



THEY stand on that vacant piece of land on the border of Crossroads - hundreds of men, women and children without homes. More than a thousand have been arrested, jailed and fined over the last weeks, but still they refused to return to the homelands. They have come to Cape Town to work, they say, because there are no jobs in the homelands. They choose to face the long days in jail and the hardship which the rain and cold brings rather than dying without food. But the government says they are here illegally, without permission. And daily, van-loads of people are arrested and charged with entering Cape Town illegally. Why are people in this country not allowed to live where they want to? Why are people arrested and told they cannot remain in Cape Town? In this article, Grassroots will look at some

of the reasons.

- **Land laws and taxes**
Before 1913, Africans could buy land in any part of the country. But after laws were passed in 1913 and 1926, only 13 percent of the land was set aside for Africans. This land today makes up the homelands. It was impossible for the people to plant enough food on this land - they could no longer feed themselves or their cattle.
- **Homeland conditions**
Today, 121 out of every 1000 children die before the age of five in the homelands compared with 98 out of 1000 in the urban areas. At that time, the government also introduced taxes. The people had to pay tax on their huts and cattle. For this, they needed money. To get money, they were forced to go to the towns for work. In this way, workers were forced into the mines and factories of

this country.

- **Machines and unemployment**
The time became when factories are using more machines and need fewer workers. Unemployment increased daily. It is estimated that there are presently 25 million unemployed.
- **The people not only unemployed in the towns, but also in the homelands.** And while in the towns they had hope of getting an odd job to help keep them alive - in the homelands there is nothing. And so people keep coming to the towns. To have control over the number of people coming to the towns, the government introduced the pass laws.
- **Pass Laws**
In terms of Section 10 of the Bantu Urban Areas Consolidation Act of 1945, no African may remain in more than 72 hours in an urban area unless he has worked for the same

employer in the area for ten years or lived there continuously for 15 years, or has been granted permission by a labour-officer to stay and work. Africans who want to go to the towns, have to go to the nearest labour bureau where labour officers decide on their future. But very few people today are given permission in terms of these laws to come to the towns.

- **Housing**
In Cape Town, the Bantu Administration Board has provided housing for some of the men who have come to work here. It is cheaper for them to provide only for the working men and not their wives and children. And so the pass laws give permission for men to come and work but not for women and children to live with them.

In this way, families were broken up to serve the labour needs of the few who control this country. While housing was provided for the man who worked, he soon found himself in the cold when he retired. As soon as the worker was too old to work, he was evicted and forced to return to the homeland. The people do not have the right to decent housing. That remains the privilege of those few who find jobs in the towns. And those who cannot find jobs in Cape Town, are being chased back to the homelands. Over the years, many thousands have been chased away but the poverty in the homelands have forced them to return. The people are now saying "We are here to stay, we want our rights in Cape Town. It is the duty of the government to provide houses and jobs for all."



Mr. Nkoko, a meat worker who lost his job said, "In Transkei everything is nothing."

EVICTIIONS



'Cape Town - the place I have chosen to stay'

"PEOPLE are starving in Transkei. There are no jobs so it is useless to go back." Theophilus Tayo, one of the almost 1500 people affected by the recent pass raids at Crossroads, spent three weeks in prison after being arrested in the early hours of July 16. After being released, he set up home on a muddy field in Crossroads. The home for himself, his wife and his little child consists of a wooden structure covered by a piece of plastic. In this way they try and keep out the bitter cold in one of the harshest winters in years. They fear that at any moment the police and administration board

officials will come and break down the little shelter they have. Theophilus lost his job when he was arrested. When he spoke to Grassroots two weeks ago, he said he had never had a permanent job. "I have always done casual work since I came from Transkei six years ago," he said. "Sometimes I just work for a week at a place then the police come and take me away for not having a pass." "It is more difficult to get a job now than it was before." Despite all these terrible hardships, 26-year-old Theophilus is determined to remain in Cape Town - "the place I have chosen to stay". He said they had been told by

administration Board officials they would be given rail tickets back to the homeland. Theophilus says this would be useless. "I came from Lady Frere, a large town in Transkei," he began. "There are many locations there in which thousands of people live," he continued. "Lady Frere only has three shops, a hospital and a garage where we can work." "Many people stay without work for as long as three years." "There are no jobs and people are starving," he said. So left with little option, he came to Cape Town in 1975. He said he had stayed at the

Langa Barracks for six years. When the place was raided by police, he had to move to Crossroads. "This was the only place I could go to," he said. A week later there was another raid at Crossroads and Theophilus was arrested. "We were taken to Pollsmoor. There were women with babies as well." "When I appeared in court last week, I pleaded not guilty to being here illegally. I was released on R30 bail. There are many people still in Pollsmoor." Now Theophilus is without a job and without a home. But he is sure of one thing... He is not going back to Transkei.

DIARY OF SHAME

TUESDAY JULY 14 - 'Illegal' residents evicted from Langa hotels.

WEDNESDAY JULY 15 - Homeless occupy land in Crossroads. They are immediately arrested. Hundreds appear in court.

THURSDAY JULY 16 - Police teargas crowd who demand to be arrested as well.

FRIDAY JULY 17 - 140 people arrested. Several hundred more in custody.

SATURDAY JULY 18 - Court hearings continue. Most cannot pay fines and are jailed.

MONDAY JULY 20 - widespread protest marches against magistrate Mr J J Fozzie over racist and 'offensive' remarks.

TUESDAY JULY 21 - Babies and young children jailed with mothers.

WEDNESDAY JULY 22 - Rand Supreme Court endorses rights to family life for those with Section 10 rights.

THURSDAY JULY 23 - Special court set up in Bishop Lavis, Guguletu, Athlone and Maitland to cope with arrests.

FRIDAY JULY 24 - Churches condemn evictions. Homeless people search for places. Prisoners 'return to discipline' from records, a newspaper reports.

SATURDAY JULY 25 - Magistrate F J J Fozzie says hunger is no offence to being illegally in an area.

MONDAY JULY 27 - Protest meeting called in a City Hall - religious and community leaders attend.

LATER THAT WEEK - Protests go on. Authorities pay no attention.

FRIDAY AUGUST 7 - Piet Koornhof, Minister of Co-operation and Development defends the police action in Parliament. - Visiting American politicians describe conditions as "brutal" and "inhuman".

MONDAY AUGUST 10 - 50 policemen with dog and water hoses make shift shelters in Langa. The night is the coldest so far.

WEDNESDAY - AUGUST 12 - Fines and jail terms handed from 'squatter' areas. People are stopped from taking bed and clothes to the 'squatters' hide teargas crowd gathered in Langa.

'We are starving in the homelands.' Magistrate L. van Wyk replied: 'We are starving in Cape Town. You can rather starve at home.' Langa Court.



They set about rebuilding their homes.

MODDERDAM STRUGGLES: Lessons from the past

BEFORE looking at the organisation around the Langa evictions, it is important to see what lessons can be drawn from similar struggles in the past. One clear such example is the building of the Modderdam squatter camp in 1978. When the mayor of Bellville called on the government to demolish the 'illegal squatter camp', it drew response from many people from outside. The people's committee - which had up to then acted very

democratically (they had regular mass meetings where the people decided what to do - was overwhelmed by the sudden and unexpected support which included money, food, clothes, a soup kitchen and a crèche. **Grassroots** The committee forgot the importance of grassroots organisation and saw the solution to the problems in the promises and plans put forward by outside organisations and 'self-help groups.

The people's spirit of self-reliance and unity weakened. Legal advice was called in and lawyers tried to fight the evictions because of loopholes in the law. The people placed even greater confidence in the power of the law and the need for grassroots organisation was overlooked. Organisation is often weakened when there is a reliance on press campaigns and the law. These weapons are limited and could sometimes be used, but they

should never be the main weapons. The government uses many different laws and means to divide and rule the lives of people. In Modderdam, they created disunity when 'Coloured' families were encouraged to accept land at Skerries, while 'illegal' Africans were railed to the homelands. In Cape Town's townships today, we see how the government is forcing divisions between the people. - Those with section 10 rights who



A member of the support committee said "organisations need to assess and know the amount of time which is needed of them before they take up new issues."

SUPPORTIVE ACTION

'a means to a greater end'

SOON after the Langa evictions and the mass arrests of thousands of men, women and children, a meeting was held to rally support for the people. Twenty-one representatives from civic, youth and workers organisations attended the meeting and pledged their active support.

- They undertook to collect food, clothing and other essentials.
- To carry the message of the plight of the people to the community.

large scale, co-ordination remained a problem. The Langa Emergency Committee representing the Ministers and other organisations drew up petitions protesting against the pass laws. A letter was also sent to the Minister of Co-operation and Development. Legal assistance and bail money was raised for the hundreds of people arrested.

Grassroots spoke to members of the community support committee about the problems that they experienced in organising support. Many community representatives did not attend support back meetings regularly. This was considered to be important as the support committee needed their direction and to discuss organisational issues which arose. It was felt that community organisations have been overwhelmed with organising around so many other issues as well as working in their own areas, that they were unable to give their active support. Some organisations are not strong enough and have been unable to cope with all the pressing needs. But since relief was organised on such a

Co-ordinate relief As opposition and general outrage grew against the government for its inhuman treatment of the evicted families, supportive assistance increased. Social service organisations, religious leaders and churches offered assistance. The community support group together with the Langa Bush Committee, (the committee representing the squatters) church representatives and other groups working in the area attempted to form a committee to co-ordinate relief. But since relief was organised on such a

Struggle of oppressed A struggle like that of the evicted and homeless always awakens the concern of many individuals and organisations. Many people rush to the area, offering relief, temporary housing and legal advice. Relief and other forms of assistance is merely supportive action. At no stage must the organisation, the control and decision-making be taken out of the hands of the people. Through fighting battles like this, major gains can be achieved which will advance the struggle of the oppressed. • a growing awareness and understanding of the causes of our problems • organisational experience and democratic action • unity between the people affected and the broader community. Supportive action can never be effective if it steps at relief, it must be a means to a much greater end.