taken together. Activities in the four areas are co-ordinated in this way. e.g. Bokmakierie wants their RENT OFFICE to be returned to this area. Therefore joint action will have to be taken to ensure that the demands of the tenants of Bokmakierie will be heard.

HOUSE MEETINGS form a fundamental part of the activities in the area. The various problems of the tenants are discussed and various solutions are formulated. Already, doors and window-frames have been fixed but many houses are in a state of disrepair. The B.B.S.K. residents are not going to allow these concessions to blind them to the inhuman treatment of the Council over the past 40 odd years.

Valhalla's rents fight

(From page 9)

A small group of people in Valhalla Park who realised that the only way to fight these problems was for people in the area to tackle them together, have come together to form a residents' committee. They are holding house meetings where people discuss their problems and are trying to include as many people as possible.

"We have got to speak to as many people as possible," a committee member told GRASSROOTS, "But is is difficult because we are still a very small group and it is dangerous to go out at night here. So we can only go to visit people at week-ends."

She said one of the issues the committee had taken up was that of rents.

"The rents are much too high. The people can't afford to pay the rents the City Council are demanding. The high rents mean that people can't afford to pay for basic foodstuffs. It is common to hear from the people we visit that once they have paid their rent, there is very little money left over for food," she said.

Another reason why they feel the rents are too high is that the Council has provided so few facilities for the community.

Divided in Zones

(From page 9)

While the surveys were carried out, people were invited to come to the general meeting of the association and to become members. Every month more and more people joined and started helping to fight their problems together.

At general meetings, everything was discussed so that all residents could understand and be part of solving their problems.

Besides general meetings, house meetings where about ten families meet are held where problems and solutions to those problems are discussed.

Because the area is very large, it is divided into 16 zones. In each of these areas, there is a contact group which sees to it that as many people as possible come together when a problem must be solved.

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