

IZWI last TOWNSHIP



REPRIEVE OF ALEX – RUBBISH, SAYS REV BUTI

The unacceptable reality of Alexandra is the unacceptable reality of South Africa – millions of people, the great majority of the citizens of the country, live still at the mercy of others.

It is good to hear someone say RUBBISH to the state's deceitful projects. More people should say RUBBISH. 'Permanent Urban Rights' – RUBBISH. 'Free-enterprise System' – RUBBISH. 'Independent States' – utter RUBBISH. 'Education & Training' – what RUBBISH. They are all rubbish for the same reason, that they are words put there to conceal an underlying exploitation.

anyone. In a recent interview with IZWI, Rev Sam Buti dismissed the sweet talk with one word – RUBBISH.

'For us to be told – well, you've got a reprieve – its rubbish so far as I'm concerned – because . . . reprieve, what is a reprieve? – In other words you live still at the mercy of another man!'

Four years ago it was announced in parliament that Alexandra would be re-developed for family housing. There were celebrations. It was said that Alex had been saved. Many people, confused by all the speeches, began to feel grateful to Koornhof and his gang, and desired to cooperate with them.

Four years later the idea of a 'saved' or 'reprieved' Alexandra no longer fools

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Yet rubbish or not, these words do have power to entangle people in the false promises of the system. Koornhof only has to say the words 'Municipal Status', and certain people begin to crave for the limited power that seems to be offered. They do not say RUBBISH, because they desire to be active. Not liking to sit in idleness, they blind themselves to reality. They want to act and at the same time they do not want to see that they are being manipulated.

Some people are never taken in. As early as July 1979 Rev. M Thema was scorning the nonsense of Alexandra's 'reprieve'. He said openly that Piet Koornhof and the Department of Community Development (another lying title) 'were emblems of oppression to the black man.' And he warned against collaborating with them. 'Black people cannot afford privileges and favours. We thirst for reality and our rights.'

That's well said. But what then can we do?

What is to be done

The first step is to try by all means to uncover reality: and that is why the word RUBBISH is of great value to us. We must sweep aside the lying words the system uses to hide behind so that we may get close to reality. This is the process of increasing consciousness.

What is the second step? For clearly one cannot stop at just knowing what is wrong: one has to act on society in order to change it. But here a tremendous difficulty presents itself — how can one achieve the power to act without working through state institutions? It is, for example, as an approved 'local authority' that the Liaison Committee in Alexandra has power to direct community affairs. To what extent is this power controlled, or to what extent is it independent?

The cart that pushes the horse downhill

Sam Buti retains the belief that he has a large measure of independence, that the Liaison Committee is able to act meaningfully on behalf of residents of the township. He rejects the implication of the word 'reprieve', but he accepts the semi-official role the Liaison Committee has in municipal affairs:

'What is important is that black people should now rally around and be united and form a force that can really **pressurise** for certain things.'
(S. Buti — Interview)

Pressurise or Collaborate

Yet, to link into the system is to risk collaborating with it, whether you want to or not. As a local authority the Liaison Committee is bound to support certain apartheid mechanisms such as influx control, house permits, ejections, shack-demolition and so on. A very thin line divides 'pressurising' from 'collaborating'.

Both steps — increasing consciousness, and action — are necessary for progress and development. They cannot really be separated in practice. People should **know what they are doing**.

We of IZWI are not yet able to present views on one of these twins, namely this problem of **action**, in a thorough manner. We will do so in a future issue of IZWI. In this present issue we concentrate on the question of **consciousness**. The articles that follow have this theme and purpose in common: they take ordinary seeming things — Clinics, Youth Centres, Exams etc — and show how they are used to **ensure a blind faith in the capitalist system**, and to conceal its methods of getting people to accept it.

Interview with Buti

IZWI had an interview with Rev Buti, chairman of the Alexandra Liaison Committee, in March, 1983. The interview was about developments in Alexandra generally, and more particularly concerning housing. Apart from his comments on the so-called reprieve of Alexandra, mentioned in our leading article, the following are some of the interesting points that were made:

(Concerning housing and the socio-economic survey that was made in Alexandra a few years ago)

Izwi — There must have been something central that came out of the socio-economic survey?

Buti — The priority number one that came as a central point, as a focal point, is that people need houses, not rooms.

Izwi — Whose idea was it to have Thusong, the tennis courts, sports fields and the expensive houses?

Buti — Projects like Thusong and the others are projects that came from people who live around Alexandra. The sports fields are the Mayoral Project of Sandton — Thusong is the project of the Sandton Civic Association — and all these other things were meant to assist the people of Alexandra. The Alexandra Liaison Committee could not have started with such projects . . .

Izwi — But you did . . .

Buti — We did not start with these projects ourselves . . .

Izwi — But you gave them the go ahead?

Buti — Well, I mean, there's no use to say no to them, when they say 'We assist'. If a person says to you you don't have a trousers and I would like to assist you with a trousers, you cannot say no to that person. You know your priorities .

Izwi — If you feel the trousers is not important first, it is important at a later stage?

Buti — I don't think that is good reasoning, and I don't think there is logic in that. In any development of a town, you don't develop lopsidedly — you develop as a town. If you build schools, you build houses, you build streets, you need facilities for the children to recreate. And if there are people who come and say we want to assist with this, we cannot say no. But if that thing can stand in the way of development of houses, then we will say no. But in no way are these projects in the way of the development.

What Rev Buti has to say about projects like Thusong and the sportsfields, is of great interest to us. Izwi has always maintained that such projects are wrongly given a priority, and has insisted that housing should be the priority. Rev Buti insists that these sites and buildings do not stand in the way of housing. But this is quite puzzling, in that what we see, apart from a few sub-economic houses, is the rapid, efficient development of these projects which undoubtedly take up space.

The crucial question which this poses, is that given the reality that Alexandra is a small area, with 60 000 people, where are the houses going to be built to accomodate everyone? It is this that makes us believe that Alexandra is intended primarily for fewer people, and especially for those who can afford expensive housing, and who are in a position to enjoy tennis, etc. What is 'perfectly clear' to the Department of Community Development, must surely also be clear to Rev Buti, that even a redeveloped Alexandra cannot accommodate its present inhabitants and that some of the Blacks may find it necessary to resettle elsewhere. (This comes from a letter from the Department to Percy Williams of the Save Alexandra (Coloured) Party - reproduced below). It will consequently be of great interest to see how Rev Buti manages to keep his promise, in a situation which seems to make it impossible for him to do so.

Report on school results

1982 School results were bad in both Minerva Secondary and Alex High School, but scandalously bad at the High.


Why is this so?

The question is confused and confusing as everyone involved in education shifts blame and responsibility. The Department of Education and Training says it is largely due to underqualified teachers that we have such bad results. Teachers blame pupils and say they are lazy and do not take their work seriously. Some pupils blame teachers for incompetence, some blame themselves as they feel they are not capable of comprehending school work. Parents blame their children or teachers, or both children and teachers.

Teachers get caned

At the meeting of teachers and inspectors held at Minerva, where the new regional director, Mr Van Zyl, was introduced to teachers, Alex High School was criticized for the high rate of failures in both JC and matric. The fault, it was said, lies with teachers who are irresponsible and fail in their duty to apply restrictive and disciplinary measures on pupils.

A pupil at Alex High reported to IZWI that some teachers told them about the meeting, and said that they were blamed undeservedly, as they felt that pupils fail because of their laziness. One teacher went further to say that pupils misinterpret the role of teacher, and expected teachers to spoon-feed them, whereas he held that the role of a teacher is to guide.



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DEPARTEMENT VAN GEMEENSKAPSONTWIKKELING
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Verrekening/Reference Sandton 4/2
 Name/Naam J W Pourie Ve-76C
 Telefoon/Telephone (012) 29551 X153
 Tel. Adres/Address DEVELOP
 Tuiske/Tuiske 3487
 Subskripsie/Subscription Building
 Volkswaard/Volkswaard Avenue
 2001 PRETORIA

Mr P R Williams
 Save Alexandra (Coloured) Party
 P O Box 507
 BERGVLEI
 2012

Sir

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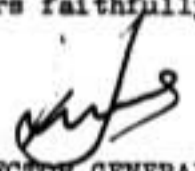
PERMANENCY OF COLOUREDS IN ALEXANDRA

I refer to the letter addressed to you by the Administrative Secretary of The Honourable S P Kotszé, Minister of Community Development, dated 25 September 1981 and wish to inform you that cognizance has been taken of your representations.

You are aware of the overcrowded conditions in Alexandra and that redevelopment of the township is under way. However it is perfectly clear that even a redeveloped Alexandra cannot accommodate its present inhabitants and that some of the Blacks may find it necessary to resettle elsewhere. It is, therefore, inevitable as well as imperative that additional land will have to be identified, preferably in the vicinity of Wynberg, where the Coloureds of Alexandra can settle permanently and where all necessary facilities can be provided for them.

Unfortunately, suitable land is not easily available in that area and the Department is still busy with certain preliminary investigations in this regard.

Yours faithfully



DIRECTOR GENERAL:
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT