

Ben MacLennan to Priscilla
Hall (GRC)

early Dec 83

Dear Priscilla:

Judy didn't come round, and I didn't see her before I left the next morning. Here's roughly what Mbengashe told me at Glenmore. The letter which he wrote doesn't seem as coherent as my interview, and covers the same ground anyway.

I'm not sure whether Mbengashe would want his name attached to anything here: I wasn't planning to use his name in connection with this, he himself was hesitant about having his letter to me published.

SAYS:

Superintendent, Strauss, has been selling the empty pails that rations (dried soup) come in, at R1 each, and the empty mealie meal bags at 50c each. He's not supposed to do this. He takes the money and puts it into his own pocket.

(Mbengashe also said Strauss himself had been selling rations in villages near Glenmore, but this may have been confusion on the part of the interpreter, as ^{improbably} subsequently, in the body of the interview, only mentioned izibonda - board officials - selling actual rations) (but maybe he feels Strauss is selling rations through the izibonda)

Ben Mafana a labour man who lives in G'town used to come here with Mr Sparrow and Mr Young. Once when he came alone he noticed two izibonda ~~was~~ loading full bags on a lorry standing outside the offices. Wondered what was going on - rations supposed to come here and not go anywhere else. The lorry went out of the labour offices yard and Ben and this man (?) tailed it. At the bridge, it took the road towards Peddie (ie Brekfis Vlei) Ben and this guy followed them - it was at a fair distance - until they were convinced they were heading towards Peddie, then they turned back. Then Mr Sparrow came up with Mr Mafana and Mr Young. They didn't go straight to the superintendent. They went to talk to some people about their rations here. The people said they don't get rations regularly any more, and that rations only last two weeks, that children are continuously fainting because of hunger (fainting at school). The residents sent the committee to investigate this from the super. The super told the committee this is the government's food not your food and the government is doing you a favour if it gives you a ration only for a day (Mbeng's interpretation - the ration isn't meant to keep you happy and full, merely to keep the spirit flickering alive) Be thankful for the little you get, the remainder is mine (ie super's) The following day (this seems to have been about the middle of the year from what I can gather) Mr X called on me to say that a car was standing in front of Mr Kofi's house, no 61, with bags of food and pails of soup in it. I went there and Mr Kofi was standing in front of the house. He saw me and went quickly into the house. The driver got into the car and I went to him - it was Mr Ndongwana - and said to him I'm arresting you for loading food that is meant for the people. He denied he had food, and I demanded he open the boot. He started the car and drove away. Mr X saw the people loading food from Mr Kofi's house and putting it into the car. Mr Kofi is working for the BAAB as a clerk. People who work for BAAB should not get rations

(re Mr Sparrow's visit - Mbeng says an informer told Strauss something was going on. Presumably Sparrow came; observed, and left: Mbeng didn't mention any confrontation with Strauss. I spose it was Sparrow's visit that led to the affidavit)

Thanks most awfully for your help and patience while I was up in G'town, Priscilla. I got some bombshell stuff from Ronnie Knott (Glenmore farmer)'s son Neil on the way down...see next instalment.

Love, Ben