

As mentioned above, students at Onverwacht were reported to have attacked the local police station on July 11, 1980. The Star newspaper of that date reported the incident in this way:

A policeman was stabbed and a woman shot when schoolchildren at Onverwacht settlement near Thaba Nchu attacked the police station yesterday.

About 600 children boycotted the eight schools in the settlement and at about 9am moved through the streets setting alight vehicles, a shop and plundering two other shops, the Divisional Inspector of Police in the Free State, Colonel Fisher said.

The crowd then moved to the small police outpost and confronted the policeman on duty. The policeman was stabbed with a knife and while unconscious was robbed of his firearm, Colonel Fisher said.

A shot was fired with the firearm and a black woman was wounded. Police retrieved the policeman's gun. About 20 youths were arrested.

Resentment against Qwaqwa Chief Minister, Kenneth Mopeli, surfaced at Onverwacht on Sunday, September 14, when he addressed a crowd of about 2 000 at the resettlement area:

Two men, armed with a petrol bomb and revolver, were arrested by BophuthaTswana (?) Security Police while the Chief Minister of Qwaqwa, Chief TK Mopeli, was addressing a crowd of 20 000 at the Onverwacht resettlement camp near Thaba Nchu.....

The two men, who were apparently disguised as women, were arrested amid strict security precautions to protect Chief Mopeli after rumours of a possible assassination attempt against him at the meeting.....

Chief Mopeli proceeded with his speech and in an interview yesterday said he would continue to move among his people without fear, as they were in his protection. (Star, 18.09.80).

# Rents: Soweto

IN PREVIOUS editions of Work In Progress it has been suggested that, in addition to factory floor issues, there are 'community' conflicts and matters which are of direct concern to working class organisation (see for example the editorials in WIP 12 and 13, the contributions on bus boycotts in WIP 13, and the debate on progressive community organisation which is continued in this edition). In the article that follows, this question is explored in relation to rents in urban african townships.

In almost all Transvaal townships rents have recently risen sharply; and in Soweto, for example, rent payments will double between August 1980 and April 1981.



Why are rents such a controversial and explosive issue in the townships? After all, payment for accommodation is something members of the working class are burdened with in all capitalist societies. To understand the way in which the payment of rental relates to the whole administration and control of the african working class, we have to go back to at least 1972/73, when the various Bantu Affairs Administration Boards were set up by the state to rule and manage african townships outside of the bantustan areas. Before this period townships had been under the control of local municipal authorities, and while this form of administration was deficient and unacceptable to township residents, there were aspects which were not as harsh as the subsequent rule of the administration boards.

A few municipalities subsidised their dormitory townships, both directly and indirectly. For example, in the last year that it was responsible for administering Soweto, the Johannesburg City Council directly subsidised Soweto to the amount of R2-m; there was also an 'indirect' subsidy in that part of the cost of township administration was absorbed by the City Council's own departments and administration.

During 1972/73 the central government removed control of african townships from local authorities, and placed them directly under 22 newly created Bantu Affairs Administration Boards (BAABs); from then on the administration of all african townships outside of the bantustans fell under these boards.

The principle that the BAABs were to be self-financing, and have no financial claim on the central state, was enforced by the government. In practice this meant that the

BAABs were expected to provide all services and infra-structure previously provided by the city councils or peri-urban boards, while at the same time creating financial self-sufficiency. In other words, most of the money required for the upkeep and development of african townships had to be provided by the residents of those townships.

Urban african townships contain no business or industrial centres; nor do they have any of the other conventional bases for taxation necessary for municipal administration in capitalist societies; this lack of a material base on which to ground township administration is itself a result of the particular way in which capitalism took root and developed in South Africa, and the manner in which the state has controlled the working class and the conflicts brought on by capitalist development.

The absence of a financial base for the administration of townships has meant that the BAABs, limited by the necessity for financial self-sufficiency, have relied for their major sources of income on rents from trading sites, houses and beds in municipal hostels, as well as on the sale of beer and liquor over which the BAABs have maintained a monopoly.

Thus for example the 1978/79 West Rand Administration Board (WRAB) budget planned for an income of R75 200 000; the components of this income were broken down as follows:

Housing rental	30 151 400
Levies	10 777 000
Sale of beer	16 300 000
Sale of liquor	16 800 000
Sport etc	525 000
General income	660 000

(Source: Survey of Race Relations in South Africa, 1978:337. SAIRR).

(Levies involve amounts paid by employers to the Bantu Affairs Administration Boards, and are calculated in relation to the number of african workers employed, whether the workers are housed by the employer or not, and whether the nature of the work performed is domestic labour or industrial/commercial).

As can be seen, almost the total WRAB income was derived from rentals, levies and sale of liquor and beer. This heavy financial dependence of the BAABs on the sale of alcohol is reflected in the percentage which this income comprised of total income for the year ending March 31, 1977:

<u>Board:</u>	<u>Income from alcohol sales as % of total income:</u>
WRAB	40%
Western Transvaal	66%
Southern Transvaal	55%
Northern Transvaal	63%
Highveld	55%
Peninsula	46%
Midlands	53%
Northern Cape	53%
Drakensberg	66%

(Source: Survey of Race Relations in South Africa, 1978:338. SAIRR).

This dependence on the sale of beer and spirits proved to be financially disastrous for the BAABs subsequent to the rebellions of 1976 and 1977. BAAB buildings in general, and bottle stores and beer halls in particular, were frequent targets for stone throwing and arson attacks, and it seems that attacks on liquor outlets reflected general resentment against the local representatives of state policy (BAAB), as well as the social effects of a 'booze economy' encouraged by the boards within townships. For example, all WRAB beer halls, and all but one bottle store, were destroyed in the mass action which followed the shootings on June 16, 1976. The financial effect of this was dramatic: during the

1975-76 financial year, WRAB derived a profit of R6 391 000 on beer and liquor sales; by 1976-77 this profit had dropped to R3 444 000 (Survey of Race Relations in South Africa, 1977:399); actual income from alcohol sales during this period dropped from R38-m to R22-m.

It can accordingly be seen that the question of rents in a township like Soweto is linked to a whole series of broader issues: the financing of townships, state policy that BAABs should be financially self-sufficient, the siting of african classes in segregated residential areas without commercial and industrial sites of any consequence, the way in which consumption of liquor and beer is encouraged by the BAABs, etc.

Rent payments in african townships actually include a number of different components, and the amount paid for each component goes up to make the total monthly rent bill. The term 'rent' covers house rent, which supposedly allows the BAABs to recover the cost of building and maintenance; site rent, which is meant to cover the cost of original land purchase, access roads, drainage, health and ambulance services, and administration costs; service charges, which are meant to cover the costs of electricity, water, sewerage and rubbish removal; and a schools levy.

#### The 1977 rents issue in Soweto.

By the end of 1976 it was clear that WRAB was suffering a severe financial crisis, partly as a result of the decline in income from the Soweto liquor and beer trade: this had been brought about by the destruction of

bottle stores and beerhalls in the aftermath of June 1976. What was previously a small surplus in WRAB budgets had changed to a deficit of R11-m in the proposed 1977-78 budget, and WRAB began recalling some of its short term investments in an attempt to offset its immediate financial crisis. The board also approached the Department of Bantu Administration for a loan of R6-m, but in terms of the government's policy that BAABs must be self-financing, only R1,5-m was granted.

In presenting the 1977-78 budget the WRAB chairman claimed that it would be necessary to increase site and hostel rentals to offset the deficit in finance. Site rents were to be increased from R6,25 to R11,50 and the cost of beds for the 45 000 men housed in Soweto's single sex hostels was also to rise. Soweto student leaders called on WRAB not to "repeat the mistake made by certain officials of Bantu Education in 1976", and on April 23 a public meeting of Soweto residents resolved not to pay the proposed increases.

Four days later, on April 27, thousands of schoolchildren were joined by their parents in an anti-rents march through Soweto. After discussion between police and leaders of the Soweto Students Representative Council (SSRC), police agreed not to intervene in the demonstration, which marched on to the UBC chambers at Jabulani. The building housing the UBC was stoned, and police broke up the demonstration with teargas and bullets.

The SSRC issued a pamphlet setting out their attitude on the proposed rent increase:

We want to make it abundantly clear to the WRAB authorities that we are sick to the core of our hearts of all these

promised facilities and improvements being dangled over our heads without being implemented.....

1. Have our pay scales been increased to meet the already rocketing cost of living?
2. Have our pay scales been increased to meet the proposed rent increment?
3. The answer is NO of course.

The proposed high rents therefore will be used for the following:

1. Building bottle stores, beer halls. (The people registered their feelings against these, but still the WRAB which is 'interested' in our welfare is prepared at all costs to re-build them).....

To the WRAB we want to make it very clear that houses from where people have been evicted will never be occupied.

Anyone found paying the proposed increment, causing others to be evicted, will be dealt with accordingly.

We appeal to our parents not to pay the proposed increments.....

Harassment or no harassment, eviction or no eviction.

**WE BOYCOTT THE PROPOSED RENT INCREMENT.**

(source: S vs Twala and 12 others, exhibit B15).



Demonstrators opposing the 1977 rent increase march through Soweto on their way to the Urban Bantu Council Chambers.

As opposition to the increases grew, then deputy minister of Bantu Affairs, Willem Cruywagen, stepped into the arena in an attempt to take the pressure off WRAB and the central government. He revealed that as early as February 1977 the UBCs of Soweto, Dobsonville and Krugersdorp had been consulted on the proposed rent increase, as had the Mohlakeng and Bekkersdal Advisory Boards; of these, only the last-mentioned had refused to support the increases. Cruywagen claimed that the UBCs had understood why the increases were unavoidable, and had agreed to them.

To some extent, Cruywagen's tactic was successful: popular anger was directed towards the UBC in Soweto, and the SSRC began a campaign to close down the UBC immediately. Members of the UBC admitted under pressure that they had known about the increases since early in 1977, but claimed that they had been told by WRAB that they were merely being informed on the rent rise, not consulted.

In calling for the resignation of UBC members, the SSRC argued that

"The fact that they (UBC) were told of the new rent increases as early as February and that they have not mentioned this to the people who supposedly elected them shows that they conspired with WRAB to add this heavy burden on our people".

The SSRC also argued that the UBC had "constantly been used by the authorities to oppress their own people" (Star, 27.04.77).

David Thebehali, then chair of the UBC, immediately took a UBC delegation to Cape Town to meet with Cruywagen, and at the end of April it was announced that the proposed rent increases would be suspended for a month while alternative sources of income were looked for.

The SSRC campaign against the UBC intensified, and individual members began resigning. Within a few days of meeting with SSRC members, Thebehali resigned, and further resignations brought the number to 23 - over half the members of the council. WRAB was forced to suspend the UBC, although it appears that a Thebehali-led clique continued to 'informally' meet with WRAB officials at its Albert Street offices for the rest of 1977. Out of the situation leading to the collapse of the UBC, a new state strategy - that of the community councils - was introduced to african townships.

The UBC

"was intended to deceive people in Soweto into thinking that they had some form of political representation, and to disguise the absolute power of the Minister and his Department. It was also intended to legitimate that power by making it appear that it was exercised only after the representatives of the people had been consulted. The clearest... example of this policy at work was the rents issue. The mask of the UBC was finally stripped away, however, when Cruywagen let the 'cat out of the bag' with his claim that the UBC had been consulted and had consented to the higher rents" (Kane-Berman, 1978:208-09).

The proposed rent increases were not implemented after a month, but in July 1977 WRAB asked the central government for permission to implement increases, and in October it was announced that site rentals would be increased in 3 stages of R1,75; in December 1977, April 1978 and July 1978. The Department of Information dropped 120 000 pamphlets over Soweto, trying to persuade residents that the increases were in their own interests. In December 1977 slogans appeared in Soweto opposing the first stage of the increase, but residents were reported

to be paying the increase (Star, 25.10.77; RDM, 02.12.77).

Can the Soweto rents conflict of 1977 be seen as a working class issue? There seems to be no reason why progressive community groups could not have organised the working class within Soweto to fight the intended increases. The issue affected those workers holding section 10(1)(a) or (b) rights in terms of the Urban Areas Act (ie workers continuously resident in Soweto since birth; legally resident in Soweto for at least 15 years, or having been employed by the same employer for at least 10 years), and who rented houses from WRAB. People without 10(1)(a) or (b) rights may not rent houses in townships, although certain dependents of lawful renters with 10(1)(c) rights may be on housing permits and occupy (but not rent) a house.

Contract and migrant workers legally in the urban areas (those with 10(1)(d) rights) are not permitted to live in township houses, but are accommodated in hostels and compounds. They are not necessarily directly affected by a rent increase, but in the case of the proposed 1977 increases, hostel rents were to be raised at the same time as house rents.

The fact that the increases affected both hostel and house-dwelling members of the working class in Soweto, coupled with the way in which the BAABs control and administer the working class in the townships, suggest the importance of the rents question for progressive and working class interests.

However, the question of community organisation is a difficult one, given that there are non-working class groups in the community (Soweto in this case), while on

the factory floor organisation involves only members of the working class. A rents issue in an urban township affects not only workers, but also petty bourgeois elements - although it affects members of professional and trading classes in a different way to the working class. But the danger in such a situation is that petty bourgeois interests take control of, and direct organisation around, a community issue such as a rents increase; in this case the working class is treated as a passive observer and follower, while non-working class interests fight out the issue through petitions to authority, legal action, press statements and similar forms of activity. The working class does not actively participate in its own organisation, directing its struggles, but is expected to passively accept victories gained 'on its behalf' by other class interests: this is clearly not working class or progressive organisation.

Despite the danger of anti-democratic, non-participatory activity on the part of petty bourgeois interests, the organisation of the working class in the community seemed structurally possible in the case of the 1977 Soweto rents issue. However, as the debate on this question in WIP suggests, there are a number of strategic and tactical questions to be considered in this regard, some of which are briefly listed below:

- a). given that a community involves more than one class, how does progressive community organisation assure the dominance of working class interests over other class interests, especially where no working class political parties exist?
- b). how does the organisation of the working class in communities avoid the traps of a

limited, issue-oriented approach, rather than organisation which has as its goal the transformation of the state?

- c). how are community and factory organisation to be linked, especially out of the context of a national working class political party?
- d). how does community organisation relate to national struggle, avoiding the dangers of becoming community specific?

#### The current rents issue in Soweto.

Some of the issues and questions raised above emerge from the rent struggle of 1977. How relevant are they in 1980 - the period of Riekert and community councils, 'total strategy' and Louis Rive? Has the manner of administering, financing and controlling the african townships altered to such an extent that the significance of township rents has lessened?

In his report, Riekert wrote that

In principle it is desirable for black communities to bear to an increasing extent a greater part of the total burden in connection with the provision of services in their own communities.... the Department (of Cooperation and Development), the administration boards, the community councils should initiate purposeful programmes of action in order to recover more and more of the cost of services from the black communities themselves.

The first budget proposal put before the Soweto community council by WRAB in 1979 involved a deficit of R25,4-m. The budget involved the following:

capital expenditure, to be financed by loans	R19,8-m
current expenditure	R46,8-m
current income, mainly from rents	R21,3-m

This left a deficit of R25,4-m, part of which

was to be financed through WRAB beer and liquor profits and employer levies; however, after this income, a deficit of R22,7-m remained.

According to an official from the Department of Cooperation and Development, the Soweto community council was given two choices in regard to this budget: either the filling of vacant posts and maintenance work could be cut down on, thereby decreasing expenditure; or these could be pushed ahead with, in which case rents would have to be increased to meet expenditure (Kane-Berman, 1980).

The community council made its 'choice': early in August 1979 Thebehali - recovered from his UBC experience and now chairman of the community council - announced a rent increase of about 100%, to be implemented in 3 stages (September 1979, January 1980 and August 1980). At this stage, average Soweto rentals were R19,50 per month, and according to Thebehali they would rise to R36,62.

Reaction was immediate: Motlana's Committee of 10 called a public meeting where the increases were rejected, while opposition groups within the community council itself petitioned Koornhof not to raise the rents. A meeting called by these opposition groups rejected the increases, while at a Committee of 10 meeting 1 000 people resolved not to pay any increases imposed on them.

At the end of August 'Promises' Piet Koornhof pledged that Soweto rents would not go up at present, as his Department of Cooperation and Development was still waiting for a final 'decision' on the issue from the community council. Opposition community

councillors retorted that WRAB, not the community council, actually controlled rents.

By late March 1980, when the community council met behind closed doors to consider the new proposed budget, rents had still not been increased. At this meeting, an increase of R12,20 in 3 stages over 9 months was proposed by Thebehali. Shortly after this suggestion, anti-increase meetings were held in Soweto by the Soweto Civic Association, as well as the opposition parties within the community council, and early in May there was an arson attack on Uncle Tom's Hall, which is used as a rents office in Soweto.

In June the chairman of WRAB announced that the rent increase in Soweto was definitely on - "its just a question of time" - and early in July Thebehali announced the new increases. Rents were to go up by R13,05 per month, but the increase was to be staggered in three stages of R4,35 to be introduced on August 1, October 1 and February 1, 1981.

The finalised budget for 1980 - 81 involved a gross outlay of R38-m, the major items involved being

building and services	5 500 000
water supply	7 700 000
electricity supply	3 100 000
health services	1 400 000
staff salaries and wages	5 400 000
sewerage fees	4 000 000

The rent increase will yield an additional amount of R5-m, but this will still leave a deficit of R13-m in the 1980-81 budget for Soweto.

The various components of the R13,05 increase are as follows:

water on unmetered sites	2,00
sewerage and purification	3,00
special electricity levy	1,30
planning fee to meet cost	
of professional engineers	,30
insurance of houses	4,39

However, this amount of R13,05 is not the only increase currently affecting Soweto residents: as was widely reported, a loan of R442 000 000 (including interest) was raised for the electrification of Soweto - and it is the residents of the township who will have to repay both the loan and interest over time. As can be seen from the breakdown of the components of the rent increase listed above, Soweto residents are already paying a special electricity levy towards the repayment of this loan. This special monthly levy will progressively increase, and current WRAB projections are that it will rise to R17 per month by October 1990. For example, the special levy will rise by another R1,00 on April 1, 1981, bringing the total rent increase in Soweto up to 100% in the 9 month period August 1, 1980 - April 1, 1981.

Electricity rates themselves have increased 400% since May 1980. Until then, Soweto residents were paying 1/2c per unit; this increased to 1 1/2c, and on October 1, 1980 increased to 2c per unit of electricity used.

#### Opposition to the increases.

Since the first phase of the increase was implemented, there have been a number of responses by various groups: some opposition has involved direct demonstration and protest, while other opposition strategies have revolved around public meetings, a petition to Koornhof, and a call on residents not to

pay the increases.

In mid July a group of about 70 women stormed the house of community councillor Ephraim Tshabalala; he told the women that the community council had not raised the rents, and he knew nothing of the increases.

Makgotla leader Siegfried Manthatha announced that he and his followers had decided to pretend they knew nothing about the increase. "We are simply going to ignore all these statements made by the Soweto Council chairman and refuse to pay", he said.

Various moderate-conservative groupings in Soweto, related either to the old UBC or opposition parties within the community council have threatened to take court action against whoever is responsible for the increase (community council? WRAB? Cooperation and Development?) These include the Sefasonke Party, Makgotla, Soweto Federal Party, Soweto Ratepayers Association and the Soweto Residents Committee.

The Committee of 10, 14 branches of the Soweto Civic Association, and AZAPO (Soweto branch) have called on residents not to pay the increases. Frans Kofi of the Soweto Federal Party, and an opposition community council member, opposed this call not to pay the increases:

"I cannot encourage such a thing because these people may be thrown out of their homes and we will not have the power of helping them. Neither the Committee of 10 nor members of the opposition (in the community council) have power of rehousing a convicted tenant.....Usually in these cases where people are told not to pay increased rents, it is the ordinary man who gets kicked out of the house. Almost all the people who incite people not to pay rent have bought their houses and do not stand chances of being kicked out" (Sunday Times, 03.08.80).

Tom Manthatha of the Committee of 10 called on people not to accept occupation of houses of residents evicted for refusing to pay the increases, and to report to their local SCA branch if WRAB officials refused to accept payment of the old rent amounts: such cases were occurring at certain rent offices.

However, the tactic gaining most prominence involves a court action, opposing the rent increase: this is being brought by Committee of 10 member Lekgau Mathabathe. The respondents of the application are

The Minister of Cooperation and Development;  
WRAB;

The Soweto community council;

The administrator of the Transvaal.

Mathabathe is claiming that, in order for rents to be raised, the approval of the Transvaal administrator is needed, and that it was not sought in this case. A number of public meetings have been held by branches of the SCA and Committee of 10 since the ban on public gatherings was lifted, and some of these have been well attended (over 2 000 in some cases). At these meetings, residents have on occasion pledged not to pay the rent increases. The Committee of 10 has said that it will take court action against WRAB if people are evicted from their homes for refusing to pay the rent increase (Post, 29.08.80).

The increases are by no means confined to Soweto: almost all townships in the Transvaal face continuing rent rises over a long period, and the first phase of these increases has been implemented in most areas over the past few months. The financing of the african townships is clearly not an issue

which can be dealt with out of the context of the form of capitalism in South Africa, which has dictated that townships are physically separate areas, some distance from the centres of business, commerce and industry, and that they are administered as separate areas where control of the workforce is the major factor.

The involvement of the community councils in the rent increases is in some ways similar to the behaviour of the old Soweto UBC; but the community councils are more directly linked into the contradiction which faces "township development" and "improvement in the quality of life" advocates: massive amounts are needed to provide the most basic of services in the urban townships; yet the state insists that these amounts are to be obtained from the residents of the townships themselves. If the community councils are to provide any material benefits for township residents, this can only be done at the cost of raising rents enormously (witness the way in which Soweto is being forced to pay for its electrification programme).

To take the case of just one township in South Africa - and one in which conditions are better than in many other african areas - Soweto. Community council director of finance, IM Florence, estimates that the figure at current prices needed to 'upgrade' Soweto in terms of road improvements, sewerage, drains and housing is R1-billion, and that "the money will have to be repaid by Soweto like any other local authority".

#### Notes.

For important background material to the question of rents and the financing of townships, see the following:

1. Rents: paying for incorporation. Work In Progress 12, April 1980.
2. Shoes without laces? The financing of urban black townships, with special reference to Soweto and the Soweto Community Council. John Kane-Berman, mimeo, SAIRR 1980.
3. Kane-Berman, John. Soweto: black revolt, white reaction. Raven Press, 1978.

## Rents: Mondlo

MONDLO - described as a 'hotbed of hatred', roads unlit and dusty, crime and disease common, in the two new schools the pupils have to sit on the floor. A Star newspaper report on the township was headed 'One would expect to find guerillas there' - a reference to the arrest of ANC fighters Boyce Bogale and Thomas Mngadi in this township earlier this year (see report on the Silverton Trial in the Courts section in this WIP and also in WIP 14).

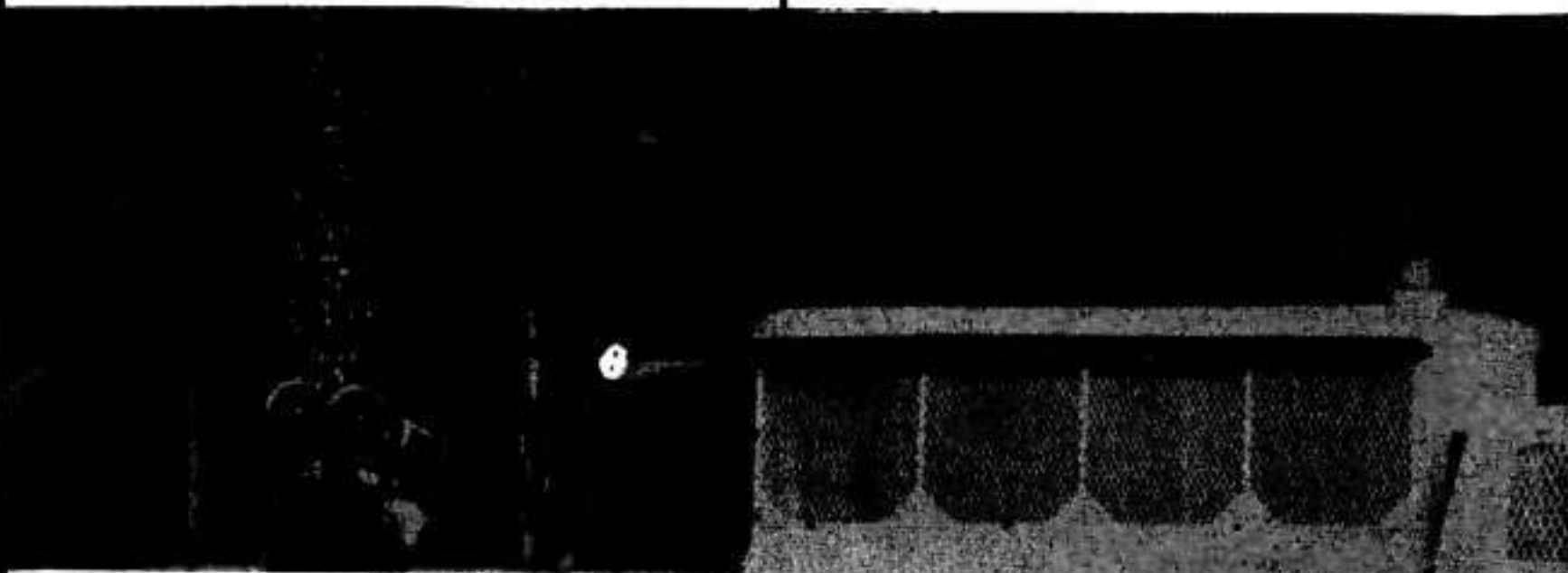
The population of about 35 000 is composed of people from farms (ex labour tenants) and from the townships around the Northern Natal towns of Dundee, Vryheid, Glencoe and Paul Pietersburg. For example, the population of Bhekuzulu location at Vryheid was going to be the first township moved as a whole (Sunday Post, 14.01.79). Many of these people have already moved to Osizweni and Nqutu, where yet another township is said to be planned.

In 1973 Dr Anthony Barker mentioned that there were '3 000 dwellers in loaned tents ... in 1963' at Mondlo.

Earlier this year it was reported that residents at Mondlo owed the KwaZulu government no less than R194 000 in outstanding rates (RDM, 17.04.80).

Rates had been increased from 84c to R6,40 (!) a month, but 99% of residents refused to pay this additional amount. The increase was said to be necessary to pay for piped water for each plot and for rubbish removal.

The increase had caused a lot



Broken windows at the Urban Bantu Council Chambers, Jabulani, after the rents demonstration of April 1977.